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Beyond the space of painting and poetry: Mallarmé and the embodied gesture

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***Beyond the Space of Painting and Poetry:
Mallarmé and the Embodied Gesture***

MARY-BERNADETTE O'TOOLE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2020

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.
4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy.
5. The word count of the thesis is 44,310.

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ABSTRACT

Painting cannot be bound by definition; painting's entanglement with art history, theory, and philosophy is a game of conjecture leading to a proliferation of terms as colourful and singular as a brush mark. This research re-evaluates the terms of painting in the 'expanded-field'. Rosalind Krauss considers the expanded-field the domain of post-modernism, equating it with 'the post-medium condition' – opposing Clement Greenberg's modernist aesthetic which limits painting to the conventions of its 'proper medium'. Today the expanded-field opens onto digital space – David Joselit imagines painting as a network, Isabel Graw proposes a 'residual-specificity' embedded in a 'medium-unspecific' concept of painting.

This research re-imagines the space of painting through the space of poetry: through a network of reciprocal relations manifest in Stéphane Mallarmé's poem *Un coup de Dés jamais n'abolira le Hasard*, (*A throw of the Dice will never abolish Chance*). The striking innovation of Mallarmé's generative poem lies in its capacity for multiple and simultaneous readings, signified in a weaving of word, image, and sound, which Mallarmé presents as a constellation. Through a close reading of *Un coup de Dés* I suggest a new critical space for painting, demonstrated in Mallarmé's spatial poetics. I propose that the poem marks the transition from a Modernist 'absorptive' mode of looking/reading to a postmodern performative mode, and that Mallarmé is crucial to understanding the relation between content and form. I demonstrate Mallarmé's relevance to articulating a reductive tendency in painting through a re-appraisal of the structural and spatial organisation of the text, the grid, blank page, and the subsequent sculptural turn that led to a re-negotiation of the space between the object and viewer.

Through performative strategies I engage with the text, drawing attention to the metaphoric possibilities of the space of the page and of the book; these include painting, sculpture, video, digital media, installation, and mathematics. Through a formal investigation of line, space, and gesture, painting is presented as a language with its own syntax. My artwork shows that what animates this relation is the embodiment of gesture, as a movement towards the idea perceived, and that the viewer's relation to the object is negotiated as a gap or a virtual space where meaning constantly unfolds.

The distinction between practice and theory, between academic writing and writing as practice, breaks down; research, conceived as a series of dialogues with Mallarmé, re-frames and re-articulates *Un coup de Dés*. Visual and textual forms are woven together, establishing a direct relation between literature and the plastic arts. This research makes a contribution to Mallarméan studies, and to current discourses relating to painting in the expanded-field, through a re-evaluation of the relation between the space of painting and poetry, and discourses that underpin spatial and temporal readings of the text. I demonstrate the importance of Mallarmé to trans-disciplinary research; extant material from one field applied to another generates new forms embodied in this gesture.

CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------|
| DECLARATION _____ | ii |
| ABSTRACT _____ | iii |
| CONTENTS _____ | iv |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS _____ | vi |
| PREFACE: A NOTE TO THE READER _____ | viii |
| DIGITAL PORTFOLIO OF WORKS _____ | xvii |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS _____ | xviii |
| A NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS _____ | xix |
| A NOTE ON THE EDITIONS _____ | xx |
| EPIGRAPH _____ | xxvi |
| INTRODUCTION _____ | 1 |
| CHAPTER ONE: <i>Mallarmé Me Marcel</i> _____ | 30 |
| INTERLUDE _____ | 75 |
| CHAPTER TWO: <i>Mallarmé Me Michalis</i> _____ | 76 |
| INTERLUDE _____ | 109 |
| CHAPTER THREE: <i>Mallarmé Me Meillassoux</i> _____ | 110 |
| INTERLUDE _____ | 134 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: <i>Meillassoux Me Mallarmé</i> _____ | 136 |
| INTERLUDE _____ | 154 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: <i>Mallarmé Me Krauss</i> _____ | 155 |
| INTERLUDE _____ | 195 |
| CHAPTER SIX: <i>Krauss Me Mallarmé</i> _____ | 196 |
| INTERLUDE _____ | 222 |

CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| CHAPTER SEVEN: <i>Mallarmé Me Manet</i> _____ | 224 |
| INTERLUDE _____ | 257 |
| CHAPTER EIGHT: <i>Manet Me Mallarmé</i> _____ | 258 |
| INTERLUDE _____ | 293 |
| CHAPTER NINE: <i>Mallarmé Me Martin</i> _____ | 294 |
| INTERLUDE _____ | 329 |
| CHAPTER TEN: <i>Martin Me Mallarmé</i> _____ | 330 |
| INTERLUDE _____ | 355 |
| CHAPTER ELEVEN: <i>Mallarmé Me I</i> _____ | 356 |
| INTERLUDE _____ | 367 |
| CHAPTER TWELVE: <i>I Me Mallarmé</i> _____ | 368 |
| INTERLUDE _____ | 371 |
| | |
| CONCLUSION _____ | 372 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY _____ | 374 |
| LIST OF FIGURES _____ | 394 |
| APPENDICES _____ | 405 |
| APPENDIX A: List of Appendices _____ | 406 |
| APPENDIX B: The Lahure Proofs _____ | 407 |
| APPENDIX C: <i>Un coup de Dés</i> – An English Translation _____ | 415 |
| APPENDIX D: A List of Editions of <i>Un coup de Dés</i> _____ | 427 |
| APPENDIX E: Typographic Analysis of <i>Un coup de Dés</i> _____ | 431 |
| APPENDIX F: Syllabic Count of <i>Un coup de Dés</i> _____ | 458 |
| APPENDIX G: Glossary of Terms _____ | 505 |
| APPENDIX H: Expanded Notes _____ | 510 |

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PREFACE: A NOTE TO THE READER

This doctoral project includes a written thesis and archive of original artwork. The written element and artwork are conceptually entangled – simultaneously articulating and expanding the space at issue: the space of poetry and painting. In this twofold project, conceived as scholarly endeavour and artwork the voice of academic and artist and are joined in refusing the limitations of disciplinary research models. The written element of the thesis is a hybrid form of writing, operating across genres, moving between creative, critical, theoretical, and philosophical modes of writing.

The thesis is divided into twelve chapters, appearing as couplets, reflecting the structural organisation of Stéphane Mallarmé's poem: *Un coup de Dés jamais n'abolira le Hazard* (A throw of the Dice will never abolish Chance), comprising twelve unbound and interchangeable double pages. The number twelve references the classical French verse form of the 'alexandrine—a line of twelve syllables divided into two halves, or hemistichs, by a pause called a caesura'.¹

The chapters provide a written account of a series of imagined dialogues between Mallarmé, 'Me', and selected poets, painters, and philosophers who have responded to Mallarmé's generative poem. The dialogues are fashioned in the process of reading, reciting, writing, listening, speaking, looking, walking, counting, making, painting, and musing; in the act of constructing and deconstructing *Un coup de Dés*. They operate between reality and fiction, and between the spoken word and written word. The written element includes, in part, a transcription of my performative readings of Mallarmé's poem, taking place

¹ Barbara Johnson, 'Translator's Note', *Stéphane Mallarmé: Divagations*, translated by Barbara Johnson, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 299–302, 299 (*Divagations*, Paris: Bibliothecque-Charpentier, 1897). Note all further references to *Divagations* are to this translation.

in the ‘real’ light of day while walking towards the sea – the horizon. The spoken form, is both real and fictive, articulated in the process of reciting *Un coup de Dés*, in shaping and reshaping the dialogues. The form approaches the rhythm of the research – weaving my words, words appropriated from Mallarmé’s poems, prose, and letters, and those of poets, painters, philosophers, art historians, and theorists. These acts of appropriation and re-contextualisation question the role of context as a register of meaning. The dialogues are constellations operating across space and time – challenging the convention of an art historical context determined by narrative sequence. In the context of these configurations or points of convergence, meaning can never be fixed.

The encounters oscillate between monologue and dialogue, rendered either silent, in the mute internalised speech of the thinking ‘I’, or spoken, alone or in exchange with the many voices resonating across the pages of *Un coup de Dés*. The ‘I’, speaking, is also ‘Me’ at the centre of each dialogue, artist and researcher caught up in a reflexive discourse. This ‘I’ has two faces. One tends towards the monologic, driven by a desire for meaning – for answers to the questions at the heart of this research. The other ‘I’ acknowledges the impossibility of any fixed meaning, from necessity tending towards the dialogic, towards an uncertain and complicated form of exchange between Stéphane Mallarmé and others who have responded to his formative poem.

This approach, like Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the ‘dialogical’, suggests multiple viewpoints, which Bakhtin links to polyphonic, multiple, not singular sounds.² In

² Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, translation by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin, TX: Texas University Press, 1981. Dialogic, (see Appencies, Appendix G: *Glossary of Terms*, p. 505). Polyphonic, (Ibid., p. 506). The choice of dialogue acknowledges a philosophical genre of writing established in the Socratic dialogue developed by Plato. Plato’s Republic presents a series of moral questions to the reader in the form of dialogues, a form that allows Plato to raise various points of view and let the reader decide which is valid. Plato, *Republic*, A New Translation by Robin Waterfield, Oxford World’s Classics, Oxford University Press, 2008, first published in 1994, revised in 1998).

Un coup de Dés twelve typographic variants suggest twelve voices; in the dialogues, multiple voices register their difference and the emergence unforeseen forms. Dialogue as strategy is intended to allow the reader to participate in the process of negotiating the many versions and approaches to the poem, drawing attention to the impossibility of fixed meaning or interpretation. The dialogues open the page and the possibilities of reading, raising questions of origin, authorship, and copy. After Jacques Derrida, ‘this “I”, a bit like “you”, undergoes its own incessant violent re-inscription within the arithmetical machinery’, which, as this thesis demonstrates, is always becoming and unbecoming form.³

The choice of dialogue as literary form and research method is not arbitrary, acknowledging the contingent operations of *Un coup de Dés*, manifest in a dynamic and complicated form of exchange, between word, image, and sound, reaching beyond the space of the page, establishing relations with other texts. The philosophical questions raised in the process of negotiating these texts and subsequent incursions into other fields of enquiry challenge the spatial and conceptual limits of this research. Extensive use of appropriated text, and playful detours, intended to illuminate rather than obfuscate the space in question, forced me to re-evaluate the relation of the main body of text to the footnotes and each part of this undertaking to the whole. The term ‘supplement’ is used cautiously to refer to supplementary material that is present – insinuated in the main body, and manifest in the footnotes and appendices. Derrida’s use of the term ‘*parergon*’, to refer to the operation of the supplement suggests something exterior to the field:

³ Jacques Derrida, *Derrida*: A documentary directed by Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman, produced by Amy Ziering Kofman, edited by Kirby Dick, Matthew Clarke, Jane Doe Films, distributed by Zeitgeist Films, premiered at Sundance Film Festival, 2002, released 2003, duration 85 minutes.

The parergon inscribes something which comes as an extra, exterior to the proper field', [...] whose transcendent exteriority come into play, abut onto, brush against, rub, press against the limit itself and intervene in the inside only to the extent that the inside is lacking.⁴

Derrida's 'lack' determines a paradoxical relation between inside and outside. This project shows the material 'outside' is inherent to the main textual body – and, made particular in this performative reading/writing. The main body can be read without recourse to the footnotes, but the footnotes and supplementary material provide more than a painterly touch to the space of writing. At times, the extensive use of notes presents a challenge to the conventions of scholastic research, undermining perceived boundaries and hierarchies with [in] this delimited field.⁵ Gérard Genette describes the relation between the main body of text and

4 Jacques Derrida, 'Parergon', *The Truth In Painting*, translated by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, Chicago, IL: Chicago, University Press, pp. 17–119, 56. (*La Vérité En Peinture*, Paris: Flammarion, 1978).

5 The written element of the thesis is constrained by a word count limiting the space available to the textual body. The footnotes offer un-limited space in principle; however, convention cautions against excess. *The Modern Humanities Research Association* considers notes an 'interruption to the reader', advocating reserve, and advising they are used 'primarily for documentation and for the citation of sources relevant to the text'. (*MHRA Style Guide: A Handbook for Authors, Editors, and Writers of Theses*, London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2008, p. 47). This thesis follows the MHRA guidelines, however, the footnotes acknowledge the 'interruption to the reader' as a pause; reflection on relevant discursive fields, as well as providing citation to sources relevant to the main textual body. To accommodate the philosophical, conceptual, and literary ambitions of this research project it became necessary to perform a series of expanded gestures. These include extensive use of footnotes, the inclusion of visual material in the dialogues and in the interlude placed at the end of each double chapter. An encompassing set of appendices meet the requirement of the pedantic academic, who at times demands measurable proofs. Equally these expanded spaces accommodate the transgressive wanderings and philosophic speculations of artist and academic. Paradoxically the expanded notes reveal the limitation of an expanded space threatened by an infinite play of connections and future projects, in turn demanding more space. This overflow suggests notes with [in] notes, books with [in] books, and an infinite regress – a *mise en abîme* (*Mise en abîme*, see Appendices, Appendix G: Glossary of Terms, p. 506).

supplementary material as a *'threshold'*, and the supplementary material as the *'paratext'*. Genette writes:

a 'threshold' [...] 'a zone between text and off-text, not only of transition but also of transaction; a privileged place of pragmatics and a strategy [...] at the service of a better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading of it.'⁶

In the context of this project Genette's 'threshold' emerges as a 'pale and indistinct line' – horizon, simultaneously dividing the space of writing [page], painting [canvas], and walking [beach].⁷ The arbiters of line; the poet and painter operate at the threshold, in the space between all opposition undermining the Western hierarchical order perpetuating this false division. The poet and painter

⁶ Gérard Genette, 'Introduction', *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Cambridge, Cambridge: University Press, 1997, pp. 1–2, (*Seuils*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987). See also, Craig Dworkin's account of contemporary writing operating at the 'threshold' outlined by Genette. Dworkin examines the tension between 'materials and rhetorics', in works he describes as 'paratextual works' – referring to 'the textual corporeality that all such 'paratexts' sustain as they seek to supplement, support, and displace the body of text. (Op. cit., Dworkin, 'Textual Prostheses', *No Medium*, p. 59).

⁷ Mallarmé, *Mallarmé on Fashion: A Translation of the Fashion Magazine La Dernière Mode, with Commentary*, P. N. Furbank and Alex Cain, Oxford, Berg Oxford International Publishes Ltd, 2004, p. 56, [*La Dernière Mode, O. C.*, p. 732.] All further references to *La Dernière Mode*, are to this translation. See also, Manet's seascapes, which were influenced by a Japanese aesthetic, undermining the laws of perspective favoured by a Western perspectival tradition. Mallarmé writes: 'to look at the sea pictures of Manet, where the water at the horizon rises to the height of the frame, which also interrupts it', we feel a new delight at the recovery of a long obliterated truth'. Stéphane Mallarmé, 'The Impressionists and Edouard Manet', (see, Charles S. Moffett, "Manet and Impressionism", *Manet: 1832–1883*, exhibition catalogue, New York, NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983, pp. 29–35, 31. [Originally published in *The Art Monthly Review and Photographic Portfolio*, no 9, London, 1876, pp. 117–22.]). Similarly, the line dividing the main textual body from the footnotes is analogous to the shifting horizon where 'the water rises to the height of the frame, which also *interrupts* it'. (Ibid.) In this sense the dialogues between poet, painter and philosopher take place in the space of the page, at times the philosophical discourses dominate the page, pushing the horizon and the perceived division between the philosophical and poetic modes of thinking and writing.

inhabiting this shore is commensurate with the traditional Chinese painter, who is seen as ‘the regulator of rhythm, the person who gets the yin and yang to act in concert’. The one who, ‘reserves a place for the sky and the earth and, only then, in the middle left empty, decides upon the landscape, which is seen as a resolution of the contradiction of the sky/earth and at the same time as a way of passing beyond it’.⁸

This false division between the main textual body and the footnotes is germane to relations between poet, painter, and philosopher. These fragile relations, suspended between reality and fiction, show in the architecture of the page. The philosophical discourses take place, for the most part in the footnotes, below the horizon line. Poet and painter operate above the horizon line and in the place left empty, in the ‘empty middle’.⁹ This distinction provides a parallel reflection on ‘philosophical’ discursive modes of thinking and the forms of thought as they are articulated by poet and painter. The philosopher like the poet is bound to speech; to articulating thought in the form of words, the order in which the words proceed differentiates one from the other. Mallarmé suggests, ‘the fewest words possible, given that language is the substance of the artwork itself’.¹⁰ He separates poetry from philosophy owing to poetry’s capacity for flight, unfolding his poetic act in the space of the page, in the ‘the beat of a wing that carries you off’.¹¹ Or, doubled

8 Hubert Damisch, *Theory of a /Cloud/: Toward a History of Painting*, California CA: Stanford University Press, 2002, ‘Our Sheet’s White Care’ pp. 182–231, 217.

9 Ibid., Damisch, p. 217.

10 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Solemnity’, *Divigations*, pp. 164–70, 166. See also Rancière, who makes the point, citing Paul Valéry, ‘the poem’s “high symphony”, liberates the poet “from the banal rescue of banal philosophies, false tenderness and lifeless descriptions”. But by turning away from representation as from dissertation, the poem is unable to abdicate the privilege of speech and thought for the “ineffability of song”’. (Jacques Rancière, *Mallarmé The Politics of the Siren*, translated by Steven Corcoran, London, New York: Continuum, 1996, p. 44. [Mallarmé: La Politique de la sirène, Hachette Littératures, 1996]).

11 Ibid., Mallarmé, ‘Solemnity’, *Divigations*, p. 167.

like flight, ‘the identity of the two halves being stamped by their parity in sound’.¹² Without poetry, which Mallarmé considers ‘glorious and philosophical and imaginative’, [...] ‘there is just a beautiful discourse out of some mouth’.¹³

Mallarmé’s arrangement of words and blank space, ‘inscribed only at its points of illumination’, challenges the order of words and conventions of philosophical thought determined by logical progression, leading him to speculate on a new form of theoretical writing, the ‘critical-poem’.

To mobilise, all around an idea, the lights of the mind, at the proper distance, through sentences: or since, really these modes of syntax, even expanded, can be summed up by a very small number, each phrase forming a whole paragraph, gains by isolation a rare type more freely and clearly than if it is lost in a current of volubility. Thousands of very singular requirements appear with use, in this treatment of writing, which I gradually perceive, know doubt there’s a way, here, for a poet who doesn’t frequently practice free verse, to show, in the form of fragments both comprehensive and brief, eventually, with experience, the immediate rhythms of thought that order a prosody.¹⁴

Mallarmé’s critical-poem anticipates the form of *Un coup de Dés*. Gordon Millan claims that Mallarmé conducted a similar kind of experiment combining aspects of the prose-poem and free-verse to create a new kind of verse form, something akin to a symphonic structure.¹⁵ In other words, Mallarmé’s new genre unifies the

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 166.

14 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Mallarmé’s Bibliography’, *Divigations*, pp. 293–8, p. 297. In *Divigations*, Mallarmé outlines a ‘new form’, representing a transition from the prose-poem to a genre he calls the ‘critical poem’. (Ibid)

15 Gordon Millan, *Mallarmé: A Throw of the Dice The Life of Stéphane Mallarmé*, London: Secker and Warberg, 1994, p. 309.

traditional form of the alexandrine with free verse.¹⁶ Furthermore, his hybrid form demands a transdisciplinary approach to reading and writing. In the dialogues, the encounters with poets, painters and philosophers are deepened by past iterations and re-articulated in the present moment anticipating new iterations, encounters, and configurations – also in the present. My performative reading and emersion in the spaces as they are apprehended from one dialogue to another is akin to inhabiting *Un coup de Dés* or inhabiting ‘the form and pattern of a thought, placed for the first time in finite space. Here space itself truly spoke, dreamed, and gave birth to temporal forms.’¹⁷

As such this hybrid form address the dual concern of the research, the space of painting and poetry, which Lessing describes as simultaneous and sequential. Apprehended all at once or over time. *Un coup de Dés* performs a simultaneous and sequential movement invoking the discourses that differentiate between a spatial and temporal readings of painting and poetry. In *Un coup de Dés*, and in the form of this thesis, narrative and fragmented forms merge, spatial and temporal divisions dissolve, as do the traditional genres. In *Un coup de Dés* the measured metre of the alexandrine is at play in the fragmented form of free-verse. It is only fitting that the form and content of the thesis reflect Mallarmé’s constellation, embodying the form and pattern of thought as it unfolds in space.

16 Mallarmé’s synthesis is acknowledged by Mitsou Ronat, Jacques Roubaud, Quentin Meillassoux and many other Mallarméan scholars including myself, (see Chapters Three and Four).

17 Paul Valéry, *Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé*, translated by Malcolm Cowley and James R. Lawler, from *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry*, edited by Jackson Mathews, Vol 8, N J: Princeton University Press, 1972, ‘Concerning A Throw of the Dice: A Letter to the Editor of Les Marges’, pp. 307–16, 309. [Routledge and Kegan, London, 1972].

DIGITAL PORTFOLIO OF WORKS

A digital portfolio of original artwork to accompany the written element can be found alongside this thesis at Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive. The portfolio is divided into six folders which are conceptually linked to each double chapter. An introductory folder provides an outline of the contents, and eventual folder archiving dissemination of practice provides evidence of contribution to knowledge.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I have consulted all published versions of Stéphane Mallarmé's poem *Un coup de Dés j'amaï n'abolira le Hasard*. I note the typographic presentation of Mallarmé's title in full, and abbreviated form varies between publications. I use the title *Un coup de Dés j'amaï n'abolira le Hasard*, and the abbreviated form: *Un coup de Dés*. This preference is consistent with the *Lahure* proofs, published in 1897, housed in the Houghton Library, Harvard University. A facsimile published by Robert Greer Cohn in 1966 confirms the capitalisation of the words *Dés* [Dice] and *Hasard* [Chance] in the title page.¹⁸ I remain consistent in my use of this title and its abbreviated form, unless I am quoting directly from a different version of the poem. This distinction is important, a rationale to support this choice is included in A Note on the Editions.

A NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

¹⁸ Robert Greer Cohn, *Mallarmé's Masterwork: New Findings*, California, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966, p. 89. A digital folio of the Lahure proofs can be found at: [https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:434952194\\$1i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:434952194$1i) For a detailed account of the proofs see, Danielle Mihram, 'The Abortive Didot/ Volland Edition of Un Coup de Dés', *French Studies*, Vol 33, 1979, pp. 39–56, 40. See also 'A Note on the Editions', p. xx–xxv.

The English translation of *Un coup de Dés j’amais n’abolira le Hasard*, and other poems by Mallarmé unless otherwise stated are from: *Stéphane Mallarmé: Collected Poems and Other Verse*, with parallel French text, translated by E. H. and A. M. Blackmore, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [2006] pp. 139–8. A copy is included in Appendices, Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 415–26.

A NOTE ON THE EDITIONS

The only edition of *Un coup de Dés j’aurais n’abolira le Hasard* to be published before Mallarmé’s death in 1898 was printed in the English version of *Cosmopolis* 1897, in single page format, not as the poet had intended. In a letter to André Gide, Mallarmé describes the necessary compromises made in this first publication of the poem, describing it as ‘ill presented’; however, in the same letter he anticipates the publication of the poem as he conceived it:

Cosmopolis behaved gallantly and deliciously; but I could give them only half the work, and even that presented for them such a risk! The poem is being printed at this moment as I conceived it; as regards pagination, in which lies the whole effect. A certain word, in large characters, dominates on its own an entire white page and I believe I can be certain about the effect created. I will send the first acceptable proof to you in Florence.¹⁹

The *Cosmopolis* edition of *Un coup de Dés*, includes a preface and editorial note by Mallarmé, intended for this edition [only] as an explanatory note to the reader.²⁰

Mallarmé produced a manuscript and subsequent proofs for the attention of the publishing house of Firmin Didot, detailing his preferred layout, revisions, and

¹⁹ Letter to André Gide, May 1879, *Stéphane Mallarmé, Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, translated by Rosemary Lloyd, Chicago IL: Chicago University Press, 1988, pp. 222–3, 223.

²⁰ Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés, Cosmopolis: Cosmopolis Magazine*, Issue May, 1897, British, with preface and editor’s note by Mallarmé. For an English translation of the preface, and editorial note see: *Stéphane Mallarmé: Collected Poems and Other Verse*, translation by E.H. Blackmore and A.M. Blackmore, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 262–3.

instructions intended for publication by Ambroise Vollard, and in double page format. This version was never produced; the manuscript and several proofs remain. The exact total number of sets of proofs (tentative and definitive) which were produced by Didot and corrected by Mallarmé during that year remains unknown.²¹ Gordon Millan proposes sixteen sets of proofs are known to exist; provided by the printers Firmin-Didot, including four completed lithographs by Odilon Redon.²² The proofs detail Mallarmé's revisions, made between 1897 and 1898 prior to his death in the same year – proofs he promised to send to Gide in Florence.²³

In 1914 *Un coup de Dés* was published in Paris by Gallimard's Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF), under the direction of Mallarmé's son-in-law, Dr Edmund Bonnoit, based on this manuscript, and printed by the Imprimerie Sainte Catherine, Quai St Pierre in Bruges. This version does not conform to the measurements and spatial layout desired by Mallarmé, evidence to support this claim can be found in Chapter Five of this thesis. Paul Valéry's vivid first-hand account of the 'magnificent proofs of the big edition set in type by 'Lahure' brings Mallarmé's concept to life.

I saw Stéphane Mallarmé for the last time on July 14th, 1998, at Valvins. When luncheon was over, he took me to his "work-room," which was four paces long and two paces wide. The window looked out at the Seine and the forest through the foliage gashed with sunlight, and the last tremors of the sparkling river were faintly echoed on the walls. Mallarmé was preoccupied with the final details of the construction of his last poem, *Un coup de Dés*. The inventor was considering and adding pencil touches to

21 Op. cit., Danielle Mihram, 'The Abortive Didot/ Vollard Edition of *Un Coup de Dés*', p. 40.

22 Op. cit., Gordon Millan, *Mallarmé: A Throw of the Dice The Life of Stéphane Mallarmé*, p. 313.

23 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to André Gide, May 1897, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, p 223.

the completely novel machine that Lahure's printing establishment had agreed to set up for him.²⁴

To avoid confusion, I make a distinction between the 'Lahure' proofs which refer to the printers responsible for typesetting Mallarmé's text and Maison Didot who were responsible for the execution of the proofs, referred to by Robert Greer Cohn as the 'Lahure' proofs. Cohn proposes a close inspection of the 'Lahure' proofs to support the thesis of a large format version exceeding the dimensions of the NRF edition of *Un Coup de Dés*. Cohn rightfully notes:

The poet's intentions could only be shown in print since "the type" is an integral part of the enterprise; in a sense he composed his poem on these sheets. Moreover, the text is modified in a few places, with indications in the poet's handwriting.²⁵

The British Typographer Neil Crawford's exacting typographic translation produced from a collation of the 'Lahure' proofs corrected by Mallarmé and housed in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, makes him critical of the dimensions of the NRF edition.²⁶

24 Op. cit., Valéry, *Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé*, 'Last visit to Mallarmé', *Leonardo Poe Mallarmé*, pp. 325–8, 326. Mallarmé's 'working room', is approximate to twelve by six feet if one accepts the measure of one pace being equal to three feet.

25 Op. cit., Robert Greer Cohn, *Mallarmé's Masterwork: New Findings*, p. 78. For a detailed account of these proofs see: Danielle Mihram, Op. cit., 'The Abortive Didot/ Volland Edition of *Un Coup de Dés*', pp. 39–56.

26 Crawford's typographic translation of *Un coup de Dés*, is accompanied by four aquatints by the artist Ian Tyson (Tetrad Edition, Tetrad Press, 1985, included in Victoria and Albert Museum, special collections). A digital folio of the Lahure proofs is available on request at Harvard University's special collections (Op. cit.)

Presumably for commercial reasons, the intended format of the Vollard edition was scaled down, not quite preserving the original proportions: however, the decision to substitute the Didot fonts with a version of Colson was unfortunate. Even more unfortunate for Mallarmé's reputation is the fact that when the *Un coup de Dés* is cited in texts dealing with the book as art object/medium or as precursor of concrete poetry, it is this edition which is most often reproduced.²⁷

Crawford's comments are supported by a close inspection of the facsimile of the proofs housed in the Houghton Library, Harvard, and reproduced by Cohn. Cohn's publication of a facsimile of the 'Lahure proofs in 1966 indicate dimensions of 11 ½ x 15 inches (single page) 23 x 15 inches (double), or 29.2 x 38.1cm (single) 58.4 x 38.1 (double).²⁸

According to Mitsou Ronat, Cohn's publication of the large format 'Lahure' proofs convinced her to produce the first large double page version of *Un coup de Dés*, published by the *Groupe d'Atelier*, in collaboration with artist and typographer Tibor Papp, 1980.²⁹

27 Neil Crawford cites Joanna Drucker as example, (Interview with Crawford, 2016. See also, Drucker, *The Visible World: Experimental Typography and Modern Art 1909 – 1923*, Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1994, p. 54). I share Crawford's criticism of the NRF edition, Marcel Broodthaers and Michalis Pichler are two of a growing number of artists appropriating the NRF edition of *Un coup de Dés*. I believe that an accurate grasp of Mallarmé spatial poetics is compromised, since the dimensions of the NRF edition are not as Mallarmé had wished. While subsequent reprints of the NRF edition reflect 'the textual changes indicated by the Lahure proofs', the dimensions remain problematic, 'the edition does not follow strictly the alignments (words, lines, margins) as scrupulously as Mallarmé demanded' (Virginia Charité, *The Dynamics of Space: Mallarmé's Un Coup De Dés Jamais N'abolira Le Hazard*, Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1987, p. 46). See also Op, cit., Paul Valéry, 'Concerning A Throw of the Dice: A Letter to the Editor of Les Marges', pp. 307–16.

28 Op. cit., Cohn, *Mallarmé's Masterwork: New Findings*, p. 80. For a comparative study of the dimensions of published versions of *Un coup de Dés* see, Appendices, Appendix D: List of Editions of *Un coup De Dés*, p. 427–430).

29 Ronat writes 'the urgency for a new edition seemed incontestable' (Op. cit., Ronat, 'This Spontaneous and Magic Architecture', p. 1). In 1980 Mitsou Ronat's edition of *Un Coup*

Two other large format versions of the poem in French have been published since Ronat's edition. Michel Pierson's version published by Ptyx, 2004, is almost identical in layout to Ronat and Papp's edition, also unbound with no separate cover (dimensions 38 x 56cm). The Pierson & Ptyx version is distinguished by its use of rare Didot characters originally intended for the proposed Vollard edition, restored for the Pierson edition.³⁰ Ypsilon Éditeur published four volumes: the first is *Un coup de Dés* complete with reproductions of Redon's lithographs, originally intended for the unpublished Vollard edition, Ypsilon Éditeur's Edition, 2007 (dimensions 38 x 56cm).³¹ A second volume represents the first Arabic translation by the Moroccan poet Mohammed Bennis. A third volume *Relativement au poème – Un coup de dès jamais n'abolira le hasard* – composed in three parts: *Journal d'une traduction* by Mohammed Bennis; *Brève histoire de l'édition Vollard du Dé* by Isabella Checcaglini; *Divagation* by Bernard Noël. The fourth volume comprises an Arabic translation of volume three. The only other large format edition is a

de Dés was published by the Groupe d'Atelier, in collaboration with artist and typographer Tibor Papp. This version is based on Ronat's revisions of the *Cosmopolis* publication and her reading of annotated proofs and the manuscript. This large double-page format comprising twelve unbound pages is, according to Charité, 'the best edition to date, preserving almost to the letter Mallarmé's sense of space' (Op. cit., Charité, *Dynamics of Space*, p. 47). This view is shared by Dee Reynolds: 'it was not until the edition by Ronat and Papp in 1980, that it appeared in an authentic form, with full-size pages, correct typeface sizes and proper alignment between the sides of the double page'. (Op. cit., Reynolds, *Symbolist Aesthetics and Early Abstract Art*, p. 104). More recently, in Anna Sigrídur Arnar's comprehensive and scrupulous study of Mallarmé's contribution to the development of the artist book Arnar singles out Mitsou Ronat and Tibor Papp's edition of *Un coup de Dés* for respecting Mallarmé's wishes, which she notes is 'composed of six unbound folio leaves, each nestled within the other without a separate cover' (Anna Sigrídur Arnar, *The Book As Instrument: Stéphane Mallarmé, The Artist's Book, and the Transformation of Print culture*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011, p. 236). For a full account of the large format editions of *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendices, Appendix D: List of Editions of *Un coup De Dés*, p. 427).

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

typographic translation of *Un coup de Dés* by British Typographer Neil Crawford, accompanied by four aquatints by artist, Ian Tyson – Tetrad Edition, Tetrad Press, 1985 (28 pages, 4 leaves of plates, 38cm x 28.5cm, single page or 38cm x 57cm double page).

Based on these findings and my reading of *Un coup de Dés*, it is my opinion that the large double page format achieved by Mitsou Ronat, Michel Pierson and Ptyx, and more recently Ypsilon Éditeur, best represents Mallarmé's idea. I believe, like Ronat, that the integrity of the poem, its spatial unity can only be determined by an accurate grasp of its spatial construction and typographical arrangement.

EPIGRAPH



Fig. 0.1

Now at the end of writing, I begin by recalling a dream that took place in the first days of this project. I found myself clinging to a ship's mast in a storm at sea. At my side, the figure of my father, now an old man raged against the storm – one hand bound to the mast, the other reaching out to his sons. The ship rolled, then pitched into the crest of a wave. In an act of defiance, the old man dragged each son from the storm and strapped them to the mast. Then, he turned to me – I let go of the mast. Without speaking my father acknowledged my gesture, as if it were preordained; knowing that I, like the Master of the ship in Mallarmé's poem would be cast into the sea until silence enveloped me.

INTRODUCTION



Fig. 0. 2

In the photograph above, books and other texts have been placed on a desk – word and image drawn together for the purpose of writing. I am in this room writing as you look at the photograph, those are my glasses. I lean towards the desk taking hold of the glasses and glance to the right of the window to a drawing of the French Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé. The drawing is a copy of a photograph of Mallarmé by Paul Nadar taken in 1896, it is framed by yellowing

paper, the inside of a discarded book, and this is placed behind glass inside a wooden frame.³²

My gaze returns to the desk, placed in the foreground at the centre of photograph and thesis is a copy of an original draft manuscript of Stéphane Mallarmé's poem *Un coup de Dés jamais n'abolira le Hasard*, composed in 1897, one year before the poet's death.³³ Concealed in piles of unbound pages to the right of the manuscript are copies of versions of *Un coup de Dés*, categorized as editions, translations, and appropriations. Stacked alongside these are the translated works of Mallarmé.

I turn my attention to the computer screen – to another frame. My eye is drawn to the image, to the space that I occupy. I am inside and outside the image – inside and outside the frame. I have unwittingly constructed and deconstructed the space. I wonder about the authenticity of this image – I wonder about the reality of this space. My fingers gesture towards the keys of the laptop, to the touch pad, as I zoom in, the image before me stretches in size. I regard the frame with [in] the frame – I wonder how this might be read as I search for the meaning in the image, I experience its disappearance in its reflection.

This effect, the *Droste* effect may be challenged through digital technology – since the image with (in) the image may be expanded to exceed the limits of the original frame, granted the image will become degraded through a process of pixilation,

32 Original Gelatin silver print photograph of Mallarmé by Paul Nadar, housed in The J. Paul Getty Museum collection.

33 See, Note on the Editions, p. xx – xxv.

its meaning destabilised, forcing the viewer to return to the 'original' to contemplate the whole.³⁴

I consider the French term '*mise en abîme*' and its English translation, 'to throw into the abyss'.³⁵ I am intrigued by the term and search for its origin. I find it in medieval heraldry, to place in the abyss is literally to place a smaller version of the shield at the centre of the original. My interest does not lie in medieval heraldry, but in the concept of '*mise en abîme*' and how it has come to be used in literary theory.³⁶ Appropriated by André Gide to describe a self-reflexive practice embedded in works of art and literature echoing the self-reflexivity of Modernist aesthetics. Gide's use of the term establishes an essential relation between content and form, and, of the part to the whole, and extends beyond the frame to other texts implicated in the 'original' text.

In a work of art, I rather like to find transposed, on the scale of the characters, the very subject of that work. Nothing throws clearer light upon it or more surely establishes the proportions to the whole. Thus, in

³⁴ *Droste* effect, see (Appendix G: Glossary of Terms, p. 506).

³⁵ *Mise en abîme*, see (Appendix G: Glossary of Terms, p. 506).

³⁶ The term *mise en abîme* [*mise-en-abyme*] is as expansive as the concept implied in its form. Operating beyond the limits of its original reference, the term suggests infinite play in its recursive form and appeal as a metaphorical device to literary theory and to the visual arts. Here it serves to differentiate between the terms of appropriation particular to modern and postmodern aesthetics. The term self-reflexive practice may be understood in relation to the infinite play of signification suggested in the postmodern condition.

certain paintings of Membling or Quentin Metys, a small convex dark mirror reflects the interior of the room in which the scene of the painting is taking place. Likewise, Velásquez painting of *Las Meniñas* (but somewhat differently). Finally, in literature in the play scene in Hamlet.³⁷

In literary theory the idea of *mise en abîme* can be linked to the term ‘metalanguage’, a language about language, words about words, a literature of self-reference leading to circularity and paradox, and back to I. In *Picture Theory* W. J. T. Mitchell uses the term ‘metapicture’ to describe a ‘picture about a picture’.³⁸ Central to his thesis is the idea that a meta-picture is not particular to art history, but to the theoretical field of representation, referring to this as ‘the hybrid discipline of “iconology”’.³⁹ Mitchell borrows the term ‘iconology’ from

37 André Gide, *The Journals of André Gide*, Volume I: 1889 –1913, translated by Justin O’Brien, Secker, and Warburg, 1948, ‘1893’, pp. 23–37, 29–30.

38 W. J. T. Mitchell, ‘Picture Theory: Metapictures’ in *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, Metapictures, Chicago IL: Chicago University 1994, Chapter 1:2, pp. 35–83, 35. More recently Peter Geimer calls for ‘a historic and systemic survey of the term reflexivity – or also often self-reflexivity’. Geimer suggests, that beyond work that ‘binds the theme of painterly self-referentiality or meta-painting to concrete, historical situations’ the terms ‘reflexivity/self-reflexivity’ have become, ‘a type of discursive wild card, an aesthetic seal of quality, which can be attributed to the works of all eras and genres. According to this, ‘complex and reflective pictures are those that not only show something but also thematise the conditions of this showing at the same time’. (Peter Geimer, ‘Response to Isabelle Graw’, *Thinking Through Painting: Reflexivity and Agency Beyond The Canvas*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012, pp. 39–42, 42). Geimer’s scrutiny of the terms ‘reflexivity, and self-relexivity’ leads predictably to the question of agency, ‘who or what is the subject or actor of this reflexivity? Is it the artist who materialises his/her thoughts and actions, so to speak, and stores them in his/her work? Or is it the work “itself”? Can paintings, sculpture, installations “think”? (Ibid., p. 41).

39 Op. cit., Mitchell, ‘Picture Theory: Metapictures’, p. 82.

Erwin Panofsky, to refer to ‘the historical study of the logic, conventions, grammar, and poetics of imagery’.⁴⁰ Mitchell concludes:

The metapicture is not a subgenre within the fine arts but a fundamental potentiality inherent in pictorial representation as such: it is the place where the pictures reveal and “know” themselves, where they reflect on the intersections of visibility, language, and similitude, where they engage in speculation and theorising on their own nature and history.⁴¹

In ‘The Meta as an Aesthetic Category’, Bruno Trentini questions Mitchell’s recourse to ‘the ordinary language view of pictures’, seeing it as a failed attempt to bypass the logical field in order to reveal that a picture is about something, that it has meaning. Trentini proposes meta as an aesthetic category, the prefix ‘meta’ meaning ‘after’, as well as ‘beyond’, ‘with’ or ‘about’, which he states, ‘is a quality, not particular to the work but rather, the reflexivity supposed to be in the work is actually the reflexivity of the cognition of spectators projected in the work’.⁴²

40 W. J. T. Mitchell, *The Language of Images*, edited by W. J. T. Mitchell, Chicago, IL: Chicago University, 1980, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1–8, 2. In *Iconology*, Mitchell asks, what are images? And how do they differ from words? And why it matters to even raise these questions; see Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, IL: Chicago University, 1990[1986] ‘Introduction’, p. 1.

41 Op. Cit., Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, p. 82.

42 Bruno Trentini, ‘The Meta as an Aesthetic Category’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, vol. 6, 2014, p. 4.

Trentini likens this to Kant's definition of the sublime, he states that 'the structure "meta" lies in the subject, not in the picture. The experience of the metapicture should actually be named as the meta-experience of the picture.'⁴³ In drawing attention to these two accounts of metapicture I propose a hybrid definition of the term, one in which Trentini's 'meta quality' can be located both in the picture as an intentional organising structure of symbolic signs, and as an aesthetic experience activated in the gap between the reader and the text, as a site of negotiation, one that leads to an experience described by Trentini as 'meta cognitive embodied experience'.

This distinction gestures to the 'meta quality' of the 'works' scrutinised in this thesis; most importantly, how these works activate the space and implicate the viewer. I draw parallels with Mitchell's desire to open a critical space that investigates not only the relation of poetry to painting, but the relation between 'pictures and discourse understood, among other things, as a relation of power'.⁴⁴

What does it mean to engage with Mallarmé now? Why place *Un coup de Dés* at the heart of this research? To address this question, I consider my relation to art production in the present. I begin by examining modes of temporal operation in modernity and post-modernity, leading me to consider what it means to be contemporary.

⁴³ Ibid., Trentini, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Op. cit., Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, p. 6.

In his essay 'Comrades of Time', Boris Groys equates contemporary with 'doubt, hesitation, uncertainty, indecision – by the need for a prolonged reflection, for a delay'.⁴⁵ Groys regards the condition of uncertainty as a condition of the time, which he links to the loss of a historical perspective, prompting a reconsideration of the modernist project. For Groys this state of limbo typifies a present that has lost faith in a future, justifying a reconsideration of the spectator's relation to the art object and its production leading to a distinction between 'time-based art' and 'art-based time'.⁴⁶ The former includes traditional art works such as painting and sculpture, conceived with the understanding that they will be exhibited in a gallery space and seen over time, and the latter 'documents time that is in danger of being lost as a result of its unproductive character', leading to a change in arts relation to time, and an investment in work that documents a continuous present.⁴⁷

Groy's definition of contemporary, expressed as doubt and embodied as a hesitation, suggests a loss in the transition from past to present to future. This contrasts with 'classical modernity's belief in the ability of the future to realise the promises of the past and the present – even after the death of God, even after the loss of faith in the immortality of the soul'.⁴⁸

45 Boris Groys, 'Comrades of Time', e-flux journal, no 11 (December 2009) www.e-flux.com

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

Mallarmé equates the contemporary era with a revolution brought on by literature's 'exquisite and fundamental crisis', leading to a state of uncertainty.⁴⁹

I consider the contemporary era to be a kind of interregnum for the poet who has nothing to do with it: it is too fallen or too full of preparatory effervescence for him to do anything except keep working, with mystery so that later, or never or from time to time sending the living his calling card – some stanza or sonnet – so as not to be stoned by them, if they knew that he suspected that they didn't exist.⁵⁰

In this context the term *interregnum* signals a break with tradition, which Mallarmé compares with the second French Revolution, bringing about the end of lyrical poetry and the birth of a new form of 'free verse'.⁵¹ Mallarmé, like Groys, equates the contemporary era with doubt: in *Un coup de Dés* the master of Mallarmé's shipwreck hesitates on the brink of the abyss. In an act of pure suspension, he holds the dice in his clenched fist, and, like Hamlet, his hesitation marks the space between being and not being.⁵² Unlike Groys's 'eternal present',

49 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Crisis of Verse', *Divigations*, p. 202.

50 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Autobiography', *Divigations*, p. 4.

51 Interregnum from Latin, from inter-between reigns or during suspension of normal government: from Latin, 'inter-between' + regnum 'reign' (*OED*)

52 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, 419).

Mallarmé's poem reflects an era in transition, and the dilemma of the master/author in navigating a new space for poetry.

I remain convinced that on grand occasions, poets will obey solemn tradition, of which the preponderance comes from classical genius: it's just that, when there's no reason, because of a sentimental breeze or for a story, to disturb those venerable echoes, a poet will think carefully before doing so. Each soul is a melody that needs to be renewed and for that, each becomes his own flute or viola.⁵³

In the interregnum Mallarmé exploits the themes and dramas of the past, re-writing the metaphor of the shipwreck favoured by the Romantic poets. Jacques Rancière writes, 'Mallarmé did what poets usually do – at least those who know what to do with old moons of inspiration: he reworked the poems of his elders in his own way.'⁵⁴ Mallarmé's polysemic masterpiece, presented as a constellation of seven hundred and seven words is cast across twelve double pages, revealing a new form of spatial poetics. *Un coup de Dés* defies a traditional historical trajectory, instead performing a multiplicity of times reflected in the form and

53 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Crisis of Verse', *Divigations*, p. 205.

54 Op. cit., Rancière, *Mallarmé The Politics of the Siren*, p. 3.

content of the poem, and its potential to generate new forms with each new encounter.

Mallarmé could be a contemporary of Nicholas Bourriaud, reflecting the idea of the ‘Radicant artist’: concerned with the interactive potentialities of various material media, virtual communicative networks, and open-ended modes of tangible connectivity.⁵⁵ Bourriaud’s ‘radicant’ artist operates across time and space, in a global context,

In which nothing disappears anymore but everything accumulates under the effect of a frenetic archiving [...] in which styles are no longer markers but ephemeral displacements that take place indiscriminately in time and space.⁵⁶

Mallarmé’s constellation may be read through David Joselit’s conception of painting as a network, with its potential to link digital worlds to ‘ancient traditions of stargazing’. Joselit compares the inconceivable task of visualising networks in a digital age to a ‘contemporary sublime’, leading him to speculate on how art

⁵⁵ The ‘radicant’ artist is encountered in ‘Notes on Radicantity’, *New Art International* (May 1989). According to Bourriaud ‘Radicant artists invent pathways among signs. They are semionauts who set forms in motion, using them to generate journeys by which they elaborate themselves as subjects even as the corpus of their work takes shape.’ Nicholas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009, p. 53.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Bourriaud, ‘The Journey-Form (3): Temporal Bifurcations’, pp. 122—31.

objects operate in a global network.⁵⁷ Joselit appropriates the term ‘transitive’ to capture the status of objects within networks—which are defined by their circulation from place to place and their subsequent translation into new contexts.⁵⁸ Transitive painting ‘invents forms and structures whose purpose is to demonstrate that once an object enters a network, it can never be fully stilled’.⁵⁹

Constellation, networks, connectivity, and multiplicity run as threads through these definitions of the contemporary. Connections and disconnections underpin Rancière’s account of an ‘aesthetic mode of art’ which questions Clement Greenberg and Theodor W. Adorno’s understanding of the term ‘rupture’ as the defining act supporting an autonomous view of modernism. Greenberg’s aesthetics of autonomy supports a belief in the formal properties of the medium in determining the purity of the artwork. He equates tradition and its continuity with the conventions of the medium. He writes:

The purely plastic or abstract qualities of the artwork are the only ones that count [...] the pristine flatness of the stretched canvas constantly

57 David Joselit, ‘Painting Beside Itself’, *October* 130, 2009, pp. 125–34, p. 128.

58 Ibid., p. 128. ‘Transitive practices’ in Joselit’s account offer a way out of the ‘reification trap’, and subsequent commodification of artwork, and permanent arrest within a network. (Ibid., p. 132).

59 Ibid. The artists who, in Joselit’s terms, ‘visualise the transitive passage of action from a painting out into a social network (or body) and from this network back into a painting’, include Jutta Koether’s *Hot Rod* (after Poussin) 2009, Stephen Prina’s *Exquisite Corpse*, the complete paintings of Manet, Wade Guyton’s digital monochromatic paintings, R. H. Quaytman’s *Chapter paintings*, and Amy Sillman, *From One O to the Other*.

struggles to overcome every other element [...] Purity in art is in the acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art.⁶⁰

Rancière's account of an aesthetic experience draws on the paradoxical relation between the words 'apart' and 'together', words appropriated from Mallarmé's prose-poem *The White Waterlily*, which Rancière links to the relation of the present to the future.⁶¹ Rancière questions Greenberg and Adorno's account of autonomy as a 'way of separating art radically from politics to preserve its political potential'. Rancière does not support the idea of a break between modernism and post-modernism; instead, he questions the terms defining such a view and arrives at what he considers to be an 'aesthetic revolution'. Mallarmé stands as exemplar in this 'aesthetic revolution, in an extension to infinity to the realm of language, of poetry'.⁶² Rancière describes Mallarmé as a poet who conceives of poetry as the purest possible expression of language and as caught up in the rituals of private, collective, and industrial life [...] All part of the celebration of the ordinary which comes to replace 'the forlorn ceremonies of throne and religion.'⁶³

60 Clement Greenberg, *Towards a Newer Laocoon*, VA, The American Avant-Garde, p. 566.

61 Rancière, 'Jacques Rancière and The (Re) distribution of the Sensible: Five Lessons in Artistic Research, cited in *Art and Research A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, Vol 2. No.1, Summer, 2008, p. 3. See Mallarmé, 'Apart we are together', (Mallarmé, 'The White Waterlily', *Divigations*, 33–6, p. 35).

62 Op. cit., Rancière, 'Jacques Rancière and The (Re) distribution of the Sensible, p. 193

63 Op. cit., Rancière, 'Politics of Aesthetics', p. 193.

Rancière's aesthetic is based on the principle that 'everything is material for art', leading to a re-evaluation of content and form, and the role of autonomy in the aesthetics of Greenberg and Adorno which Rancière claims reinforces traditional hierarchies. In this context Mallarmé's critical poem cannot be separated from Rancière's re-evaluation of poetry as an aestheticized philosophy. *Un coup de Dés* embodies, presents, and enacts an account of the contemporary that bridges historical boundaries defined by the terms, 'modernism', 'post-modernism', and 'altermodern'. The poem reflects many of the central tenants of modernism, including an experimental approach born of crisis, yet, could be placed in the context of a postmodern critique or read through a contemporary lens, echoing Bourriaud's 'radicant' artist, taking the journey as 'a switching form, a generator of connections between time and space'.⁶⁴

The term 'expanded field of painting' situates the work in a broader art historical context, taking Krauss's essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' as a focal point. Krauss's essay is read in relation to key theoretical texts relating to comparisons between poetry and painting, including: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, Greenberg's *Towards a Newer Laocoon*, Michael Fried's *Art and Objecthood*, and W. J. T. Mitchell's 'The Politics of Genre: Space and Time in Lessing's Laocoon'.⁶⁵

64 Op. cit., Bourriaud, 'The Journey-Form (3): Temporal Bifurcations', *The Radicant*, 122–3.

65 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, (1766), translation, Edward Allen McCormack, New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1984 [Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, translated by

Krauss defines sculpture as ‘a historically bounded category and not a universal one’.⁶⁶ The internal logic of sculpture as inseparable from the logic of the monument, and the monument inseparable from the place of its intended function, and symbolic gesture as a commemorative representation. Krauss traces the fading monument to the turn of the nineteenth century, characterising Rodin’s *Gates of Hell*, and his statue of *Balzac* as failures, works that never reached the place of their intended function. Such transitional works in Krauss’s reading signal the emergence of a space qualified by its ‘negative condition’, which she describes as ‘a kind of sitlessness, or homelessness, an absolute loss of place’.⁶⁷ For Krauss, the moment of rupture defines modernism’s terms: the monument becomes an abstraction, and its base or plinth is absorbed into itself to reflect the materials and the process of its construction. Sculpture’s status at this juncture is described by Krauss as ‘nomadic’. ‘In being a negative condition of the monument, modernist sculpture had a kind of idealist space to explore, a domain cut off from the project of temporal and spatial representation.’⁶⁸

Ellen Frothingham, Boston: Robert Brothers, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887]. Greenberg (Op. cit.) Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood, Essays and Reviews*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998). W. J. T. Mitchell, ‘The Politics of Genre: Space and Time in Lessing’s Laocoon’, *Representations*, No 6, (Spring, 1984), pp. 98–115.

66 Rosalind Krauss, ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Seattle: Bay Press, 1983, pp. 31–42, p. 32. [Originally published in *October*, Vol. 8. Spring, 1979, 30-44].

67 Ibid., p. 33.

68 Ibid., p. 34.

I link Krauss's 'negative condition of the monument', and emergence of an ideal space for sculpture to Mallarmé's crisis of verse, leading to a re-evaluation of the space of literature. Mallarmé, whose circle included Rodin, was aware of the fate of Rodin's monument to Balzac; however, it is to another monument that I turn.⁶⁹ Mallarmé attributes literature's 'exquisite and fundamental crisis' to the death of Hugo, and the symbolic form of his monument testifying simultaneously to the absence and presence of the idea embodied in the word literature. In this extraordinary text, which Mallarmé refers to as a 'critical poem', he lays out his theoretical framework.

A French reader his, habits interrupted by the death of Victor Hugo, cannot fail to be disconcerted. Hugo, in his mysterious task, brought all prose-philosophy, eloquence, history-down to verse, and since he was verse personified, he confiscated, from whoever tried to think, or discourse, or narrate, almost the right to speak. A moment in the desert, surrounded by silence: in a crypt, the divinity of the majestic unconscious idea-that is, that the form we call verse as soon as diction calls attention to itself, rhyme as soon as there is style. Verse, I think, respectfully waited until the giant who identified it with his tenacious and firm blacksmith's hand came to be missing, in order to break. All of language, measured by meter, recovering therein its vitality, escapes, broken down into

⁶⁹ Mallarmé berates The Society of Men of Letters who refused to accept Rodin's first version of Balzac. Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Méry Laurant, 14 May. 1898, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, p. 226.

thousands of simple elements: and I add not without similarity to the multiplicity of notes in an orchestral score, but this one remains verbal.⁷⁰

This research establishes a relation between Mallarmé's crisis of verse, and the loss of constraint imposed by metre in traditional French poetry, and Krauss's account of the loss of place and purpose of the monument. Krauss's account of modernist sculpture is defined by its negative condition, as is her account of the sculptural turn that took place in the nineteen sixties, leading to the postmodern project. Krauss sites Robert Morris's *Untitled Mirrored Boxes* (1965) as the purest example of sculpture that would reflect its own absence, its own terms of exclusion.⁷¹ Morris's boxes, placed in the landscape, reflect the landscape as visually continuous with the work, but not part of it. Krauss considers the 'expanded field' to be characteristic of postmodernism, having two features, 'one of these concerns the practices of individual artists: the other had to do with the question of medium'. She uses the term 'post-medium condition' to oppose Greenberg's 'medium specificity', which holds that 'the common effort in each of the arts to expand the expressive resources of the medium', thus accentuating their differences since, pure poetry strives for infinite suggestion and pure plastic art for the minimum.⁷²

70 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Crisis of Verse', *Divigations*, p. 202.

71 Op. cit., Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', p. 38.

72 Op. cit., Clement Greenberg, 'Towards a Newer Laocoon', p. 566.

Krauss considers the expanded field of sculpture a logical progression of modernist sculpture, beginning with a re-evaluation of the space once occupied by the monument, and subsequent reflection on the materials and processes of its construction leading to 'an ideal space'. Once this course had exhausted its potential, the terms of its presence came under scrutiny, and sculpture was defined by its difference, 'not landscape, not architecture'.⁷³ In this expanded view anything could be included, 'Thus the field provides for both extended but finite set of related positions for a given artist to occupy and explore, and for an organisation of work that is not dictated by the conditions of a particular medium.'⁷⁴

To conclude, Krauss proposes a logical transferal of her ideas to painting, and its expansion around a different set of terms – 'uniqueness and reproducibility'. Her essay locates two paradigm shifts in the history of art, junctures where the principal strands of this research intersect and transgress boundaries to explore the spatial and temporal relation of painting and literature, understood as 'apart we are together'.⁷⁵

73 Op. cit., p. 37. The work of Robert Morris, Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, Richard Serra, Walter De Maria, Robert Erwin, Sol Le Witt, and Bruce Nauman between the years of 1968–70, in Krauss's estimation could 'no longer be described as modernist'. (Ibid., p. 41). Krauss allies this 'historical rupture' to postmodernism (Ibid).

74 Ibid., p. 42.

75 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'The White Waterlily', *Divagations*, 33–6, p. 35.

The aim and objective of the research was to perform a re-evaluation of the terms of painting in the 'expanded-field', considering contemporary discourses seeking to re-define paintings presence in an unlimited field. David Joselit's networked-painting establishes painting as a transitive form. Isabelle Graw's claim that painting contains a latent residual-specificity embedded in a medium-unspecific concept of painting, acting as a guarantor of the presence of the artist. It is this presence, Graw concludes that leads to the assumption that painting is a thinking form, 'omnipresent', and at 'work in other art forms'.⁷⁶

This research re-imagines the space of painting through the space of poetry, through a network of reciprocal relations manifest in Stéphane Mallarmé's poem *Un coup de Dés*. Through a close reading of *Throw of the Dice*, I suggest a new critical space for painting demonstrated in Mallarmé's spatialised form. The tropes of poetry and painting come under scrutiny as the tension that exists between gesture *in* painting and *of* writing are made visible. Brush stroke as form and act, and word as material object – are proposed as an integrated structural arrangement in space, as both thought and physical occupation. This is reflected in my painting practice, which challenges the conventions of 'medium specificity', in which method and process from one discipline are applied to another to produce work that operates across and beyond the space of poetry and painting.

⁷⁶ Op. cit., Graw, 'The Value of Painting: Notes on Unspecificity, Indexicality, and Highly Valuable Quasi-Persons' *Thinking Through Painting: Reflexivity and Agency Beyond The Canvas*, pp. 45–57, 45).

In the process performing a parallel critique of the possibilities of a transdisciplinary approach to research that questions the limits of disciplinarity.

I propose that gesture and language are joined, one articulating the other: The word gesture implies a movement towards something – an act of expression, a form of communion. Every gesture, albeit symbolic or traced by the hand that seeks to grasp its object or inscribe the object's form, whether, mute, spoken, written, drawn, painted, or modelled, expresses the moment of transformation, when the formless becomes form. In this sense, thought seeks the most desirable form of expression to realise the idea – the idea becomes embodied in the form.

My reading of *Un coup de Dés* operates in an expanded field, where the space of walking, reading, writing, and painting, are subject to multiple approaches including a re-evaluation of Albertian and Cartesian perspectival models dominated by the 'eye', by a fixed point of view. At the same time, the limitations of this monocular view, the blind spots are exposed through metaphoric transformations revealing transdisciplinary spaces undermining a fixed point of view. Everything that lies outside the 'field of vision'; outside the frame of the page or the painting, becomes implicated. In Chapters Seven and Eight this transgression reaches a climax through a parallel reading Manet's *Olympia*, and Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*, in this sense, 'what is at stake is the discovery of a politics of vision'.⁷⁷ One than not only transgresses the boundaries of the

⁷⁷ Bryson, Norman, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', *Vision and Visuality*, ed. by Hal Foster, Seattle, WA: Dia Art Foundation, 1988, pp. 87–113, 107.

perceptual field of vision, but of writing, and by association the spoken word – sound.

The philosophical implication of reading these respective spaces returns the reader to the question of a Western philosophical tradition built on oppositions. In Chapter's One and Two I layout the philosophical arguments and theoretical concepts that run as threads throughout the project. At the same time, I establish the place where encounters between poet, painter, and philosophers take place – the meeting place I call Monument to I.

The central philosophical thread opens with Derrida's challenge to Plato's order – for Derrida, 'Platonism' and 'anti-Platonism' stands in for the whole history of Western Philosophy – a tradition which equates 'being' with 'presence'. Derrida's unravelling of the metaphysics of presence; a paradigm structured on a belief in 'being-as-presence'; that 'presence' implies truth – a belief that places the spoken word over the written word by virtue of the presence of the speaker in time and space.⁷⁸ In her critique of Derrida and indeed the 'logocentric' philosophical tradition Adriana Cavarero equates Plato's metaphysics of presence with the 'devocalization of Logos', a system which she believes 'relegates the voice to the status of those things that philosophy deems unworthy of attention'.⁷⁹ For

⁷⁸ See, Derrida, *Jacques Derrida: Dissemination*, Chicago IL: Chicago University Press, 1991, [La Dissémination, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972]

⁷⁹ Adriana Cavarero, 'The Voice of the Soul' in *For More Than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, translated by Paul A. Kottman, California, CA: Stanford

Cavarero, the singular, embodied uniqueness of the speaker's voice, becomes politicized through an act of communion; the reciprocal relation of one voice to another is raised and amplified through vocal exchange. This exchange leads to a reconsideration of the term 'logos', which Cavarero describes as a 'synonym for what we call "language," the term oscillates between "discourse" and "reason" [Levinas], between the realm of speech and the realm of thought. It comprehends and confuses them both.'⁸⁰ Cavarero also differentiates between the Muse, whose voice is only audible to the poet, and the Siren's 'pure vocal sonority, a phonic modulation without words', and audible to all.⁸¹ Cavarero's differentiation anticipates in my reading the emergence of the siren's voice at the centre of *Un coup de Dés*, and Manet's muse, Victorine Meuret's emergence as painter in Manet's *Olympia* in Chapter's Seven and Eight. My reading differentiates between the symbolic order of tradition, and a new symbolic order operating across gender and genre, revealing the play of oppositions. In other words, the play of multiple voices, which become audible to all in Mallarmé's potent and democratic gesture.

At the risk of complicating this weave further, W. J. T. Mitchell's reading of Lessing's 'laws of genre, namely, the laws of gender', reveal a list of 'Gender – Genre' oppositions underpinning Lessing's thesis. Painting is equated with space, natural signs, a narrow sphere, imitation, body, external, silent, beauty, eye, and

University Press, 2005, pp. 42–6, 42, [*A più voci: Per una filosofia dell'espressione vocale*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 2003]

⁸⁰ Ibid., Cavarero, 'The Devocalization of Logos', pp. 33.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 104.

the feminine. Poetry is equated with time, arbitrary man-made signs, infinite range, expression, mind, internal, eloquent, sublimity, ear, the masculine. In other words, Lessing's division between poetry and painting, supports the master narrative which renders woman mute.⁸² Mitchell's analysis of Lessing's division in this context reveals the complexity of the task but also a denouement as it takes place on the page. Mitchell's challenge to Lessing supports my own findings. In this performative reading of *Un coup de Dés*, the temporal and spatial are bound to one another, like the bound and boundless ocean of Homer's *Odyssey*: 'A sea so vast and dread that not even in a twelve month could a bird hope to wing its way out of it.'⁸³

In Chapters Three and Four I establish a structural and conceptual relation between the dice and the twelve double pages of *Un coup de Dés*. I compare my findings with Quentin Meillassoux's decipherment of *Un coup de Dés*, in the process defending Mitsou Ronat's thesis, which I believe has been dismissed out of hand by Meillassoux. I suggest similarities between my reading and Ronat's reading of *Un coup de Dés*, both of which establish the relation of content to form. Both readings propose the integrity of the poem; its spatial unity can only be determined by an accurate grasp of its spatial construction and typographical arrangement. My reading, like Ronat's reading places great significance on the number twelve, its divisions, and multiples in relation to the structural and

⁸² Mitchell, 'The Politics of Genre: Space and Time in Lessing's *Laocoön*', pp. 108–109.

⁸³ Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by T. E. Lawrence, Wordsworth Classics, 1992, p. 37.

typographical layout of the poem and its symbolic register. However, this research goes further. Establishing first an integral relation between the architectural space of the dice, whose sides when added together form six squares, or twelve sides, which are linked to the twelve double pages of *Un coup de Dés*, and to the alexandrine a line of twelve syllables divided at the centre.

In Chapters Five and Six the reciprocal relation between the dots of the dice and their numerical value to the alexandrine is established through a series of mathematical calculations and arrangements giving rise to a mathematical model, a codex generating infinite configurations in time and space. I compare this model to a chiasmic structure, one that simultaneously constructs and deconstructs itself. I conduct a closer examination of the syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés* in relation to the traditional form of the alexandrine, leading me to speculate that Mallarmé's hidden architecture is based on the traditional form of the alexandrine, though 'its elements are dispersed across the pages of the poem'. The research, like Ronat's establishes a synthesis between the traditional form and free form. Yet again there is difference; this reading reveals a chance operation at play, an infinite form that constructs and deconstructs itself. It contains 'a limit on the infinite' in principle, that is, 'the number that cannot be another'.

In Chapters Seven and Eight the philosophers appear on mass, at times dominating the page as the philosophical implication of reading the space of walking [beach] writing [page] and painting [canvas] returns the reader to the question of a Western philosophical tradition – built on oppositions. Derrida's comparative

reading of Plato and Mallarmé in the Double Session is considered alongside Cavarero's concept of the devocalisation of the logocentric tradition. As such, questions of presence and absence, the real and fictive, perspectival, and perceptual modes of apprehending the spaces encountered and comparisons between poetry and painting dominate. The question of origin, lineage, appropriation, and the pursuit of truth are simultaneously woven and unravelled.

In Chapters Nine and Ten I perform a comparative reading of the twelve unbound pages of *Un coup de Dés*, the twelve white paintings that make up Agnes Martin's Islands, and my video installation *On Some Vacant and Higher Surface*, showing two blank dice being thrown repetitively – first in slow motion, then in 'real time'. I consider the Japanese concept of 'Śūnyatā', which translates as "blankness", "emptiness" or "nihility", and the ancient Chinese practice of writing and painting where the space between the brushmarks take on their own significance.⁸⁴ These works are read through Norman Bryson's interpretation of 'Śūnyatā', which relocates the Gaze in an 'expanded field' where a number of conceptual transformations become necessary and urgent', leading to a re-evaluation of the space of painting, the frame, brush, and pigment.⁸⁵ I borrow Bryson's reference to *Ch'an* painting, also known as 'flung-ink', which he compares with the act of throwing the dice. In both practices, the force of the gesture exceeds the control of the thrower, and the limitations of the frame, thereby "what breaks into the

84 Op. cit., Bryson, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', *Vision and Visuality*, p. 88.

85 Ibid., p. 88.

image is the rest of the universe, everything outside of the frame”.’⁸⁶ Graw’s concept of painting as a ‘model of subjectivity’ is unravelled when placed in the expanded field of *Sūnyata*, leading me to compare modes of transcription in *Un coup de Dés*, *The Islands*, and *On Some Vacant and Higher Surface*. I show that the presence of the absent author cannot be separated from the mode of inscription. And the mode of inscription from the form, which like the form of thought suggests infinite possibilities; thoughtful constellations (Mallarmé), networks of lines that ‘go out’ into the world (Agnes), a mathematical model that constructs and deconstructs itself (my chiasmic structure). Furthermore, that these works implicate the reader/ viewer who is initiated into the game by the author-operator.

In Chapters Eleven and Twelve I consider the grammar of painting through a playful engagement with the space of writing – the white page.

Letters, numbers, words, and ‘gestures’ [brushstrokes] are placed in dialogue, articulating their difference in the page and across the conceptual horizon dividing the page. The brush stroke is scrutinised in relation to a body of work comprising brush marks cast in plaster, bronze, and gold. I refer to these forms as *gestures*. They are the embodiment of the gesture of painting [brush-mark] and the sign of the gesture, the form of a sign. The placement of the gestures in relation to the letters, numbers, words and ‘blancs’, is intended to reflect the reciprocal nature of language. Like Mallarmé’s constellation this work establishes the limits of

⁸⁶ Ibid. 103.

meaning in a space where meaning is differentiated with each new encounter,
where words constantly efface themselves in the silence.

CHAPTER ONE

Mallarmé Me Marcel

the point may be compared to an instant of time, and the line may be likened to the length of a certain quantity of time, and just as line begins and terminates in a point, so such a space of time begins and terminates in an instant.⁸⁷

___Leonardo Da Vinci



Figure 1.1

⁸⁷ Leonardo Da Vinci, 'Astronomy: Of Time and its Divisions', *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*, Vol. II, XV, translated by Jean Paul Richter, London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1884, pp. 916–18, 916 [Originally published as *The Literary Works of Leonardo Da Vinci*] Produced for Project Gutenberg, by Distributed Proofing, published on line by: *Internet Sacred Texts Archive*, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/aor/dv/v1title.htm>.

I place one foot in front of me, then the other; each step moves me closer to the horizon [Fig.1.1]. My eye traces the curvature of the earth, anticipates a point directly in front of me. My body vertical to the horizon-line forms a cross, signalling a point of intersection, a centre, a place of origin. Your words circle me like an incantation – ‘You just tear off a blank white page and, according to your mood, start writing’.⁸⁸

I begin with your words, sounding them out; casting them into the wind like a spell. It sounds simple, one word then another forming a line, each line approaching its end, dot, full stop. But it is not this simple. ‘The line has in itself neither matter nor substance and may rather be called an imaginary idea than a real object; and this being its nature it occupies no space’.⁸⁹

Leonardo’s words give way to paradox, for line, is both present and absent, conceived in the mind as an idea, embodied first in the imagination as a concept and given form in an act that signals an encounter with time and space. Similarly, the word is conceived in the mind as an idea [silent] and given form in an act that signals an encounter with time and space [spoken – written – inscribed] As such, the paradox of presence and absence inscribed in Leonardo’s line inaugurates

⁸⁸ Stéphane Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, *Divagations*, pp. 173–98, 191.

⁸⁹ Op. cit., Leonardo, ‘Linear Perspective: Definition of the Nature of the Line’, *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*, Vol I, II, pp. 47–8, p. 47.

itself in this space establishing the ground, and related philosophical discourses built on such oppositions.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Jacques Derrida writes:

Western thought has always been structured in terms of dichotomies or polarities: good vs. evil, being vs. nothingness, presence vs. absence, truth vs. error, identity vs. difference, mind vs. matter, man vs. woman, soul vs. body, life vs. death, nature vs. culture, speech vs. writing. These polar opposites do not however stand in as independent and equal entities. The second term in each pair is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first, a fall away from it. Hence, absence is a lack of presence. (Op. cit., Derrida, cited by Barabara Johnson, 'Translator's Introduction', *Jacques Derrida: Dissemination*, pp. vii–xxxiii, xiii.

Derrida follows Martin Heidegger in his interrogation of the metaphysics of presence; a paradigm structured on a belief in 'being-as-presence', and the idea that 'presence' implies truth – a belief that values the spoken word over the written word by virtue of the presence of the speaker in time and space. Derrida's challenge begins with Plato – for Derrida, 'Platonism' and 'anti-Platonism' stands in for the whole history Western Philosophy – a tradition which equates 'being' with 'presence'. (Ibid., Derrida, 'The Double Session', *Jacques Derrida: Dissemination*, p. 191). In the translator's note Barbara Johnson writes: "Logocentric" — that which is "centered" on the "Logos" (= speech, logic, reason, the word of God)— is the term uses by Derrida to characterise any signifying system governed by the notion of the self-presence of meaning; i.e. any system structured by a valorisation of speech over writing, immediacy over distance, identity over difference, and self-presence over all forms of absence, ambiguity, simulation, substitution, or negativity.' (Ibid., Johnson, 'Outwork', *Jacques Derrida: Dissemination*, p. 4). Adriana Cavarero equates Plato's metaphysics of presence with the 'devocalization of Logos', a system which she believes 'relegates the voice to the status of those things that philosophy deems unworthy of attention'. (Op. cit., Adriana Cavarero, 'The Voice of the Soul' in *For More Than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, pp. 42–6, 42. For Cavarero, the singular, embodied uniqueness of the speaker's voice, becomes politicized through an act of communion; the reciprocal relation of one voice to another is raised and amplified through vocal exchange. This exchange leads to a reconsideration of the term 'logos', which Caverero describes as a 'synonym for what we call "language," the term oscillates between "discourse" and "reason" [Levinas], between the realm of speech and the realm of thought. It comprehends and confuses them both.' (Ibid. Caverero, 'The Devocalization of Logos', pp. 33 – 41, 33). Cavarero's critique of Plato extends to Derrida, who she believes maintains Plato's opposition through a form of reversal. For Cavarero, Derrida identifies the voice as: 'the constitutive feature of metaphysics itself, [metaphysics of presence] while the task of destabilizing the phonocentric order of metaphysics is reserved for writing.' [See Derrida's *différance*] (Ibid., Cavarero, Appendix: Dedicated to Derrida, pp. 213–42, 214). In other words: 'Rather than devocalize logos,

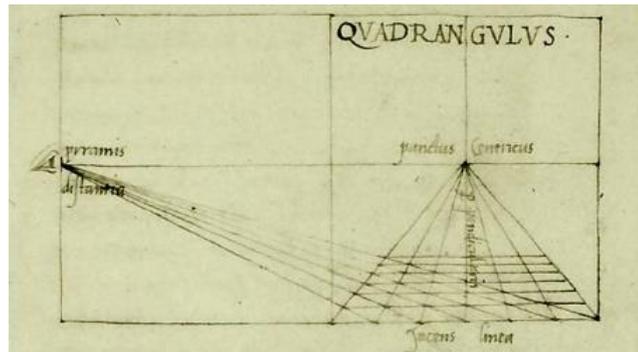


Fig. 1.2

Leonardo's concept of line has its roots in Euclidean geometry, in linear perspective, in an account of representation that privileges vision.⁹¹ He challenges

philosophy in Derrida's view focuses on the voice in order to make it so that logos itself, truth is configured as a realm of presence.' (Op. cit., p. 215).

It has been said that the entire history of philosophy is nothing but a series of footnotes to Plato. If this is true, it is rather strange that Plato's readers have rarely taken the trouble to reflect on the phenomenon of the devocalization of logos, which follows from its reduction to the visual as a guarantor of the truth of presence. Put simply, this problem could also be described as a subordination of speaking to thinking that projects onto speech itself the visual mark of thought. The result is the firm belief that the more speech loses its phonic component and consists in a pure chain of signifieds, the closer it gets to the realm of truth. (Op. cit., Cavarero, 'The Voice in the Soul', p. 42).

⁹¹ Leonardo's method is bound to the scientific revolution of the Renaissance – the Italian Quattrocento, and the perspectival revolution initiated by Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) and Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472). Leonardo's notebooks testify to Alberti's influence, he writes:

Drawing is based upon perspective, which is nothing else than a thorough knowledge of the function of the eye. And this function simply consists in receiving in a pyramid the forms and colours of all the objects placed before it. I say in a pyramid, because there is no object so small that it will not be larger than the spot where these pyramids are received into the eye. Therefore, if you extend the lines from the edges of each body as they converge you will bring them to a single point, and necessarily the said lines must form a pyramid. (Op. cit., Leonardo, Linear Perspective,

the claim that ‘painting is mute poetry’, and poetry a speaking painting, ‘then the painter may call poetry blind painting [...] poetry is the science that serves as the pre-eminent medium for the blind, and painting does the same for the deaf.’⁹²

According to Leonardo the eye is scientific by nature; able to discern light and shade, it ‘serves a nobler sense and remakes the forms and figures of nature with greater truth than the poet’.⁹³

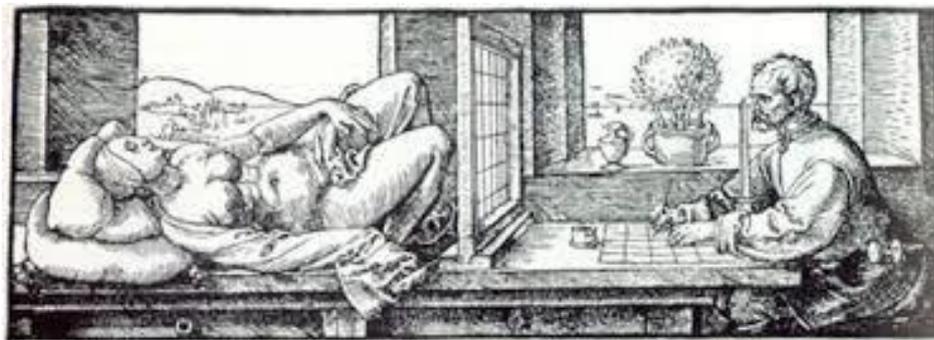


Fig. 1.3

Definition of Perspective, *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*, Vol I, II, p. 50).

Leonardo describes the eye as ‘the primary means by which the *sensus communis* of the brain may most fully and magnificently contemplate the infinite works of nature, and the ear is the second, acquiring nobility through the recounting of things which the eye had seen’. (Leonardo, ‘The Works of the Eye and Ear Compared’, *Leonardo: On Painting*, edited by Martin Kemp, translated by Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 20).

⁹² Attributed to Simonides of Keos, recorded in Plutarch’s *De Gloria Atheniensium*, III, 346f – 347c.

⁹³ Op. cit., *Leonardo: On Painting*, p. 20.

Leon Battista Alberti's treatise on linear perspective *De Pictura*, provides a model for depicting objects in space; Alberti's *window on the world* is a construct based on numerical values [Fig. 1.3] Reading between Alberti and Leonardo's treatise on linear perspective, an ideal visual model emerges – empirical, scientific, above all universal, and pertaining to truth.⁹⁴

Martin Jay refers to 'the ubiquity of vision as the master sense of the modern era'.⁹⁵ He asks; 'is there one unified "scopic" of the modern or are there several, perhaps competing ones? He proposes: 'the scopic regime of modernity may be best understood as a contested terrain, rather than a harmoniously integrated complex of visual theories and practices.'⁹⁶ Jay considers a 'radical reversal of the visual subcultures in the modern scopic regime', through a reappraisal of traditional perspectival models dominating Western culture.⁹⁷ Jay's conclusion anticipates my own, that is, to say, 'it is more useful to acknowledge the plurality of scopic regimes now available to us'.

In this sense my reading of the space of painting and poetry operates between visual models – performing a critique of the perceptual field, in the process

94 Alberti, *Leon Battista Alberti: On Painting*, translated by Cecil Grayson, London: Penguin Books, 2004 [Phaidon Press, 1972] and, Op. cit., Leonardo, 'The Science of Vision in Painting', *Leonardo: On Painting*, pp. 47–48).

95 Martin Jay, 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity', *Vision and Visuality*, edited by Hal Foster, Seattle, WA: Dia Art Foundation, 1988, pp. 2–27, 3).

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid., p. 4

illuminating difference – deepening the field. In one sense my trajectory [walk to the horizon] traces a similar line to Jay’s; beginning with the Quattrocento, with Leonardo’s line, that is a reading of linear perspective which, as Jay points out, ‘came to symbolise a harmony between mathematical regularities in optics and God’.⁹⁸ Alberti’s window (Fig. 1.3) simultaneously anticipates the modernist grid and differentiates between the perspectival space, and the ‘flattened, geometricized, and ordered space’ of the modernist grid.⁹⁹



Fig. 1.4

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

⁹⁹ Rosalind Krauss, ‘Grids’, *October*, Volume 9, 1979, pp. 50–64, 58.

I feel my foot press into the soft ground, moving me forward. I picture Alberti's pyramid – a line connecting me to a point directly in front of me, a point that does not exist.¹⁰⁰ I consider line, its ability to divide time and space, and wonder how such a construct might shed light on difference and similarity between writing, painting, and music. I turn back, retracing my steps to the point at which we agreed to meet, the place I call *Monument to I* [Fig. 1.4].

Monument to I is a cast iron column placed at the end of a jetty that reaches towards the Irish Sea – a point off the Meols coast, once a Viking settlement on the Wirral peninsular. The title acknowledges Krauss's account of the monument as inseparable from the place of its intended function.¹⁰¹ Like Krauss's monument, this structure belongs to another time; it has lost its purpose but remains present here and now – a monument to itself and to the Victorians.¹⁰² Here it is re-cast as *Monument to I*, a symbolic form which lends itself to this reading – acting as a rhetorical device, performing a metaphoric operation.

100 Joel Snyder's describes Alberti's concept of images as completed perceptual judgements about the objects of sense, made in the mind, in the imagination, leading Alberti to conceive of this mental construct, the image as a picture. Snyder observes. 'The genius of Alberti was not simply in conceiving of a visual image as a picture; he also provided a method by means of which that image could be projected and copied by art.' (Joel Snyder, 'Picturing Vision' in *The Languages of Images*, edited by W. J. T. Mitchell, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp. 219–46, 240).

101 Op. cit., Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', p. 32.

102 Strictly speaking this structure is not a monument but a remnant of a pier or jetty built by the Victorians.

'I' echoes the shape of the column, it signals the first-person narrator, the voice of the reader, and the performer located at the centre of the image [Fig. 1.4–1.5]. 'I' also refers to the 'eye', vision, the artist, and the act of looking. 'I' is visually equivalent to the Roman number one and to the ship's mast – it functions as a vertical axis, dividing the space and positioning the viewer. *Monument to I* establishes the meeting place, a point of convergence, and a vertical axis – which placed against the horizon-line forms a cross.¹⁰³

103 'I' places the subject at the centre of the world – a contested visual field, which as Norman Bryson writes, is 'progressively dismantled – by Sartre's concept of: *le regard*, "the Gaze" [Being and Nothingness] and Lacan [*Seminar XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*]. Bryson argues that while Sartre and Lacan move towards a radical decentering of the subject within the visual domain, neither entirely escape the 'gaze'. Bryson credits Japanese philosopher Kitaro Nishida and his student Keiji Nishitani, with a 'more thoroughgoing displacement of the subject in the field of vision', achieved through consideration of the term: Śūnyatā which translates as "blankness", "emptiness" or "nihility" [Ibid., Bryson, p. 88]. My interest in Bryson's paper is relative to this performative reading of the space of Mallarmé's text, which as I show performs a radical decentering of its own. Bryson's reading of Nishida's reading of the gaze, 'relocates the Gaze, *le regard* in an 'expanded field' where a number of conceptual transformations become necessary and urgent', leading to a re-evaluation of the space of painting, the frame, brush, and pigment. [Ibid., Bryson, p. 88]



Fig. 1.5

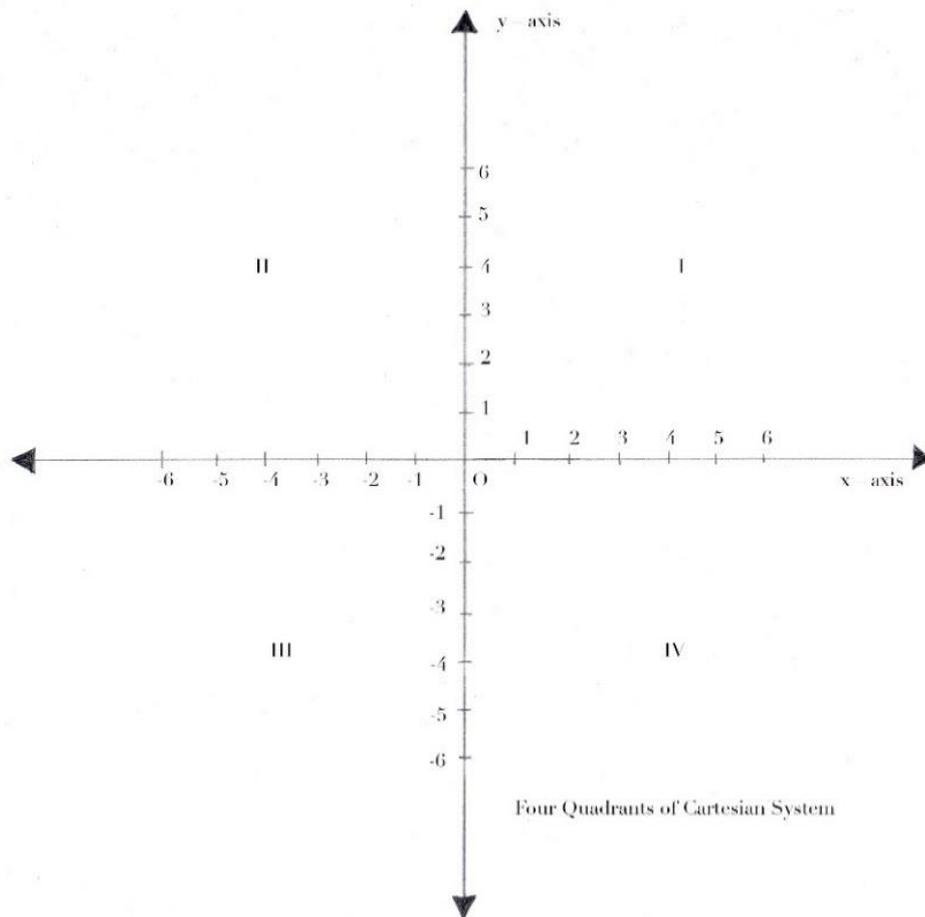
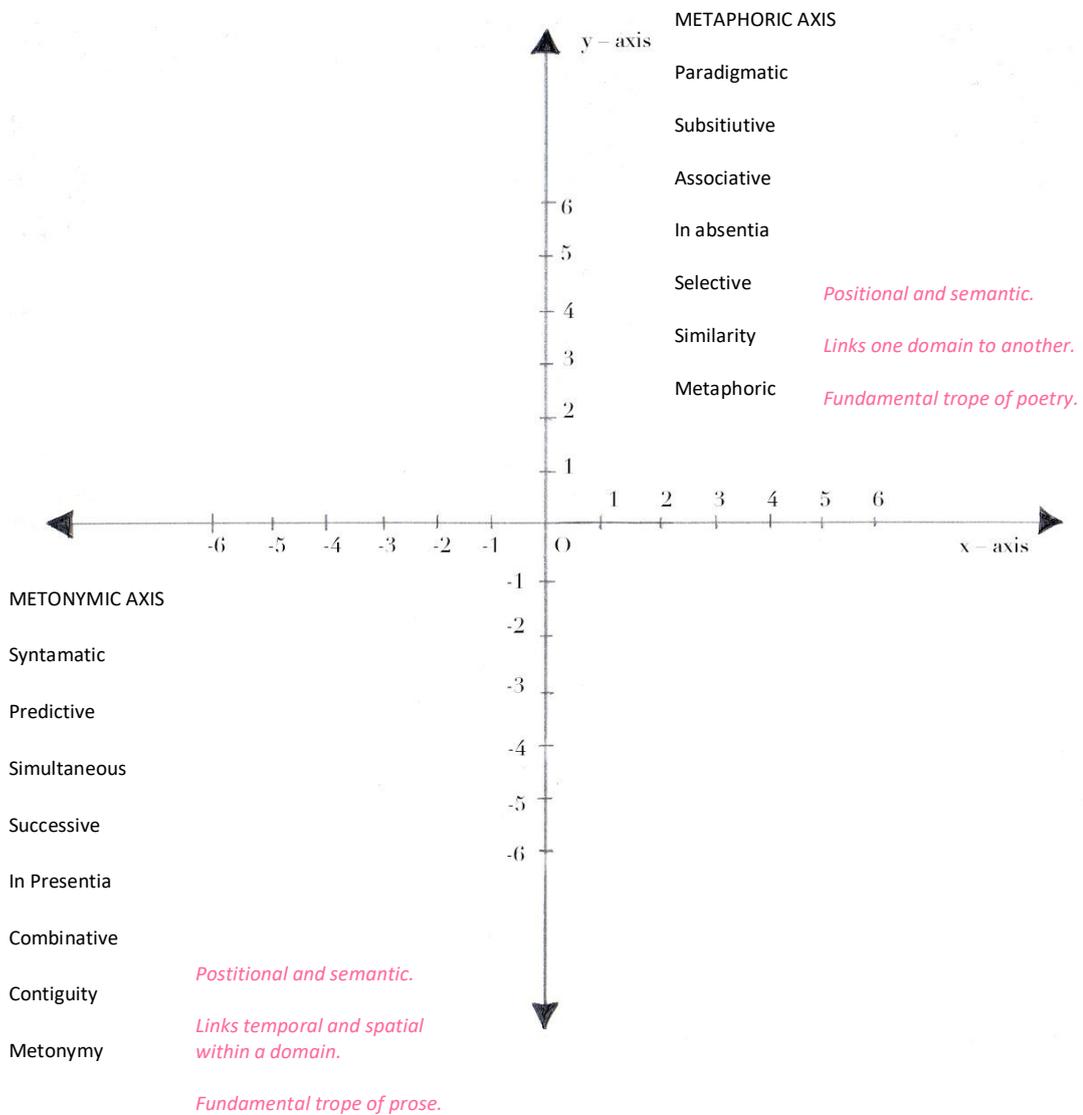


Fig. 1.6

My thoughts turn to numbers, to zeros and o's – to the centre of a Cartesian model [Fig.1.6] determined by O. Two numbered lines, ordered pairs – opposed by what is [+] and is not [-] A poem.¹⁰⁴



104 Descartes reputedly dreamt of a book, and the paradox of what is and is not a poem; in other words, a coordinated space organised in positive and negative terms.

Fig 1.7

I picture Roman Jakobson's axes of language: the axis of selection [metaphor] and the axis of combination [metonymy]. Jakobson's builds on Saussure's structural linguistics, on the idea that language [a system of signs] performs two operations: selection and combination,

To delimit the two modes described as combination and selection, Saussure states that the former "is *in presentia*": it is based on two or several terms jointly present in an actual series, whereas the latter; "connects terms *in absentia* as members of a virtual mnemonic series".¹⁰⁵

Jakobson claims that metaphor links by similarity, connecting one domain to another, while metonymy links by continuity, by spatial and temporal series in a given domain.¹⁰⁶ Discourse 'may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or through their

105 Roman Jakobson, 'Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances', *On Language: Roman Jakobson*, edited by Linda R. Waugh and Monique Monville-Burston, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995, pp. 115–33, 119.

106 Op. cit., p. 116.

contiguity [Fig. 1.7].¹⁰⁷A predilection for ‘substitutive’ [metaphor] or ‘predictive’ [metonymic] modes is reflected in personal style, in the way selection and combination construct and inform a discourse. Jakobson regards metaphor as a fundamental trope of poetry, and metonymy a fundamental figure of prose.¹⁰⁸

107 Op. cit., p. 129.

108 Op. cit., p. 130. Jakobson acknowledges the challenge to his axial model, which he writes: has ‘been artificially replaced [...] by an amputated, unipolar scheme’. Jakobson is comparing modern literatures break with convention, with aspects of Aphasia that is to say, a disturbance in one’s ability to construct and understand linguistic messages. In his critique of Jakobson’s essay, David Lodge proposes the notorious ‘obscurity’ of modern literature is due to ‘some dislocation or distortion of either the selection or combination axes of language’, citing the work of Gertrude Stein (*Tender Buttons*), and Samuel Beckett (*End Game*). See (David Lodge, ‘Metaphor and Metonymy’, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977). *Un coup de Dés* provides a structural performance, operating between axis; between tradition and a radical spatialised form of poetics which leans towards the ‘metonymic axis. Mallarmé operates at the juncture outlined by Jakobson in his essay that is between ‘the decline of Romanticism and the rise of Symbolism’.

The primacy of the metaphoric process in the literary schools of Romanticism and Symbolism has been repeatedly acknowledged, but it is still insufficiently realised that it is the predominance of metonymy which underlines and predetermines the Realist trend, which belongs to an intermediary stage between the decline of Romanticism and the rise of Symbolism and is opposed to both. (Jakobson, Op. cit., p. 119).

Jakobson’s axial model is not confined to literature; it extends to ‘other sign systems’ including painting drama and film. (Op. cit., p. 130) In Chapters Seven and Eight, the structural organisation of Mallarmé’s *Un coup de Dés* and Manet’s *Olympia* are discussed in relation to the vertical and horizontal axis dividing the space of the page/canvas, and the metaphoric and metonymic import of this architecture. Such comparisons signal a broader discourse on painting’s relation to poetry and truth, leading back to Plato, and beyond, as Derrida notes:

it is always the metaphors of painting and writing that are linked in this way back and forth: we recall that, on another plane, outside these metaphors, Plato always asserts that in their literal sense painting and writing are totally incapable of any intuition of the thing itself, since they only deal in copies, and in copies of copies. (Op. cit., Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, *Dissemination*, p. 190).

However, Jakobson's distinction is not as clear cut as this abridged version may suggest. He writes: 'Linguistics is concerned with language in all its aspects— language in operation, language in drift, language in the nascent state, and language in dissolution.'¹⁰⁹

I picture *Un coup de Dés*; I observe the vertical axis as it shifts, 'listing from this side to that'.¹¹⁰ With each new reading I notice your words refuse to fix themselves – folding onto and into one another in metonymic waves. By placing *Monument to I* at the centre of the artwork and place, I draw attention to the operational function of metaphor in my performative reading of *the poem*. I is 'in absentia' the: I readING, the: I walkING, the: I seeING, the: vertical column, the ships mast, the fold of the page, the vertical axis, the operational axis, the selective axis movING towards the horizon, toward the abyss, becomING the abyss.

I can see you in the distance, and Marcel too, three dots lining up to form collinear points, co-ordinates in a Cartesian system reduced to letters and numbers to be defined by a point of origin. Anticipating the moment, we will meet, I notice my pace has increased, words too seem to be falling into line, as if to keep up with the beat of my heart. I try to compose myself, to compose my first question. It occurs to me that if I slow the pace of my footsteps this might lower my heart rate giving the impression that I am composed. Numbers and letters, three ordered pairs of

¹⁰⁹ Op. cit., p. 116.

¹¹⁰ Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 418).

co-ordinates (x, y) (x, y) (x, y) , I think these terms would amuse you; certainly, the irony would not escape you. Descartes's *numbers* and *letters*, his merging of the languages of analytical geometry with its visual immediacy, and the abstract language of algebra make me think of your lecture at Cambridge University, when you spoke of the crisis of language particular to French poetry.¹¹¹ This is a crisis with its root in the language of numbers, in counting, in a beat, in rhythm, in the Alexandrine, and in your letters.¹¹²

Twenty- four letters as they have fixed themselves, through the miracle of infinity, in some existing language, his, then a sense for their symmetries, their actions, their reflections, all the way up into transfiguration into the surreal endpoint, which is verse; he possesses, our civilized inhabitant of Eden, above everything else, the element of felicity, a doctrine as well as a country. Whenever by his initiative, or

111 In 1894 Mallarmé attended Oxford and Cambridge Universities to present his paper: 'Music and Letters'. (See, Mallarmé, *Divagations*, pp. 173–98). See also Mallarmé's Letters to Marie and Geneviève Mallarmé, February 1894, and March 1894. (Op. cit., *Mallarmé, Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, pp. 194–97).

112 The alexandrine is a line of twelve syllables divided into two halves by a pause called a caesura. Barbara Johnson writes:

The mere displacement of the caesura from its central position in the line caused an uproar when Victor Hugo dared to attempt it in 1830 (in his play *Hernani*). But as of 1886, after the death of Hugo, the poetic line seemed to Mallarmé to be breaking up all together. Poets were writing in "free verse". To a French ear accustomed to counting syllables and evaluating rhyme, this was a revolution. Mallarmé even goes as far as to treat it as a second revolution. (Op. cit., Johnson, Translator's Note, *Divagations*, pp. 299–302, 301).

whenever the virtual force of the divine characters teaches him, he begins to put them to work.¹¹³

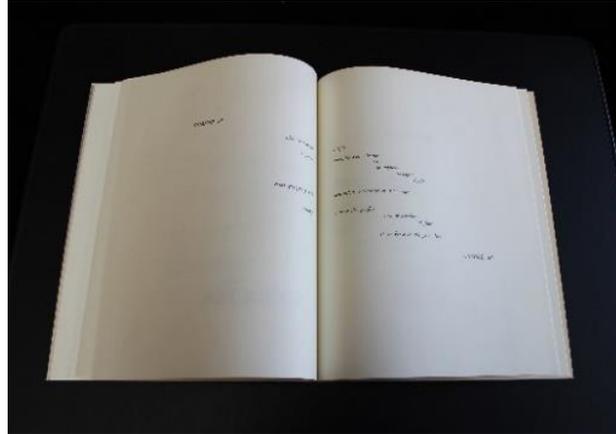


Fig.1.8

I hear your words, I see them in my imagination, and now I transpose them, reading aloud to see if, as you promise in your preface to the poem, ‘a musical score will result from this stripped-down form of thought.’¹¹⁴ I begin in the middle [Fig. 1.8].

113 Ibid., Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, *Divigations*, p. 186.

114 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Stéphane Mallarmé: Collected Poems and Other Verse*, pp. 262–3. Mallarmé writes: ‘Music and Letters are two sides of the same coin; here extending to obscurity; there dazzling with clarity; alternative sides to the one and only phenomenon I have called the Idea. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters,’ *Divigations*, p. 189). Irving Babbitt asks: ‘What is the difference between the legitimate music of verse and the music it attains by trespassing on the domain of a sister art? (Irving Babbitt, ‘Progamme Music’, *A New Laocoon: An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910, pp. 159–72, 155). Babbitt is critical of the Symbolist movement’s attempt at ‘musical suggestiveness’ which, he writes, ‘tumbled into chaos’. (Ibid., p. 157). He singles Mallarmé out as exemplary transgressor, citing as example the symphony in words [*Un coup de Dés*] published by Mallarmé in the defunct review of *Cosmopolis*, vol vi, pp. 417–27, with the “overture” to Teick’s comedy *Die verkehrte Welte*, Ibid., Babbitt, p.155.

*AS IF | A simple insinuation | in the silence inrolled ironically | or | the
mystery | hurled down | howled out | in some imminent swirl of hilarity
and horror | hovers on the brink of the abyss | without sprinkling it | or
escaping | and draws from it the soothing virgin sign | AS IF.*¹¹⁵

‘My dear friend,’ you say. ‘We have arrived just as the tide has gone out.’

‘I am pleased that you agreed to meet me here,’ I reply, smiling and moving closer to greet Mallarmé, then Marcel.

‘My choice of place is not arbitrary,’ I say, eager to establish the ground. ‘I should explain the meaning I ascribe to this place, and the distinction I make between place and space before we begin discussing the spatial and temporal conditions of your versions of *Un coup de Dés*, which incidentally, I had the opportunity to place side by side, together with Michalis Pichler’s recent version of the poem when I visited the Victoria and Albert Museum earlier this year.’¹¹⁶ [Fig.1.9] Mallarmé and Marcel raise their eyebrows.

Babbitt writes, ‘Mallarmé indulges in confusions of music and poetry that rival in extravagance what one finds a century earlier in Germany in the theory of Novalis and the practice of Tieck.’ (Ibid).

115 Op. cit., *Mallarmé, Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 421).

116 Marcel Broodthaers and Michalis Pichler’s respective appropriation of *Un coup de Dés*, is of the Édition Gallimard (1914) publication, also referred to as the Nouvelle Revue Française, [NRF] publication. Copies of all three versions are held in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The Édition Gallimard version does not accomplish Mallarmé’s desired



Fig. 1.9 – 1.12

format; the significance attributed to the dimensions and proportions of the various publications of the poem and my criticism of the Édition Gallimard, (NRF) edition is outlined in 'A Note on the Éditions', p. xix–xxiv. For more on the Éditions Gallimard publication and artists appropriating this version, (see Appendix D: List of Éditions of *Un coup De Dés*, p. 427).

‘In *The Practice of Everyday Life*,’ I continue. ‘Michel de Certeau describes “space as a practiced place”, and “every story — a spatial practice”.¹¹⁷ De Certeau’s account implies a physical acting out of space, an embodied encounter that transforms a place into a particular space, producing spaces of walking, reading and writing [among others] through this encounter.¹¹⁸ I share with de Certeau an understanding of “space as practiced place”, and I perform my reading of your poem, a delimited field located in time and space just as we are located in this constant but changing seascape.’

‘As a result,’ I say. ‘My encounter with the space of walking [beach], writing [page], and painting [canvas], performs a parallel critique of the perceptual field, illuminating difference – deepening the field. The act of walking, like thinking, writing, and speaking has its own rhythm. It is punctuated; hesitation contemplated in the pause, in the space between steps, in the space between thoughts and words, in the space on the verge of becoming meaning, becoming

117 Michael De Certeau, *The Practice Of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendall, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1988 [1984] Chapter IX ‘Spatial Stories’, pp. 115–30, 117.

118 De Certeau’s account has echoes of Gaston Bachelard’s ‘lived in space’ (*espace vécu*), see: (Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, translated by Maria Jolas, Massachusetts, MA: Boston, Beacon Press, 1994 [1969], [*La poétique de l’espace*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958] Bachelard makes a distinction between the architectural spaces defined by a Cartesian system of co-ordinates and an experience of space that transcends its geometric planes. Bachelard’s ‘lived in space’ is qualified by time through an inhabited experience of the space. See also Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s existential view of space ‘there are as many spaces as there are distinct spatial experiences’. (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Donald A. Landes, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, [*Phénoménologie de la Perception*, Paris: Gallimard, 1945]

conscious of movement, becoming “the place where nothing takes place but the place”.¹¹⁹

‘Michel Foucault,’ I continue, ‘uses the term “epoch of space” to differentiate between modernism and postmodernism, between the nineteenth century’s obsession with “history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of an ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men. And the present epoch of simultaneity [...] the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed”.’¹²⁰

119 Op. cit., *Mallarmé, Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 425).

120 Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias’, *Journal of Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, October 1984, p. 1–9, 1, (‘*Des Espace Autre*’, March 1967, translation by Jay Miskowiec). Foucault acknowledges the ‘monumental’ contribution made by Bachelard and the phenomenologists to the discourse of space. However, he distinguishes between ‘internal space’, which he considers to be of primary concern for the phenomenologists, and ‘external space’, which provides the focus of his analysis, defining external space as:

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be coloured with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. (Ibid., p. 3)

For an excellent overview of the ‘spatial turn’ in relation to the ‘postmodern condition’ and related discourses, see Robert T. Tally Jr, ‘The Spatial Turn’, *Spatiality: The New Critical Idiom*, Milton: Routledge, 2013, pp. 11 – 43.

‘Shall we continue this conversation while walking toward the sea?’ I ask, visualising the space that surrounds me in mathematical terms, following Leonardo’s line to the Quattrocento. At the same time, differentiating between the perspectival space of Alberti’s model and, an embodied experience of space which as Gaston Bachelard rightfully claims ‘transcends its geometric planes’.¹²¹

One reading of the space leads to another, I shift, from one to the other operating between spaces, between ‘real’ and imagined spaces. In the process I become aware of a parallel operation, or oscillation between modernist and postmodernist aesthetics. Between a line defined by its continuity, its progression into the future: and one that hesitates, turns back on itself to question the legitimacy of its origin. Either way every time I attempt to follow a straight line to the horizon, I find myself circling back.

Turning to Mallarmé, I say. ‘The word space conjures up infinite possibilities, infinite spaces, both concrete and abstract. Today our concern is with the space of *Un coup de Dés*, with Marcel’s version, and my performative reading of the poem which produces infinite spaces.’

‘The French scholar Malcolm Bowie observes that: “No poet has gone further in the manipulation of this pause than you, Mallarmé in *Un coup de Dés*.” He writes, “For every space in the poem is equivocal, it is impossible to read the text in such

121 Op. cit., Bachelard, ‘House and Universe’, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 47.

a way that those functions of space which are irrelevant to a given instance simply remain in abeyance while the correct function is being performed”.¹²²

‘I would agree,’ says Marcel. ‘It is like a game of hide and seek? In Belgium we say *Loup, est-tu là?* Wolf: are you there? Of course, the one who is hiding will always say he is somewhere else, yet he is always there. You know he will turn around and catch someone. The interminable search for the definition of space serves only to hide the essential structure of art, a process of reification. Any individual who perceives a function of space appropriates it mentally or economically.’¹²³

‘Yes,’ I say, ‘like the truth always revealing and concealing itself, and just as economical.’

Mallarmé, looking towards the horizon, says, ‘A game. In light of a superior attraction like a void, we have the right to be lured on by nothingness; it is drawn out of us by the boredom of things if they are established as solid and preponderant, we frantically detach them and fill ourselves up with them, and also endow them with splendour through vacant space for as many solitary festivals as we wish. As for me, I ask no less of writing and I am going to prove it.’¹²⁴

122 Malcolm Bowie, *Mallarmé and the The Art of Being Difficult*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978 p. 122.

123 Marcel Broodthaers, *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs*, edited by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988, [Originally published as *October* 42, Fall 1987]. See section titled ‘Ten Thousand Francs Reward’, pp. 39–49, 45.

124 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, *Divagations*, 173–98, p. 187.

‘I have no doubt that you have already,’ I say, smiling. ‘Let us not concern ourselves with the impossible task of defining space, but rather the role of line in shaping our perception of space, and, of delimiting objects in space, and the role of the imagination in the arrangement and reading of those objects.’

‘When I first encountered *Un coup de Dés*,’ I continue, ‘I was struck by its beauty, its apparent simplicity, its economy. As a painter with a taste for white, for the monochromatic paintings of Kazimir Malevich, whose *White on White* compositions suggest a symbolic transformation of the illusionist or representational space of painting, by simultaneously denying perspective and implying ‘infinity’. Malevich’s monochromatic painting creates a tension between the white square support/ground, and the internal white square which tilts towards the frame, as if it might float free, thus undermining the frame [Fig. 1.13].¹²⁵ Infinity also implied in the horizontal lines of Agnes Martin’s white paintings, which appear to dissolve the space between the painting and viewer, as light particles play across the surface undermining the division [Fig. 1.15–1.16].¹²⁶ In Robert Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings*, described by composer John Cage as ‘airports for lights, shadows, and particles’, the space of reception

125 Kazimir Malevich, *White on White*, 1918, Oil on canvas, 79 cm x 79 cm.

126 Agnes Martin, *The Islands I–XII*, 1979, Acrylic paint and graphite on canvas, twelve parts, each 182.9 x 182.9cm. See Chapters Nine and Ten for a detailed reading of *The Islands*

becomes mirrored in the surface of the painting [Fig. 1. 14].¹²⁷ In Cage's subsequent conceptual work *Waiting*, he equates white with space, and space with silence, celebrating the pause, the space between notes echoed in the silence, like the space between your words Mallarmé in *Un coup de Dés*.¹²⁸

I pause to catch my breath, glancing first towards Mallarmé, and then to Marcel, to see if they are keeping pace. Noticing the difference between Marcel's strides and Mallarmé's short, considered steps, I attempt to set the pace since my stature falls somewhere between the two men, and I fear Mallarmé is too polite to complain.

'Visually,' I continue, '*Un coup de Dés* held my attention before any attempt to read the words or elicit meaning I was drawn to the white expanse of the page, a space that captured my imagination and set in motion a host of possibilities and transpositions. I am not alone in this. *Un coup de Dés* appears to attract noise, the silence appears to attract other voices, other words among these: Blanchot's

127 Robert Rauschenberg, *White Paintings*, latex paint on canvas, 182.88 cm x 274.32 cm, 1951. See, John Cage, 'On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and his Work', in *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, London: Marion Boyers, 2011, [Calders and Boyers 1968] pp. 98–104, 102.

128 John Cage, *Waiting*, 1952, premiered New York 1952. This work begins with sixteen measures of silence, followed by two sections with short ostinato, followed by further twenty second's silence. Cage composed 4'33" in the same year, this work as the title suggests lasts for four minutes and thirty-three seconds and is entirely silent.

Space of Literature, Roland Barthes's 'The Death of the Author', Derrida's *Double Session*, Jacques Lacan's *Écrits*, and Jacques Rancière, 'The Space of Words'.¹²⁹

129 Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, translated by Anna Smock, Lincoln, N E: University of Nebraska Press, 1982, [France, *L'espace littérature*, Éditions Gallimard, 1995]. Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Image – Music – Text*, translated and edited by Stephen Heath, London: Fontana, 1977. Jacques Derrida, *Dissémination*, translated by Barbara Johnson, London: Athlone Press, 1981 [*La Dissémination*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972]. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, translated by Bruce Fink, New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2006 [*Écrits*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966]. Jacques Rancière, 'The Space of Words: From Mallarmé To Broodthaers', in *Porous Boundaries :Texts and Images in Twentieth Century French Culture, Modern French Identities 44*, edited by Jérôme Game, Bern: Laing, AG International Academic Publishers, 2007, pp. 41–61. See also Robert Greer Cohn, 'Mallarmé's Wake', *New Literary History*, Vol. 26, No 4, Philosophical Resonances (Autumn, 1995), 885–901, John Hopkins University Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20057323> Rosemary Lloyd, 'Mallarmé at the Millennium', *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 95, No. 3 (July 2000), 674–83, published by Modern Humanities research Association, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3735495>

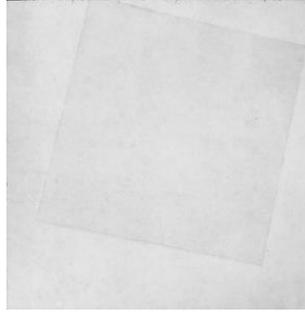


Fig. 1.13 – Fig. 1.16

‘You see,’ Mallarmé interjects, ‘to face a white sheet of paper which seems to demand the lines dreamed of for so long, and which would contain only a few

words.¹³⁰ The blank spaces, in reality, assume importance and catch the eye at once: versification has always demanded them, as a surrounding silence, so that a lyric or a short-lined piece usually occupies only about the central one third of a page. I am not transgressing against this arrangement, merely dispersing its components.’¹³¹

‘The arrangement of words on the page,’ I add, ‘composed as you say, “like a musical score”, reflects the complex interplay between word, image and sound further complicated by the spaces that operate both with (in) and between these three elements.’¹³²

‘Let me reiterate,’ Mallarmé says, ‘that for anyone who would read it aloud, a musical score results from this stripped-down form of thought [with retreats, prolongations, flights] or from its very layout. At the turn of the nineteenth century free verse and prose poetry, were brought together by means of a strange influence, that of Concert Music; several of its methods will be found here: they seem to me to belong to literature, so I am retrieving them. Its genre if it should

130 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Henri Cazalis, May 1867, pp. 74 – 76, 74.

131 Mallarmé’s preface to *Un coup de Dés*. (British version of *Cosmopolis Magazine*, 1897, see also, ‘Note on the Editions’, p. xix–xxiv. For an English translation see, (Op. cit., *Stéphane Mallarmé: Collected Poems and Other Verse*, pp. 262–63.)

132 Ibid., Bowie makes a similar point, emphasising the ‘semantic functions which variable spacing and typeface serve’, leading to a ‘calculated unbalance’, shifting between the visual devices of the poem and their verbal counterparts (Ibid., p. 119.) In Bowie’s opinion this separates Mallarmé from the sphere of concrete poetry, ‘for the concrete or calligrammatical poet seeks to superimpose sign systems upon each other with a view to the construction of a more or less elegant and ironically suggestive tautology, citing as example Guillaume Appolinaire’s calligrammatic poem *Il Peut* (Ibid., p. 120).

gradually become a unit like the symphony, alongside individual song, leaves intact the old form of verse, which I continue to venerate, and to which I ascribe the realms of passion and reverie; while this might be a more suitable way to handle subjects of pure and complex imagination or intellect: which there is no longer a reason to exclude from the unique source—Poetry.’¹³³

‘I would like to talk more about this idea of equivalence,’ I say. ‘I wonder if we might do this by taking one section of the poem, and since my reading of *Un coup de Dés* begins at the very heart of the poem, this seems to be the ideal place to start. I am not suggesting that a reading of a part will lead to an understanding of the whole; rather, that it is here in the centre of the poem that I encounter in my reading a discourse on the reciprocal nature of music and letters, spelled out and played out with exceptional clarity, and irony.’¹³⁴

‘Before we begin and since I have alluded to figures of speech in the form of synecdoche, it occurs to me that we all share a fascination with the spaces that emerge between word, image and sound, with the play of words, with slippage, with, the figures of metaphor and metonymy.’ I say.¹³⁵

133 Op. cit., Mallarmé, preface to *Un coup de Dés*, in *Stéphane Mallarmé: Selected Poems and Other Verse*, pp. 262–3.

134 One of four master tropes, Synecdoche, ‘is the substitution of a part for the whole’ (Jonathan Culler, ‘Rhetoric, poetics, and poetry’, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011 [1997] pp. 70–82, 73.

135 Mallarmé operates between visual and verbal signs, further complicated by a non-linear structure, which as Bowie rightfully claims, ‘contains powerful linearities within it’ (Op. cit., *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult*, pp. 134–45). Mallarmé’s arrangement of words opens up the field; according to Bowie, Mallarmé’s ‘stratified syntax has left us

‘Ah,’ Marcel says, his voice as deep and soft as the fabric of his coat. ‘The word or idea, indissolubly linked to being, is to be at the origin of the modern notions of space in the plastic arts and music... I want to say that an artist does not build a volume. He writes in volume space; this is the mantle of the blind.’¹³⁶

I become conscious of the ground under my feet, of the pace of our movement, and conscious that despite our effort we seem to be no closer to the horizon; it is always out of reach. We must appear from a distance as three dots, displaced syntax about to disappear off the edge of the world. My thoughts turn to associative strands, to the abstract play of language, the ‘flicker of uncertainty’, a term used by Bowie to refer to the hesitation produced in ‘cases where sound likeness occurs both within and between adjacent fragments [...] the matching sounds join the fragments, and the blank spaces quite as strongly disjoin them.’¹³⁷

‘Even at a glance it is clear to the reader that the centre pages of *Un coup de Dés* have been composed with great deliberation,’ I say, collecting my thoughts. [Fig. 1.17]. ‘The fine italic print appears like a delicate but broken chain laid out across the double page as if closer scrutiny will reveal where the links might be re-joined,

with three incomplete patterns...the sound figures, syntax, and imagery, which the reader is invited to pursue concurrently (Ibid., p. 134–45). See also Roman Jakobson’s ‘The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles’, pp. 115–33, and, Derrida’s ‘supplementary mark’, which, as Derrida writes, is ‘neither a metaphor nor a metonymy even though it is always represented by one trope too many or too few’. (Derrida, *The Double Session*, p. 252).

¹³⁶ Broodthaers, MTL documents reproduced in the catalogue of the Broodthaers exhibition at the Musée du Jeu Paume in Paris, 1991 p. 147 and p. 149. Cited in Jacques Rancière, ‘The Space of Words: from Mallarmé to Broodthaers’, p. 23.

¹³⁷ Op. cit., Bowie, *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult*, p. 135.

returned to sequence and fastened to form a circle. The words *Comme Si* \ *Comme Si* appear on the top left of the page and bottom right might well serve as ornate clasps that open and close the circle. I have the sense that the centre pages are full of secrets – that the words should be whispered, and only between good friends.’¹³⁸

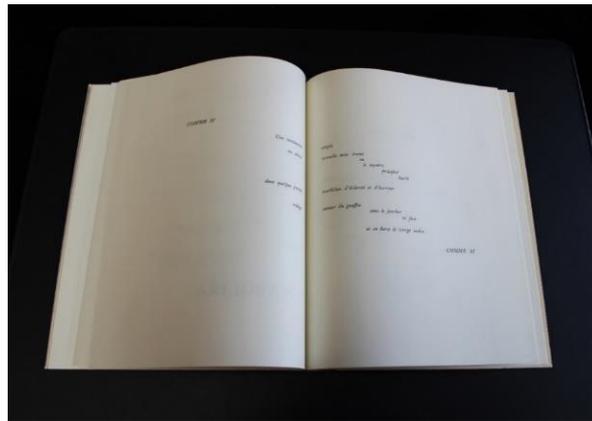


Fig. 1.17

138 The relation between italic script, cursive script, and the implied intimacy of the handwritten note is discussed in Chapters Three and Eight. Mallarmé's exacting typographic layout is exquisitely defended by Paul Valéry in his appeal to the executors of Mallarmé's estate who were considering a proposal to stage *Un coup de Dés* with full orchestra.

If they had known the living Mallarmé, however slightly, and if they had ever had my opportunity of hearing that great man speak *discuss* (almost in the algebraic sense) the slightest details of the verbal and visual system he had constructed—if they had been privileged to help him as he minutely verified the arrangement of a pattern in which the simultaneity of vision was to be united with the consecutiveness of speech, as though a very delicate equilibrium depended on such fine adjustments—I assure them that they would *never* have dreamed of demolishing by means of interpreters all that profound calculation based on chance. (Op. cit., Paul Valéry, 'Concerning A Throw of the Dice: A Letter to the Editor of *Les Marges*', p. 310).

See also (Appendix E: Typographic Analysis of *Un coup de Dés*, pp. 431–457).

Mallarmé smiles. I search for a clue in his expression and hope that he considers me a good friend. ‘The elliptical presentment at the centre of *Un coup de Dés*,’ I venture, ‘reflects the circular nature of thought and philosophical enquiry at the heart of this poem. The reader encounters this movement in the opening page of the poem and the final page, in the words: *A Dice Throw* and *Every Thought emits a Dice Throw*.’¹³⁹

‘It is true,’ Mallarmé says. ‘It teaches the practised reader little that is located beyond her perception yet may cause trouble for the novice who should apply her gaze to the poem’s first words so that the following ones, laid out as they are, lead her to the final ones, the whole without any novelty except in the spacing of the act of reading.’¹⁴⁰

‘Leading to circularity, and paradox and back to I,’ I say, thinking about the implication of Mallarmé’s circular structure in relation to the chiasmus, and my discovery of a mathematical model at the heart of *Un coup de Dés*.

‘This circular strategy,’ I continue, ‘where the line appears to have no beginning nor end calls into question the tradition of linear sequence particular to narrative

139 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 415–26). In a contradictory note advising the reader how to approach the poem Mallarmé writes: ‘I would prefer this note not to be read, or to be glanced at and then actually forgotten’. (Op cit., preface to *Un coup de Dés*, *Collected Poems and Other Verse*, p. 262.)

140 Ibid.

representation and in turn a re-evaluation of what might be described as narrative space.¹⁴¹ Further to this your placement and displacement of words breaks with

141 Jakob Lothe defines 'place as an element of space', and narrative space as 'the fictional universe presented by the narrative discourse. (Lothe, 'Space, Time, Narrative: From Thomas Hardy to Franz Kafka and J.M. Coetzee', *Literary Landscapes: From Modernism to Postcolonialism*, edited by, Attie De Lange, G. Fincham, J. Hawthorne, and J. Lothe, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 1–16). Lothe refers to Sabine Buchholz and Manfred Jahn's differentiation between 'story space', and 'discourse space', and its parallel 'story time' and 'discourse time' to present a set of complex parameters contributing to the formation of narrative space, (Ibid. p. 2). He establishes 'points of connection between early modernist and post-colonial literature', between the work of early modernist Thomas Hardy, 'fully fledged modernist' Franz Kafka, and postcolonial writer J. M. Coetzee. (Ibid., p. 1) The position of the first-person narrator and third-person narrator who acts as the 'author's evaluative instrument' is considered in relation to narrative space. (Ibid., p. 2) The transition from a stable sense of place or rootedness connecting the subject to nature is undermined by the 'unstoppable advance of modernity', which simultaneously dislocates the subject within the space. (Ibid., p. 13) The 'threshold' between the space in which the event takes place (story space) and the authorial space, which is the narrator's environment, is scrutinised by the modernist project, signalling the beginning of European modernism. Lothe traces narrative's fixation on time to Aristotle's *Poetics* which emphasises 'temporal succession rather than spatial situation'; unsurprisingly he links this idea to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laokoon* which considers literature a temporal art, and painting a spatial art. (Ibid., p. 3) Aristotle's *Poetics* and Lessing's *Laokoon* are discussed in Appendices, Appendix H: Expanded Notes, p. 517). Drawing on Bakhtin's concept of the 'chronotope', which Lothe summarises as 'a place or limited area where dimensions of time and space are curiously compressed', and 'the chronotope of the threshold', for example a corridor, window, or door to identify a neutral space but also 'one of transition, hesitation, reflection and memory', Lothe identifies Thomas Hardy as one of the 'transitional writers' operating at the threshold of modernism, between 'real' and 'fictive' space, 'exploiting and combining realist and fictional elements in his work'.

The spatialised poetics of Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés* should be considered 'transitional', operating at the threshold of real and fictive space, symbolically manifest in the master's act of hesitation, which places *Un coup de Dés* at the threshold of modernist and postmodern aesthetics. In *Un coup de Dés* the distinction between fictive space and the space of writing breaks down. The author and the master are one and the same, operating in both spaces simultaneously; between the fictive space of the shipwreck, and the real space of the unbound pages of *Un coup de Dés*. The crisis of verse articulated in Mallarmé's spatialised poem is experienced by the reader who, disorientated by the fragmented appearance of text is cast adrift in the expansive space of the white page. The reader must navigate the physical space of the page and fictional space that simultaneously refuses narrative yet provides linear flights along multiple associative strands and across associative fields. This movement is symbolically manifest in two modes of reading suggested in two presentations of the title, first as a traditional a linear sequence on the title page, then as a fragmented form dispersed across the pages of *Un*

the conventions of linear sequence and its traditional measure, the reader is certainly thrown!’

‘Line,’ says Marcel. ‘I spent my vacation practising immobility. Sitting in a chair puts you into a void. A device for thinking about writing. Three months later I had built up enough vertigo to justify a breath of air. (I got up) I will never write another line, I said to the Future. The lines in my hand will have to do. They’re already written down.’¹⁴²

We all laugh. ‘There is much wisdom in your statement,’ I say turning to Marcel. For line implies movement, and the lines in your hand inscribed in your DNA will both reveal and conceal your fate in time.’

‘On a more practical note,’ I say. ‘It occurs to me that line, whether in writing, drawing, or musical notation, can be differentiated, since each line is inscribed with its own history. By this I mean line in each discipline is weighted, with accents

coup de Dés, encouraging a simultaneous and sequential apprehension of the poem and event. Anna Sigridur Arnar makes a similar claim,

Un Coup de Dés is perhaps most successful as a set of designs, or as a blueprint to invite participatory reading. By closely studying the visual logic of printed media, Mallarmé learned how to design-shape-reading by creating visual anchors and fulcrum points that guide the reader while simultaneously providing choices for diverging and individual modes (or textures) of reading. (Op. cit., Arnar, *The Book as Instrument*, p. 238)

142 Marcel Broodthaers, from *Investigating Dreamland*, 1960, translated by Paul Schmidt, *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs*, edited by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988, p. 30. Marcel’s gesture signifies his turn from a traditional poetry towards conceptual poetics as seen in his appropriation of Mallarmé’s *Un coup de Dés*.

and stresses, it may be continuous or broken, it can reveal and conceal forms in space, and it can delimit space, just as you do Mallarmé in *Un coup de Dés*.’

‘Yes’, Mallarmé says. ‘The different typeface between the principal theme, secondary one, and adjacent ones dictates their level of importance when uttered orally, and the position on the stave, intermediate, high or low on the page, will indicate how much intonation rises or falls.’¹⁴³

‘Returning to the idea of equivalence,’ I say. ‘It appears across disciplines that line is both concrete and abstract, inscribed in space and in the imagination, but what of music, can sound like line be inscribed?’ I ask.

Mallarmé stops for a moment and then, with some authority, says, ‘I know that music – or what we have commonly agreed to call by that name, limiting it to orchestral performances involving the support of strings, brass, and winds, with permission to be joined by words – hides the same ambition, although this is never spoken of because music seldom confides.’¹⁴⁴

‘I am intrigued by the space between what we hear and what we see, between the spoken word and written word. In your version of *Un coup de Dés*,’ I say, to Marcel, ‘you have not only concealed the words – you have removed the sound. The black bars replacing Mallarmé’s words, while claiming equivalence present the paradox

143 Op. cit, Mallarmé, preface to *Un coup de Dés*, p. 263.

144 Op. cit, Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’ *Divagations*, pp. 173–98, 88.

of presence and absence. Without a prior knowledge of Mallarmé's words there is no sound, no memory of sound. When this version was first exhibited at the *Wide White Space Gallery*, a recording of your recital of *Un coup de Dés* played on a continuous loop alongside several versions of the erased poem.¹⁴⁵ To my knowledge this recording no longer exists; we are left with versions of your erasure, and a series of compelling abstract spaces. Spaces which serve as visual markers in my reading and recalling of *Un coup de Dés* [Fig.1. 20].¹⁴⁶

Mallarmé says, 'Very strict, numerical, and direct, with the play of its two parts, the former meter subsists, alongside experimentation. That's where we are now: the separation.'¹⁴⁷

145 Broodthaers produced three versions of *Un coup de Dés* published by Wide White Space Gallery, Antwerp, 1969. These include ten copies of mechanical engraving and paint on twelve aluminum plates, each: 12 3/4 x 19 9/16 x 1/8 inches (32.4 x 49.7 x 0.3 cm); three hundred copies of the artist book, each: 32.4 x 49.7 x 0.3cm: and ninety copies of the artist book on translucent paper each 32.4 x 49.7 x 0.3cm.

146 See Digital Portfolio of Work.

147 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Music and Letters', p. 183.

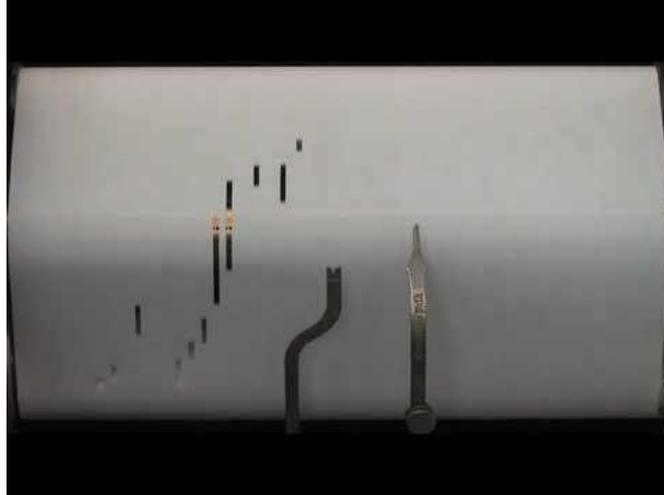


Fig. 1.18

Returning to my previous point, I say, ‘It occurs to me that the abstract bars replacing your words in Broodthaers’s version of the poem resemble beam notes and maxima notes; symbols of music notation [Fig.1.19]. In one of Michalis Pichler’s versions of the poem the space occupied by the black bars has been transposed onto a piano roll [Fig.1.18]. Holes have been punched into the space once located by Broodthaers’s black bars and read through a tracking bar system which plays musical notes as the looped roll crosses the tracking bar. Pichler’s transposition maybe a salutary gesture to the distinction you make between poetry and music, it is nonetheless disappointingly dissonant.’¹⁴⁸

‘The music of words is sufficient in itself.’¹⁴⁹ Mallarmé replies.

148 Michalis Pichler, *Un coup de Dés j’amaï s n’abolira le Hasard (Musique)* 2009.

149 Op. cit., Valéry, *Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé*, p. 263. According to Valéry Mallarmé was unhappy when Claude Debussy put music to *Prélude: à l’après-midi d’un faune*. See Debussy, *Prélude: à l’après-midi d’un faune* for Orchestra, Edited by/ Herausgegeben von/Édition de Jean-Paul C. Montagnier, London: Ernst Eulenburg, 2007.

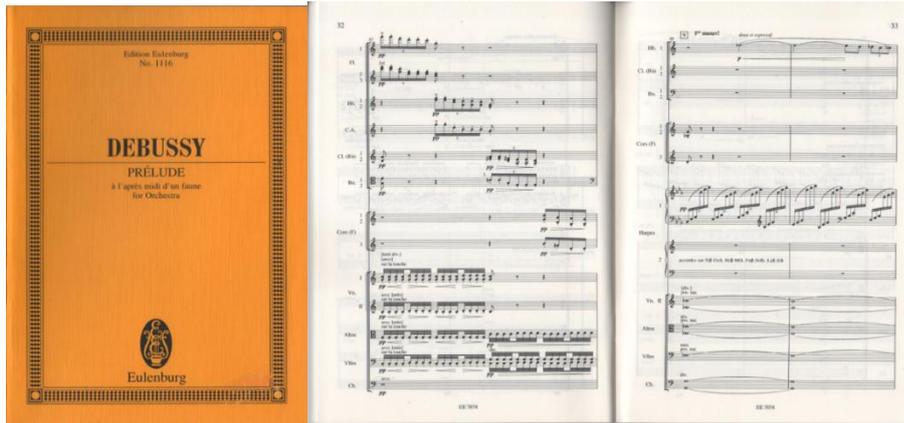


Fig. 1.19



Fig. 1.20

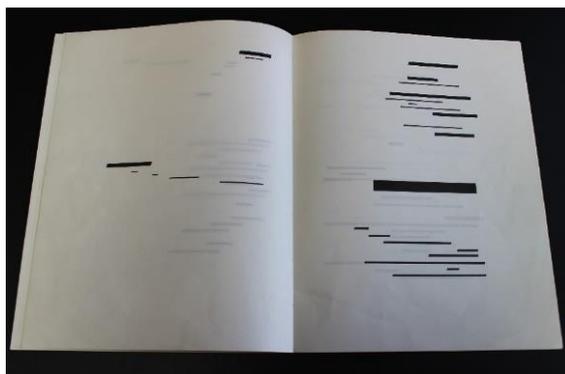


Fig. 1.21

Then, he adds, 'The layout of the words, the distance and separation of word groups and words has the effect of seeming to speed up and slow down the rhythm, scanning it, even imitating it, through a simultaneous vision of the page:

the latter taken as the basic unit, in the way that verse or perfect line is taken in other works.’¹⁵⁰

‘As for the notion of establishing some direct relation between literature and the visual arts,’ Marcel says, stopping to inspect an unspoiled razor shell, ‘I began by choosing *Un coup de Dés*, as a subject! ¹⁵¹ You are the source of modern art, Mallarmé. You unwittingly invented modern space.’¹⁵²

‘Let me tell you,’ Mallarmé says, casting his eye first on me, and then Marcel, just long enough for me to see a flicker of mischief play across his green eyes. ‘For a month I have been in the purest glaciers of Aesthetics and that after having found the Void, I’ve found Beauty – and you can’t imagine in what lucid altitudes I’m venturing.’ ¹⁵³

‘Ah,’ Marcel says facing Mallarmé, ‘A *throw of the Dice*, this would have been a treatise on art. The last in date; that of Leonardo has lost some of its consequence,

150 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Preface to *Un coup de Dés*, *Collected Poems and other Verse*, p. 262.

151 Marcel Broodthaers, Letter to Catalano, London, July 8, 1973, in *Marcel Broodthaers*, Cologne, Museum Ludwig, 1980, pp. 15–16. Cited by Brigit Pelzer, ‘Recourse to the Letter’, *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs*, edited by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988.

152 Marcel Broodthaers, MTL-DTH exhibition catalogue, MTL Gallery Brussels, 1979. I am indebted to Anne Rorimer for the inclusion of facsimiles of Broodthaers handwritten notes, translated here by Rorimer and which she argues testify to Broodthaers’ esteem for the poetry of Mallarmé. See, Rorimer’s essay, ‘The Exhibition at the MTL Gallery’ included in *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs*, p. 110.

153 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Henri Cazalis, July, 1866, Selected *Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, pp. 64–7, 65.

since it accorded too much importance to the plastic arts and, one senses today, to his masters [the Medicis].¹⁵⁴

‘Yes,’ I say. ‘Jacques Rancière credits you both with “initiating a wider reflection on the relation of words and space” which he writes, “invites reconsideration of what we term modernity in art and its political implications”.¹⁵⁵ Rancière reflections mirror my own; in fact, Rancière describes your reading [Broodthaers] of Mallarmé as a representation of a paradox, since your replacement of Mallarmé’s words by black rectangles, simultaneously signify the absence of the words, and the presence of this absence by drawing attention to the plasticity of the space.’¹⁵⁶

‘Marcel,’ I continue. ‘Your reference to Leonardo’s treatise on the imitative arts that is the distinction he makes between painting and poetry – places vision over sound, the visible over the readable. This is based on the authority he attributes to line in drawing, in turn based on perspective, on a scientific approach, which he writes “is nothing else than a thorough knowledge of the function of the eye”.’¹⁵⁷

154 Op. cit., Rorimer’s essay ‘The Exhibition at the MTL Gallery’ in *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs*, p. 110.

155 Op. cit., Jacques Rancière, *The Space of Words: from Mallarmé to Broodthaers*, published in *Porous Boundries: Texts and Images in Twentieth Century French Culture*, pp. 41–61, 41.

156 Ibid.

157 Op. cit., Leonardo, *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*, Vol II. Linear Perspective, Definition of the Nature of the Line, 47–8, p. 47.

'I wish to make the point that the paradox of presence and absence revealed in your appropriation and re-presentation of *Un coup de Dés*, Marcel, has much in common with the paradox presented by Leonardo in his conception of line. He writes: "The line has in itself neither matter nor substance and may rather be called an imaginary idea than a real object; and this being its nature it occupies no space" .'¹⁵⁸

'At the risk of repeating myself,' I continue, 'Leonardo's words give way to paradox, for line is both present and absent conceived in the mind as an idea, embodied first in the imagination as a concept and given form in an act that signals an encounter with time and space. These thoughts occupied my mind before your arrival today. I return to a reconsideration of the space of word, image, and sound, engendered, Marcel, in your paradoxical appropriation of the space of *Un coup de Dés*.'

In summary I say, 'The reciprocal nature of music and letters, like the space between word and image operates in and across the surface of the page; one revealing the other only to disappear in the silence of the page and re-emerge as the other. Flotsam from a shipwreck upon the raging foam – syntax no longer bound by tradition, by meter, words float free in space of the page. Word, image, and sound join and separate, crash into one another, tossed in the waves and washed over. Meanings rise and just as quickly disappear in the tidal surge, like gulls that touch the surface and just as soon fly off. The master is free to operate

158 Ibid.

in the space between word, image, and sound in a hermeneutic gap; the reader relaxed from the authorial grip of the master, is free to build her own ship from the flotsam.'

'Then,' Mallarmé says, 'we justly possess the reciprocal means of Mystery. Let us forget the old distinction between Music and Letters, which only divide them, voluntarily, for their subsequent fusion: the one evocative of prestige situated at the highest point of hearing, or almost abstract vision, being well versed which spaciouly, grants the page an equal range.

'I pose the following conclusion: that music and letters are two sides of the same coin; here extending into obscurity; their dazzling with clarity: alternative side to the one and only phenomenon I have called the idea. One of the modes, inclining to the other, disappearing, re-emerges with borrowings: twice, disturbing the finishing touches with its oscillation, it transforms a whole genre.'¹⁵⁹

'We should turn back,' I say.

159 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Music and Letters', *Divagations*, p. 189.

INTERLUDE

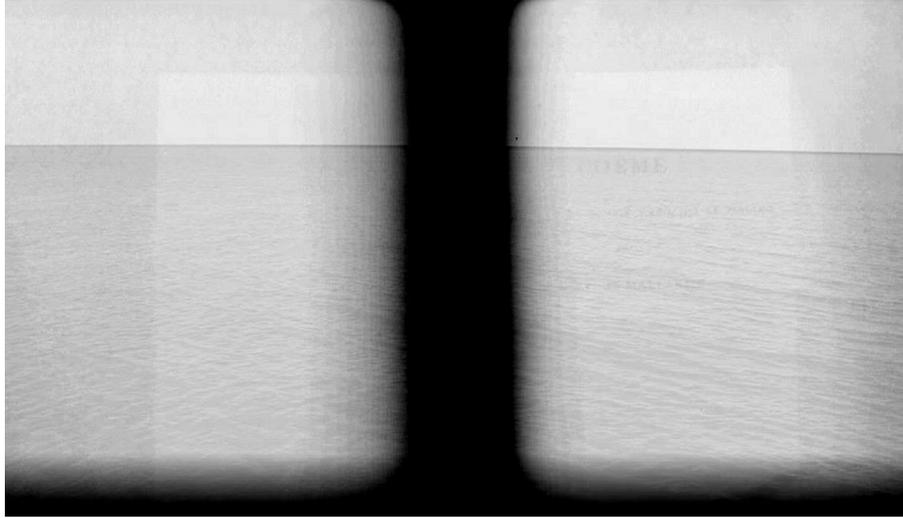


Fig 1.22



Fig. 1.23



Fig. 1.24

CHAPTER TWO

Mallarmé Me Michalis



Fig. 2.1

I stand at the edge of a small jetty looking out to sea. I position the camera, focus the lens, and centre the cast iron structure. I press the shutter release button, rotate the mode dial to movie function, and shoot [Fig. 2.1].¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Video still [Fig.2.1] from one in a series of twelve videos recording the turn of the high-tide following a full moon over the course of twelve months, (see Digital Portfolio of Works).



Fig. 2.2

My thoughts turn to the double pages of *Un coup de Dés*, divided at the centre by a fold or *pli*. I imagine turning the page, each one folding into the last – repeated in the rise and fall of the tide. [Fig. 2.2]

the shadow buried in the deep veiled by this variant sail | to the point of
matching | the span | with its gaping trough like a shell | of a ship | listing
to this side or that. ¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 418).



Fig. 2.3

I am drawn to these indefinite spaces. To test limits of the page – its dimensions, proportions, and material characteristics, I begin by casting the fold [Fig. 2.3]. A series of hybrid objects belonging to the book and to the language of sculpture, architecture, and archaeology emerge. These discursive forms open the textual space – bridging the gap between literature, sculpture, architecture, and archaeology, performing a metaphoric and metonymic role. I recall the process of constructing a clay mould either side of the fold and pouring casting plaster into the channel at the centre of *Un coup de Dés*. The Roman letter [numeral] ‘I’ emerges. I release the form, washing the clay which clings to the fragile structure. The form resembles an architectural column or human bones, conceivably those excavated from a sacred site.¹⁶²

162 The page emerges as archaeological site, establishing a relation between surface, and what lies beneath the surface. The metaphoric potential of this exchange becomes embodied as a generative potential, which is literally realised through the emergence of new forms. This gesture recalls two sculptural works by the artist Robert Morris: *Box for Standing* 1961 and *I-Box*, 1962. *Box for Standing*, originally made by Morris as a prop for

His puerile shadow | caressed and polished and restored and washed |
softened by the waves and set free | from the hard bones lost among the
timbers.¹⁶³



Fig. 2.4



Fig. 2.5



Fig 2.6

This 'I', summoned from the pages – washed, restored, and set free from 'the
muck of ages', is born of the shadows [Fig. 2.4–2.6].¹⁶⁴ The voice of the reader

a Simone Forti's 'constructed dance performance', later appropriated by Morris who presents himself standing inside the box, placed vertically on the ground, framing his body, and suggesting a coffin-like structure. The relation of the artist/author's body to his work/art object, is developed through a reflection on visual and literary figures in *I-Box*. Morris is pictured standing naked inside a similar box like structure, inside a secondary structure framing his body in the form of the Roman letter or numeral I. The proportions of the outer box suggest the form of a book, the letter 'I' framing his body suggests a doorway, the door is open revealing the naked form of the artist/author located at the heart of the book, at the centre of the object.

163 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 420).

164 The symbolic act of washing away earth, separating clay from plaster to reveal the 'I' form is linked to the ritual act of cleansing signifying an associative chain that begins with

is constructed in the act of reading and liberated by your transformational gesture. A text – ‘anonymous, speaking on its own, without the voice of an author’.¹⁶⁵

Your words give way to Roland Barthes’s words. In ‘The Death of the Author’, he notes that your: ‘entire poetics consists in suppressing the author in the interest of writing, which is to restore the place of the reader’. He concludes: ‘The reader is the space on which all the quotations which make up a writing are inscribed

birth and ends in death. The new-born is washed on entering the world. After death the body undergoes a ritual cleansing in preparation for burial. Ritual purification is common to most religions. Baptism as ritual cleansing in Christianity is synonymous with restoration and resurrection. ‘To wash away one’s sins’ in the baptismal sacrament signifies resurrection through Christ. The Christian ritual of Baptism is linked to John the Baptist, the messenger sent to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. The role of religion, of God and of John the Baptist, and the significance of ritual in the Catholic mass, are recurring themes in Mallarmé’s work. Mallarmé’s aesthetics is bound to an ideal in which the role of art and the artist is to replace the function of God and religion. Quentin Meillassoux’s analysis of *Un coup de Dés* uncovers a relation between the Master of *Un coup de Dés* and the fate of John the Baptist, both of whom lose their heads. The cyclical themes of birth and death, the ebb and flow of the tide, are linked to Greek mythology, and to themes of resurrection and renewal. Among these immortals, Proteus, the Old Man and the Sea, whose ability to change form, can be linked to the poet, to Mallarmé – master of a new poetic form. The figures of Aphrodite, rising from the foam, signifying renewal, and the Siren who signifies song, and its absence are symbolically evoked by Mallarmé in *Un coup de Dés*, as is the figure of Odysseus, tied to the mast of the ship, (see Chapter Eight). The resurrecting ‘I’ released from the clay mould represents the construction of self, a symbolic act recalling Karl Marx’s ‘revolutionary praxis’. Marx and Friedrich Engels propose a direct relation between self-transformation, social relations, and revolution, to overcome ‘all the muck of ages’, in a movement towards true democratisation. (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, c.1846, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1965, p. 86 [Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, 1932, published by David Riazanov, Marx–Engels Institute, Moscow])

165 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Divagations*, ‘Autobiography’, Letter to Paul Verlaine, November 1885, pp. 1–6, 4.

without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination'.¹⁶⁶ Foucault goes further, asking: 'What is an Author', replying:

it is not enough, to repeat the empty affirmation that the author has disappeared [...] Instead we must locate the space left empty by the author's disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings this disappearance uncovers.¹⁶⁷

Your gesture simultaneously propels me into the realm of aesthetics, and that of the emancipated reader. In your notes for *Le Livre* you describe an 'architectural and premeditated' book, a 'book restored to the people', in which the author assumes the role of 'operator'.¹⁶⁸ You speak of French literature at

¹⁶⁶ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Image – Music – Text*, translated and edited by Stephen Heath, London: Fontana, 1977, p. 143. Published first in an American multi-media three-dimensional magazine: *Aspen 5 & 6: The Minimalist Issue*, dedicated to Mallarmé, including twenty-eight numbered items by artist and writers, edited, and designed by Brian O'Doherty, with art direction by David Dalton and Lynn Letterman, published fall-winter 1967 by Roaring Fork Press, NYC.

¹⁶⁷ Michael Foucault, 'Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology', *The Essential Works of Foucault, Volume Two 1954-1984*, edited by James D. Faubian, translated by Robert Hurley *et al*, New York, NY: New Press 1998, pp. 205–22, 209. A note from the editor advises: 'This essay is the text of a lecture presented to the Société française de philosophie, Feb 22, 1969, [Foucault gave a modified form the lecture in the United States in 1970]. This translation by Jowsué V. Hariri.

¹⁶⁸ Mallarmé's *Le Livre*, was never published. At the time of his death Mallarmé had compiled over two hundred and fifty loose sheets of paper containing his ideas for *Le Livre*. In a letter to Paul Verlaine, he describes his vision for a 'great work', an 'Orphic explanation of the Earth' (Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Paul Verlaine, November 1885, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, pp. 142–6, 143). Acknowledging that he may never accomplish *Le livre*, Mallarmé proposes:

the turn of the nineteenth century as ‘undergoing an exquisite and fundamental crisis’.¹⁶⁹ You compare this crisis with a revolution brought on by the death of Victor Hugo and the ‘primacy accorded to rhyme in French poetry’, which questions authority, the establishment, tradition, the role of the artist, the form of language itself.¹⁷⁰ The possibilities for an inclusive and democratic space for cultural and political exchange – proposed as an ‘aesthetic revolution’, anticipating ‘Rancière’s politics of aesthetics’.¹⁷¹

The tide has turned, I press the stop button, the camera has recorded twelve minutes at high tide. Soon the tide will go out and I will place my tripod on the sand in front of the monument. Then I will walk toward the sea, recording my

a fragment which had been created, and in making glorious authenticity shine in one place, and indicating in all its entirety the rest, which would demand more than one lifetime. To prove by the proportions created that this book does exist, and that I’ve known what I was able to accomplish. (Ibid., p. 144).

169 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Crisis of Verse’, *Divigations*, p. 201.

170 Ibid.p. 202. Jacques Roubaud speaks of this crisis through the figure of Hugo who is interchangeable with Igitur, and the Master/author of Mallarmé’s shipwreck. (See, *The Change errant/ d’atelier*, edition of *Un Coup de Dés*, 1980, realised in collaboration with Tibor Papp, and with the participation of Phillipe Dôme, Jean Pierre Faye, Rudolfo Hindostroza, Claude Minière, Bruno Montels, Paul Nagy, and Jacques Roubaud).

171 Jacques Rancière, *Mallarmé The Politics of the Siren*, translated by Steven Corcoran, London, New York: Continuum, 1996, p. 3. [*Mallarmé: La Politique de la Sirène*, Hachette Littératures, 1996]. Mallarmé lived through the French Revolution of 1848, in 1870 the Second Republic collapsed, and the Paris Commune formed a temporary revolutionary government establishing a programme of social democratic change, including the separation of Church and State. Mallarmé’s concept of a book to replace the ritual of mass, ‘catholic in spirit’, but civic in principle reflect the social and political upheavals of the day.

disappearance as I separate myself from the mechanical eye of the camera,
sounding out your words, first in French, then in English.



Fig 2.7

Born | from a frolic | the sea attempting via the old man or the latter
versus the sea | an idle chance | Nuptuals | whose | veil of illusion |¹⁷²

I hear a your voice, '*la voile d'illusion*' – I continue sounding out the words – your
voice covers mine – deep rich tones carried on the wind – I continue, as you do.¹⁷³

| veil of illusion being splashed back their obsession | along with the
wrath of a gesture | will falter | and fall | sheer folly¹⁷⁴

172 Op. cit, Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendices, Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 420).

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid.

These divinatory lines would not be out of place in a Confucian hexagram. They appear to advise one to proceed with caution, while implying that the event, the fall has already taken place.

I pause and turn to face you, embarrassed by the intimacy of this act. You smile, and as if sensing my thoughts, you say ‘Let me introduce myself into your story.’

175

I move towards you, I greet you, ‘I did not expect to see you,’ I say. ‘Perhaps we should walk back to the monument. Michalis will arrive soon.’

‘I like to read aloud,’ I continue. ‘I begin by memorising the words, then, I recite from memory as I walk out to meet the sea. The words come back to me, they circle me, they haunt me, they breathe in me. Out here in this space, “of this united horizon”, your words breathe, I hear them.’¹⁷⁶

175 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘To introduce myself into your tale’, *Stéphane Mallarmé: Collected Poems and Other Verse*, p. 79.

176 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 419). See Anna Sigrídur-Arnar, for a comprehensive and compelling account of historical and social implications of reading practices in France at the turn of the nineteenth century. Arnar discusses models of reading in relation to democratic principals and freedoms in the post revolutionary Republic. Pointing to the ritual memorisation and recitation favoured by the Catholic school system of Mallarmé’s day, which she links to a supervised memorisation of the catechism to avoid misinterpretation and ensure a uniformity of doctrine. (Anna Sigrídur-Arnar, *The Book as Instrument: Stéphane Mallarmé, the Artist Book, and the Transformation of Print Culture*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011). In his book *Les mots anglais: petite philologie à l’usage des classes et du monde* Mallarmé acknowledges the power of memorisation and recital to ‘arouse the intelligence’, characterised by both an intuitive and rational grasp of the text. Contrary to the ‘catholic system’ Mallarmé’s method supports independant reading and individual interpretation. Mallarmé extends the practice of memorisation and recital to translation. He extols the benefits of unfamiliarity, leading to an appreciation of the

‘Verse,’ Mallarmé says, ‘which, out of several vocables, makes a total word, entirely new, foreign to the language, and almost incantatory, achieves the isolation of speech, negating with a sovereign blow, despite their repeated reformulations between sound and sense, the arbitrariness that remain in the terms, and gives you the surprise of never having heard that fragment of ordinary eloquence before, while the object named is bathed in a brand new atmosphere.’¹⁷⁷

‘Yes,’ I say, ‘the incantatory power of words; “the mystery, hurled down, howled out, in some imminent swirl of hilarity and horror, hovers on the brink of the abyss”.’¹⁷⁸

The words silence me. Still – standing facing the horizon. My thoughts turn to America, to the Black Mountain Poets and their predecessors. I look beyond the

inherent rhythms and poetic effects of language, effects that may not be perceived by the native speaker.

177 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Crisis of Verse’, *Divigations*, p. 211. Incantation: Middle English: via Old French from late Latin *incantatio(n-)*, from *incantare* ‘chant, bewitch’. Incant: from Latin *incantare* ‘to chant, charm’, from *in-*(expressing intensive force) + *cantare* ‘sing’ (*OED*). To chant summons the middle ages, sacred rituals of the Catholic Mass, and Gregorian chants [organised into twelve modes]. The magical transformational power of the book can be linked to Mallarmé and the Symbolists, and to the proposed séance suggested by Mallarmé in a communal reading of *Le Livre*. See also ‘incantation’, poet’s glossary: [...] Oracular and prophetic poets rely on what Roman Jakobson calls ‘the magic, incantatory function’, of language to raise words beyond speech, to create dream states and invoke apocalyptic forces, dangerous transcendent powers. [See <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/incantation-poets-glossary>] See also modes of the Gregorian chant, and all the other twelves. See Villard de Honnecout’s twelve divisions and the twelve spheres of music.

178 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 421).

expanse of the Irish sea, beyond the Atlantic ocean to the expansive 'field' of Charles Olson's 'Projective Verse' to:

the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE

the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE ¹⁷⁹

Olson claims to open the space of poetry, breaking with tradition, comparing the page to an energy field, and the poet to *a medium* channelling energy from one field to another. I consider the pages of *Un coup de Dés*. I transpose the words into this space, where land meets the sea, and the sea meets the sky. Here where the 'eye rests', where the 'eye' perceives itself perceiving 'I'. Standing in front of the horizon, pausing. I slowly inhale, filling my lungs with air, expanding my diaphragm until the force of your words compels me to speak.

179 Charles Olson, 'Projective Verse' [1950] in *Human Universe and Other Essays*, New York, NY: Grove Press, 1967, pp. 51-62. Olson's essay is a manifesto for a 'new poetics', which he describes as 'open verse' or 'projective verse' opposing a traditional or 'closed verse', which emphasises 'inherited line, stanza, and overall form, what is the "old" base of the non-projective'. Olson acknowledges his debt to Ezra Pound's earlier call to poets to 'compose in the sequence of the musical phrase not in sequence of a metronome'. Olson delineates 'composition by field', the poem becomes an energy field, the poet a conduit transferring this energy from one field to another. Taking Robert Creeley's maxim: 'form is never more than an extension of content' Olson builds his COMPOSITION BY FIELD, tracing the construction of line. Beginning with the breath, from 'the smallest particle of all', the syllable, to the line, by way of the heart. Olson is credited with coining the term postmodernism. Mallarmé writes:

all of language, measured by metre, recovering therein its vitality, escapes broken down into thousands of simple elements; and, I add, not without similarity to the multiplicity of notes in an orchestral score. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Crisis of Verse', *Divagations*, p. 202.

‘Stéphane, let me introduce my self.’ Michalis says, ‘I arrived early and seeing figures in the distance decided it must be safe to walk out to the sea. Of course I recognise you, Stéphane,’ Michalis says, extending his hand.

He turns to me, I offer my hand. ‘You found your way.’ I say smiling. ‘We were just about to head back to the shore to meet you. Since we are all here, let us continue our walk out to the sea.’

‘We were discussing the incantatory nature of words before you arrived.’ I continue. ‘I mentioned to Mallarmé that I like to recite the words of *Un coup de Dés* as I walk out to the sea. Reading between the French and English words, between familiar and unfamiliar sounds. The act of memorisation is complicated by the unconventional spatial layout of the poem, and omission of punctuation. In the process of memorising I have become aware of a tendency to picture the placement of the words on the page, in relation to one another and to the blank space. This act recalls the practice of reading ‘negative space’ around the subject in painting. In Marcel’s version of *Un coup de Dés* the space around the black bars replacing the words initiates a similar kind of game [Fig.2.9]. By picturing the black rectangular bars I can simultaneously locate Mallarmé’s words and Broodthaer’s obliteration of the words [Fig.2.8]. This game highlights the reciprocity of word, image and sound. It operates across languages, producing new associations and [dis]associations between sound and sense, giving rise to new and unfamiliar notes. I will send you a link to the videos recording my readings of *Un coup de Dés*. You will see and hear these reciprocal relations play out; word, image, and sound

touching and separating, surfacing and disappearing in layers and compressions, revealing new and unfamiliar forms.’¹⁸⁰

180 See Digital Portfolio of Works. Other artists and conceptual poets employing similar strategies in their reading of *Un coup de Dés*, include Peter Manson’s *English in Mallarmé*. In this version English words have been separated from the French text and isolated in the space of the page. The text appears fragmented as words are broken and dislocated in the page. Manson describes the work as ‘an act of violence on the *Poésies*’, born from frustrations arising during the two decades he dedicated to translating Mallarmé’s “untranslatable” poems’. (See, Ellen Dillan ‘Ta vague lit rat: an introduction to English in Mallarmé, in *English in Mallarmé*, London: Blart Books, 2014, pp. i–vi, p. ii, [first published 2007 as a pdf in *Publishing the Unpublishable* series at/ubu Editions 2007. <http://www.ubu.com/ubu/unpub.html>]. See also Ivan Juritz’s playful approach to translation in his reworking of Mallarmé’s *Un coup de Dés*. Juritz follows Mallarmé’s notes designed for school students in the English language [‘English in a Couple of Days’] and juxtaposes Mallarmé’s instructions against the poem in his reinterpretation of the text. The result is a palimpsest, simultaneously offering the reader the benefit of Mallarmé’s advice on the English language, its translation, and a new approach to interpreting *Un coup de Dés*.



Fig 2.8

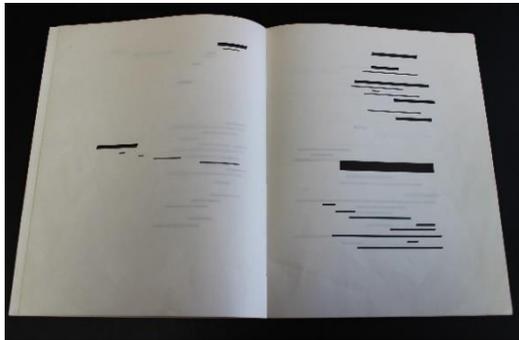


Fig 2.9



Fig 2.10

'It occurs to me,' I say, 'that the page could be transposed into this space in "volume space"; just as words inscribed in the space of the page when read aloud roll from the tongue amplifying the space we inhabit [Fig.2.10].¹⁸¹ 'In Broodthaers's version the words of *Un coup de Dés* are replaced with black strips; on the title page *Image* replaces the word *Poem*.

¹⁸¹ Broodthaers, MTL documents reproduced in the catalogue to Marcel Broodthaers exhibition at the Musée du Jeu de Paume in Paris, 1991 p. 149.

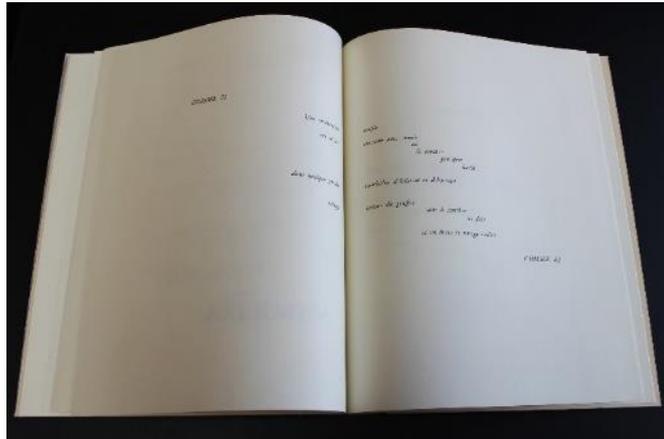


Fig 2.11

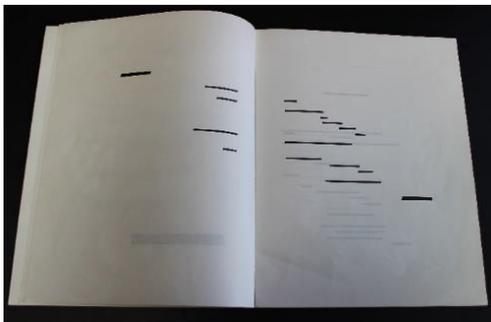


Fig 2.12

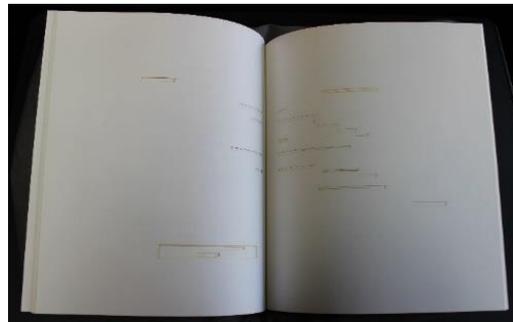


Fig 2.13

‘In your version,’ I say, turning to face Michalis. ‘Mallarmé’s words have been removed with a laser cutter, on the title page, *Sculpture* replaces the word *Poem*. In both versions, Mallarmé’s words are represented in the preface as a condensed block of text. Two acts: one of concealment [Broodthaers] one of subtraction [Pichler]. Both separate text from the space, word from image, sound from silence. Both question the relation of content to form in an act of appropriation that places each in direct relation to Mallarmé, simultaneously suggesting lineage and separation, since Mallarmé’s name has been replaced drawing attention to the question of authorship and appropriation as a strategy

to produce ‘new work’. Three authors, three books, one space. Father, son, and the holy ghost!’

Mallarmé, and Michalis glance at one another – across the chasm. My presence at the centre obscures their line of sight.

‘I am fascinated by the capacity of each of these versions to reveal more of the ‘original’, I say. ‘Your version, Michalis, like Broodthaers’s before you, takes the appearance of the 1914 Éditions Gallimard, (NRF) publication.¹⁸² The first thing

160 Broodthaer’s and Pichler’s slight but significant changes to the Éditions Gallimard (NRF) version of the poem, underscores the conceptual weight of their respective acts of appropriation. Other artists who have appropriated the formal appearance of Éditions Gallimard version include Michael Maranda, who replaces title *Poem* with *Livre*, 2008; Ceryth Wyn Evans, 2009; Eric Zyboya, *Translations in Higher Dimensions*, 2011; and Jérémie Bennequin who replaces *Poem* with *Omage*, 2014. Steve Mc Caffery’s *Parsival*, 2014 owes something to the appearance of the Éditions Gallimard, and to the typographic layout of Mallarmé’s *Un coup de Dés*. While the Éditions Gallimard, (NRF) publication is problematic in my reading, it does not detract from the conceptual weight of subsequent versions by Broodthaers’s, Pichler, *et al*, since their respective works do not depend on an accurate grasp of the dimensions of the book. The preface and editorial note written by Mallarmé to accompany the *Cosmopolis* version of *Un coup de Dés* [only], has been reproduced in the Éditions Gallimard, (NRF) publication, under the heading ‘Préface’. This is a mistake, in my opinion, but used to effect by Broodthaers and Pichler to replace Mallarmé’s note to the reader with the words of Mallarmé’s poem, which is re-presented as a dense block of text, the only indication of spacing is signified by a virgule – to indicate a line break. Broodthaers version retains the word ‘Préface’ above the text, Pichler does the same, but he adds by M. B [Marcel Broodthaers] initials, ending the text block with Stéphane Mallarmé, thereby acknowledging his lineage. The appearance of the Éditions Gallimard version favoured by Broodthaers, Pichler, Wyn Evans, Maranda, Zyboya, and Bennequin establishes membership to a ‘boys club’, and indirectly [since all of these versions are printed independently only assuming the appearance of the Édition Gallimard, (NRF) publication] affiliation to the established publishing house of Éditions Gallimard founded in 1911, as a branch of La Nouvelle Française, an influential French review of literature and the arts, founded by André Gide, Jacques Copeau, and Jean Schlumberger. See also, Appendix D: List of Éditions of *Un coup De Dés*, p. 427–430. See

that strikes me about your act of appropriation is how your gesture establishes lineage, how you position yourself in relation to these works, and by association, these two men. You keep good company.'

'The anxiety of influence,' Michalis replies, 'is not being afraid of being told that somebody had done something similar before, but quite the opposite – using finished art works as a starting point for something new, as material. I think this separates today's appropriation strategies from the so-called first-generation appropriation of the seventies, that it's also appropriating concepts, and redoing things with slight changes. That happens a lot these days, while then it was more like using images, like Sherry Levine shooting Walker Evans. Nowadays it is not so much about breaking a taboo, or pretending to break a taboo, killing the author or something. It has become not so much an if, but a how question, about the wittiness of it, how one creates a labyrinth of inside jokes.'¹⁸³

'A game for the initiated,' I say.

'But also, how it relates to the "real world" after all.' Michalis replies.¹⁸⁴

my criticism of *Éditions Gallimard*, (NRF), 1914 publication of *Un coup de Dés* in Notes on the Editions, p. xx–xxv.

183 Michalis Pichler in conversation with John Stezaker, *Michalis Pichler*, edited by Annette Gilbert and Clemens Krümmel, New York, NY: Printed Matter Inc, and Leipzig, Spector Books, 2015, pp. 218–24, 222.

184 *Ibid.*

'In your terms, like Broodthaers, you belong to a second generation of appropriators.'

'I am not sure if I would call myself a second generation appropriator, but I can tell you of people who employ similar strategies, with books, texts, and with artworks: Michael Moranda, Elizabeth Tonnard, Eric Doeringer, Natalie Czech, Jonathan Monk, Claude Closky maybe – also a lot of the conceptual writing people, Craig Dworkin, Kenny Goldsmith, Rob Fittermann, Simon Morris, Jen Bervin, Christian Bök – now these people see themselves more as poets than as visual artists.'¹⁸⁵

'I would include Sharon Kivland, and Derek Beaulieu,' I say. Both of whom read from their respective appropriations at the *Conceptual Poetics Day*, in Berlin in 2017 and 2018, at your invitation. The list of artists and writers using appropriation strategies today is testimony to an enduring practice – which seems to be implicit in any creative act that is critically engaged.¹⁸⁶ How an act of appropriation is performed reflects the methods and technologies of its time; this fact remains critical to the "idea" and becomes manifest in the form. Such acts are bound to questions of authorship, meaning, time and by association space, best summed up by Walter Benjamin, "It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or

185 Ibid.

186 Others working in this vein include Vanessa Place, Riccardo Boglione.

what is present casts its light on what is past; rather what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation".' ¹⁸⁷

'This brings me back to *Un coup de Dés*.' I say. 'We could talk at length about the historical implications of appropriation and appropriation strategies, but this may precipitate a longer conversation on the difference between modernist and postmodernist aesthetics. We would have to wake a few dead poets, uncover work embedded in other work, Homer's *Odyssey* for instance in Joyce's *Ulysses*, for now I will consign these thoughts to the footnotes so to speak.'¹⁸⁸

187 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Press, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 62 [Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*]. See also Kenneth Goldsmith, 'Why Appropriation' in *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011, pp. 109–24, 116. Goldsmith proposes Benjamin's composite work *The Arcades Project* as the greatest book of 'uncreative writing', a term that becomes synonymous with appropriation in Goldsmith's reading/writing. In his excellent critique of the place of the art object/text in a sea of images and words, Goldsmith appropriates Douglas Huebler's words, exchanging the word 'object' for 'text' to sum up his position. Goldsmith writes: 'The world is full of texts, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more.' Recalling the words of Samuel Beckett: 'I have nothing to say, that is to say, nothing in particular. I have to speak. Whatever that means, having nothing to say, no words but the words of others, I have to speak'. (Beckett, *The Unnamable*, London: Faber and Faber 2010, [*L'Innommable*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1953]). Beckett's words find their place in John Cage's 'Lecture on Nothing'; Cage writes: 'I have nothing to say and I'm saying it.' (John Cage, *Silence: Letters and Writings*, pp. 109–128, 109, [first published in *Icontri Musicali*, August 1959]).

188 T. S. Eliot cautions against tradition conceived as a 'blind or timid adherence' to the success of the generation immediately preceding the current one. His concept of tradition as continuity understood as 'historic sense', represents the reflective and comparative approach of modernist aesthetics. He writes:

Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves in the first place, the historical sense [...] and the historical sense involves a

‘As Rancière writes, Mallarmé, “you did what poets usually do – at least those who know what to do with the old moons of inspiration: you reworked the poems of your elders in your own way”.¹⁸⁹ It occurs to me that you reinvented the game – the alexandrine.’

Mallarmé answers, ‘To argue from experience today with those who are already the future, through doctoral pronouncements, is vanity, or even if one has to do it, it reveals disdain for the sovereign rule—that one should never linger, even in eternity, longer than the time it takes to draw something from the depths; but to be more precise, to attain one’s own style, or as much so as necessary to illustrate one of the aspects and veins of language: one should begin again, differently, as a student if the risk of becoming a pedant looms—thus disconcerting, with a shrug, the genuflection attempted by others, and safeguarding one’s multiplicity or impersonality or even anonymity, in front of the gesture of arms raised in stupefaction.’¹⁹⁰

perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical scene, which is a sense of timelessness as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity. (T. S. Eliot. ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, *Perspecta*, Vol.19 (1982), 36–42.

198 Op. cit., Rancière, *Mallarmé: The Politics of the Siren*, p. 3.

190 Mallarmé, ‘Solitude’, *Divigations*, pp. 271–5, 273.

I stop for a moment in front of a small rock pool. Mallarmé and Michalis so the same. Then, turning to Michalis, I say. 'I make the distinction between Broodthaers's act of appropriation, and by association yours, and my approach – which I consider to be a performative reading of *Un coup de Dés*.¹⁹¹ While my reading leads to the production of artworks – I do not consider my act one of appropriation, but testament to the generative nature of *Un coup de Dés*. At times I have taken words from the poem and re-presented them in translation as the title of a work.¹⁹² This act is one of acknowledgement, a nod to the master. I have no desire to position myself as you do by replacing Mallarmé's name with your own. But I acknowledge your act in the spirit of *Un coup de Dés*, and in the spirit of tradition put forward by T. S. Eliot, who rightfully claims: "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead [...] The existing monuments form an

191 Pichler appropriated Broodthaers's appropriation of Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*. Like Broodthaers Pichler produced three versions of *Un coup de Dés: Un coup de Dés jamais n'abolira le Hasard, Sculpture*, published, Berlin: *Greatest Hits*, 2008, 325 x 251 mm, 32mm, Offset and laser gravure, 500 copies. A second version on translucent paper, 2008, 325 x 251 mm, 64pp, 90 copies. A third version of twelve engraved plexi glass plates, 2008, 325 x 250 x 3 mm, 10 copies. In 2009 Pichler produced a further version of *Un coup de Dés jamais n'abolira le Hasard, Musique*. In this version the space occupied by Mallarmé's words have been cut into a 88 tracker note scroll which can be played on an automatic piano. (See Op. cit., *Michalis Pichler*, catalogue, pp. 108–47, 147).

192 See for instance: *Variant Sail*, and *A Simple Insinuation*, in *Portfolio of Works*.

ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work among them".¹⁹³

'Nowadays we steal much more openly, and in a much more refined way,' Michalis says, looking to Mallarmé as if to elicit a response, but Mallarmé appears deep in thought.¹⁹⁴ 'I am quite embracing as far as influence is concerned, he continues, 'even to a degree that I redo other people's work, just with slight changes, and I think it is perfectly valid, to claim that as your own work.'¹⁹⁵

'A game of affiliation,' I say. 'And there are others.'¹⁹⁶ I wonder about all these versions – I wonder, Mallarmé, if you consider these men to be equal to your idea

193 Op. cit., T. S. Eliot. 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *Perspecta*, 36–42.

194 Op. cit., Pichler, *Michalis Pichler*, p. 222.

195 Ibid.

196 Pichler is not alone in his simultaneous appropriation of Mallarmé and Broodthaers. Cerith Wyn Evans, Michael Maranda, and Jérémie Bennequin employ similar strategies. Cerith Wyn Evans writes of his appropriation of Broodthaers's appropriation of *Un coup de Dés*:

What I chose to do in reference - in reverence - to Broodthaers was to take it a step further and cut the language out completely, so that it would be possible to look through the paper to the wall and then, in a very Warholian sense, bring the very fabric of reality back into a recognition of structural material: we are made of flesh and blood, the world is something that is physical, present, temporary. In that way, it was an attempt to address the return of the real.

Michael Maranda refers his appropriation of Broodthaers's version of *Un coup de Dés* as 're-enactment', 'I re-enact the gesture of Broodthaers, taking it one step further in a meditation on "les blancs."' Instead of the black band of censorship, however, the place of the text is replaced with the absence of ink. Surrounding these literal 'blancs' is a cream coloured ink wash, imitating the paper stock of the original edition. To highlight the transformation of the reception of the poem by Broodthaer's edition, the preface of this edition is Mallarmé's original one, translated from French to Dutch and then back to

of inheritance, which “goes from natural affiliation to the line of the mind. Or that those people, young ones, in their time and at their peril, who are researching a trace of supernatural ancestors”.¹⁹⁷ My thoughts turn to Derrida’s *Memoirs of the Blind*. To ‘A singular genealogy, a singular illustration, an illustration of oneself among all the illustrious, blind men who keep each other in memory, who greet and recognise one another in the night.’¹⁹⁸

Turning to Michalis, I say, ‘I am intrigued by two acts of removal or separation in Broodtheers’s version of the poem [Fig.2.14] and yours, [Fig.2.15]. First the words are removed from the space of the page – then the space is removed from the

English using the online translator Babble Fish. The English version is printed in black ink, the French is printed in the absence of ink, and the Dutch version remains only in the traces of the transformation. (See, Michael Moranda, *Un coup de Dés jamais n’abolira le Hazard*, published by Art Metropole, 2008.

(<http://www.michaelmaranda.com/documents/projects/livre/statement.htm>).

Jérémie Bennequin whose work includes an erasure of Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, writes of his appropriation of *Un coup de Dés*: ‘To each his way of disappearing, of resisting nothingness, Proust is not effaced as Mallarmé is abolished.’ The idea of completing his work by pruning even more of *Un coup de Dés* leads Bennequin to play a game of dice, each throw resulting in the deletion of corresponding syllables. The game is relayed in real time on a computer screen and reproduced as a book [adopting the appearance of the NRF Édition]. Bennequin’s ‘decomposition’ can be seen as a movement toward silence (Jérémie Bennequin, *Le Hasard n’abolira jamais un coup de Dés*, Omage, Éditions de la Librairie Yvon Lambert, dimensions 33cm x 25cm / 32 pages) See also Bennequin’s essay, ‘Des Monts et Des Tombes’, published online at: <https://jeremiebennequin.com/des-mo-n-ts-et-des-tom-b-es>.

197 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, *Divigations*, p. 177.

198 Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Nass, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. ix [*Mémoires d’aveugle: L’outoportrait et autre ruines*, Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1990].

words. How each of these works accomplish this separation appears equal to the revelation and the meaning ascribed to your individual texts.”

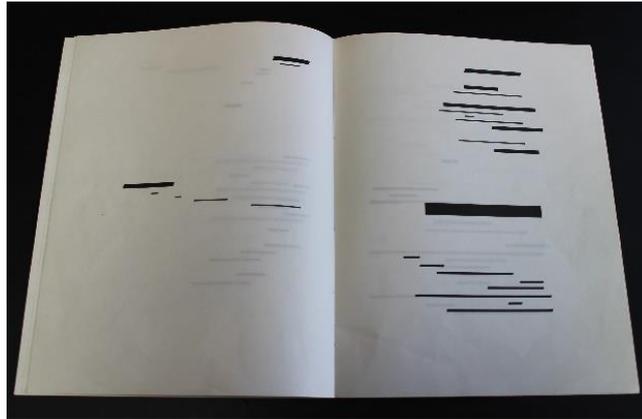


Fig 2.14

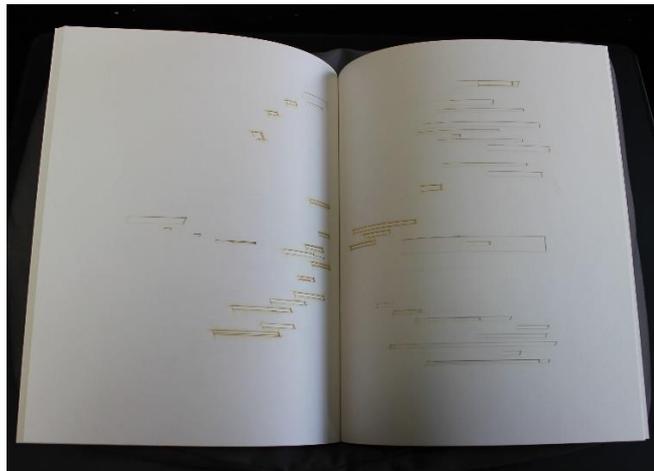


Fig 2.15

‘The very definition of sculpture, as opposed to modelling, is working in a subtractive way. With my *coup de Dés*, the text has been literally cut out and the resulting window frames not only reveal views on the page or even pages behind,

but also orchestrate a light-and-shadow-play, enacted by the very act of reading.’

199

I wonder if he is thinking of Plato’s cave.

‘Broodthaers’s treatment of *Un coup de Dés* suggests a “cover up”, I say. ‘The black bands replacing Mallarmé’s words conjure other words, other verbs: to cover, to conceal, to hide, to silence, to quiet, to censor. I am reminded of redacted text in classified documents. Broodthaers reveals the space occupied by the words in a paradoxical play which simultaneously separates the word from the space of the page, re-materialising their absence as a solid black bars. The white of the page, which in your version, Mallarmé, signifies silence is met with the sound of absence. In other words, the ‘sound and sense’ of the absent words is pronounced in the silence; made present.’

‘Michalis,’ I venture, ‘your act of “subtraction”, as you define it, is a definitive act. I am unable to separate my reading of the space from the violence of the laser used to reveal the space once occupied by Mallarmé’s words and Broodthaers’s black bars. To laser is to ‘treat or remove (something) using a laser, especially as part of a surgical procedure.²⁰⁰ In this regard the laser is a development of the scalpel employed by artist and surgeon alike to incise, to cut, to remove from the body, or, in this instance the textual body [*le corps du texte*]. Your act is final, the

199 Op. cit., Pichler, *Michalis Pichler*, p. 221.

200 See, *OED*.

words cannot be restored to the page. I imagine some words have been vaporised in the process, and others, now weightless, no longer bound by the page have literally taken flight. What remains? Each cut undermines the integrity of the page, the words may have migrated, but the structure of the page no longer supports its capacity for flight.'

Pichler smiles. I wonder if he remembers the day I ran after a sheet of paper as it flew from a large folio containing multiple unbound pages of his new work, carried away by a breeze, making me think of Homer's 'winged words'.

'It is not only about an abstract absence, but also the very physicality of the traces.'

Michalis says.²⁰¹

'The presence of absence; a trace of burning smouldering at the edge of each cut.'

I reply, recalling Michalis's version of the poem. 'When I first opened your book at the V&A, the scorch marks appeared so shocking and recent that I felt compelled to smell the book – to unearth its meaning. I wonder at your method, and the signifying chain set in motion by the trace of your act of removal. From ashes to ashes.' I say, recalling Blanchot and *The Writing of the Disaster*. 'Blanchot speaks of 'absence', the crisis of literature, the loss of meaning after the holocaust, "the absolute event of History – that utter burn where all history took fire, where the Movement of Meaning was swallowed up".'²⁰²

201 Op. cit., Pichler, *Michalis Pichler*, p. 219.

202 Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, translated by Anne Smock, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995, p. 47. [*L'Écriture du désastre*, Paris: Éditions

‘Derrida speaks of a “singular regular monotony”,’ I say, recalling his words. “One thinks one is seeing themes in the very spot where the non-theme, that which cannot become a theme, the very thing that has no meaning, is ceaselessly re-marking itself—that is, disappearing.”²⁰³

Mallarmé speaks as if from another place, ‘Everything was stormy but bright, and, in the upheavals, all to the credit of the recent generation, the act of writing was scrutinized down to its origins. [...] I formulate thus: that is itself whether writing is out of place. Monuments, the sea, the human face, in their natural fullness, conserve a property differently attractive than the veiling any description can offer—say, evocation, or I know, allusion or suggestion. This somewhat haphazard terminology bespeaks a tendency, perhaps the most decisive tendency that literary art has undergone; it limits it, but it also exempts it. The literary charm if it is not to liberate, outside of a fistful of dust or reality without enclosing it, in the book, even as a text, the volatile dispersal of the spirit, which has to do with nothing but the musicality of everything.’²⁰⁴

Gallimard (NRF), 1980].

203 Op. cit., Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, p. 251

204 Mallarmé speaking of the crisis of French literature at the turn of the nineteenth century, at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, ‘*Music and Letters*’, *Divigations*, pp. 173 – 98, 177.

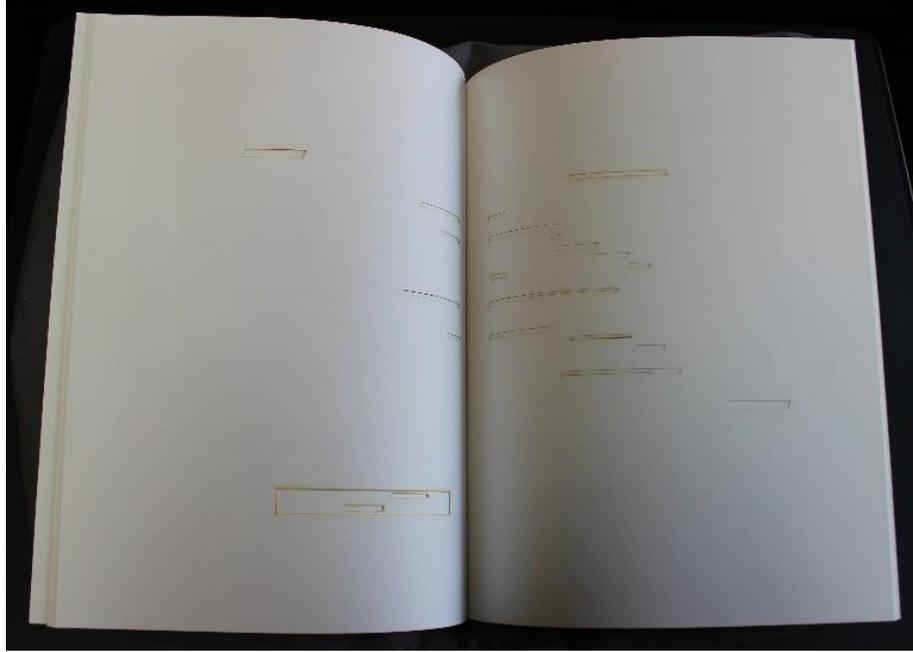


Fig 2.16

‘In your version, like Broodthaer’s version,’ I say, directing my comments to Michalis, ‘Mallarmé’s words have been banished, condensed, confined –and placed at a distance. The air circulating between the words has been extracted – separating the text from the space, form from content, sound from sense.’²⁰⁵ Words have been re-grouped without regard for Mallarmé’s spatial effect – revealing the space of literature as visual construct. Broodthaers attaches the word *Image* to his act, and you the word *Sculpture* to yours.’

²⁰⁵ Derrida writes: ‘One must distinguish between the essential content of sense and the formal appearance through which it is to be intended to be [viser]. [...] ‘Let us space. The art of this text is the air it causes to circulate between its screens.’ Derrida, *Glas*, translated by John P. Leavey, Jr., and Richard Rand, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1986, p. 75. [*Glas*, Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1974.]

Michalis says, looking straight ahead, 'There are also the windows and frames, and looking through something and onto something else which was maybe already there but.'

'Yes,' I say, interrupting Michalis, 'the absence is traced, framed in the space of the page. Space opens on to space – infinite absences. Shadows cast three-dimensional forms, suggesting windows but also letter boxes. I want to post Mallarmé's letters back to you. I want to shout the words through the letter box filling the rooms of your modernist architectural ruin. I want to poke my fingers through the letter box, through the windows that appear more like slits – I want to reveal the obscenity of your act. "It is no longer the obscenity of what is hidden, repressed, or obscure, it is the obscenity of the visible: it is the obscenity of that which has no more secrets."' ²⁰⁶

Michalis does not respond, but turns instead to face Mallarmé, saying 'I found myself working on both sides of the imaginary border between visual art and literature, and I like to think that to insist on the existence of this border is rather

206 Jean Baudrillard, *L'Autre par lui même*, Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1987, p. 20. Cited by Craig Dworkin, 'The Logic of Substrate' *No Medium: Craig Dworkin*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015, pp. 5–33, 8. Dworkin borrows Derrida's phrase '*vérite comme nudité* [truth as nakedness] to present the paradox of nudism. Dworkin writes: 'If words, conventionally thought to clothe thought, they also–Nudisme reveals–cover the page. To conceive of dematerialised ideas clothed by more tangible language elides the degree to which that sense of language is itself dematerialised in relation to the physical materiality of print that would make that language manifest. Print clothes language, which is to say, it clothes a clothing.' [Ibid., p. 7]

reactionary [...] it is not necessary for me. I like to explore the materiality of language and of text.'²⁰⁷

'Your sculpture invites touch.' I say to Michalis. 'My hand reaches like the hand of the blind man in *Memoirs of the Blind*, apprehensive of the space, but desiring the line.'²⁰⁸ Unlike Derrida's blind man who gropes in the dark, I imaging a white cane tapping out the space, divining objects in space, regarding the space and the forms occupying space.'

A sonic boom breaks all thought, a fighter jet cuts through the cloud, grey metal splits condensed vapour, and is gone.

We all fall silent. Stopped dead in our tracks. Everything appears different, as if the violence of this act had re-aligned our co-ordinates.

207 Op. cit., Pichler, *Michalis Pichler*, p. 223.

208 Op. cit., Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self – Portrait and Other Ruins*.

INTERLUDE



Fig 2.17

CHAPTER THREE

Mallarmé Me Meillassoux



Fig 3.1



Fig 3.2

I stand with my back to the Monument, my body turned towards the sea [Fig.3.1].

I raise my arms, slowly drawing my shoulder blades up and in, as if in imitation of flight [Fig.3.2]. I imagine a wingspan equal to that of the raven, flight feathers separated and joined in one body.

‘Apart we are together’ you say, two bodies separated by desire; re-joined by what you describe as an ‘intuitive accord’... one ear to the ground or to the sand, to hear that everything has fallen silent!’²⁰⁹

This space, suspended between anticipation and desire, holds an ideal form within its grasp. To imagine the object of one’s desire without ever possessing it is, ‘an absence enclosed in this solitude, a taste made of intact dreams’.²¹⁰

Yet, the space is abundant, infinite, governed by an understanding of the potential of this division to unite – a division conjured up in the paradox ‘apart we are together’, symbolised in two wings drawn together in flight.²¹¹

209 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘The White Waterlily’, *Divagations*, pp. 33–6, 35. The poet, while rowing on a lake contemplates a state of anticipation brought about by the possibility of his encounter with the women he intends to meet. He hears footsteps, perhaps those of the woman concealed in the shadows on the bank of the river. He abandons any thought of approaching her, taking pleasure in the idea of the encounter which he likens to an ‘ideal flower’, a presence enclosed in the ‘hollow whiteness’ of the petals as they fold to envelop the space at the centre of the water lily.

210 Ibid.

211 The image of a bird, of two wings, and of flight is a recurring symbol in Mallarmé’s work. The metaphoric possibilities of such imagery exploited by the Romantic poets, the Parnassians and Symbolists is signified in the figure of the swan. ‘The swan is rich with imagery and a standard symbol of the Parnassian aesthetic: Baudelaire’s swan signifies his view of himself as artist, impersonal, exiled, a stranger to the world.’ (Op. cit., Elizabeth McCombie, Introduction, *Stéphane Mallarmé Collected Poems and Other Verse*, p. xxiv). In *A Few Sonnets [This virginal long-living day]* Mallarmé recalls a swan trapped in a frozen lake:

This virginal long-living day | will it tear from us with a wing’s wild blow |
the lost hard lake haunted beneath the snow | by clear ice-fights that
never flew away! (Ibid. Mallarmé, ‘Poetical Works’, *Collected Poems and
Other Verse*, p. 67).

Flight, synonymous with freedom and movement is a metaphor for the poet’s desire to liberate himself from the constraints of language. In his essay ‘Music and Letters’ Mallarmé refers to the reciprocal relation of music and poetry: ‘the sinuous and mobile

I hear two voices. Two chords. I sense a dissonance. I lower my arms and turn to greet you. ‘You must climb over the railings and lower yourself onto the jetty to reach the Monument,’ I say.

How different these two men appear, standing now, side by side – poet and philosopher linked by *A Throw of the Dice*. I consider this union in a world without God. My thoughts turn to Plato’s concept of an ‘ideal state’, in which happiness is equated with morality, and the pursuit of truth, unity, stability and order engendered by God – an ideal model manifest in an elegant and ordered Cosmos, an ideal worthy of assimilation. Plato’s concept of unity separates the philosopher from the poet, truth from fiction. Poet and painter represent illusion and trickery; the philosopher does not share the poet or painter’s interest in the material world,

variations of the idea which writing claims to stabilize’ must recognise, ‘it is all vain, unless language, dipping and soaring on the purifying wings of song, gives it meaning’. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, p. 188).

In *Un coup de Dés* flight as a figure of speech is manifest in the typographic layout of the poem: double page three suggesting the form of two wings, dipping, and falling in the space of the page:

Whether | the | Chasm | whitish | fulltide | frenzied | down a declivity |
desperately glides | on a wing | its own | in advance fallen back from a
failure to guide its flight | and covering all the out spurts | cutting off all
the surges | far far within recalls | the shadow buried in the deep veiled
by this by this variant sail | to the point of matching | the span | with its
gaping trough like the shell | of a ship | listing to this side or that.(Op. cit.,
Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English
Translation, p. 418).

Mallarmé extends the metaphor through play – the page is also a wing that might take flight, or a sail, or veil, or one and the same. The symbol of two wings in the M of Mallarmé, is exploited to effect in his monograph, which he places beneath his signature to signify the swan, Mallarmé’s personal emblem, like his cherished friend James McNeill Whistler’s butterfly. (Op. cit., Anna Sigrídur Arnar, *The Book As Instrument: Stéphane Mallarmé, The Artist’s Book, and the Transformation of Print Culture*, p. 243).

he is governed by reason, in his rational pursuit of knowledge, he is closer by virtue to truth, and to God.²¹²

I wonder about this relation, what truth can be found in a world without God? What model could replace God? Can there be truth without beauty, beauty without truth?

‘I see you have had the opportunity to speak with one another,’ I say, as I move to position myself between the two men to take centre stage.

‘Yes, my dear friend, we travelled together from Paris to be with you today,’ Mallarmé says stepping forward to greet me.

‘Let me introduce you to Meillassoux, I gather from your letter that you have not met in person.’

‘I am so glad that you were able to be here today given the demands of your work,’ I say, taking Meillassoux’s hand.

‘A pleasure.’ Meillassoux says. ‘We have in the course of our journey had the opportunity to discuss my reading of *Un coup de Dés*, which you will know from my book, *The Number and the Siren: a Decipherment of Mallarmé’s coup de Dés*.²¹³

212 Plato, ‘Poetry and Unreality’, *Republic*, A New Translation by Robin Waterfield, Oxford World’s Classics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, [first published 1994, revised 1998], pp. 344–62.

213 Quentin Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren: A Decipherment of Mallarmé’s Coup de Dés*, translated by Robin Mackay, New York, NY: Urbanomic/Sequence Press, 2012 [*Le Nombre et la sirène*, Paris: Fayard, 2011]. Meillassoux’s use of the word ‘decipherment’ to suggest a musical motif is explained by Robin Mackay in the translators note. He writes:

In your letter you mention a mathematical principle at work in Mallarmé's poem – a structure that simultaneously constructs and deconstructs itself, which you believe to be the hidden architecture of the poem – I am intrigued.'

'Well then, this is a good place to begin,' I say, walking towards the sea. 'It is no coincidence that tonight is a Full Moon, and a Super Moon,' I continue glancing in Mallarmé's direction. 'The Sun and the Moon will be in opposition; placed either side of the Earth; with the Moon in its nearest approach to the Earth. If I imagine, positioned as we are now in a line, with me in the centre so that I am the Earth and you are the Sun and the Moon, we can calculate an angle of one hundred and eighty degrees between us. If I draw a vertical line through the centre-point, I will have created two right-angled triangles placed either side of me, two sails as we face north into the wind [Fig.3.3].'²¹⁴

Déchiffrement and *Déchiffrage*: Meillassoux's argument, in so far as it brings together a musical motif with that of coding and decoding, plays on these two related words; "Déchiffrement" is simply deciphering; "Déchiffrage" refers specifically to a musician's "deciphering" of a written musical score. This is even reflected in the original subtitle, which reads "A déchiffrage [not déchiffrement] of Mallarmé's *coup de Dés*. Un fortunately, although English does not share with French one of the etymological convergences that Meillassoux exploits – that of musical keys and keys that unlock – there is no English equivalent for "déchiffrage", the equivalent term being "sight-reading", which I have used once or twice to mark the double register. (Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, 'Translator's Note, pp. 293–8, 293).

²¹⁴ Observation of the phases of the Moon reveal a symbolic relation to the structural organisation of *Un coup de Dés*. Rotational calculations of the New Moon – zero degrees, first quarter – ninety degrees, Full Moon – one hundred and eighty degrees, and third quarter – two hundred and seventy degrees, correspond with the rotation of twelve pages around a central axis. The symbolic significance of the Moon, its elliptical orbit around the Earth, is calculated at twelve degrees per day. The Earth's rotation coupled with the gravitational forces exerted by the Sun and the Moon governing tidal patterns a symbolic system linking tidal movement and wave pattern to rhythm, and to line in poetry. Other

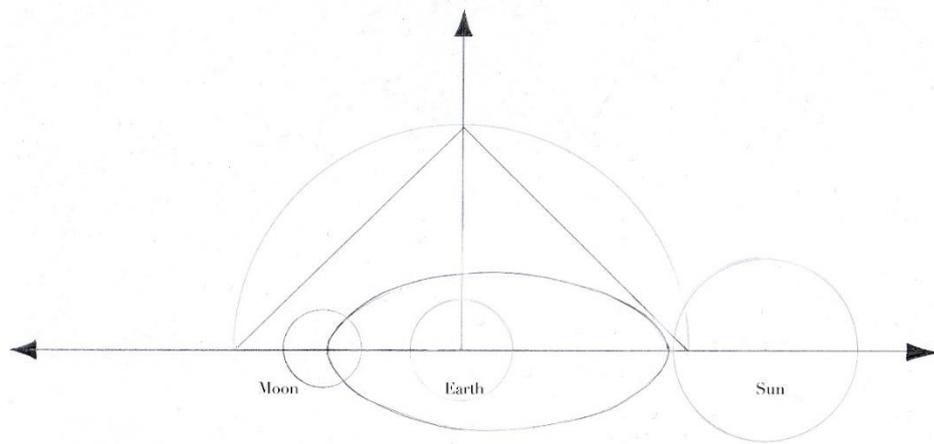


Fig 3.3



Fig 3.4

'Anyone who has really looked at nature contains inside himself a theatre inherent to the mind, a summary of types and correspondences: just as any volume

relational terms implied in the phases of the moon include synodic meeting – the alignment of celestial bodies, and appropriation of synod relating to church governance and the meeting of Bishops. In *Un coup de Dés*, the cyclical patterns are repeated; this is a feature of the poem and of Mallarmé's multiple play – mirrored in the structural layout of the poem and its hidden architecture.

confronts them, opening up its parallel pages.’²¹⁵ Mallarmé says, anticipating my thoughts.

‘With two pages and their lines of verse,’ he continues, ‘and the accompaniment of my whole self, I supply the world! Or at least I perceive, discretely, its drama.’²¹⁶

‘There is a symmetry to your words,’ I reply, ‘leading me to the heart of the poem; to an unfolding of *Un coup de Dés*.’

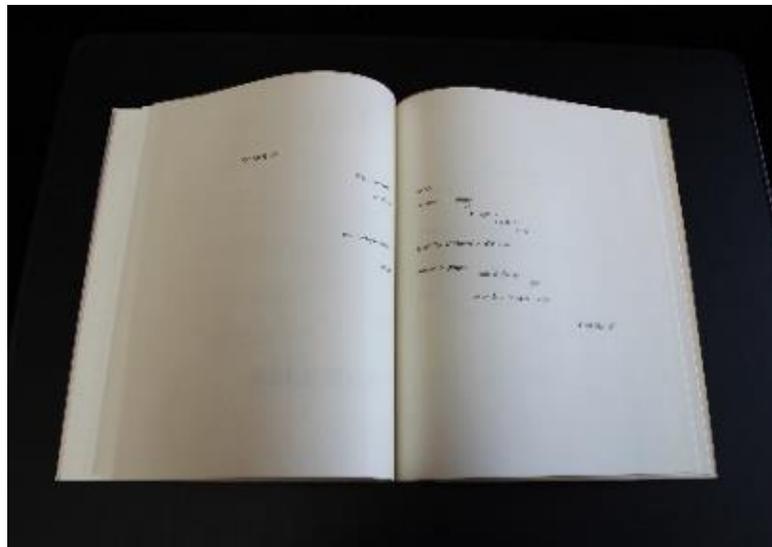


Fig 3.5

‘Let us return to page six [Fig.3.5],’ Meillassoux says. ‘This page plays a role that is, to the letter, central for the Poem: It separates it, as we have seen, into two equal halves, the counting of whose pages – twelve on each side incites us to read the

²¹⁵ Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Stages and Pages’, *Divagations*, p. 161.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

whole of the poem as if it were composed of a couplet of rhymed alexandrines brought together in a chiasitic structure.²¹⁷

‘I agree that page six is central to the poem. Just as the fold, the *pli* unites and divides the double page, echoing the caesura of the alexandrine, which divides the line of twelve syllables into two halves to establish a ‘principle of division’. My reading of page six goes further; acknowledging the chiasitic arrangement of the poem – and revealing the hidden architecture which demonstrate a mathematical principle at the heart of the poem; connecting the architecture of the dice to the twelve double pages of *Un Coup de Dés* – performing a chiasitic operation. The term chiasitic is also used by Dee Reynolds and Roger Pearson to describe the arrangement of page six,’ I continue, curious to know if Meillassoux is familiar with their research, but he continues without acknowledging the point.²¹⁸

‘You will know from my book that I bring to light a procedure of encryption housed in *coup de Dés*.²¹⁹ This procedure, once deciphered, allows the precise

217 Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 58. Meillassoux defines the alexandrine as ‘a rhymed pair, stanza or couplet’ (Ibid., p. 184). See *Chiasmus*: ‘a rhetorical or literary figure in which words, grammatical constructions, or concepts are repeated in reverse order’ (OED). See Appendix G: Glossary of Terms, p. 506.

218 Reynolds writes: ‘It is not coincidental that the configuration ‘si’ figures prominently on double-page six, where it frames the chiasitic pattern of the text on both sides’. (Dee Reynolds, *Symbolist Aesthetics and Early Abstract Art: Sites of Imaginary Space*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 111). In Roger Pearson’s reading, the chiasmus extends from ‘the centerfold and deepest “abîme” of the text, and across ‘*Un coup de Dés*’ as a whole’ (Roger Pearson, *Unfolding Mallarmé: The Development of a Poetic Art*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 259).

219 Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 3. See Meillassoux’s use of the term ‘decipherment’ to bring together a musical motif with that of coding and decoding (Ibid., p. 293). In the preface to *Un coup de Dés*, Mallarmé writes:

‘Let me add, for anyone who would read it aloud, a musical score results from this stripped-down form of thought (with retreats, prolongations, flights) or from its very

determination of the ‘unique number’ enigmatically evoked in the poem. Thus, the poem is coded and the ability to read this code is a condition of the true comprehension of *Un coup de Dés*.²²⁰ Meillassoux says with an unusual degree of certainty. Then, he says. ‘The discovery of the code will not offer us a response that will unknot all the difficulties of the poem, but will instead present us with a new question: Why encrypt *Un coup de Dés*; or more exactly, why encrypt in this way?’²²¹

‘The one and only Number that cannot be any other,’ Mallarmé says, quoting directly from his poem, but giving nothing away.²²²

layout. (Op. cit, Mallarmé, *Collected Poems and Other Verse*, p. 262). Roger Pearson’s links the homophonic texture of Mallarmé’s versification to the notes on the musical scale: ‘*Si* is the seventh note on a musical scale and so called after the initials of “Sancte Iohannes” following a nomenclature introduced by Guido d’Arezzo scale’. (Op. cit., Pearson, *Unfolding Mallarmé: The development of a Poetic Art*, p. 265). The relation of ‘*Si*’ to “Sancte Iohannes” is developed by Meillassoux who acknowledges his debt to Bertrand Marchal’s earlier comments on Mallarmé’s poem *Noces d’ Hérodiade*, and which Meillassoux links to *Un coup de Dés*, Marchal writes: But the ‘*si*’ that gives the tonality of the text also evokes the musical note, whose etymology we know: Sancte Ioannes. (Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 61). Meillassoux discusses the symbolic role of decapitation in Mallarmé’s, *Noces d’ Hérodiade*, and *Un coup de Dés*. (Ibid, p. 55–6). The significance of ‘*si*’ in Meillassoux’s sight-reading leads him to conclude that *Un coup de Dés* is written ‘in seven as a sonata is written in *si* minor’, (Ibid., pp. 67–8). *Si* – the seventh note on the elementary musical scale represents for Meillassoux’s the key to deciphering Mallarmé’s ‘numerical enterprise’ (Ibid., p. 66).

220 Ibid., p. 3. Meillassoux acknowledges the suspicion that his claim that *Un coup de Dés* is coded will provoke, citing Jacques Rancière who renounces any attempt to reduce Mallarmé’s poetry to a ‘key’ that would unveil its ultimate meaning, a position shared by many Mallarméan scholars.

221 Ibid., p.11.

222 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés* (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés: An English Translation*, p. 415–26.) ‘The one and only Number that cannot’ [l’unique Nombre qui ne peut pas] appears on the verso, and ‘be another’ [être un autre] on the recto. (Ibid., p. 418) The line is divided by the fold. Composed of twelve syllables suggesting the traditional form of the alexandrine, at the same time the fragmented line breaks with

“‘IF || IT WAS \ THE NUMBER \ IT WOULD BE \ CHANCE”,’ I continue, recalling the words of the poem; words connected typographically and separated in the space of the page.²²³

‘Your ‘seductive game’ is in play.’ I add. ‘I can see fragments of classical verse emerging like clues across the fold.’²²⁴ The word ‘if’ suspended like a supposition between pages makes me wonder if your game is, after all, one of chance.’²²⁵

We all fall silent; our feet press into the soft ground. I no longer wish to speak, but words are forming as dark clouds appear on the horizon.

*AS IF | A simple insinuation | in the silence inrolled ironically | or | the
mystery | hurled down | howled out | in some imminent swirl of hilarity
and horror | hovers on the brink of the abyss | without sprinkling it | or
escaping | and draws from it the soothing virgin sign | AS IF.*²²⁶

conventional alexandrine. See also the capitalised word *Nombre* which draws attention to the significance of the number twelve and its placement in a line containing twelve syllables. See Appendix F: Syllabic Count of *Un coup de Dés*, pp. 458 – 504.

223 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés: An English Translation*, p.423–4).

224 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Crisis of Verse’, *Divigations*, p. 206.

225 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés: An English Translation*, p. 421).

226 *Ibid.*, p. 421.

‘Chance,’ I say, breaking the silence. “‘Inrolled ironically”– like the dice, leading me to the centre of your poem; to the hidden architecture. If I may explain briefly, as it appears that a storm is heading this way.’

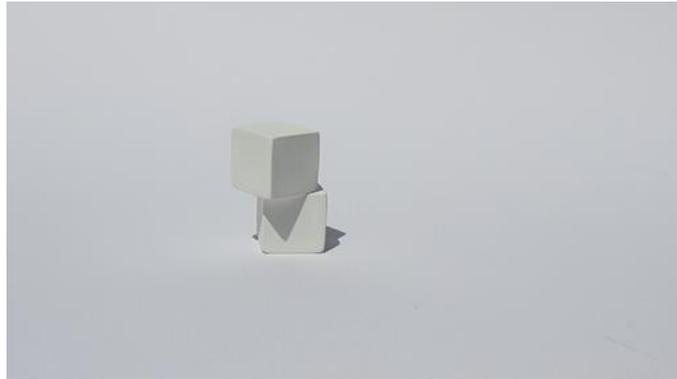


Fig 3.6

‘Two small blocks of wood, cubes, spacing devices intended for use in the construction of a piece of flat-pack furniture, fell from their packaging and rolled across my studio floor [Fig.3.6]. A coincidence: a chance encounter that focused my attention. I felt compelled to paint each surface, layer on layer of white gesso; sanding and smoothing between layers, softening the edges, until the cubes attained the weight and feel equal to my idea of the dice. Dice without dots, without numbers, twelve beautiful white squares, joined and separated by a line, an edge equal to each fold of the twelve pages of *Un coup de Dés.*’

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| ONE CUBE | ONE CUBE | TWO CUBES |
| SIX SQUARES | SIX SQUARES | TWELVE SQUARES |
| TWELVE EDGES | TWELVE EDGES | TWENTY FOUR EDGES |

‘The thesis of a coding of the poem by the number twelve has undergone a refutation by fact from which there is no question of returning. It also contains a difficulty in principle, which we must discuss in order to clarify our own perspective.’ Meillassoux says.²²⁷

‘You refer to Mitsou Ronat’s thesis and the question of ‘Igitur’,’ I say, aware that we do not have the time to discuss these points in detail.²²⁸

227 Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 27. Meillassoux is referring to Mitsou Ronat’s reading of *Un coup de Dés*. Ronat proposes a ‘numerical principle’ at work in Mallarmé’s poem; in which the visible constraint of tradition – the alexandrine becomes invisible in the pages of the book. She equates the number twelve, its multiples, and divisions with the formal structural arrangement of *Un coup de Dés*. Ronat credits Mallarmé with creating a new genre, one that unites the traditional form with free verse. Meillassoux limits the significance of the number twelve and its relation to the alexandrine to the ‘material contours’ of *Un coup de Dés* ‘dominating the setting of the text to be read’ (Ibid., p. 48.). The content he argues is governed by a different number, by the number seven, the true cipher of the poem (Ibid.). Meillassoux’s count is based like Ronat’s on a numerical principle, however, he discredits Ronat’s count which he believes is based on miscalculation relating to the typographic layout of the poem. He concludes, as Ronat does, that *Un coup de Dés* contains ‘both the ‘play’ of free verse, and the strict count of regular verse’, recognising *Un coup de Dés* as the first of a genre, a prototype, like the number in *Un coup de Dés*, ‘unique’. Meillassoux qualifies its uniqueness as eventual, not arithmetical’ (Ibid., p. 164.). Meillassoux refers to a ‘problematic count’, that is the rule of constraint governing fixed metre. He describes a ‘principle of uncertainty’ governing the alexandrine; that is whether the letter ‘e’, should be ‘pronounced or elided at leisure’ (Ibid., p.182). He believes this ‘principle of uncertainty’ is transferred by Mallarmé to *Un coup de Dés*. A comprehensive account of my defence of Ronat considering Meillassoux’s refutation of her thesis, and based on my findings, including and my syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés* is provided in Appendices, Appendix H: Expanded Notes p. 511. See also Appendix F: Syllabic Count of *Un coup de Dés*, p. 458–504.

228 ‘Igitur’ is the title of an unfinished prose-poem, by Mallarmé (1869), published in 1925, twenty-two years after the poet’s death. Like *Un coup de Dés*, Igitur reflects on the ‘crisis of verse’ particular to French literature, in which Mallarmé evokes the spirit of Hamlet, ‘that latent lord that cannot become’. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Hamlet’, *Divigations*, pp. 124–8, 125). At the stroke of midnight Igitur descends a stair, to the tomb of his ancestors, to perform an act of chance, to throw the dice, in a bid to accomplish a sum of twelve.

In an act where chance is in play, chance always accomplishes its own
Idea in affirming or negating itself. Confronting its existence, negation

'If Ronat's thesis had been correct, it would have placed *Un coup de Dés*, in strict continuity with "Igitur",' Meillassoux says. 'The drama hangs entirely upon Igitur's hesitation to throw the dice – the very hesitation we find again in the attitude of the master faced with the storm of free verse.'²²⁹

'I have read your book with great interest, Monsieur Meillassoux, and I would agree that some clarity is needed in relation to the significance of the number twelve. It may be useful to summarise these points now, but I have not finished my account of the hidden architecture of the poem. I suspect that my findings may cause you to reconsider your dismissal of Ronat's thesis, and indeed, the question of 'Igitur'.' I notice the ground becoming slippery. 'I fear we have gone too far.' I say.

'Let us walk a little further,' Mallarmé says. 'Up above and at the horizon is a bright cloud, with a narrow blue burrow in it for a Prayer.'²³⁰

and affirmation fail. It contains the Absurd - implies it, but in the latent state and prevents it from existing: which permits the Infinite to be. (Mallarmé, *Igitur*, translated by Mary Ann Caws).

Igitur hesitates; in an act of pure suspension, he lies down on the tomb of his ancestors, with the dice held in his clenched fist. Ronat writes:

My central hypothesis is the following: *Un coup de Dés* is constructed entirely (though probably not only) from "the one number that cannot be another", that is, the double-six falling from the hand of Igitur. (Ronat. 'Le « coup de dés »: forme fixe?' *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*, n°32, 1980, pp. 141–47, 143).

229 Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 28.

230 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Long Ago, in the Margins of a Copy of Baudelaire', *Divigations*, p. 49.

Mallarmé's words open the sky, a strip of cerulean blue spreads out turning the ground in the distance gold. I sense a change in mood. Meillassoux smiles, I suspect he acknowledges the irony of Mallarmé's words.

We fall silent, three solitary figures approaching the horizon, moving in time in rhythm to some internal beat, a logic we have learned to count.

'There is no doubt the number twelve is significant. We have established its relation to metre in French poetry; to the alexandrine, a tradition that goes back to the seventeenth century. In your lecture you compare language to a game; oscillating between forms.'²³¹I continue, turning to Mallarmé.

'It's really the culmination of what used to be called the prose poem, Mallarmé says. 'The very strict, numerical and direct, with the play of its two parts, the former metre subsists, alongside experimentation. That's where we are now: the separation. In place of the way the powerful romantic ear at the beginning of the century, combined the doubleness of their undulating alexandrines with their stressed caesuras and enjambments; fusion undid itself towards integrity. A lucky discovery which seems to bring to a close yesterday's experiments is *free verse*—an individual modulation (as I say frequently), because every soul is a rhythmic tangle.'²³²

231 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Crisis of Verse', *Divigations* pp. 201–211.

232 Ibid., p. 183–4.

“A throw of the dice”, I whisper. ‘Igitur’s chance, twelve as a potential of a dice throw.’

‘The number twelve: at once that of midnight – the critical instant, the irreversible spectator of the Past and Future – and that of the perfect alexandrine. The question is whether this throw, which aims at the perfect verse, must still be perpetuated, and with it the line of your ancestors, [romantic and Parnassian poet] given that God has ceased for the young Mallarmé, to guarantee the status of literary symbols, nothingness and “chance” reigned over Letters and over existence alike.’²³³ Meillassoux replies, raising his eyebrows.

Meillassoux’s question hovers in the space between what has passed and what has yet to come. I consider the reciprocal nature of music and letters put forward by Mallarmé; how Mallarmé’s abstract vision may overcome contingency, as he writes ‘language dipping and soaring on the purifying wings of song gives it meaning.’²³⁴ I wait for Mallarmé’s response, but he appears deep in thought. Conscious of the gravity and complexity of Meillassoux’s question, yet eager to sum up this play of twelve by disclosing my hypothesis, I say, ‘Let us put God on hold for a moment.’

‘What if,’ I continue, “a simple insinuation in the silence inrolled ironically, or the mystery hurled down howled out, in some imminent swirl of hilarity and horror,

²³³ Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and The Siren*, p. 28.

²³⁴ Op., cit, Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, *Divigations*, p. 189.

hovers on the brink of the abyss, without sprinkling it or escaping, and draws from it the soothing virgin sign".²³⁵ What if this potential is contained in the dots of the dice, in their number and arrangement; in the infinite possibilities they present. "A total count in the making"?²³⁶

"The unique Number that cannot be another"? Meillassoux replies, re-presenting Mallarmé's paradox as a question.²³⁷

'Just as Ronat's thesis suggests,' I add. '*Un coup de Dés* is constructed entirely, though probably not only from "the one number that cannot be another" that is, the double-six falling from the hand of Igitur.'²³⁸

235 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés: An English Translation*, p. 421.)

236 Ibid.

237 Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number And The Siren*, p. 26.

238 Op. cit., Ronat. 'Le « coup de dés »: forme fixe?', *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*, p. 143. Meillassoux, makes the point that every number is necessarily identical to itself and not to another, just as one could say that every number can be augmented by a unit and become other by addition, concluding that every aleatory result is contingent in so far as it will have been able to be another, (Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number And The Siren*, p. 20). Meillassoux's arithmetical interpretation of Mallarmé's paradox overlooks the number anticipated in the dice throw. The dice by design is the union of two numbers, any throw will equal the sum of the dice. In this respect twelve is achieved by throwing two sixes, the only possible combination to achieve the sum of twelve, a multiple of six by two. In this respect six (6+6) is identical to itself. I have considered all the possible permutations of a dice throw; my conclusion; the numbers twelve and two are the only two numbers to be achieved by one throw, and by two numbers identical to themselves: two (1+1= 2), and twelve (6+6=12). If, and I suspect this is the case, the number to be achieved is divided, not in the space of the page, but across the pages of the poem, and presented as the sum of two parts, just as the numbers are separated in the dice are identical to themselves and to one another.

‘In my reading of *Un coup de Dés*,’ I continue, ‘I discover two sixes, two words, each containing six syllables falling across pages of the poem, first on page six in insinuation, and then on page nine in hallucination. It was never my intention to seek out ‘the number’, or to reveal a code in the pages of *Un coup de Dés*. However, the words insinuation and hallucination prompted a full syllabic count of the poem, and its re-presentation first as a series of dots and then numbers; a corresponding syntactical structure which I animate to demonstrate the constellationary play at work in *Un coup de Dés*.²³⁹ The question is not, can I locate two sixes, the perfect alexandrine, but what meaning can be ascribed to this event, since it has already taken place?’

‘Every thought, in so far as it is formulated in a language, produces a series of aleatory numbers linked to the linguistic components necessary for its formulation.’²⁴⁰ Meillassoux says, stopping abruptly to make his point. ‘Our concluding phrase, “Every Thought emits a Throw of the Dice”, contains, like every phrase, a certain number of letters, of syllables, of words, of substantives, etc. These numbers are ‘engendered’ by thought in so far as it finds itself formulated in them, but in themselves they have no meaning – and in particular, no meaning linked to the thought in question.’²⁴¹

239 See related Portfolio of Work: corresponding artist books, and animations.

240 Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 49.

241 Ibid.

‘Yet, you and I, and Mallarmé count. Is our numerical enterprise “a demented act”?’ I ask, smiling directly at Mallarmé.²⁴²

‘The traditional poet,’ Meillassoux replies, ‘one who practises regular verse – is precisely one who submits language to a count, and more especially to the count of syllables so, as to guarantee their meter.’²⁴³

‘Those who remain faithful to the alexandrine, our hexameter, loosen internally the rigid and childish mechanism of its meter: the ear, freed from gratuitous inner counter, feels pleasure in discerning all the possible combinations and permutations of twelve beats.’²⁴⁴ Mallarmé replies, brushing sand from his coat, before continuing. ‘It’s not arbitrary that there should be similarities between poetry and ancient proportions: some kind of regularity will last because the poetic act consists of seeing that an idea can be broken up into a certain number of motifs that are equal in some way, and of grouping them; they rhyme; as an external seal, the final words are proof of their common measure.’²⁴⁵

I see how the words insinuation and hallucination are separated in the pages of *Un coup de Dés* and joined in rhyme and in syllabic count. I imagine detaching the

242 Valéry recall’s Mallarmé handing him the corrected proofs of *Un coup de Dés*, prior to being printed in *Cosmopolis*, and commenting ‘Don’t you think it is an act of sheer madness?’. (Op. cit., Valéry, Concerning a Throw of the Dice, *Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé*, p.310).

243 Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 49.

244 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Crisis of Verse’, *Divigations*, p. 203.

245 Ibid. p 206.

dots from the dice and placing them side by side to form two right-angled triangles [Fig. 3.8], two sails, two wings, joined and separated in the white of the page; and doubled in the process of making, in the fold of the signature sheet. [Fig. 3.10]

Mallarmé pauses, then as if reading my thoughts, he says 'The intellectual armature of the poem conceals itself, is present, and acts, in the blank space which separates the stanzas and in the white of the paper: a pregnant silence no less wonderful to compose than verse itself.'²⁴⁶

'It begins with insinuation,' I reply. 'A simple insinuation in the silence; the words of the centre pages playing over and over in my mind. Sounding the words out, first in French then in English, to produce a homophonic texture, which reveals secrets between the chords, and in a rhythm. Hidden rhymes revealed not only in sound, but visual rhymes, that move beyond the language of words, syllables and letters, crossing over into mathematics, geometry, trigonometry, producing signs and sines, arches that share in these ancient proportions.'²⁴⁷

'The word *insinuate*,' I continue, 'from *in* and *sinuare* to curve, is linked to sinus and to sinus rhythm.'²⁴⁸ This in turn denotes the sino-atrial node of the heart and

²⁴⁶ Mallarmé, *Oeuvres Complètes*, edited by Henri Mondor, and G. Jean-Aubry, Paris: Gallimard, 1945, p. 872.

²⁴⁷ Mallarmé writes: 'It is not arbitrary that there should be similarities between poetry and ancient proportions.' (Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Crisis of Verse, Divigations*, p. 206.)

²⁴⁸ To insinuate is to suggest or to hint in an indirect way; originating in the sixteenth century (in the sense to 'enter (a document) on the official register'): from Latin *insinuate* – introduced tortuously, from the verb *insinuare*, from *in* – *in* + *sinuare* to curve, see synonyms: whisper, aside, innuendo (*OED*). Dee Reynolds makes the point that italic type is used to effect by Mallarmé, who associates italics with handwriting, suggesting a confidential aside. See, Reynolds, *Symbolist Aesthetics and Early Abstract Art*, p. 111.

its function of regulating the heartbeat; situated at the heart of *Un coup de Dés*. In *Le Littré* insinuation is also linked to *insinuare*, to sinus, and to geometry and the sign of an arc or angle of ninety degrees.²⁴⁹

‘There is so much more to discuss.’ I say. ‘There are hosts and Eucharists and cupolas and domes, the mass and civic religion, ceremony and ritual, infinity and chance, the universe.’

Poet, painter, and philosopher, we face the sea, ‘to gaze at what lies beyond our daily existence, which is to say infinity and nothingness.’²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ *Le Littré*, confirms a six syllable count in insinuation. (*in-si-nu-a-sion ; en vers, de six syllabes*) s. f. See also hallucination :(*Al-lu-si-na-sion, en vers, de six syllabes*). F. Insinuation is defined as the recording of an act on an authoritative register, in order to give authenticity to the writing. (Si-nus). M. In geometry, the sine of an arc or angle is the perpendicular lowered from one end of the arc to the diameter that passes through the other end. It is undoubted, and in this Descartes deserves a blow of censer, that the sinus of incidence and that of refraction are in reciprocal reason of their velocities in the environments which they traverse, [Voltaire, Lett. Mairan, 11 Sept. 1738] It is in the first quarter of the circumference that the sinuses form, and generally all the lines which trigonometry employs, [Laplace, Exp. I, 12] The sine slope of an arc or angle is the length between the foot of the sine and the point where the diameter meets the circumference. Total sinus, the sine of an arc or angle of ninety degrees, which is equal to the radius. In trigonometry, sin x is the positive or negative number that measures the sine of the angle or arc x, the radius being taken as a unit. Table of sinuses, table of sin x values for all arc lengths. Origin: Latin expression adopted in the Middle Ages to translate the word jayb, chosen by the Arabs to designate the half-cord of the double arch, and which properly signifies sinus indusii (D'AVEZAC, Project, géogr. p. 83). This precludes the conjecture according to which, the cord being formerly inscripta, the inscribed line, the sinus was first called semi-inscripted, then, by abbreviation, s-inscripta, s. Ins, and finally sins, from whereby euphony sine.

²⁵⁰ Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Mallarmé on Fashion*, p. 56.

INTERLUDE



Fig 3.7



Fig 3.8

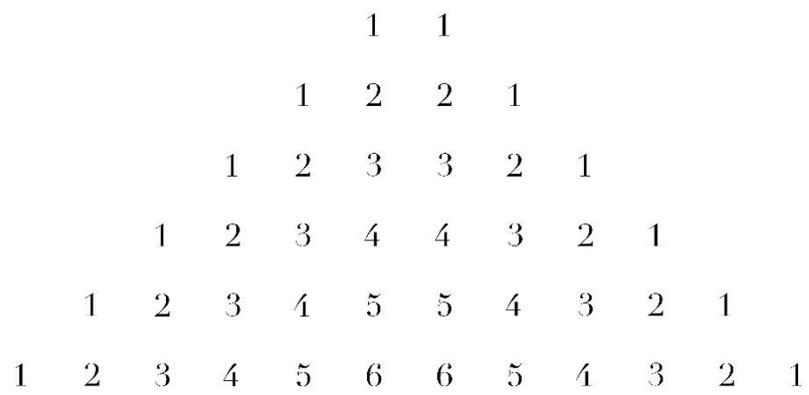


Fig 3.9

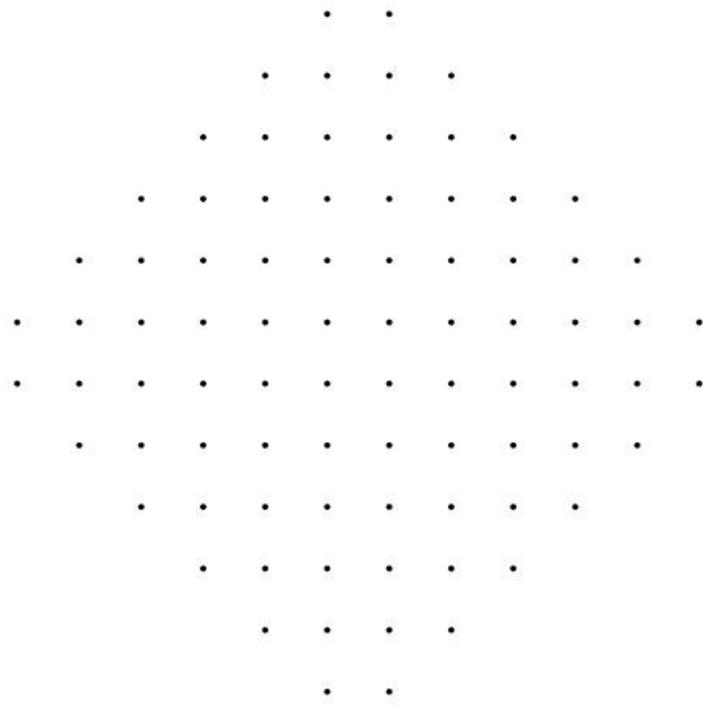


Fig 3.10

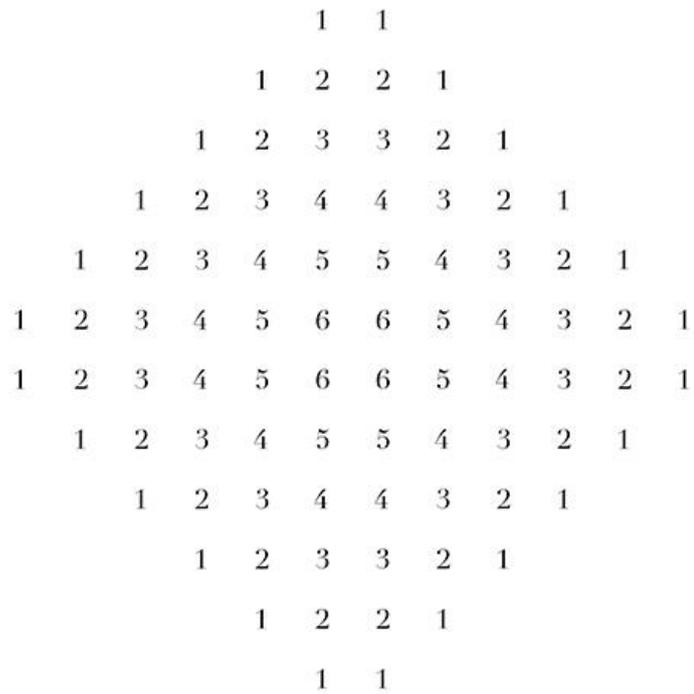


Fig 3.11

CHAPTER FOUR

Meillassoux Me Mallarmé

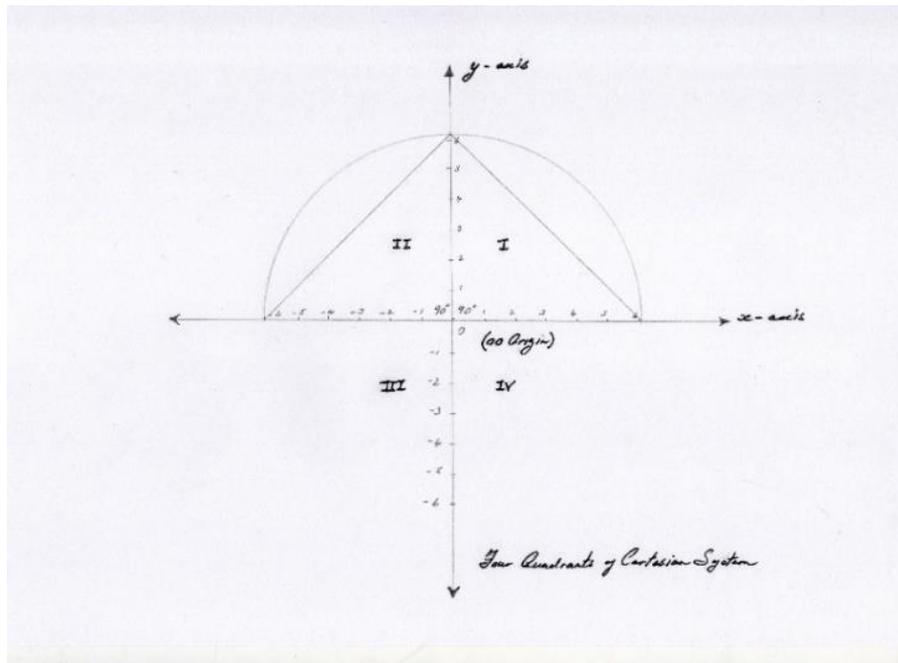


Fig. 4.1

We stand facing the sea, 'to gaze at what lies beyond our daily existence, which is to say infinity and nothingness'.²⁵¹ I consider 'this pale and indistinct line' as it curves away from me, separating first the sea from sky, then the earth from the heavens. I imagine a second line, the sine of an arc extending from the ground to my right, to a point above my head, the perpendicular, and then to a point on my left, as it inscribes an arch [Fig. 4.1], the arc of an angel, a messenger in the sine of x.

²⁵¹ Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Mallarmé on Fashion*, p. 56.

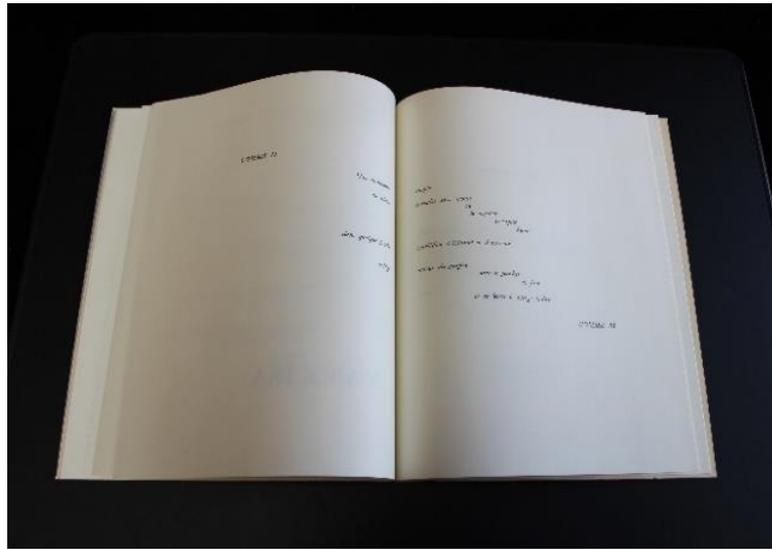


Fig. 4.2

My thoughts turn to the origin of the word *sine*, to *jayb*, chosen by the Arabs to designate the half-cord of the double arch.²⁵² The cord is formerly *inscripta*, the inscribed line. I wonder about this curve, this perfect line, insinuated in *Un coup de Dés*. I see that the poem operates under the sign of ‘*si*’ contained in ‘*in(s)inuation*’, a sign that proliferates in the centre pages of *Un coup de Dés*, in and across translation [Fig. 4.2].²⁵³

252 Victor J. Katz, writes: ‘The word *sine* comes from a Latin mistranslation of the Arabic *jiba*, which is a transliteration of the Sanskrit word for half the chord, *jya-ardha*’. (Katz, *A History of Mathematics*, Boston: Addison-Wesley, 2008, 3rd. ed., p. 253).

253 Mallarmé’s associative game operates across translation, between the written and spoken word. See also, Meillassoux’s reading of ‘*Si*’ in ‘*insinuation*’, being equal to the seventh note of the ‘*sol-fa*’ musical scale. (Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 66.)

This ‘simple insinuation’ is an ironic play. The small italic font betrays its significance. In the preface to *Un coup de Dés*, Mallarmé writes: ‘the different type face between the principal theme, a secondary one, and adjacent ones, dictates their level of importance when uttered orally’.²⁵⁴ This insinuation, whispered perhaps, carries an official seal, the authority of the signatory, mirrored in the act of inscribing, implying a solemn occasion, a ceremony, a permanent record. The words ‘*COMME SI | COMME SI*’ in translation ‘*AS IF / AS IF*’ join to form an ornate clasp, the signatory seal of the poem [Fig. 4.3]. I picture the **S** of *SI* entwined with

the **S** of the second *SI*, forming the image of the whirlpool. Two sixes coiled together, to form a circle, now a figure of eight, which if turned on its side reveals



a sign of infinity. The figure of the siren, her ‘siren sinuosity’ is evoked in

the letter **S**, which may also be linked to the letter **f**, signified in the solitary

plume, ‘an utterly lost and lonely quill’.²⁵⁵ The quill pen, a flight feather, links by

254 Op. cit., Mallarmé, preface to *Un coup de Dés*, *Collected Poems and Other Verse*, p. 263. Italic type may be linked as previously noted to the handwritten note, to cursive script and the signature, and by association the hand of the artist and line. The question of authority and of authorship is signalled and paralleled in Mallarmé’s linguistic act. In a letter to Paul Verlaine, Mallarmé refers to his ‘fragment’ [*Un coup de Dés*] as ‘anonymous since the text would speak by itself and without the author’s voice’. (Op. cit., Rosemary Lloyd, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, Letter to Paul Verlaine, Numbered 103, November 16, 1885, pp.142–6, 144) Mallarmé’s letter in my opinion signifies the book to come, a self-generating book of letters and by association numbers.

255 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup De Dés* (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 421.) See Mallarmé’s corrections to the ‘f’ of *Fiançailles* in proofs of *Un*

association flight and swan, script and manuscript, the plume of Hamlet's cap, and song.²⁵⁶ The letter **S** and **f**, included in 'AS IF /AS IF', and 'COMME SI / COMME

SI', recall the shape of the sound hole carved into stringed musical instruments.²⁵⁷

The *f* hole,  a symbol that also appears in pairs  bears a striking resemblance to the S in the handwritten manuscript [Fig. 4.3].

coup de Dés and request of the printers to accentuate the curve of the figure 'f'. (Op. cit., Reynolds, *Symbolist Aesthetics and Early Abstract Art: Sites of Imaginary Space*, p. 110)

²⁵⁶ Ibid. The figure of Hamlet is conjured up in the line 'a bitter prince of the reef'. Hamlet's hat and plume are separated in the storm, 'that cap of midnight...the velvet crumpled', and 'an utterly lost and lonely quill', paralleling the separation of the master (poet) 'a corpse cut off by its arm from the secret it withholds', implying a separation between mind and body.

²⁵⁷ F-hole: see Appendices, Appendix G: Glossary of Terms, p. 507.

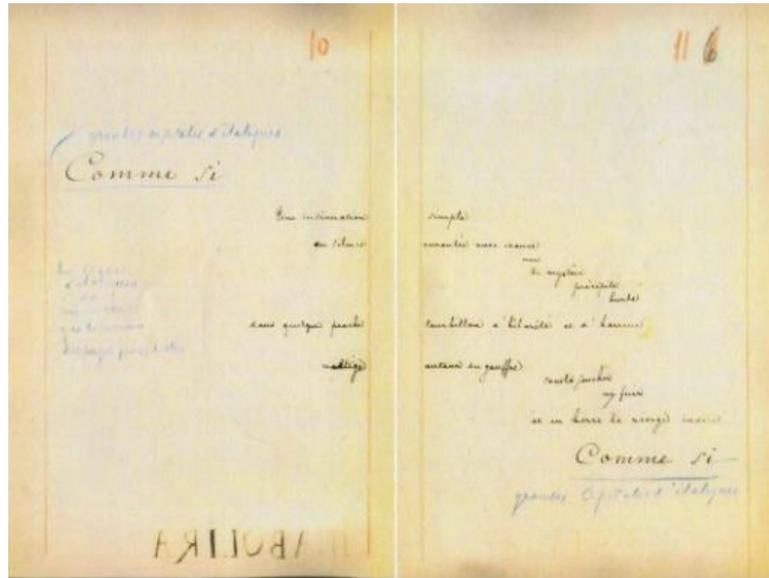


Fig. 4.3

This symbol \int may also be linked to the quill, and to the plectrum used to play a stringed instrument.²⁵⁸ Music and letters, signified in *SI*, in the song of the *siren*, in a final gesture the ‘Swan song’ is repeated and doubled in your ‘letters’, in the sound of alliteration.²⁵⁹

258 John Koster, ‘Quill’, in L. Root, Deane. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press.

259 The Swan Song, from the ancient Greek κύκνειον ᾄσμα; Latin *carmen cygni*, is defined as a metaphorical phrase for a final gesture, effort, or performance given just before death (*OED*) In Greek mythology, the swan was dedicated to Apollo, considered a symbol of harmony and beauty. In Mallarmé the swan is emblematic of Mallarmé’s poetic vision. See also poets and painters who have exploited the fable of ‘Leda and the Swan’. Leda is seduced and raped by Zeus, who by deception has taken the form of a swan. The rape of Leda in Greek mythology results in the conception of Helen and Polydeuces, by Zeus, at the same time Leda is said to have born two children of her mortal husband, Castor and

Word, image, and sound coalesce; the circle suggests a male and female principle, in the form of ying and yang, day and night are invoked, as are black and white, unleashing a whirlpool of binary relations.²⁶⁰ Symbols are conjured and doubled in letters, in syllables, in words and sounds appearing in the centre pages of *Un coup de Dés*. A doubling culminates in the vortex, ‘in some immanent swirl of hilarity and horror’, the mystery is performed and revealed, simultaneously presenting a vortex and a dome, a celestial constellation recalling Sandro Botticelli’s *Eighth Sphere (Heaven of The Fixed Stars)*, [Fig. 4.4 – 4.5].²⁶¹

Clytemnestra. See for example William Butler Yeats’s *Leda and the Swan*, and by contrast Hilda Doolittle’s *Leda* to represent male and female readings of the myth.

²⁶⁰ Binary from Late Middle English (in the sense ‘duality, a pair’): from Late Latin binarius, from bini ‘two together’. This may also be linked to binary code and to binary star (*OED*).

²⁶¹ Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 421). In Fig. 4.5 words from the centre pages of *Un coup de Dés*, are placed over a copy of Sandro Botticelli, *Paradiso XXVI, The Fixed Stars*, [one of a series of drawings illustrating the cantos from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*]. In the *Eighth sphere (heaven of fixed stars); Beatrice entertains St. Peter to examine her ward in true faith, the prime theological virtue; Dante’s confession of faith. Sandro Botticelli, c.1480–c.1495. Zeichnungen von Sandro Botticelli zu Dantes Göttlicher Komödie; verkleinerte Nachbildungen der Originale im Kupferstich-Kabinett zu Berlin und in der Bibliothek des Vatikans; mit einer Einleitung und der Erklärung der Darstellung hrsg. von F. Lippermann. Berlin: G. Grote, 1921.*



Fig. 4.4

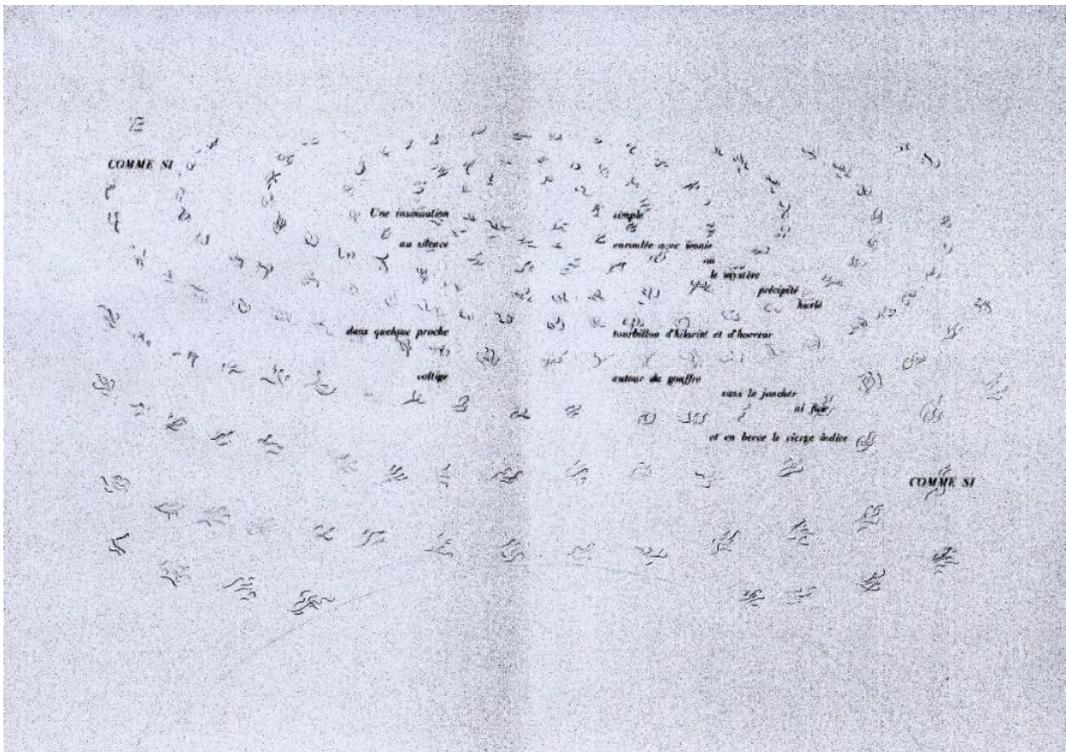


Fig. 4.5

Turning to Mallarmé, I say: ‘The French word *‘indice’* from the line *“et en berce vierge indice”*, (*“and draws from it the soothing virgin sign”*),²⁶² translated as *sign* is also defined as *‘clue’* or *‘index’*.²⁶³ *‘Indice’* sounds like the English words *‘in dice’* – in this associative chain linking French and English words *sign*, *clue* and *index* become synonymous with *dice*. Your symbolic gesture, like the “throw of the dice” – begins a corresponding movement that unites *sign* and *symbol* – initiating temporal and spatial sequences, manifest both in the *dice* and beyond their delineated space.²⁶⁴ In my reading, this dynamic play gives rise to a three-dimensional mathematical model, a codex generating infinite configurations in time and space.’ [Fig. 4.6–4.7]

262 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 421).

263 *Le Littré*, *‘Indice’*, see Appendix G: Glossary of Terms, p. 507.

264 See, Mallarmé’s ‘abstract vision’, ‘That music and letters are two sides of the same coin; here extending into obscurity; there dazzling with clarity; alternative sides to the one and only phenomenon I have called the Idea’. (Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, *Divagations*, pp. 173–98, 189.) Mallarmé’s idea is conjured up in this synthesis, reading becomes a movement between word, image and sound, a dynamic body, whose meaning can never be fixed. Meillassoux questions the relation between subject and object, between being and thought, undermining the role of a subjective sensory experience, a split that could also be linked to the Master in *Un coup de Dés*, ‘a corpse cut off by its arm from the secret it withholds’ (See, Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 419).

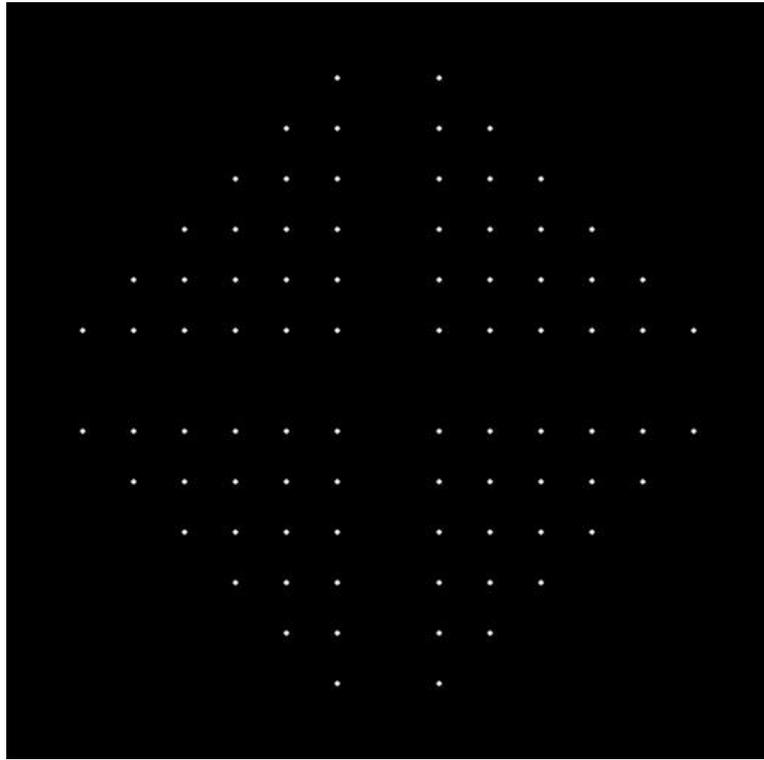


Fig. 4.6

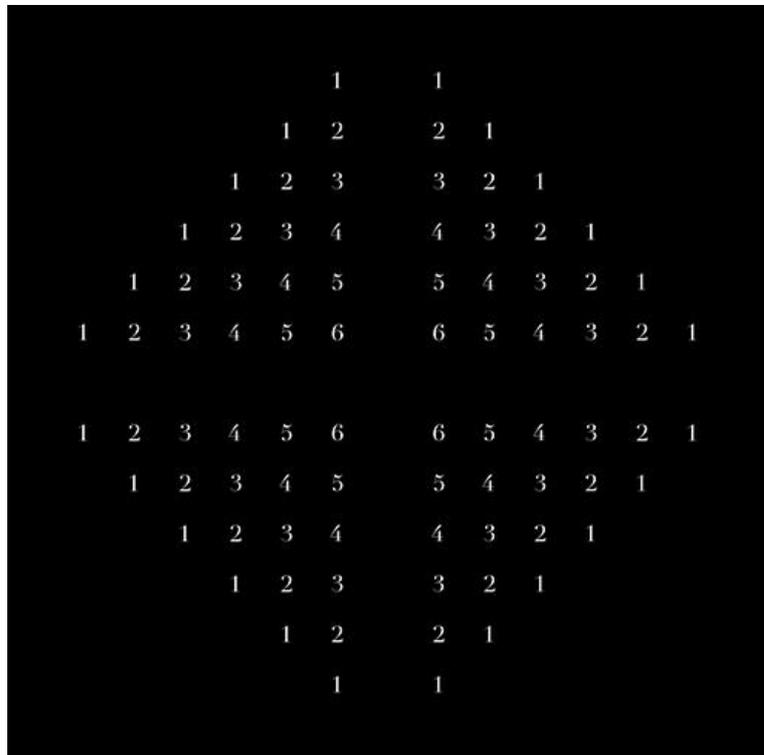


Fig. 4.7

I hesitate for a moment, before continuing. 'I imagine this principle applied to the twelve double pages of *Un coup de Dés*. I see how you establish your "simultaneous vision of the page", how these apparently broken chains link and expand in the white space, forming a series of ellipses. These expand and contract into spheres, dynamic bodies, whose movement is linear and rotational. A movement is established along this arc, a series of waves emanate from the centre. In *Un coup de Dés*, this becomes manifest in the violence of the storm, in the maelstrom, "in some immanent swirl of hilarity and horror".²⁶⁵ The vortex implies numbers and letters, zeros and o's, and by extension, holes and wholes. The paradox of presence and absence resurfaces, and I think your idea of the book, "a real book architectural and premeditated, and not a collection of chance inspirations however wonderful".²⁶⁶ Mallarmé's words merge with my thoughts.

267

'The orphic explanation of the Earth', he says smiling.

The tone of his voice pulls me from my musing to "this pale and indistinct line".²⁶⁸

We are standing still, eyes fixed on a point in the distance. How long have we been standing here? I wonder. How long has Mallarmé been speaking?

265 Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 421.

266 Mallarmé, Letter to Paul Verlaine, 15 November, 1885, Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Autobiography', *Divagations*, pp. 1-6, 3.

267 Ibid.

268 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Mallarmé on Fashion*, p. 56

‘I’ll go further,’ Mallarmé says. ‘The Book, persuaded that when all is said and done there is only one, attempted unwittingly by whoever has written, even those of genius. The Orphic explanation of the Earth, is the sole duty of the poet and the literary game *par excellence*: for the rhythm of the book, then impersonal and living, even to its pagination, is juxtaposed with the equations of this dream or Ode.’²⁶⁹

‘We stand at the threshold of the true enigma of *Un coup de Dés*’ Meillassoux interjects. Then, turning to Mallarmé, he asks. ‘What did you wish to produce with this new metre, and in what way could this procedure revive modern poetry?’²⁷⁰

Speaking softly, Mallarmé replies. ‘We are merely empty forms of matter, but we are indeed sublime in having invented God and our Soul. So sublime, my friend, that I want to gaze upon matter, fully conscious that it exists, and yet launching itself madly into Dream, despite its knowledge that Dream has no existence, extolling the soul and all the divine impressions of that kind which have collected within us from the beginning of time and proclaiming in the face of the Void which is truth, these glorious lies! I shall sing it as one in despair’.²⁷¹

269 Op.cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Paul Verlaine, November 16, 1885, ‘Autobiography’, *Divagations*, pp. 1-6, 3.

270 Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 106.

271 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, Letter to Henri Cazalis, April 1866, p. 60.

In the distance a gull soars on the wind. Mallarmé's vision is one of hope. My thoughts turn to Meillassoux: he writes in *After Finitude* that "the philosophical link and immanent form of hope – believing in God because he does not exist – has never been systematically defended."²⁷² Poet and Philosopher are united in a lie, a glorious lie! What would Plato think, dreams, deceptions, illusions, 'the fragmentary hallucination of some death throe.'²⁷³

272 In *After Finitude*, Meillassoux develops his theory of 'speculative realism'. He uses the term 'correlationism' to describe the central principle of modern philosophy since Kant.

By 'correlation' we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other [...] Correlationism consists in disqualifying the claim that it is possible to consider the realms of subjectivity and objectivity independently of one another. (Op. cit., Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, p. 5).

The logic of correlationalism according to Meillassoux, consists in conflating two distinct notions: that of the *ancestral*, and that of the (spatially) *distant* or (temporally) *ancient*. (Ibid., p. 20) Drawing on Husserl's 'givenness-by-adumbrations', Meillassoux differentiates between a temporal or spatial event that appears to be un-witnessed or un-perceived: 'A cube is never perceived according to all its faces at once; it always retains something non-given at the heart of its givenness. (Ibid., p. 19) As such this event poses no threat to a concept of correlationalism, whereas 'the ancestral does not designate an ancient event – it designates an event anterior to terrestrial life and hence anterior to givenness itself. Though ancestry is a temporal notion, its definition does not evoke distance in time, but rather anteriority to time. (Ibid., p. 20). Meillassoux considers his concept of 'the ancestral', the event anterior to terrestrial life, as a challenge to correlationalism, which he qualifies as 'an ontological problem of coming into being of givenness as such' (Ibid., p. 21). He differentiates between 'space-time anterior to the spatio-temporal forms of representation'. This for Meillassoux constitutes a 'philosophical problem' which calls for a revision of Modern philosophy. He asks: 'How is mathematical discourse able to describe a world where humanity is absent; a world crammed with things and events that are not the correlates of any manifestation; a world that is not the correlate of a relation to the world?' In other words, Meillassoux presents the paradox. 'How can a being manifest being's anteriority to manifestation'. (Ibid., p. 26)

273 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 424).

‘It all begins with a political consideration,’ Meillassoux says. ‘Your hostility, Mallarmé, is not to the French Republic, but to its secularism. For the poet, you say “the State needs a system”,²⁷⁴ because no society is possible without a strong symbolic bond, capable of founding a civic religion and engendering a profound adhesion of individuals to the ends of community. A religion, you maintain, must be a public thing, not a private affair, Catholic rather than Protestant in spirit.’²⁷⁵

‘We should turn back; the tide is coming in.’ I say, turning to face the monument. Mallarmé and Meillassoux follow.

‘The question of religion,’ I add, ‘cannot be separated from the role of the artist historically. If I look back, if I trace a line to the hand of scribe and artist it is at the service of one divinity or another. The question remains the same, how we have chosen to make sense of our existence, our place in the universe continues to be a question of unity and division. Faced with this void, this nothingness which you call truth, I see how you have liberated yourself from the tyranny of fear, how your ‘idea’ is manifest in the ‘presence of absence’. It’s no wonder that you sing.’

I face Mallarmé, who now appears to my right, as if we had turned full circle, one body inscribing an arc in the sand.

274 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘The Same’, *Divagations*, pp. 249–51, 249.

275 Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren: A Decipherment of Mallarmé’s Coup de Dés*, p. 106.

‘Divinity is never anything but Oneself,’ he says, smiling.²⁷⁶

‘Your position,’ Meillassoux interrupts, ‘consists in a dividing of roles: the alexandrine must be reserved for the “solemnity of grand occasions”,²⁷⁷ whereas the poet forges his instrument, a voice that belongs to him alone. Far from entering into conflict, the two poetical forms complement and complete each other. Free verse avoids the exhaustion of the alexandrine, overused to the point of becoming insupportable to the ear. From this point of view, the advocates of free verse continued the efforts of those, like Verlaine or yourself, who, even while conserving official verse, had already loosened its too rigid mechanism in favour of a heterodox play of cuts and rejects. Inversely, the maintenance of the alexandrine could allow poetry to conserve its power of unification and even its religious role – its capacity to unify with a song a ‘throng’ that you would wish to open to its own mystery, in a civic cult where the poem of the new art would replace the priest of an outmoded faith.’²⁷⁸

Mallarmé pauses, then says, ‘What arises from it is a new point of view according to which whoever is musically organised may, by listening to the special arabesque which governs him and if he manages to note it down, create a personal metrics

276 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Catholicism’, *Divagations*, p. 244.

277 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Crisis of Verse’, p. 205.

278 Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 23.

drawn from himself and removed from the general type which has become a public monument in our city. What a delicious liberation!' ²⁷⁹

Meillassoux replies, 'You suggest that the weakness of Wagnerian 'total art' resides in its will to reconnect with the Greek articulation of theatre and politics. To figure upon a scene the relation of humans and their gods, to render visible to the masses the principle of their communion with the aid of a narrative embellished with song; in short, to represent to a people its own mystery, such is for you the Greek heritage upon which art, including Wagnerian art, continues to feed.' ²⁸⁰

'If I may summarise your essay on Catholicism,' Meillassoux continues, 'It is precisely representation that art must break with' if it would claim to go beyond Christianity. To want to be Greek is an impossible desire: not because the Greeks are a lost origin, a perfect unity of art, science, and politics impossible to rediscover, but, on the contrary, because we moderns know that they are not our real origin". ²⁸¹

'In treating the motif whole,' Mallarmé replies, gesturing with both hands as if to describe a sphere, 'rather than cutting it up into pieces, I would have avoided

279 Mallarmé acknowledges Kahn's contribution to inventing a new form of verse; 'Free Verse' (Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*. Letter to Gustav Kahn June 8 [7] 1867.

280 Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 108.

281 Ibid., p.23.

Hellenising with the name of Plato; having, myself, no intentions other than those of a modern man directly expressing an unchallenging enigma, just as he wears in public a black suit.²⁸²

‘We have almost reached the monument,’ I say, pausing to look back to the horizon. Mallarmé and Meillassoux do the same.

‘It occurs to me,’ I say, that: ‘The arch originating in Mesopotamia, along with mathematics, with cursive script, with narrative, not to mention records; developed by the Greeks, towards an idea of perfection, appropriated by the Romans, and turned into a Dome, the arched vault of the heavens, the Pantheon.²⁸³ A temple dedicated ‘to all the gods’ or ‘to the Twelve Gods.’²⁸⁴ In 609, the Pantheon was converted into a Christian church, consecrated to St. Mary and the Martyrs. In Paris stands another Panthéon, consecrated in 1790, and deconsecrated in 1791 in the French Revolution, from church to mausoleum. It occurs to me that Victor Hugo buried in the Paris Panthéon, rests with God, and with tradition, French verse, Catholicism, and the French Revolution – all under the same roof – housed in a monument, whose origins may be traced to Mesopotamia and the arch, to the Greeks through its cruciform foundation, to

282 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Crisis of Verse’, *Divagations*, 197.

283 Pantheon is derived from the Ancient Greek “Pantheion” (Πάνθειον) meaning “of, relating to, or common to all the gods”: (pan- / “παν”- meaning “all” + theion / “θεῖον”= meaning “of or sacred to a god”) (*OED*)

284 Ziegler, Konrat (1949). ‘Pantheion’. *Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft: neue Bearbeitung* (vol. XVIII ed.). Stuttgart. pp. 697–747.

Rome and the dome of the Pantheon. Most remarkable of all is that I have found in the same architecture in *Un coup de Dés*. Mallarmé, you built a Panthéon in the pages of *Un coup de Dés*.'

INTERLUDE

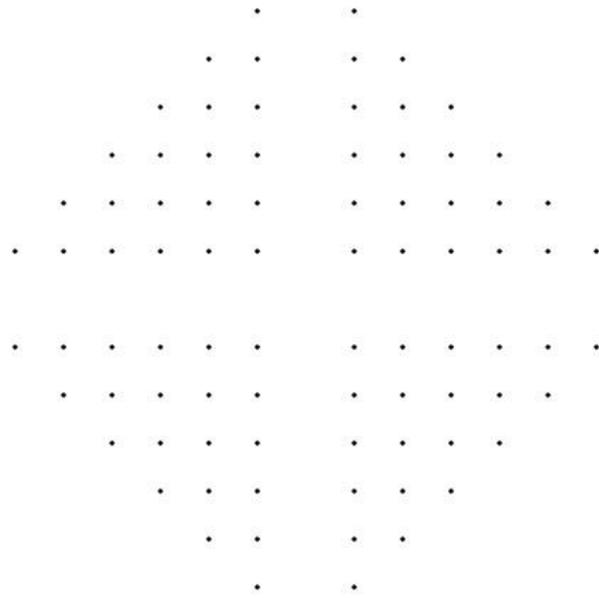


Fig 4.8

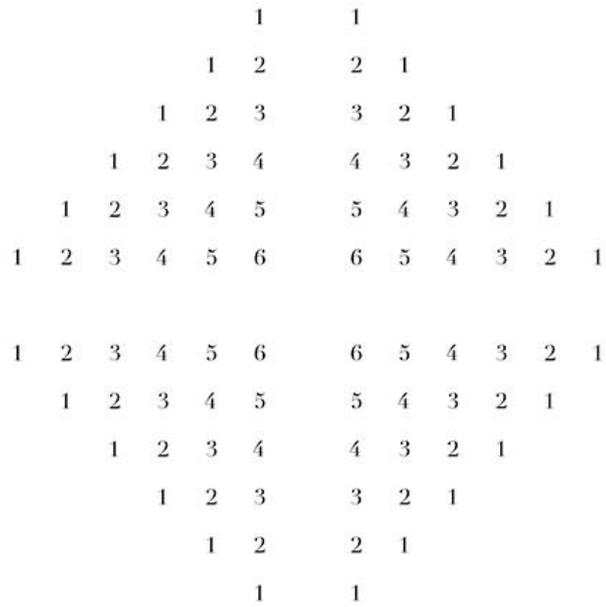


Fig 4.9

CHAPTER FIVE

Mallarmé Me Krauss



Fig. 5. 1

Nature's image is given to me framed on the surface of my retina – the world as seen – and the world pictured intersect. I regard the image in front of me, conscious of its artifice, accepting its deception.²⁸⁵

285 German Astronomer and Mathematician Joannes Kepler's [1571–1630] study of optics led him to conclude that: 'vision is brought about by a [*pitura*] of the thing being formed on the concave surface of the retina'. (Cited by Svetlana Alpers, 'Ut picture, ita visio: Kelper's Model of the Eye and the Nature of Picturing in the North', *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1983, pp. 26–71, 34. [Originally published as Johannes Kepler, 'Ad Vitellionem paralipomena, quibus astronomiae pars optica traditur', in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Walther van Dyck and Max Casper, 18 vols, Munich, C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1937]). This view of the 'retinal picture' as a representation favoured by seventeenth century Dutch painters is described by Svetlana Alpers as 'the world prior to us made visible', in contrast to the Italian Renaissance's perspectival mode, which Alpers describes as 'we prior to the world and commanding its presence'. (Alpers, p. 70). Erwin Panofsky describes 'a fundamental discrepancy between reality', between the perceptual world and its construction. The retinal image 'paints itself upon our physical eye', as does the mechanical eye of the camera, both of which project onto a concave surface, unlike linear perspective which constructs images on a two-dimensional surface. Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, translated by Christopher S. Wood, New York, NY: Zone Books, 1997, I, pp. 27–37, 31. [*Die Perspektive als symbolische Form, Vorträge der Bibliothek Warberg, 1924–1925*, (Leipzig & Berlin, 1927), pp. 258–330]

Derrida begins his discourse on the difference between seeing and believing, with a reflection on the word *skepsis*, linked to the eye,

The word refers to visual perception, to the observation, vigilance, and attention of the gaze [*regard*] during an examination. One is on the lookout, one reflects upon what one sees, by delaying the moment of conclusion. Keeping [*gardant*] on the thing in sight, one keeps on looking at it [*on la regarde*].²⁸⁶

I see the eye seeing. I consider the eye looking – perceiving objects in space. I see how the vertical line of the monument intersects with the horizon forming a cross. I imagine placing Alberti's rectangular grid in front of the image – a series of intersecting lines appear to organise and divide the space [Fig. 5.2].²⁸⁷

286 Op. cit., Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, p.1. In this extraordinary discourse on drawing, Derrida outlines his hypothesis of sight [site]: of the 'seer' and the 'blind man', tracing [*trait*] and, retracing [*re-trait*] his line of vision. In this parallel discourse Derrida appears to mimic the draughtsman: the story of a 'point of view', from the monocular to the binocular, Derrida retraces en abyme, 'a specular folding or falling back [*repli*]—and a supplementary trait'. (Ibid., p. 3). To regard: from Middle English: from Old French '*regarder*' 'to watch, from re- 'back' [also expressing intensive force] + *garder* 'to guard' (*OED*).

287 The space depicted by Alberti, conceived as an extension of the artist and viewer's space; creates the illusion of spatial recession – demonstrated in the convergence of parallel lines on a point somewhere in the distance. Alberti's perspectival view places the artist and viewer in direct relation to the picture plane. The grid divides the space and image into parts, the artist operates between two corresponding grids – eye and hand working in unison in order to transfer the picture from one surface to another. The distinction between perception and perspective is demonstrably significant, typified broadly speaking by the optical [Keplerian] and perspectival [Albertian] view of the world. If I follow Kepler's view – to trust in the lens is to trust in that which is represented on the



Fig.5. 2

My thoughts turn to Mallarmé, and to the ‘symbolist window’, framing and mirroring the world simultaneously.²⁸⁸

Soon the tide will go out – Mallarmé and Krauss will arrive, we will walk out to the sea. The grid, Krauss notes with the authority of the consummate art historian eager to establish the ground by regarding the past, ‘is a pattern that organises

retina. Therefore, to regard the picture acknowledging a possible deception is to acknowledge the artifice of nature, and to doubt the accuracy of science. To trust in Alberti’s perspectival view, is to accept a perceptual model based on symmetry, investigation and observation, a deterministic view based on mathematics on the structural laws and principles of the material world. The eye in Kepler’s world is central, the eye of the painter is ‘static, unblinking, fixated, rather than dynamic, moving with what later scientists would call “saccadic” jumps from one focal point to another’. (Op. cit., Jay, p. 7).

288 Rosalind Krauss describes the symbolist window as: ‘simultaneously transparent and opaque’, likening it to the geometric form of the grid. Acknowledging the Symbolists debt to Romanticism, Krauss contrasts Casper David Friedrich’s *View from the Painter’s Studio*, 1818, with the symbolist painters and poets whose treatment of the window as motif, ‘turned in an explicitly modernist direction’. (Rosalind Krauss, ‘Grids’, *October* 9, 1979, pp. 50–64, 58).

itself on the surface of a painting – a lateral spread in front of the viewer’s plane vision.’²⁸⁹ I consider Krauss’s definition of the grid: ‘A structure that has remained emblematic of the modernist ambition within the visual arts ever since’.²⁹⁰ This distinction is telling; the grid may operate as a hidden organising principle – predicated by clean and ordered lines, supporting a rational and predictable model, or it may reveal itself on the surface, declaring its presence. Either way, the grid draws attention to the space – a delimited field, and to the surface between each of these loci.²⁹¹ The surface becomes a contested field historically –

289 ‘Grids’, eponymous radio broadcast, about the nature of the ‘grid’, and its application across disciplines, with contributions from architects, designers, artists, musicians, writers and art historian Rosalind Krauss. Produced by Brook Lapping for Radio Three, BBC. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08v8qn4>

290 Op. cit., Krauss, ‘Grids’, p. 51. For an alternative view see W. J. T. Mitchell’s criticism of narratives representing ‘abstract art as a repression of literature, verbal discourse, or language itself in favour of “pure” visuality or painterly form’. (Op. cit., ‘Ut Pictura Theora: Abstract Painting and Language’, *Picture Theory*, pp. 213–39, 214). Mitchell considers Krauss’s use of the term ‘emblematic’ paradoxical, ‘an emblem’ is ‘a composite visual-verbal form, an allegorical image accompanied by a textual gloss’ (Ibid. p. 215). In this sense the word emblematic encapsulates the discursive field and the master narratives dominating the field; including Greenberg’s call for ‘purity’, Fried’s notion of ‘theatricality’, emphasising the so called ‘confusion’ in the arts, and divisions echoed in the terms: ‘modern’ and ‘post-modern’.

291 For a condensed overview of the subject, see: Jack. H. Williamson’s essay ‘The Grid: History, Use, and Meaning’, *Design Discourse: History, Theory, Criticism*, edited by Victor Margolin, Chicago IL: Chicago University Press 1996, pp. 171 – 86. Williamson’s historical perspective, and compelling unravelling of the forces shaping the iconology of the grid, its symbolic function, typology, application, and shift in meaning begins with a reflection on the late medieval Christian world. The transition from a ‘sacred to an increasingly secular world conception’ is linked to a corresponding ‘shift from a grid based on value-loaded coordinates and intersections, to one conceived as a field comprised of points and axes possessing either neutral or numerical (quantitate) value’. (Ibid.) Williamson stresses the symbolic significance of the point-based grid, or co-ordinate system based on the Cartesian grid:

a symbolic system of vertical relations between the super physical above and material reality below, which were divinely generated by means of

symbolically separating modern and post-modern aesthetics. The logic of the modernist grid is taken apart by the spirit of post-modernism, by a game of deconstruction, exposing the fallacy of its order and the master narratives supporting its structure.²⁹²

point coordinates conceived as “thresholds”, and the line-based grid visible in the Gutenberg bible, whose use of vertical and horizontal lines to position the text and image, does not, as he points out differ in principle from the twentieth-century modernist grid that acts as an under structure to control the layout of the page. (Op. cit., Williamson, p. 171.)

Williamson’s account of the transition from a ‘sacred to an increasingly secular world conception’, is linked to a corresponding ‘shift from a grid based on value-loaded coordinates and intersections, to one conceived as a field comprised of points and axes possessing either neutral or numerical (quantitate) value.’ (Ibid.) Williamson cites Natalie Zemon Davis who writes:

The coordinates’ shift from a spiritual to a physical meaning well exemplified in the radical alteration of environmental space which occurred in Lyon, France when the city passed from Catholic to Protestant rule in the sixteenth century. The widespread iconoclasm which accompanied the takeover eliminated numerous sacred grottos, churches, and similar spiritual “hotspots” through which the divine was felt to vertically penetrate the space of the mundane world from above. Once destroyed a more horizontally-orientated environmental network of secular and commercial activities took its place. A homogeneous cityscape thus displaced one that was qualitatively differentiated. (Natalie Zemon Davis, ‘The Sacred and the Political in Sixteenth Century Lyon’, *Past and Present* 90 (February 1981): 40-70. Cited by Williamson, p. 175)

The distinction between ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ spaces is significant in relation to Mallarmé’s poetic ideal – which as this thesis shows inhabits the architecture of the sacred, in order to perform the mystery of his poetic transformation.

²⁹² See, Manet’s ‘game of verticals and horizontals’, Chapters Seven and Eight, and Agnes Martin, Chapters Nine and Ten. See also Piet Mondrian’s modernist grid, and the proliferation of artists working with the grid in America during the nineteen-sixties and seventies, such as Ad Reinhardt, Annie Albers, Ellsworth Kelly, Eva Hesse, Brice Marden, Carl Andre, and Sol Le Witt.

My thoughts drift to my studio. I recall placing a grid over the surface of *Un coup de Dés* – locating each word, letter, and syllable, each note played out in the space of the page [Fig. 5.4]. I remember the act of retracing the course of poet-typographer charting his constellation – inscribing his words on quadrille paper. [Fig. 5.3]²⁹³

293 Mallarmé's use of quadrille paper has been documented by numerous Mallarméan scholars. Dee Reynolds writes that 'the poem was written on graph paper, allowing Mallarmé to compose the blanks as the text'. (Op. cit., Dee Reynolds, *Symbolist Aesthetics and Early Abstract Art: Sites of Imaginary Space*, p. 105) An inspection of facsimiles of the surviving Vollard manuscript of 1897 shows Mallarmé's hand-written poem with annotations on quadrille paper (Fig. 5.3) In a letter to the editor of *Les Marges*, concerning, *Un coup de Dés*, Valéry writes:

Mallarmé's invention, wholly deduced from analysis of language, of books, and of music, carried out over many years, was based on his consideration of the page as a visual unity. He had made very careful study (even on posters and in newspapers) of the effective distribution of blacks and whites, the comparative intensity of typefaces. It was his idea to develop this medium, which till then had been used to either as a crude means of attracting attention, or else as a natural ornament for the printed word. (Op. cit., Valéry, 'Concerning A Throw of the Dice: A Letter to the Editor of Les Marges', p. 312).

In his critical essay: 'The Book as Spiritual Instrument', Mallarmé compares the virtues of the book to the newspaper. His detailed analysis of the structural layout of the newspaper leads Mallarmé to acknowledge qualities particular to its form, and to the agency it affords the reader. He notes 'a spectacular vulgar advantage' [...] in the multiplication of copies [...] He equates the organisation of the text with a ceremonial act, writing: 'the principle—making typographic composition approach a rite'. He proposes the newspaper as a site of infinite combinations – an inspiration to poet and reader alike, recommending: 'The book's total expansion of the letter, should derive from it directly a spacious mobility, and by correspondences institute a play of elements that confirms the fiction'. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Divagations*, p. 228). For a comprehensive account of Mallarmé's appropriation of newspaper structure and its effect on reading practices in France at the turn of the nineteenth century, (see Op. cit., Arnar, 'Newspaper and the Structures of Consumption', *The Book as Spiritual Instrument*, pp. 227–329. See also Joanna Drucker regarding Mallarmé's knowledge and engagement with typographic innovations and practices at the turn of the nineteenth century. Drucker suggests Mallarmé's knowledge of advertising typography may have provided the inspiration for *Un coup de Dés*. She proposes a correspondence between Mallarmé's typographic layout, and the structural organisation, along various axis, used in advertising and commercial printing trades. (Op. cit., Drucker, 'Visual and Literary Materiality in Modern Art', *The Visible World: Experimental*

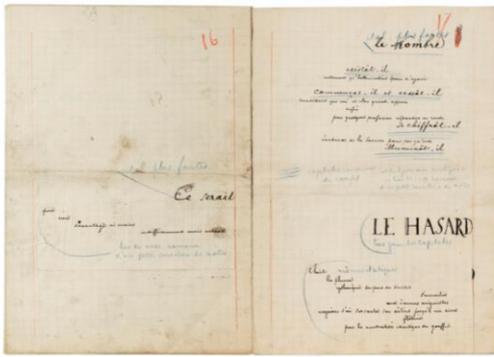


Fig. 5.3

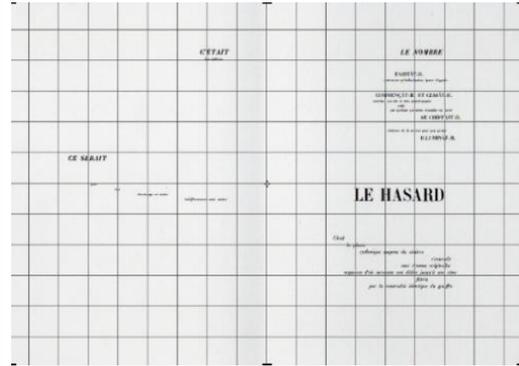


Fig. 5.4

In this simple gesture I could sense your mind at work – your hand, eye, and ear composing in and across the twelve double pages. Word, image, and sound spun – each thread qualified by difference, and unified in the space of the page, as if each word, colour, and sound, in seeking that which is essential to it alone, had discovered its true nature reflected in the other. Valéry was right, believing your ‘endeavour must necessarily have been of a deeper order.’²⁹⁴

Sometimes it seemed to me that Mallarmé had examined, weighted, held up to the light all the words of the language one by one as a lapidary his precious stones: the sound, the brilliance, the colour, the limpidity, the meaning of each of them.²⁹⁵

Typography and Modern Art, pp. 49–89, 55). See also Linda Goddard’s excellent re-evaluation of Mallarmé’s engagement with the ‘physical and cultural aspects of the newspaper, and its influence on his work on a visual and theoretical level’ (Goddard, ‘Mallarmé, Picasso and the Aesthetic of the Newspaper’, *Word and Image: Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*. Vol 22, No 4, October–December, 2006, pp. 293–303, 294.)

²⁹⁴ Op. cit., Valéry, ‘Concerning A Throw of the Dice: A Letter to the Editor of *Les Marges*’, *Collected Works, Volume 8*, p. 31.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

Like Valéry, I understand the conceptual underpinning of your method – composed not as ‘successive operations’, each form lending itself to the other, but as a harmony achieved in the space of the page by contemplating the relation of each to the other. You are the divine divisor – dividing and subdividing the space of the page. Letters and numbers rendered and ordered – unified and mobilised to reflect a mathematical principle at play. The number:

is in preparation | tossed and blended | in the fist that seeks to grasp it |
as you threaten some destiny and also the winds | the one and only
Number that cannot be another.²⁹⁶

What are the limits of this space? What are its dimensions and proportions? How might these be measured, given there is no definitive proof of *Un coup de Dés*? Thinking about these questions, as I stand facing the horizon, I call to mind my comparative study of the versions of the poem – which I compiled into one condensed drawing [Fig. 5.5].²⁹⁷

296 Op. cit, Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 419).

297 Scale drawing, showing the difference between double page format versions of the poem (Fig. 5.5). To be read from the centre, beginning with the smallest in relation to the list. The Cosmopolis Edition is not included since this was in single page format. I have omitted Mohamed Bennis’s Arabic translation (38 x 56cm) and Neil Crawford’s typographic translation (38 x 57cm) from fig. 5.5, because they are translations, and

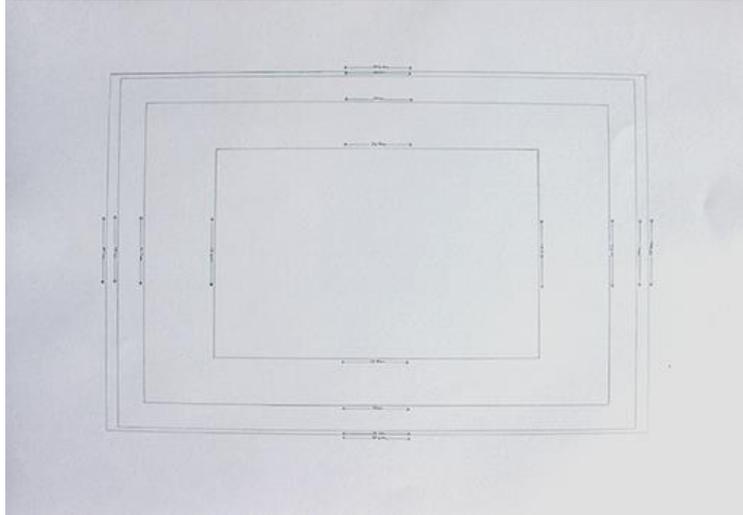


Fig.5. 5

Vollard Manuscript: 34.8cm x 22.4cm (double) 16.4cm x 22.4 cm (single)

15.1 inches x 13.7 inches (double), 7.5 inches x 13.7 inches (single)

NRF Gallimard: 50cm x 32.5cm (double), 25cm x 32.5 cm (single)

9.6 inches x 12.8 inches (double), 9.8 inches x 12.8 inches (single)

Mitsou Ronat: 57cm x 38 cm (double), 28.5cm x 38 (single)

22.4 inches x 14.9 inches (double) 11.2 inches x 14.9 inches (single)

Michael Pierson: 56cm x 38cm (double), 28cm x 38cm (single)

22 inches x 14.9 inches (double), 11 inches x 14.9 inches (single)

Ypsilon Éditeur: 56cm x 38cm (double), 28cm x 38cm (single)

22 inches x 14.9 inches (double), 11 inches x 14.9 inches (single)

Lahure Proofs: 58.4cm x 38.1cm (double), 29.2cm x 38.1cm (single).

neither use Didot in their construction. For a full account of all versions see, 'A Note on the Editions, p. xx–xxv, and Appendix D: List of Editions of *Un coup De Dés*, p. 427–30.

23 inches x 15 inches (double), 11.5 inches x 15 inches (single)

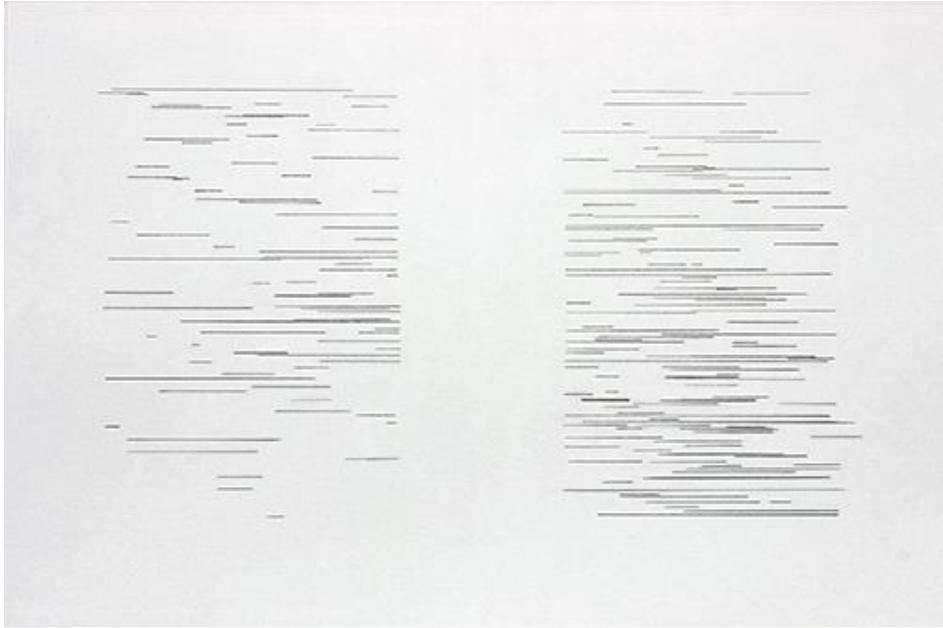


Fig. 5.6

I consider a second series of drawings comparing the typographic layout of the large format editions of *Un coup de Dés*. I recall the act of replacing each line of text with a graphic line and tracing each page onto the subsequent page – so that the previous page reverberates in succession. [Fig. 5.6].²⁹⁸ The cumulative effect of successive additions revealing two panels occupying the white field of the page – a window appearing to frame the drama.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ Fig. 5.6 and Fig. 5.7 show slight variations in typographic layout between Mitsou Ronat, Michael Pierson & Ptyx, and Ypsilon Éditeur's versions of *Un coup de Dés*. This series recalls Broodthaers and Pichler's abstract rendering of the poem; unlike Broodthaers and Pichler, these drawings seek illumination through difference, rather than absence, (see Chapters One and Two). See also Appendix E: Typographic Analysis of *Un coup De Dés*, p. 431–457, and Portfolio of Works.

²⁹⁹ The symbolic revelation of the window as framing device initiates a series of metaphoric transformations of the page. Word, image, and sound appear unified by the frame which fixes the space emphasising its internal and external dimensions.



Fig. 5.7

Paradoxically the suggestion of a window simultaneously undermines a fixed reading of the space by suggesting a space beyond the frame. The space begins to shift between two and three dimensions; between the surface of the page 'on' to, or 'in' to which the lines, letters, numbers, or dots are placed, and an unlimited space; recalling Alberti's window which places the artist and viewer in direct relation to the picture plane. Mallarmé achieves the illusion of spatial recession by using twelve variant fonts, and five point sizes [10, 16, 24, 36, 60] making the letters appear closer or further away. His textual layout suggests both deep space (stars in night sky) and surface, including forces beneath the surface (ocean). See, (Appendix E: Typographic Analysis of *Un coup De Dés*, p. 431–457) Robert Pickering's re-examination of the relation between writing and the page, charts the radical revision the space of the page undergoes at the turn of the nineteenth century. He notes: 'the page loses its connotation of parameter and becomes the stage for the inscription of dynamic configurations, which create their own space and their own depth, independent of the page's spatial limits'. (Robert Pickering, 'Writing and the Page: Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Valéry', *The Modern Language Review*, Vol 87, No 1, 1992, 56 –71).

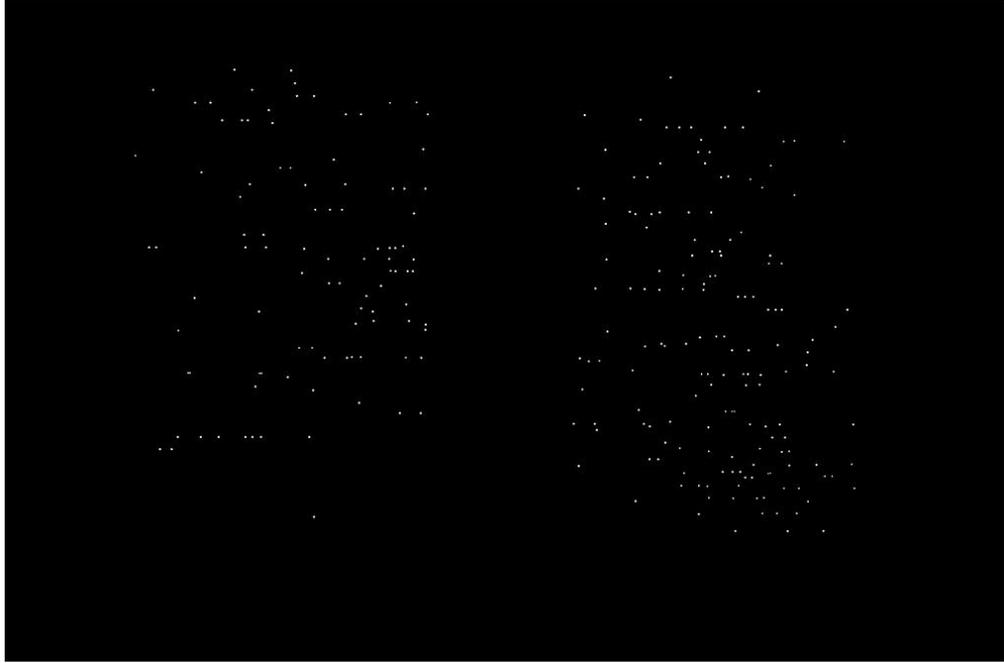


Fig. 5.8

In a subsequent series of drawings, I recall charting each dot placed over every ‘i’ and diaereses in *Un coup de Dés*, which I rendered using the same point size as the ‘original’ text, creating the illusion of spatial recession. I picture the image inverted – white dots occupy a black space. A series of constellations emerge and one final compressed image – the cumulative effect of all twelve constellations in *Un coup de Dés* [Fig. 5.8]. I have the sense of looking at the night sky, at infinite space through Mallarmé’s window.³⁰⁰

While plotting each dot and counting the stars in the constellations as they appear in *Un coup de Dés*, the numbers 12 and 21 emerge triumphant. The total number

300 A related series of digital drawings, also presented in a limited edition of artist books, and related series of video animations chart these constellations, (see: Portfolio of Works).

of dots placed over the ‘i’ equals 247. If the diaeresis are included in the count, of which there are eight, appearing in the lines *la mer par l’äieul tentant ou l’äieul contre la mer / une chance oiseus*, and *Exigüment* and *l’heroïque*, the count is 255. If I exclude the title page from the count, my final count is 252, when divided by 12 this equals 21, in other words $252 \div 12 = 21$. Twelve being the number of double pages and twenty-one the sum of the dots in the die.

These acts of counting and of measuring bring me closer to understanding the relation between the external dimensions of the page, and the internal dimensions of the print area – which appear at a glance to be of equal proportion. A harmony is achieved.³⁰¹

301 Modernist typographer Jan Tschichold provides a comparative overview of the subject: Jan Tschichold, ‘Consistent Correlation Between Book Page and Type Area’, *The Form of the Book: Essays on the Morality of Good Design*, Points Roberts, WA: Hartley & Marks, 1991, pp. 36–63. Tschichold proposes that a harmony is achieved when ‘type area and page size are of equal proportions’, a characteristic of the handwritten manuscripts attributed to the scribes of the Middle Ages. And, as the originator of the form; the canon perused by Gutenberg and other early printers, as exemplar. Tschichold writes:

Printers took over the laws of book form which the scribes had been following. It is certain that there existed fundamental codes. Numerous medieval books show a surprising conformity in proportions of format and position of type area. Unfortunately, such codes have not come down to us. They were workshop secrets. Only by carefully measuring medieval manuscripts can we attempt to track them down. (Ibid., pp. 42–3.)

In an attempt to uncover their secrets, Tschichold set about measuring medieval manuscripts, concluding:

I have measured a great number of medieval manuscripts. Not every single one follows a code exactly... After much toilsome work I finally succeeded, in 1953, in reconstructing the Golden Canon of book page construction as it was used during the late Gothic times by the finest of scribes. (Ibid., p. 42).

Is it enough to intuitively grasp this harmony, or is there proof that your gesture is not one of chance, but a calculated act? I think of the days and nights spent unravelling this mystery, comparing dimensions, calculating ratios, converting centimetre to imperial inch, only to discover the '*pouce*' (French inch), which unlike the English inch of sixteen parts, is divided into twelve parts.³⁰²

I learn that the Didot point system, established by François-Ambroise Didot in 1783, was an attempt to improve the Fournier system. I note that Didot retained Fournier's subdivisions: one inch being equal to twelve lines, being equal to seventy-two points – which corresponds with the subdivisions of the '*pouce*'.³⁰³ Through Jan Tschichold's '*Golden Canon*' I unearth older methods still – the secrets of the scribes.³⁰⁴ I recall how Tschichold led me to Van de Graaf's canon,

In a similar fashion, the larger format versions of *Un coup de Dés* have been measured and compared here – establishing a page proportion of 2:3 and margin proportions of 1:1:2:3, equal to those determined by Tschichold, that is, equal in proportion to Tschichold's '*Golden Canon of book page construction*', laid out by the scribes of the medieval manuscripts.

302 An English Inch is one thirty-sixth of a yard. An inch is one twelfth of a foot. An Inch has sixteen subdivision called dyadic fractions or dyadic rationals. An inch is equal to 2.52 cm. The word inch from: Late Old English 'ynce', from Latin is 'uncia', 'twelfth part', from 'unia' 'one' (probably denoting a unit). A French inch, '*pouce*' is divided into twelve parts: one '*pouce*' equals 2.7cm.

303 See, Phil Baines and Andrew Haslam, *Type & Typography*, London: Laurence King Publishing, 2005, p. 93. A correlation between Didot's subdivisions: 1 inch = 12 lines = 72 points, and divisions of the '*pouce*': 1 pouce = 12 divisions = 2.7 mm, can be demonstrated.

304 I am indebted to British typographer Neil Crawford, who kindly agreed to be interviewed. Crawford's expertise, and his knowledge of the *Lahure* proofs have been invaluable. (See, Note on the Editions, p. xx–xxv). Crawford introduced me to Jan Tschichold's essay: '*Consistent Correlation between Book Page and Type Area*', which led me to the respective canons of Van de Graaf, and Villard De Honnecourt.

Raul Rosario's system, importantly, Villard De Honnecourt's Diagram, based on a geometric system of harmonious divisions, and sub divisions, which divides a line into equal parts – infinitely. ³⁰⁵

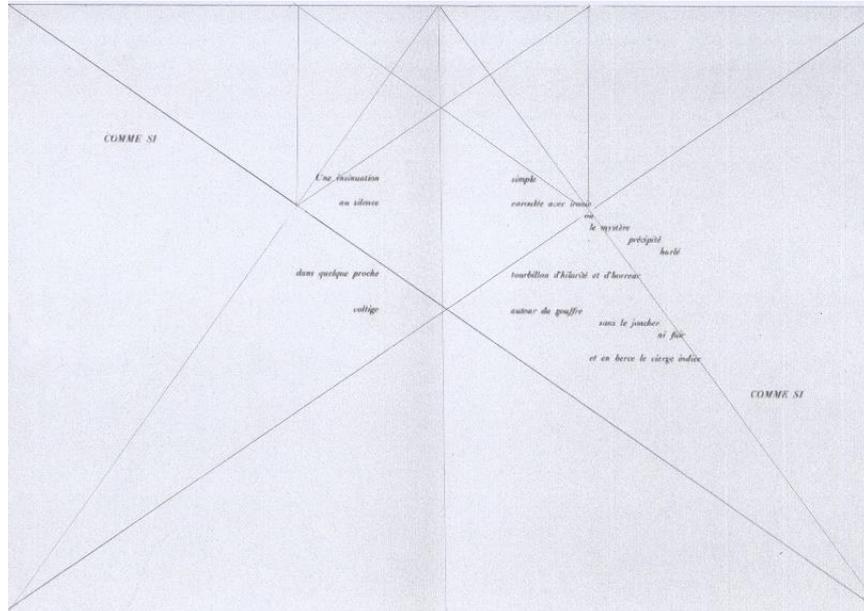


Fig. 5.9

305 Tschichold draws on the work of Van de Graaf to support his 'Golden Canon'. To determine the position and dimensions of the text block, Graaf's geometric system is applied to *Un coup de Dés* [Fig. 5.9]. Villard De Honnecourt's geometric system of harmonious division, justly celebrated by Tschichold provides an alternative system of division. Tschichold notes:

When book printing began, the pica divided into twelve parts was unknown, and general rules did not exist. Even the natural measurement taken from the human body, like the yard, foot and width of the thumb, the inch was not defined. It is likely that given lengths were divided using Villard's Diagram, and that every printer did his own calculations based on units that were not at all universally valid. (Op. cit., Tschichold. 'Consistant Correlation between Book Page and Type Area', p. 52.)

If Villard's Diagram is applied to *Un coup de Dés* – by dividing the page into twelfths, a correlation between the space of the page and Mallarmé's placement of words is highlighted.

Based on these findings I propose a sympathetic system of division between the 'pouce' and the Didot point system favoured by Mallarmé, and a disjuncture between the metric system and Didot's point based on divisions of twelve, the 'douze'.³⁰⁶ Most importantly, I have shown through application of the methods laid out by Tschichold that 'a consistent correlation between book page and type area' – a harmonious unit can be demonstrated in *Un coup de Dés*. In other words, Mallarmé's 'profond calcul', like Plato's symphony of proportion, establishes an ideal order.

If: 1 'pouce' = 2.7cm, 10 'pouce' = 27cm. It follows that $57\text{cm} \div 2.7 = 21$ 'pouce', and $38\text{cm} \div 2.7 = 14$ 'pouce'. Therefore, dimensions in 'pouce' = 21 'pouce' x 14 'pouce' = 2: 3 Ratio. 21 'pouce' x 12 (1/12 subdivisions of a 'pouce') = 252. 14 'pouce' x 12 (1/12) = 168 'pouce'. Therefore $164 + 84 = 252$, which is equal to a ratio of 2: 3.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ According to Roger Pearson, Claude Lebensztejn's description of the print area in a single page of *Un coup de Dés*: 27 cm x 18 cm OR 60 x 40 dz. Pearson notes: the major complaint about the Didot system has always been its lack of fit with the metric system, yet it has persisted in use among printers precisely because its key number, twelve, is divisible by so many whole numbers, citing *Dictionnaire de l'imprimerie*, ed. Morin, 1903. (See Roger Pearson, 'The Quest for Prosody', *Unfolding Mallarmé: The Development of a Poetic Act*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, pp. 247–70, 255). Pierson's account of the douze system favoured by Didot, and Mallarmé's use of quadrille paper – lead him to reason that Mallarmé's "profond calcul" would have exploited such squares, and that each character was given its place on the grid according to the least random of arithmetical calculations. Pearson's evaluation explains the difficulty encountered in establishing the page dimensions. That my calculations are consistent with the facts presented by Pearson lead me to conclude that Mallarmé's 'profond calcul' is not one of chance.

³⁰⁷ These calculations tally with Jean-Claude Lebensztejn's conclusion:

Based on my observations and calculations, the page dimensions which best represent Mallarmé's idea, calculated using centimetres, inches and the pouce are:

57cm x 38 cm (double page), 28.5cm x 38cm (single)

22.4 inches x 14.9 inches (double page), 11.2 inches x 14.9 inches (single)

21 pouce x 14 pouce (double page), 10.5 pouce x 14 pouce (single)



Fig. 5.10

The open space curves around me – a piece of driftwood blinks in the heat haze.

I extend my arm fully – the gesture of an artist using the rule of thumb to measure

the edition for which Mallarmé had corrected the proofs shortly before he died was to be a folio edition measuring 38 cm x 28.5cm for a single page and thus 38 cm x 57 cm for a double page. Hence, not only would the area of printed text 27 cm x 18 cm have reflected the proportions 3: 2 for a single page, the overall page size would have had the proportions 4: 3 for a single page or for the whole text when shut or folded) and 2:3 for a double page, (or for the whole text when open or unfolded). (Ibid., Pearson, p. 255).

the relation of one thing to another [Fig. 5.10]. The word inch becomes abstract, a thumb, equal in part to something else – an arbitrary sound: Duim, polze, palec, tome, tommel, duim, pouce, *hüvelyk, pollice, polegada, polegar, palec, pulgada, pulgar, tum, tumme.* ³⁰⁸



Fig. 5.11

I hear laughter, I turn to face the monument, I see Mallarmé, then Krauss walking towards me.

³⁰⁸ A cursory search of the work 'inch' in Wikipedia reveals that the word 'inch' like the French word '*pouce*', is derived from the word thumb, being approximate to a man's thumb. The appropriation of the word thumb to represent an 'inch' is common to many other European languages, (see: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inch>).

‘My dear, dear friend,’ you say reaching for my hand, ‘I’ve been counting these last few days, on meeting you in various places and of talking about Aphrodite better than through this handshake.’³⁰⁹

‘Let me introduce you to Madame Krauss.’

‘Please, call me Rosalind,’ Krauss says, extending her hand.

‘Is this the monument you mention in your letter?’ She asks, somewhat surprised!

‘Yes. This is the place I call *Monument to I.*’³¹⁰

Mallarmé has climbed over the railings and onto the jetty, eager to begin walking to the sea. We follow his lead. Rosalind appears amused.

‘Are we facing north?’ she asks.

‘Northwest,’ I say, ‘onto the Irish Sea, and the Atlantic beyond.’

I begin with a precis of my findings. ‘You will know from my letters that I have established a relation between the twelve double pages of *Un coup de Dés*, and twelve sides of the dice [Fig.5.12] I say, turning to Rosalind.

309 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Pierre Louÿs, July 1896, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, p. 213.

310 Placed in the lower right hand corner of the photograph [Fig. 5.11] beyond the railings stands *Monument to I*, casting its shadow in the sand. A network of lines crisscrosses the beach – walks traced and erased by the tide. See: Google earth, aerial view from a point off the Meols coast, facing out to the Irish Sea.

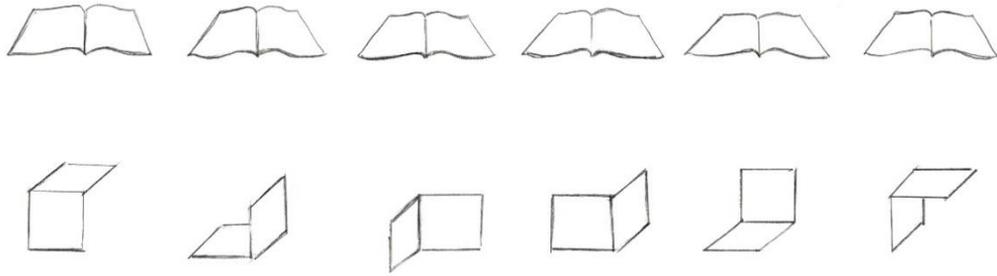


Fig. 5.12

‘Through a separation of the dots from the dice, and re–presentation on a two dimensional surface, I have produced a series of drawings, related books, and animations depicting a self-generating chiasmic structure, which I link to the alexandrine.³¹¹ Presented as both a series of dots and a series of numbers equivalent to the value ascribed to the dots in the dice, this structure takes the form of a grid [Fig. 5.13], suggesting infinite possible configurations on a two-dimensional surface in three-dimensional space.’³¹²

311 See Portfolio of works.

312 The potential of this model and its development into three-dimensional model, using digital technologies opens the work to digital space / virtual spaces, to code and binary code.

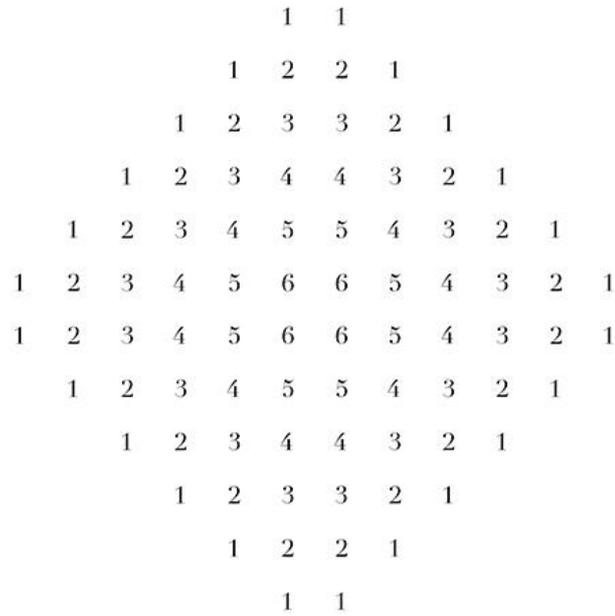


Fig 5. 13

‘The correlation between model and structural organisation of *Un coup de Dés* is compelling.’ I continue. ‘A correspondence between drawings, diagrams, and calculations allied to the dice, and those achieved in determining the typographic layout of the poem, and its syllabic count can be demonstrated.³¹³ Granted, this reading is complex. However, the reciprocal relations are so exacting, that I am driven to greater measures to perform these operations. In the process the grid has exerted its power as an ambiguous structure, simultaneously constructing and deconstructing itself.’

‘The grid,’ Krauss interjects, ‘announces among other things, modern art’s will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse. As such, the grid has done its job with striking efficiency. The barrier it has lowered between the arts of

³¹³ See, Appendix F: Syllabic Count of *Un coup de Dés*, p. 458. See also Portfolio of Work.

vision and those of language has been almost totally successful in walling up the visual arts into the realm of exclusive visuality and defending them against the intrusion of speech.’³¹⁴

Krauss’s conviction falls like the angled blade of a guillotine – a single clean cut separates head from body. I think of John the Baptist and all the other decapitated saints.³¹⁵ St Denis, the patron saint of France, who, it is rumoured, carried his

314 Op. cit., Krauss, ‘Grids’, p. 50. W. J. T. Mitchell deftly unpicks Krauss’s argument, revealing a paradox in her personification of an ‘anti-linguistic grid, with its “will to silence”’, which as he points out, ‘announces itself’, in other words speaks! (Op. cit., W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, p. 215). Krauss’s argument is considered in relation to Greenberg’s insistence upon ‘excluding ‘literature’, and subject matter from plastic art’. (Op. cit., Greenberg, *Towards a Newer Laocoon*, p. 566.) And Michael Fried’s contention:

The enterprise known variously as Minimal Art, ABC Art, Primary Structures, and Specific Objects is largely ideological. It seeks to declare and occupy a position—one that can be formulated in words, and in fact has been formulated by—some of its leading practitioners. (Fried, ‘Art and Objecthood’, p 1).

315 The symbolic role of decapitation in *Un coup de Dés*, and earlier works by Mallarmé including *Igitur*, has been mentioned in Chapter Three. In *Herodias: Cantic of John the Baptist* (Hérodiade: Le cantique de saint Jean), Mallarmé writes: ‘and my head now full-blown | a watchman on its own in the victory flights made | by the scythe’s blade’. (Op. cit., *Stéphane Mallarmé: Collected Poems and Other Verse*, p. 215). St John, like the poet undergoes a separation, baptism, illumination and ultimately salvation because of the symbolic act of decapitation. Meillassoux, makes a similar point, writing:

It is in this capacity that the decapitation of Saint John becomes, in Mallarmé, the symbol of the poetic act in its highest purity and its greatest power of hope: the symbol of a salvation, this time purely terrestrial; a symbol that prepares and announces an equally extreme ascesis with regard to the work of writing. (Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 56.)

Gardner Davies considers Mallarmé’s act of severance a necessity, which liberates the poet from ‘the constraint of time and space, and individual consciousness in preparation for the creative act’, thus accomplishing Mallarmé’s poetic ideal: ‘leaving behind everything that is not pure abstract mind’. (Gardner Davies, ‘Mallarmé’s Commitment to “Transposition, *Australian Journal of French Studies*, XXVI, no. I (January – April 1989), 52–70, 55. In my reading, Mallarmé accomplishes his poetic ideal through an act of

severed head while preaching a sermon to the site of his own burial, known today as ‘*The Martyrs Mountain*’, and the site of *St Denis Basilica*, which is laid out in the form of a Latin cross [Fig.5.14]. The grid, composed of vertical and horizontal lines intersecting at right angles, determines the sacred architecture of the basilica – a place of silent contemplation and a space occupied by a host of heavenly voices – the choir.³¹⁶

suspension, creating an unparalleled space to contemplate the full potential of a dice throw.

³¹⁶ The sacred architecture of the basilica and the pages *Un coup de Dés*, share a common ground. Both sites function as a place of contemplation, of silence, and, as space for the many voices, for the choir, for the twelve voices alluded to by twelve typographic variants in *Un coup de Dés*. Choir from Middle English *quer, quere*, from old French ‘*quer*’, from Latin chorus. The spelling change in the seventeenth century was due to association with Latin *chorus* and modern French *choeur*, *OED*. The word ‘choir’ is first used by members of the Latin Church. Isidore of Seville and Honorius of Autun writes that the term is derived from the ‘*corona*’, the circle of energy or singers who surround the altar. In Daniel Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub’s film, *Toute révolution est un coup de dés* (1977), nine readers placed in a semicircle perform Mallarmé’s *Un coup de Dés*. The performance takes place on a mound of earth in the grounds *Cimètiere du Père Lachaise*, facing the memorial wall, and plaque dedicated to the dead revolutionaries of the Paris Commune (21 –28 May 1871). Photography by Willy Lubtchansky and Dominique Chapuis, performers: Helmut Färber, Michel Delahaye, Georges Goldfayn, Danièle Huillet, Manfred Blank, Marilù Pariloni, Aksar Khahled, Andrea Spingler, and Dominique Villain.

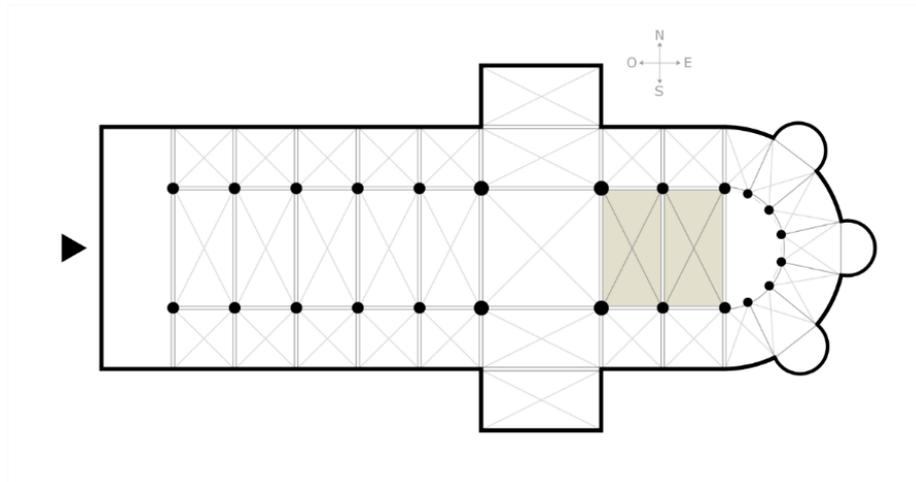


Fig 5. 14

'I have only to remain silent—not that I am pleased to be in an ecstasy close to passivity, but because the human voice is in error here.' Mallarmé says.³¹⁷

'Is this the interregnum you speak of? Is *Un coup de Dés* your calling card?³¹⁸ I ask. 'If, as you say, "this low world is suzerain", a sovereign state governed by a common language, then the poet has no recourse, but to silence.'

'As the lake under the motionless azure that even the white moon of summer mornings doesn't tarnish, is content to reflect it with mute admiration that a murmur of delight would brutally disturb.'³¹⁹ Mallarmé replies beguilingly.

317 Mallarmé, 'Hérésies artistique—L'Art pour tous', cited in Takeo Kawase's essay 'A crisis before "the Crisis": On Mallarmé's "Les Fenêtres"'.

318 Mallarmé writes: 'I consider the contemporary era to be a kind of interregnum for the poet, who has nothing to do with it: it is too fallen and too full of preparatory effervescence for him to do anything except keep on working'. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Paul Verlaine, November 15, 1885, *Divigations*, pp. 1–6, p. 4).

319 Ibid. Mallarmé, 'Hérésies artistique—L'Art pour tous', cited in Takeo Kawase's essay 'A crisis before "the Crisis": On Mallarmé's "Les Fenêtres"'.

‘The space of silence is ambiguous – the spectre of sound haunts the space.’ I say, as if to myself. ‘Silence smothers words – as dense fog obscures vision. Sound tests the contours of silence – pushing against its walls until words surface. This returns me to your poetic ideal, conjured up in the word ‘*transposition*’, and to my mathematical model performing the word.’

‘Ah’ Mallarmé says. ‘The aim, I call Transposition; Structure, another. The pure work implies the disappearance of the poet speaking, who yields to the clash of their ordered inequalities; they light each other up through reciprocal reflection like a virtual swooping of fire across precious stones, replacing the primacy of the perceptual rhythm of respiration or the classic lyric breath, or the personal feeling driving the sentences.’³²⁰

‘In your pursuit of beauty – of truth, you describe the process of transposition appearing as two opposing forces, one apparently negating the other, simultaneously revealing what is present and absent. In a similar way, my model performs this act, living and dying in the same moment – suspended like Hamlet between being and not being, like Igitur at the stroke of midnight, like the Master

320 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Crisis of Verse’, *Divigations*, p. 208. The principal of ‘*transposition*’ signals a necessary process of negation, towards the realisation of Mallarmé’s poetic ideal. In other words, Mallarmé’s poetic ideal depends on an act of negation in order to achieve its true essence, which is song. Mallarmé distinguishes between two kinds of language: ‘the double state of speech—brute and immediate here, there essential’. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Crisis of Verse’, *Divigations*, pp. 201–11, 210.) Gardner Davies, writes: ‘if affirmation and negation amount to the same thing, it is imperative to avoid the deadlock of *reductio ad absurdum*: only by keeping the contradiction *latent* is it possible to transcend it and move on to the infinite’, (Gardner Davies, ‘Mallarmé’s Commitment to “Transposition”’, *Australian Journal of French Studies*, XXVI, no. 1 (January – April 1989), 52–70, 68. See also: Appendix G: Glossary of Terms, p. 508.

of *Un coup de Dés*, like you, Mallarmé, faced with the ‘Crisis of Verse’. Your act of suspension, is also an act of contemplation, and of death.’ I picture my model – a protean form. I imagine it suspended in space– a perfect sphere, performing its own doing and undoing, becoming, and un- becoming form.³²¹

‘If numbers can demonstrate this principle,’ I continue, turning to Mallarmé, ‘then the dots of each die, which number one to six – twenty one in total, have the potential to perform this operation. Parallels between the numbers of the dice, and a syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés*, offer proof of this relation, which is confirmed through an explication of the text, and reflection on the nature of language itself. Or, as you say, “the sinuous and mobile variations of the idea, writing claims to stabilise”.’³²²

‘Referring to “the contemporary intellectual burden of the poet,” Mallarmé replies, ‘if he has saved from the disaster a kind of reverence for the twenty-four letters as they have fixed themselves, through the miracle of infinity, in some existing language, his, then a sense for their symmetries, their actions, their reflections, all the way up to a transfiguration into the surreal endpoint, which is verse; he possess, our civilised inhabitant of Eden, above everything else, the element of felicity, a doctrine as well as a country. Whenever by his initiative, or

321 Proteus, Greek God of Sea and rivers, the ‘Old Man of the Sea’ [Homer]. Protean from Proteus suggest a mutable nature changing form, see Appendix G: Glossary of Terms, p. 508.)

322 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, *Divigations*, p. 188.

whenever the virtual force of the divine characters teaches him, he begins to put them to work.’³²³

‘I have put your letters to work, Mallarmé. And, they have reciprocated.’ I add visualising my drawings – a series of right angles triangles [Fig. 5.15–5.16], recalling Robert Smithson’s *Heap of Language*, composed on graph paper, occupying a field of squares [Fig. 5.17]. Smithson’s hybrid form oscillates between word, image, and sound. Drawing my eye along the vertical axis, from the top down and up again to the top of the pyramid, returning to the perpendicular thrust, along the horizontal axis from left to right, pausing at the softened edge of the words, sensing a curve, and moving beyond the flat space of the page, around the mound, to contemplate the heap, the pile, the mass (Mass).³²⁴

323 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, *Divigations*, p. 186.

324 Richard Sieburth writes:

This principle of “grid composition” not only alludes to an entire tradition of American art of the 50s and 60s (cf. Rosalind Krauss), but also the tradition of visual poetics that emerges, say, from, “*Un coup de Dés*” (whose spatial scoring of the page Mallarmé worked out for his typesetter on schoolboy sheets of graph paper). (Sieburth, ‘A Heap of Language: Robert Smithson and American Hieroglyphic’, published online: <https://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/heap.htm>).

Smithson appears to be in dialogue with Mallarmé: ‘My sense of language’ ‘is that it is matter and not ideas – i.e. “printed matter”, recalling Mallarmé’s earlier claim ‘poetry is made of words and not ideas.’ Michalis Pichler takes the concept further treating the finished work itself ‘as material’ (Op. cit., Pichler, see Chapter One and Two) Smithson notes in ‘Language to be Looked at and/or Things to be Read’, literal usage becomes incantatory when all metaphors are suppressed. Here language is built, not written’, recalling Mallarmé’s ‘twenty four letters’. Smithson’s use of graph paper extends and mirrors the ‘Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles’ proposed by Jakobson to describe two axes of language: the vertical axis of selection (metaphor), and the horizontal axis of combination (metonymy). Smithson like Mallarmé, activates the space of the page –

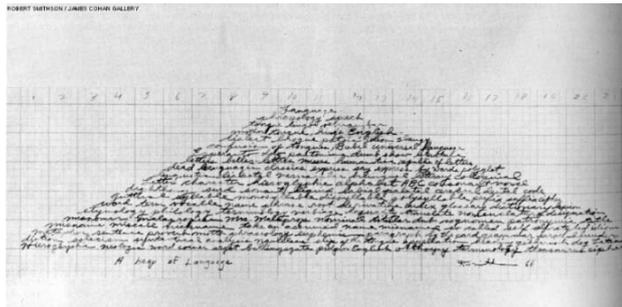
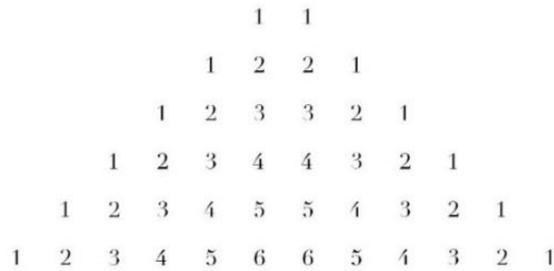


Fig 5.15 – 5.17

‘There are two ways in which the grid functions to declare the modernity of modern art.’ Rosalind says. ‘One is spatial the other temporal. In the spatial sense, the grid states the autonomy of the realm of art. Flattened, geometricised, ordered, it is anti-natural, anti-mimetic, anti-real. It is what art looks like when it turns its back on nature. [...]’³²⁵

drawing the reader’s eye along each axis, implicating the reader in a language game, in the play between word, image, and sound.

325 Op. cit., Krauss, ‘Grids’, p. 51.

‘One does not write, luminously, on a dark field; the alphabet of stars alone does that, sketched or interrupted; man writes black on white.’³²⁶ Mallarmé says, looking to the heavens.

‘My first syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés*, revealed 1224 syllables. My excitement in realising the same figure as Mitsou Ronat was tempered by doubt, leading to repeated counts.’³²⁷ I say, interrupting Mallarmé.

326 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Restricted Action’, *Divigations*, p. 216.

327 The decision to conduct a syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés* was counter-intuitive given the fragmentary layout of the poem, which problematises such a count. A glance of the text suggests multiple approaches to reading, defying a conventional linear trajectory. Meillassoux asks: ‘If there is a meter intrinsic and specific to the *Un coup de Dés*, what does it number? And what exactly must we count to obtain it? Meillassoux is critical of Ronat’s syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés*, justifying a ‘word count’, in his decipherment of the poem. Meillassoux cites Gustav Kahn’s unequivocal position as principal theorist of the new form of ‘free verse’, writing: ‘For Kahn, the essence of verse was not at all linked to the puerile counting of syllables or to the equally infantile matching of rhymes.’ (Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 22). Mallarmé recognises the value of both traditional metre and free verse: ‘let us imagine the dissolution of the official verse form, the form now becoming whatever one wants, so long as pleasure repeats in it’. Mallarmé’s position liberates the ‘ear’, in favour of an ‘individual game’, while the traditional form continues to provide a social function: ‘I remain convinced that on grand occasions, poets will obey, solemn tradition, of which the preponderance come from the classic genius’ (Op. cit., *Crisis of Verse*, p. 205, 206). This research supports Ronat’s claim that the classic form of the alexandrine is written into the architecture of *Un coup de Dés*. However, it goes further, demonstrating how the code and operations of the poem can be reconfigured into a model representing the potential of every throw; a model that performs a reciprocal relation between the syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés* and the numbers in the dice. For a comprehensive account of my approach to conducting a syllabic count see (Appendix F: Syllabic Count of *Un coup de Dés*, p. 458–504).

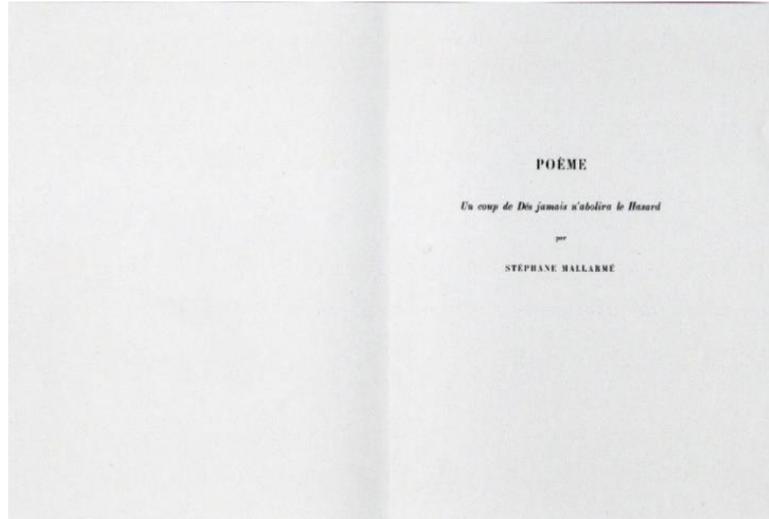


Fig 5.19

Turning to face Mallarmé, I say. 'A revised syllabic count of 1221 necessitated a re-appraisal of the link between the title page and the textual body of the poem. Composed of twenty-one syllables, the title page forms part of the whole but performs a separate function [Fig. 5.19]. It is symbolically linked to the 'operator', who, like the author initiates the performance.'³²⁸

'My thought has thought itself and reached a pure concept.' Mallarmé says, smiling, not without irony. 'All that my being has suffered as a result during that long death cannot be told, but, fortunately, I am utterly dead, and the least pure region where my spirit can venture is Eternity. My spirit that recluse accustomed

328 Mallarmé's name appears on the title page of *Un coup de Dés* (Fig. 5.19), see, Appendix F: Syllabic Count of *Un coup de Dés*, p. 458–504.

to dwelling in its own Purity, is no longer darkened even by the reflection of Time.³²⁹

Mallarmé has accomplished his poetic ideal, 'leaving behind everything that is not pure abstract mind'.³³⁰

"Yes, and I have proof," I say, producing a wand from my pocket, as I lower myself to the ground to write my proof.

I trace the number 1221 in the sand.



Fig 5.20

329 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Henri Cazalid, May 1867, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, pp. 74–6, 74.

330 Op. cit., Gardner Davies, Mallarmé's 'Transposition', p. 55. Gardner commenting on Mallarmé's prose-poem, 'Restricted Action' (Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Restricted Action, *Divigations*, pp. 215–19) compares the symbolic separation of head and body with Mallarmé's desire to 'purge the mind of the artist to the point of abstraction, before any valid attempt at creation' (Ibid., Gardner, p. 55).

By divesting himself of his personality, leaving behind even his individual consciousness, the author strives to be born again as pure mind, through which the universe may perceive and develop itself. Only under such conditions can he emerge as the anonymous instrument of the Oeuvre. (Ibid.)

‘The main body contains 1200 syllables – the title page 21 syllables. The figure 1221 is a chiasmic structure, 12 = 21 mirrored.’³³¹ I say, spelling it out. ‘The sum of dots contained in one die is 21. Two die (the dice) are summoned in a doubling of the title : *A throw of the Dice will never abolish Chance. A throw of the Dice will never abolish Chance* is repeated (mirrored) in the main body of the poem. This time the words are cast over several pages, falling as if by chance like the dots in the dice. A correspondence between the dots, which are configured one to six – six to one, and, a syllabic count of the poem reveals the majority of words have one or two syllables, recounting your words: ‘a lowly splashing of some kind as if to scatter the vacuous action’.³³²

‘Chance,’ Mallarmé interjects ‘doesn’t enter into any line and that is the great thing. Several of us have achieved this, and I believe that when lines are so perfectly delimited, what we should aim for above all, in a poem, is that the words which are already sufficiently individual not to receive external impressions—

331 Mallarmé likens the void to a reflected word,

I’m extracting this sonnet, which I thought about once this summer, from projected study of *The Word*: it is inverted, by which I mean that its meaning, if there is one (but I’d draw constellation for its lack of meaning from the dose of poetry it contains, at least in my view) is evoked by an internal mirage created by the words themselves. If you murmur it to yourself a couple of times, you get a fairly cabalistic sensation. (Mallarmé, *Sonnet in X*, Letter to Henri Cazalis, July 1868, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, pp. 85–7, 86).

332 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: An English Translation, p. 425).

reflect upon each other to the point of not appearing to have their own colour anymore, but to be merely transitions with in an entire gamut.³³³



Fig. 5.21

'At the centre of *Un coup de Dés*, the words *Comme Si* \ *Comme Si*, comprise two and, one syllables respectively. Closer scrutiny of my syllabic count reveals 2 and 1 placed side by side, appearing on the verso, repeated on the recto as 21 – 21. The dice are in play – symbolically invoked in numbers 21, and 21. This play is mirrored and doubled visually in the appearance of the word SI, which if reversed resembles the number 21. The dice are insinuated in *Comme Si*, as if: SI = 21, and 21 = SI. The outcome of this symbolic throw, the alexandrine is playfully suggested

³³³ Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to François Coppée, December 1866, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, pp. 68–9.

in the lines : The one and only number that cannot | be any other (*l'unique Nombre qui ne peut pas | être un autre*). These lines are separated like the alexandrine by a pause. Unlike the classic alexandrine they are placed across two pages, if counted as one double page an alexandrine results. In the following line of twelve syllables : “closing the division and passing proudly on” (*en reposer la division et passer fier*) the form of the alexandrine is simultaneously recalled, and called into question.³³⁴ The alexandrine appears in many guises in *Un coup de Dés*, a shape shifter, agile and light of foot ; culminating in the perfect throw, which is symbolically present in the only two words of the poem to contain six syllables : ‘*insinuation*’ and ‘*hallucination*’ – two sixes falling across the chasm.’³³⁵

To conclude, I say. ‘The Master is suspended between two states. If he refuses to play the game like the ‘*hoary maniac*’, if he holds on to tradition he will perish, and, with him the worn-out forms of his predecessors, the romantics Hugo and Baudelaire.³³⁶ If he casts the dice, if he leaps into the void, he will be restored,

334 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés*: An English translation, p. 419). Unlike the traditional alexandrine the caesura (pause) does not fall in the centre of this line.

335 Mallarmé writes:

The poet with acute tact who considers the alexandrine the definitive jewel [...] touches it shyly or plays around it, superb and naked : letting his fingers drag against the eleventh syllable, or go to the thirteenth, many times. Monsieur Henri Regnier excels at this kind of play, of his own invention, discreet and proud like the genius he has instated, and revealing of the transitory trouble poets have with the hereditary instrument. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Crisis of Verse’, *Divigations*, p. 205.)

336 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 419). ‘Hoary maniac’, in French, ‘*en maniaque chenu*’, refers to old man, ‘chenu’ (hoary) refers to ‘greyish white’, to: ‘hoary cobwebs’, synonymous with ‘white, grey, silvery (of a person having grey or white hair. Hoary is synonymous with overused,

“born | from a frolic”³³⁷ The number 21 is repeated in the only line of the poem to contain 21 syllables – the full potential of the die. “The old man towards this ultimate conjunction with probability”³³⁸

‘As you write, Mallarmé:’

Ancestrally not to open his hand/ which is clenched/ far beyond his
useless head/ a bequest on his disappearance/ to someone/ ambiguous
/ the ulterior immorial demon/ having/ from non-lands/ led / the old man
towards this ultimate conjunction with probability.³³⁹

‘When a poem has matured, it will fall. I am imitating the laws of Nature, as you can see.’³⁴⁰ Mallarmé says, shielding his eyes from the midday sun.

unoriginal, and worn-out. Hoary also refers to ‘hoary peaks’ the snow-covered mountains which I would connect to the twin peaks of Mount Olympus, the Parnassian poets, and Mallarmé. In etymology ‘chenu’ Provenç weaver, ital canuto; from the Latin cantus, derived from canus; Sanskrit, Kas, shine: what is white is brilliant (Littré).

337 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 420.

338 Ibid.

339 Ibid.

340 Mallarmé, Letter to Théodore Aubanel, July 1866, cited by Gordon Millan, *Mallarmé: A Throw of the Dice The Life of Stéphane Mallarmé*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1994, p. 141.

CHAPTER SIX

Krauss Me Mallarmé



Fig. 6.1

I raise myself from the ground and continue walking towards the sea. Mallarmé
and Rosalind follow my lead.

Down falls | the quill | a rhythmic suspension of disaster | to bury itself
| in the primordial spray | whose frenzy formerly leapt from there to a
peak | that is blasted | in the constant neutrality of the abyss³⁴¹

³⁴¹ Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendices C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 424).



Fig. 6.2

The word falls, unfurls. F forced out by the breath; all follows the [f]all. I think of all the fallen women, the fallen angels – a fall from grace, recalling the fall of man. Pride comes before a fall, and we all fall.

“Down falls the quill, a rhythmic suspension of disaster”.³⁴²

³⁴² Ibid. The French word, *'choit'*, (fall) from the verb *'choir'*, refers to a shock, a blow, an impulse that causes the balance to be lost, topples, and carries up and down, while falling indicates a fall from a very high place. The French word *'Suspend'*, from old French *'suspendere'*, or Latin *'suspendere'*, from sub- 'from below' + *'pendre'* 'hang', (of solid particles) be dispersed through the bulk of a fluid. And, to drape, or to hang. In music prolong (a note or chord) into a following chord, usually to produce a temporary discord. (OED).

‘Your words suggest two opposing movements.’ I say turning to face Mallarmé.

‘The quill is falling, at the same time it is suspended in the “primordial spray”.’³⁴³

The paradox is a symbolic manifestation of your dilemma, or as you say, the “two abysses” you have encountered in your pursuit of truth.’³⁴⁴

343 Ibid. The ‘primordial spray’, in French ‘aux écumes originelles’, returns the reader to the concept of ‘origin’. In English, ‘original’ from: French origine, from Latin, origo, origin-, from oriri ‘to rise’ (OED). The French word ‘écumes’: a whitish foam that forms on the surface of agitated, heated, or fermenting liquid. The foam of the Sea – Aphrodite. (*Dictionnaire Littré*). Mallarmé’s words summon, first, the beginning of time, the origin of man, and by association ‘original sin’, and the ‘fall of man’. A point of origin in the Cartesian system, where x (axis) crosses y (axis), otherwise known as the ordered pair (0, 0) – a fixed point of origin denoted by the letter O. Derrida questions the integrity of the concept of a structure based on the principle of a fixed origin, that is, an organising principle governing the rational order dominating the Western metaphysical philosophical tradition. He refers to the ‘structurality of structure’, whose centre implies a ‘point of presence, a fixed origin’. (See, Derrida, ‘Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’, *Derrida: Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London; Routledge, 2001, 1978) [*L’écriture et la différance*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967], pp. 351–70, 352. The implication of a system determined by this principle designates for Derrida ‘the constant presence—eidos, arché, telos, Energeia, ousia (essence, existence, substance, subject) altheia, alethia, transcendentality, consciousness, or conscience, God, man, and so forth’. (Ibid., p. 353). In Derrida’s deconstruction and Mallarmé’s *Un coup de Dés* the paradox of the centre is presented as simultaneously open and closed. In *Un coup de Dés* this becomes manifest in the vortex at the center of the poem. Derrida argues that the centre is both inside and outside, since the very thing that governs the structure, is by definition unique, and, therefore, escapes structurality – the centre is and is not a centre. (Ibid., p. 353). Derrida and Mallarmé question the convention of language based on a principle of cause and effect, which presupposes an origin, a structural order, a narrative. For Derrida and Mallarmé there is no beginning, no end – only an endless game of signification. Mallarmé’s poem writes [performs] the paradox – *Un coup de Dés* begins with the words ‘A throw of the dice will never abolish chance’, and ends with the words, ‘Every thought emits a dice throw’. Derrida’s deconstruction of the ‘mythic centre’ is a paradoxical play. To deconstruct the centre, Derrida by necessity must acknowledge the presence of the absence of a centre or origin, and conversely the absence of a presence of a centre or origin. In my reading *Un coup de Dés*, this paradox becomes manifest in a model that simultaneously constructs and deconstructs itself – being both present and absent at the same time, presenting the presence of absence and the absence of presence simultaneously.

344 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Henri Cazalis, April 1866, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, p. 59.

‘If you only knew what nights of desperation and what days of reverie have to be sacrificed to succeed in writing original poetry.’ Mallarmé says smiling. ‘And what study of the sounds and colour of words, the music and painting through which your thought must pass, however beautiful it may be, if it is to become poetry!’³⁴⁵

A rite of passage. And, what of unoriginal poetry. Who I wonder, is writing who?

Turning to Mallarmé, I say: ‘The first abyss, the void, is your discovery that language refuses meaning. The failure of the word to correspond to its sound, for instance, simultaneously opens and closes the space of meaning. Contradictions between sound and sense initiate a reflection on the words themselves, which appear as conventional signs. I would agree – at the heart of language lies the void, “the centre that cannot hold”, the abyss, the vortex, the paradox of hole and whole.³⁴⁶ This is the space where meaning slips, where mis-readings abound – in the constant “neutrality of the abyss”.³⁴⁷ In this endless play of signification, word, image and sound are spun – meaning can never be fixed.’³⁴⁸

345 Ibid., Mallarmé, Letter to Henri Cazalis, July 1865, pp. 52–3. Mallarmé’s words mirror Manet’s desire for ‘an impersonal abstraction’, both of which require ‘the master to pass through many phases ere this self-isolation can be acquired’. (Manet, cited by Mallarmé in: (Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘The Impressionists and Edouard Manet’, pp. 29–35, 29.

346 W. B. Yates, *The Second Coming*.

347 Op. cit, Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 424). See also Derrida’s reading of Rousseau, leading to his theory of writing as ‘an indefinitely multiplied structure—en abyme [in an abyss] Derrida, ‘The Exorbitant Question of Method’, Jacques Derrida: *Of Grammatology* p. 163.

348 Ferdinand de Saussure considers language a system of differences. The referent in Saussure’s system is a word or sign referring to a real object. Jonathan Culler elaborates on the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign in Saussure’s system: ‘First, the sign (for instance a word) is a combination of a form (the ‘signifier’), and the relation between form

‘Yes,’ Mallarmé says, adding. ‘My own sense regrets that discourse fails to express objects by touches corresponding to them in shading of bearing, since they do not exist among the many languages, and sometimes in one. Beside *ombre* (shade), which is opaque, *ténèbres* (shadows) is not very dark; what a disappointment, in

and the meaning (the ‘signified’), and the relation between form and meaning is based on convention, not natural resemblance’. (Jonathan Culler, ‘Language Meaning and Interpretation’ *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011 [1997] pp. 56 – 9, 58). Culler refers to a second aspect, in which the signifier (form) and the signified (meaning) are themselves conventional divisions of the plane of sound and the plane of thought, respectively. [Ibid.] Derrida questions the foundation of Saussure’s Structuralism which is based on the relative pairing of ‘signifier’ to ‘signified’, in other words a binary operation, pre-supposing cause and effect, or successive operations – that is to say, an origin. A sign under the critique of Derrida’s ‘deconstruction’ is not independent, or stable, on the contrary, it is linked by association to another sign. Derrida’s ‘signifying chain’ is one that proliferates, leaving ‘traces’, which accumulate and complicate reading. The spirit of Derrida’s ‘deconstruction’ is demonstrated in my reading of the word ‘*sign*’ (‘*indice*’) at the centre of *Un coup de Dés*. To differentiate between the primacy accorded to speech and the status of writing as secondary representation of speech, in Saussure’s structural analysis and indeed the Western metaphysical tradition of philosophy, Derrida coins the term ‘*différance*’. The distinction between difference and ‘*différance*’ becomes critical in Derrida’s approach,

The verb ‘to differ’ [*différer*] seems to differ from itself. On the one hand, it indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernibility; on the other, it expresses the interposition of delay, the interval of a *spacing* and *temporalizing* that puts off till ‘later’ what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible. Sometimes the *different* and sometimes the *deferred* correspond [in French] to the verb ‘to differ’. This correlation, however, is not simply one between act and object, cause, and effect, or primordial and derived. In the one case ‘to differ’ signifies non-identity; in the other case it signifies the order of the *same*. Yet there must be a common, although entirely different [*différente*] root within the sphere that relates to two movements of differing to one another. We provisionally give the name *différance* to this *sameness* which is not *identical*: by the silent writing of its ‘a’, it has the desired advantage of referring to differing, *both* as spacing/temporalizing and as the movement that structures every dissociation. (Op. cit., Derrida, ‘Difference’, p. 278.)

Derrida points to the ‘ance’ of ‘*différance*’, which he describes as ‘undecided between active and passive’, an act of indecision, of suspension, which I link to Mallarmé’s *Throw of the Dice* and, to Igitur’s hesitation and Hamlet’s indecision.

front of the perversity that makes *jour* (day) and *nuit* (night) contradictory, sound dark in the former and light in the later. Hope for a resplendent word glowing, or being snuffed out, inversely, so far as a simple light-dark alternative are concerned. —*Only, be aware that verse would not exist: it*, philosophically, makes up for language’s deficiencies, as a superior supplement.’³⁴⁹

349 Op. Cit., Mallarmé, ‘Crisis of Verse’, *Divigations*, p. 205. Mallarmé, presents the paradox. The failure of language to offer one material truth, a universal form, leads Mallarmé to re-evaluate his position as poet, and to separate poetry from ‘ordinary language’ – poetry becomes elevated, a ‘superior supplement’. Mallarmé’s ‘superior supplement’ recalls Derrida’s reading of Jean- Jacques Rousseau’s “*dangerous supplement*”, exposing the paradox at the heart of Rousseau’s desire for ‘self-presence’. Rousseau becomes the master of absence; in order to show his true presence [value] he must absent himself from speech [since it fails to do him justice] and present his true value through writing. As Derrida points out, Rousseau exposes the ‘mirage’ of the immediacy of speech, and the fallacy of the written word which denies self-presence[ideal form of truth] leading to paradox, Derrida writes: ‘Death by writing inaugurates life’, leading Derrida to speculate on the ‘economy of *differance*’. A *differance* that ‘does not resist appropriation’, indeed it re-appropriates presence. (Derrida, ‘That Dangerous Supplement’, *Of Grammatology*, p. 143). Derrida’s untangling of the paradox presented by Rousseau’s confession: ‘How to escape the risks of ‘impoverished speech’ is compelling. At the risk simplifying Derrida’s reading, ‘the dangerous supplement’ (the real life behind the text) is of no interest:

there has never been anything but writing: there have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations, which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the “real” supervening, and been added only while taking meaning on from a trace and from the invocation of the supplement, etc. And thus, to infinity, for we have read, in the text, that the absolute present, Nature, that which words like “real mother” name, have always already escaped, have never existed; that which opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence. (Ibid., p. 159.)

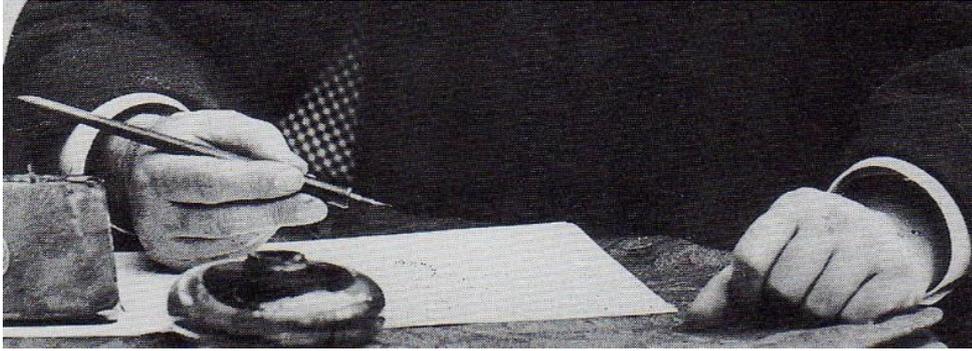


Fig 6.3

‘And this is the point.’ I reply. ‘It is because of this absence, this lack, which, your “brute and ordinary language” cannot fill, that poetry by necessity comes to be.’

350

‘We must return to your “superior supplement”, and to Derrida,’ I continue. ‘But first, death. The master of *Un coup de Dés* could be said to be in contrivance with his own death. Rather than playing the game like “a hoary maniac”, he hesitates – “a corpse cut off by its arm from the secret it withholds”.³⁵¹ Down falls the quill,

350 Ibid.

³⁵¹ The Master’s hesitation, like that of Igitur and Hamlet has been discussed. Mallarmé’s solitary crisis leads him to reflect on the originary nature of language, and on his lineage which he traces through Beaudelaire, Hugo, and Poe back to the muse to ‘*the primordial spray*’, and Aphrodite, who emerges from the foam of the sea. A poetic fury is invoked in the lines ‘*whose frenzy formerly leapt from there to a peak*’. Frenzy, in French ‘*delire*’ (de-li-r) defined as- : Sense of mind caused by illness. An acute delirium, [...] poetic fury. A sublime delusion [...] Cassandra in excess of a sacred delirium. (*Le Littré*). The word, Peak, in French ‘*cime*’ defined as peak summit, the pointed top of a tree, a mountain, a steeple. Poetically. The mount with double summit, the double peak, Parnassus. The nymphs of the double crown, the Muses. (*Le Littré*). Mallarmé has arrived at the mythical origin of poetry, music, and learning, home of the muses. The name ‘*Parnassus*’ appropriated by the *Parnassian* poets, leads back to Mallarmé, and to Montparnasse, on the left bank of the Seine – a meeting place for poets and painters, and a burial site.

in religion as in the government between tyranny and anarchy ready to fall into one of these two chasms".³⁵⁴



Fig. 6.4



Fig. 6.5



Fig. 6.6



Fig. 6.7

'The fall,' I continue, 'anticipated by Voltaire, recalls Jacques-Lois David's painting: *The Death of Marat*, 1793. In the painting, Marat's lifeless arm hangs down – the quill will fall from his hand – as Christ falls from the cross, [Fig. 6.4]. Poet, painter, and revolutionary are all dead – suspended in time and space. Implicit in this death is the prospect of resurrection. David's staging of Marat's death is a lie, the duplicity of his act [craft] transforms Marat into a Christ-like figure – reminiscent of earlier paintings showing Jesus's descent from the cross.'³⁵⁵ [Fig.6.5–6.7].

354 Attributed to Voltaire (Le *Littré*) cited under '*gouffre*' (abyss). In his criticism of the Catholic Church, French Enlightenment writer and philosopher Voltaire, advocates for a separation of church from state. Enlightenment thought, and rationale are used to undermine the authority of the Catholic Church during the French Revolution. The concept of secularity (*laïcité*) finds form in *The Civil Constitution of the Clergy* 1790, signalling a shift of wealth and power from church to state. The transition from a sacred to secular society, leads to the dismantling and appropriation of the so-called 'sacred places', and a re-evaluation of their use and function.

355 A full commentary on David's painting, indeed the French Revolution, is beyond the scope of this thesis. Its inclusion here highlights the importance attribute to the shift from sacred to secular; how Jacques-Louis David: *The Death of Marat*, 1793 [Fig.6.4] serves as a paragon of symbolic appropriation. See also Simon Schama, who describes David's depiction of Marat as a Christ-like figure as an 'apotheosis', comparing David's *Death of*

‘David’s symbolic appropriation of the iconography of the cross signalling a shift from the sacred to secular space becomes a revolutionary act and a political reality. In *The Death of Marat*, the cross is symbolically present in the block of wood, cut down and transformed into a tombstone – a monument engraved with the name of Marat and the author of his transfiguration, David. The canvas is divided into two halves, the vertical axis of the cross is replaced by infinite space – symmetry and proportion rule and order the remaining space, establishing an ideal worthy of Greek classicism.³⁵⁶ In an act that conceals the true circumstances of Marat’s death, David’s divine staging of the assassination simultaneously evokes and replaces the figure Christ.’³⁵⁷

Marat to a revolutionary pietà (see Michelangelo’s *Pietà*, (1498–1499), St Peters Basilica. See Simon Schama, ‘Terror Is the Order of the Day’, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*, New York, NY: Alfred Knopf, 1989, pp. 726 – 92, 746. Marat’s transfiguration has also been compared to Caravaggio’s, *The Entombment of Christ*, (1602–1603), Vatican Pinacoteca, (Fig. 6.5). Rubens, *The Decent from the Cross*, (1612–1614), Cathedral of Our Lady, Antwerp (Fig 6.6), I also include Jean-Baptiste Jouvenet’s, *La Déposition*, (1697), Musée du Louvre, (Fig 6.7).

³⁵⁶ See, Williamson on Jacques-Louis David’s appropriation of the grid in his painting *The Death of Socrates*, 1787.

David used the grid not merely as an illusionistic tool for transferring the drawn figure of Socrates from paper to canvas: rather, the rigid network of horizontals and verticals, evident in the wall behind Socrates is presented in the finished painting as well. [...] the grid, which invades and integrates itself into the figures very gestures, signifies the rational, impersonal, and inevitable character of natural law, which deterministically controls the structure of the material world and of the events within the material world. (Op. cit, Williamson, ‘The Grid History Use and Meaning’, p. 176–7).

³⁵⁷ David is described by Schama as a propagandist, and by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon ‘as an infernal genius’, who could ‘excite pity and anger’ in the people to manipulate their actions. David’s genius in my opinion, is his ability to reduce everything to its simplest form – metaphorically ruling and dividing the space of the canvas, while appropriating the symbolism of the sacred to determine secular rule, in a gesture that becomes politically

‘Mallarmé,’ I continue, ‘your desire for a poetics that would replace the rituals of the Catholic Church springs from this revolutionary well. Your poetic act differs from Marat’s in two respects: first, it is used not to mask the truth, but to reveal the truth. David’s theatrical staging of Marat’s death is an act of manipulation and control, presupposing the authority of its author. *Un coup de Dés* – your ‘divine transposition’, is an act of communion – radical, and, democratic.³⁵⁸ The author having conceived of a structure [‘the orphic explanation of the earth’] becomes the operator, who sets the paradox in motion.³⁵⁹ I [the reader] am thrown – unable to determine a point of origin, a centre, become a reader of maps, and creator of constellations.’³⁶⁰

manifest. See also Williamson’s account of the transition from a ‘sacred to an increasingly secular world conception’, linked to a corresponding ‘shift from a grid based on value-loaded coordinates and intersections, to one conceived as a ‘field’ comprised of points and axes possessing either neutral or numerical (quantitate) value.’ And Natalie Zemon Davis’s account of the symbolism of the vertical axis in relation to sacred spaces, ‘through which the divine was felt to vertically penetrate the space of the mundane world from above’. (Op. cit., Williamson, p. 175.)

358 See Mallarmé’s ‘divine transposition’, discussed in Chapter Five.

359 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Paul Verlaine, November 1885, *Selected letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, pp. 142–6, 143. See Mallarmé’s concept of the book, ‘Le Livre’ in relation to *Un coup de Dés*, considered a fragment of his idea for Le Livre by many Mallarméan scholars.

360 See Valéry on Mallarmé’s challenge to the reader:

To demand that the reader should be intellectually alert; to forbid him the privilege of completely possessing a text at the cost of a somewhat painful effort; to insist on transforming him from a passive spectator that he would prefer to be a partial creator. Op. cit., Valéry, *Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé*, Vol 8, p. 273.

See also Mallarmé’s influence on Foucault and Barthes, in respect of the authority of the author.

‘Futhermore,’I add, ‘Marat’s appropriation of formal classical ideals [Neoclassicism] in order to achieve control, contrasts with your organisation of the space of the page, which inhabits the architecture of the sacred [sacred geometry] in order to perform the mystery of your poetic transformation.’

Rosalind interjects. ‘Given the absolute rift that had opened between the sacred and the secular, the modern artist was obviously faced with the necessity to choose between one mode of expression and the other. The curious testimony offered by the grid is that at this juncture he tried to decide for both. In the increasingly de-sacralised space of the nineteenth century, art had become the refuge for religious emotion; it became, as it has remained, a secular form of belief. Although this condition could be discussed openly in the late nineteenth century, it is inadmissible in the twentieth century, so that now we find it indescribably embarrassing to mention art and spirit in the same sentence.’³⁶¹

‘Yet,’ I insist. ‘It is impossible to consider the grid without recourse to time and space, and by association, the concepts of the infinite and finite. Equally it is impossible to escape the symbolism of the cross which appears wherever two lines intersect. You make a similar point in your essay, citing the work of Ad Reinhardt

³⁶¹ Op. cit., Krauss, ‘Grids’, p. 54. Krauss claim that the prevalence of significant artists using the grid in their work is indicative of its success and power as an emblem of the twentieth century. This success Krauss writes refers to three things at once:

A sheerly quantitative success, involving the number of artists in this century who have used grids; a qualitative success through which the grid has become the medium of some of the greatest works of modernism; and an ideological success, in that the grid is able – in a work of whatever quality to emblematised the Modern.

[Fig. 6.8] and Agnes Martin.³⁶² I would include my cruciform works generated in the process of reading *Un coup de Dés* [Fig. 6.9 – 6.10]. At the centre, a cross divides the space into four quadrants – I equate this with the fold of the double page in *Un coup de Dés*, which would have been doubled before being cut open by the reader.'

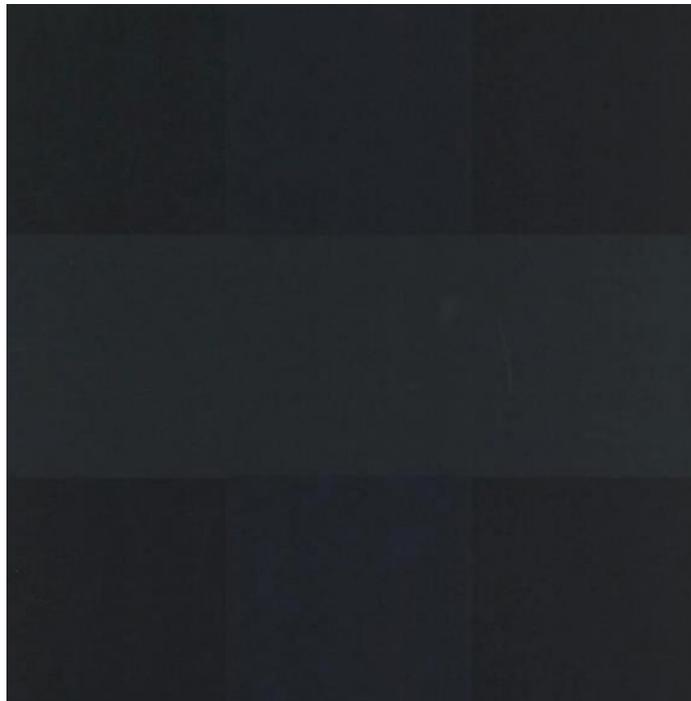


Fig. 6.8

362 Ibid.

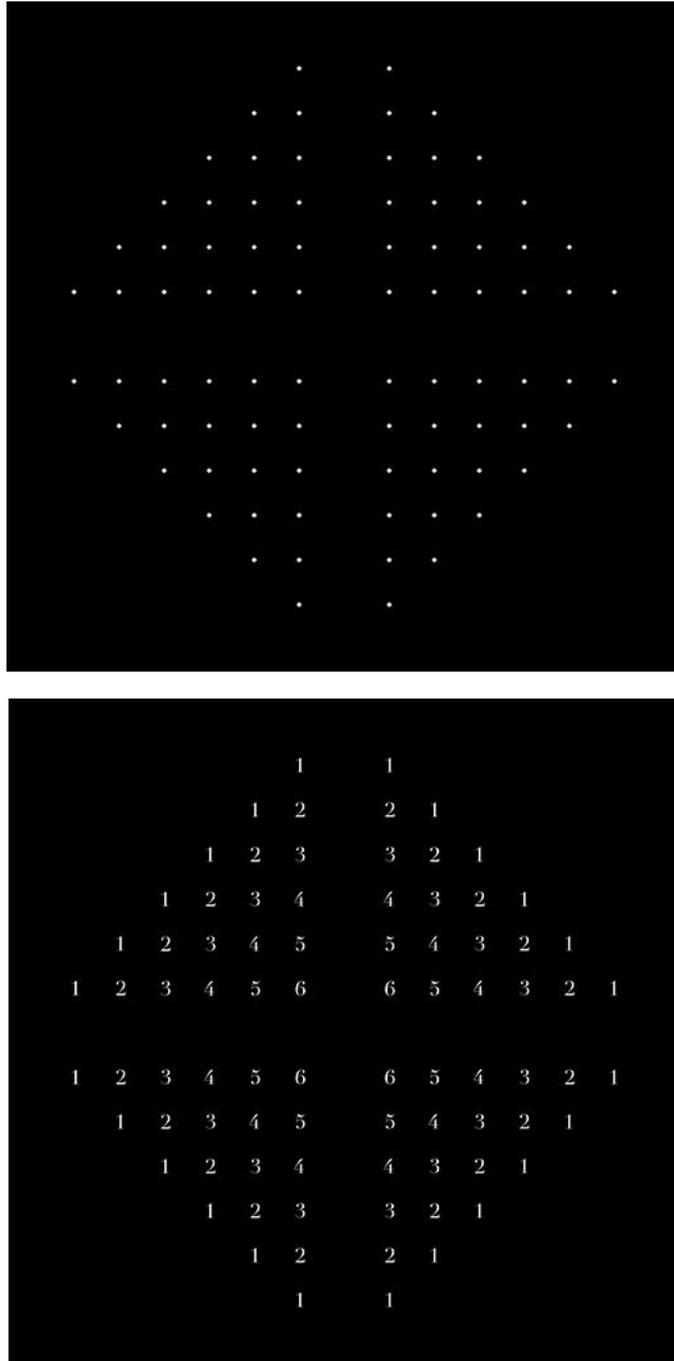


Fig. 6.9, Fig. 6.10

'The grid.' Rosalind says with authority, 'declares the space of art to be at once autonomous and autolectic. In the temporal dimension, the grid is an emblem of modernity by being just that: a form that is ubiquitous in the art of *'our'* century,

while appearing nowhere in the art of the last one. In that great chain of reactions by which modernism was born out of the efforts of the nineteenth century, one final shift resulted in breaking the chain. By “discovering” the grid, cubism, de Stijl, Mondrian, Malevich landed in a place that was out of reach of everything that went before. They landed in the present; everything else was declared to be the past.’³⁶³

‘There’s no such thing as a Present,’ Mallarmé replies. ‘No—a present doesn’t exist...Uninformed is he who would proclaim himself his own contemporary, deserting or usurping with equal imprudence, when the past seems to cease and the future to stall, in view of masking the gap.’³⁶⁴

‘It is in this ambivalence about the import of the grid, an indecision about its connection to matter on the one hand or spirit on the other, that its earliest employers can be seen to be participating in a drama that extended well beyond the domain of art.’³⁶⁵ Rosalind replies, brushing sand from her feet.

Two swallows appear to fall from the sky, now rising, and falling again, and rising.

‘Shall we?’ Rosalind asks, moving to the water’s edge, dipping her toes in the sea.

‘I’ve been attracted to anything that could be summed up in the word ‘fall~’.’

Mallarmé says, raising himself from the ground. ‘Thus,’ he continues, ‘my favourite

363 Ibid., Krauss, p. 54.

364 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Restricted Action’, *Divigations*, p. 218.

365 Op. cit., Krauss, p. 54

time of year these last, lazy days of summer which immediately precede autumn, and my favourite time of day for walks is when the sun perches for a moment on the horizon before setting, casting yellow copper rays on the grey walls and red copper rays on the windowpanes.³⁶⁶

I imagine the solitary figure of Mallarmé watching the sun rise and set from his studio window in Valvins. The practice of writing and painting appears to be synonymous with solitary spaces. Is it any wonder that the window, frame, and grid in all their manifestations become a preoccupation?

Turning to Rosalind, I say, 'In your essay you suggest Mallarmé, and the "symbolist window is the first instance of the grid; a precursor to the modernist grid".³⁶⁷

'Indeed,' she says. 'The grid appears in symbolist art in the form of windows, the material presence of their panes expressed by geometrical intervention of the window's mullions. The symbolist interest in windows reaches back into the early nineteenth century and romanticism. In the hands of the symbolist painters and

366 Mallarmé, 'Autumn Lament', *Divigations*, p. 13. In a recent poetic exposition of the term '*falling*', Kristen Kreider and James O'Leary write: 'There is a line of thinking that runs throughout the history of natural philosophy, in which everything, everywhere is continually falling always. The world is composed of these particles that fall and these particles are falling forever. (Kreider and O'Leary, *Falling*, London: Copy Press, 2015).

367 Op. cit., Krauss, 'Grids', p. 51. Krauss refers to Mallarmé's poem *Les Fenêtre*, 1863 and Odilon Redon's Lithograph, *Le Jour*, [Day] from *Songes [Dreams]* 1891.

poets, this image is turned in an explicitly modernist direction. The window is experienced as simultaneously transparent and opaque.’³⁶⁸

‘I absolutely detest *isms* and anything like them,’ Mallarmé says, appearing uncharacteristically annoyed. ‘Such academic distinctions seem totally repugnant to me when applied to literature, which, on the contrary, remains a question of individual originality.’³⁶⁹

Instinctively Rosalind and I turn to face Mallarmé – we have placed ourselves either side of him.

Rosalind says. ‘There is no necessary connection between good art and change, no matter how conditioned we may be to think that there is. Indeed, as we have a more extended experience of the grid, we have discovered that one of the most modernist things about it is its capacity to serve as a paradigm or model for the anti-developmental, the anti-narrative, the anti-historical. This has occurred in the temporal as well as the visual arts: in music for example, and in dance. It is no surprise then that as we contemplate this subject, there should have been announced for the next season a performance project based on the combined

368 Lorenz Eitner, ‘The Open Window and the Storm-Tossed Boat: ‘An Essay in the Iconography of *Romanticism*,’ *Art Bulletin XXXVII*, (December 1955), pp. 281 – 90, cited by Krauss, ‘Grids’, p. 51.

369 Mallarmé, Interview published in the *L’Echo de Paris*, March 13, 1891. Cited by Gordon Millan, *Mallarmé: A Throw of the Dice The Life of Stéphane Mallarmé*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1994, p. 321.

efforts of Philip Glass, Lucinda Childs, and Sol LeWitt: music, dance and sculpture, projected as the mutually accessible space of the grid.’³⁷⁰

‘I would like to return to this “mutually accessible space”; first, would you explain how the symbolist window serves as a paradigm?’ I ask.

‘Of Course.’ Rosalind replies. ‘As a transparent vehicle, the window is that which admits light – or spirit – into the initial darkness of the room. But if glass transmits, it also reflects. So, the window is also experienced by the symbolist as a mirror – something that freezes and locks the self into the space of its own reduplicated being. Flowing and freezing; *‘glace’* means glass, mirror, and ice; transparency, opacity, and water. In the associative system of symbolist thought this liquidity points in two directions. First, towards the flow of birth – the amniotic fluid, the ‘source’ – but then, towards the freezing into stasis or death – the infecund immobility of the mirror.’

Then, turning to Mallarmé, she says, ‘For you Mallarmé, particularly, the window functioned as this complex, polysemic sign by which you could also project the “crystallization of reality into art”.’³⁷¹

370 Op. cit., Krauss, ‘Grids’, p. 64.

371 Ibid., p. 59. The ambiguous space Krauss refers to, recalls Mallarmé’s earlier poem: ‘This virginal long-living lovely day’, where, the frozen glassy surface of the lake has transfixed a swan, who is suspended between two states: *‘by clear ice-fights that never flew away!’* The phrase ‘crystallization of reality into art’, is a direct reference to Robert Greer Cohn’s essay: ‘Mallarmé’s Windows’, *Yale French Studies*, no. 54, 1977, 23 –31. Cohn refers to ‘the spiritual place of the poem and its very weighty, sensual, material place’. The ambiguous space of the mirror relates to the ‘solid block of a poet’s whole life-experience’, and to the ‘shadowy memories suspended there’. Cohn makes a case for the

Mallarmé responds from a solitary place, hardly conscious of our presence, he whispers,

I see myself – an angel! – and I die;

The window may be art or mysticism, yet

I long for rebirth in the former sky

Where Beauty blooms, my dream being my coronet!³⁷²

‘Takeo Kawase’ calls this “the play of the mirror”, I say, interrupting Mallarmé’s thoughts. ‘He believes your poetic ideal is revealed through ‘opposition’ to Baudelaire, who “takes reality too seriously”, making me think of Plato’s game; one that shouldn’t be taken too seriously.’³⁷³ He likens your dilemma to “self-crucifixion” – the only recourse to achieving real life in the realm of the ideal is to relinquish any hold on reality. Reading *Les Fênêtres*, Kawase refers to “the sorrowful figure of a fallen angel who has lost the faculty of flight”. I say recalling Kawase’s words:

co-existence of both the ‘real’ and ‘ideal’, referring to: ‘That block’ that simultaneously, ‘carries the angelic breath and reality of Mallarméan space’. (Ibid.)

372 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Les Fênêtres*, Op. cit., *Stéphane Mallarmé: Collected Poems and Other Verse*, pp. 11–13, 13.

373 Plato considers the poet ‘a representer who knows nothing of value about the things he represents; representation is a kind of game, that shouldn’t be taken too seriously’. (Op. cit., Plato, ‘Poetry and Unreality, *Republic*, p. 354.)

This transparent partition that separates the Ideal from Reality not only returns the poet's image to his gaze as the exquisite mirror but superimposes the image onto the vast stretch of the blue sky in the background. [...] the poet finds himself transformed into an 'angel' who lives in the sphere of the ideal. But at the same time the poet is dead.³⁷⁴

'Death, silence, suspension – revelation. The poet operates between two worlds, between the real and the ideal. Your window symbolises this division – it is a necessary construct, reflecting the separation of two states. The paradox is that one exists because of the other, the poet's existence is dependent on this division. The two abysses, two deaths you speak of, loss of faith, and a self-imposed silence delineate a new space for poetry. This interregnum, gap, pause, hesitation, suspension, indicated in two opposing movements, reflects the full potential of my protean model.'

'Futhermore,' I continue. 'The revelation of this space allows you to conceive of poetry as a "superior supplement", one "that makes up for language's deficiencies".'³⁷⁵

374 Takeo Kawase, 'A Crisis before "the Crisis: On Mallarmé's "Les Fênêtre"', *Mallarmé in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Robert Greer Cohn, London: Associated University Presses, 1998, pp. 143–55, 149. Kawase concludes out of this crisis Mallarmé attempted a new genre, the prose poem. (Ibid., p.153).

375 Valéry describes Mallarmé's reflection on the nature of language as:

A withdrawal into his own mind, communing with the endless analysis of his own insights. He considered language in a wholly personal way, and it became the centre of his thoughts, I must add a capital point: his idea of it was remarkably precise [...] Mallarmé never stopped thinking of the nature and possibilities of language with the lucidity of a scientist and the conviction of a poet. [...] From his reflections he drew formulas that

‘The foundations of a magnificent work.’ Mallarmé says, smiling deeply. ‘Every man has a secret in himself, many die without finding it and will not find it because, when they are dead, it will no longer exist, nor will they. I have died and come to life again with the bejewelled key of my final spiritual casket: now it is for me to open it in the absence of any borrowed impression, and its mystery will emanate into a lively sky.’³⁷⁶

‘A constellation. And what fireworks!’ I reply.

“‘The mystery, is hurled down, howled out’.”³⁷⁷ I continue. ‘Your twenty-four letters, Smithson’s heap of language, these forms of speech, are, as Valéry says, “patterns of relation and operations which, by allowing us to combine or associate the signs of any given objects and heterogeneous qualities, can help to lead to the discovery of the structure of our intellectual universe”.’³⁷⁸

I think of all the great men, all those illustrious men who bump into each other in the night.

constitute a singular metaphysics. He would say that the world had only been made so as to end in a beautiful book, and that it could and must perish once its mystery had been represented, and its expression found. He could see, in the existence of all things, no other explanation and no other excuse. (Op. cit., Valéry, ‘Stéphane Mallarmé, *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry: Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé*, p. 270.)

376 Mallarmé, Letter to Théodore Aubanel, in Op. cit., Valéry, *Leonardo Poe Mallarmé*, p. 269.

377 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 421).

378 Op. cit., Valéry, p. 305.

‘Mallarmé, your act of construction demands an act of deconstruction. In my reading of *Un coup de Dés* I encounter paradoxes essential to language, and to thought. The strangeness of this encounter, which denies narrative crumbs, leads to a re-evaluation of the words themselves, and to their sound. The word becomes sound – sonorous, as the inarticulate voice of the reader, articulates the sound of your words. The revelation of a new and unfamiliar voice [song] is in the play of these inequalities. I repeat the words until all sense is lost. I record the words in French and English, and layer the words – sound touches here and there creating new and unfamiliar notes.’

‘I have taken the words apart, letter by letter, syllable by syllable, deconstructing and reconstructing, as dots and then numbers. The words have been sounded out, spoken out, spelled out, tapped out, counted out, written out, traced out, typed out, your words have been outed.’ I say smiling.

‘This process,’ I continue, ‘makes me wonder about the language of painting. May a brush mark be compared to a word, a sound – a note vibrating in space? A brush mark inscribes its own contours – but does it miss as efficiently as the word *‘jour’* [day] or *nuit* [night] in the art of correspondence. A brush stroke can conjure up with striking efficiency the object of its desire. But can the form of a brush stroke be more than itself, more than a trace, a gesture. Is it nonsense to attempt to articulate one from of language through another, since each by necessity differentiates itself by virtue of its form? These questions return me to the signifier

and signified, and to your twenty-four letters, to Smithson's heap of language. To my gestures.' [Fig. 6.11 – 6.14].

INTERLUDE



Fig.6.11



Fig.6.12



Fig.6.13



Fig.6.14

CHAPTER SEVEN

Mallarmé Me Manet



Fig. 7.1

I can see myself in the distance – walking. I am outside myself – visible.³⁷⁹

‘It will all become clear.’ Mallarmé says, approaching the monument.

‘Forgive me dear friend. I fear I have kept you waiting.’ Mallarmé says reaching for my hand.

379 In a recursive gesture the artist records herself walking away. During the process, her shadow becomes visible (centre foreground, Fig.7.1) A third figure is implied; the artist recording a video projection of the event – simultaneously absent, located outside of the frame, and present, that is insinuated in the shadow. This work recalls Michel Foucault’s ‘utopia of the mirror’, he writes: ‘I see myself where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface [...] that enables me to see myself there where I am absent. (Op. cit., Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias’, p. 4). For Foucault, the mirror is both a real [Heterotopia] and unreal place [Utopia]. For me to come back to myself, to ‘reconstitute’ myself here where I am – outside of the screen,³⁷⁹ I must pass through a virtual point over there.

It makes the place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there (Ibid).

‘Manet,’ he adds, ‘who hardly ever writes, given his function as painter, sends you a long silent handshake!’³⁸⁰

I take Mallarmé’s hand. ‘I received a message from Victorine Meurent yesterday, explaining Manet’s condition. She assured me he is with us in spirit.’³⁸¹

‘Shall we?’ I ask, indicating it is time to begin our walk to the sea.

‘I would like to talk about your essay, “The Impressionists and Edouard Manet”’.³⁸²

You say, “Manet paints the truth”. A plain statement of fact, framed in one of two

380 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Algernon Swineburne, Jan 1876, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, pp. 110 – 13, 110.

381 Victorine Meurent, painter and contemporary of Edouard Manet, is best known as Manet’s model, see Manet’s *Olympia*.

382 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘The Impressionists and Edouard Manet’, pp. 27–35. Mallarmé, close friend and frequent visitor to Manet’s studio recounts conversations between painter and poet. He describes Manet’s approach as conceptual, noting his opposition to the artifice of perspective, and the classical style favoured by the academies, of which Manet was himself a Master.

Each work should be a new creation of the mind. The hand, it is true, will conserve some of its acquired secrets of manipulation, but the eye should forget all else it has seen, and learn anew from the lesson before it. It should abstract itself from memory, seeing only that which it looks upon, and that as for the first time; and the hand should become an impersonal abstraction guided only by will, oblivious of all previous cunning. (Ibid., p. 29.)

Mallarmé describes the ‘crisis’ that led Manet to abandon the convention of the academy, ‘to paint not at all, or paint entirely from without himself’. See also Art critic Marius Chaumelin’s review of Manet and the Impressionists,

They have a hatred for the classical traditions and an ambition to reform the laws of drawing and colour. They preach the separation of Academy and State. They demand an amnesty for the ‘schools of the daubs [taches, of whom M. Manet was the founder and to whom they are all indebted. (Maurice Chaumelin, ‘Actualités: L’exposition des intransigeants’, *La Gazette [des Étranges]*, 8 April 1876, cited by Stephen F. Eisenman, ‘The Intransigents Artist or How the Impressionists Got their Name’, in Charles

towering columns occupying the space of the page. You describe “two aspects”, “two masters”, whose combined influence, coupled with Manet’s search for an “impersonal abstraction”, would free the hand of “all previous cunning’ revealing the truth.”³⁸³

‘Yes,’ Mallarmé says. ‘And give the paintings based upon them a living reality instead of rendering them the baseless fabric of abstracted and obscure dreams. These have been the tentatives of Manet, and curiously, it was to the foreigner and the past that he turned for friendly council in remedying the evils of his country and his time. Yet truth bids me say that Manet had no pressing need for this; an incomparable copyist, he could have found his game close to hand had he chosen his quarry there; but he sought something more than this, and fresh things are not found all at once; freshness indeed frequently consists – and this is

S. Moffett (ed), *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874 –1886*, San Francisco, CA: The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986, pp. 51 – 9.)

³⁸³ Ibid., Mallarmé, p. 29. Mallarmé is referring to the Spanish painter Diego Velasquez, and the Flemish school of painting, who in Manet’s estimation achieved a ‘new evolution of art’. (Ibid.) Mallarmé recalls Manet’s interest in ‘the atmosphere’ of Diego Velasquez’s compositions, and the ‘glow’ of the painters of the Flemish school, who shared a fascination with the sphere of projection, with the natural laws of vision, and with Kepler’s optics. Vermeer’s use of the camera obscura, in his quest for ‘observable truth’ presents two divisions, the painter is separated from his subject by the lens of the camera, but first, as Kepler points out, between vision and observation, between the function of the eye and what is presented to the eye. Svetlana Alpers describes Vermeer’s *View of Delft* as:

a display of artifice. [...] A claim is made on us that this picture is at the meeting place of the world seen and the world pictured. That border line between nature and artifice that Kepler defined mathematically, the Dutch made a matter of paint. (Op. cit., Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 70)

especially the case in these critical days – in a co-ordination of widely scattered elements.’³⁸⁴

‘We return to the question of origin, and to lineage; to those “spiritual ancestors”, which you write, “goes from natural affiliation to the line of the mind”,’ I reply, recalling Broodthaers, Pichler, and all the other illustrious men.³⁸⁵

‘Literature,’ Mallarmé adds, ‘often departs from its current path to seek for the aspirations of an epoch of the past, and to modernise them for its own purpose, and in painting, Manet followed a similarly divergent course, seeking the truth and loving it when found, because being true it was so strange, especially when compared with the old and worn-out ideals of it.’³⁸⁶

‘Nature is summoned,’ I interrupt. ‘Reality and representation are held to account, undermining a fixed point of view, and the philosophers who drive and furnish such truths. Plato likens you and me and Manet to a ‘mirror’ – masters of mimesis,

384 Ibid., Mallarmé, p. 29.

385 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, *Divigations*, p. 177. Broodthaers and Pichler’s respective acts of appropriation differ from Mallarmé’s and Manet’s re-fashioning of the past; Pichler uses ‘finished artwork as a starting point for something new, as material’. This raises the question of trace, of cumulative traces; of ‘supplementary doubles’, and ‘double inscriptions’. In other words, Broodthaers, and Pichler trace the supplementary double inscription of the absence of the presence of Mallarmé’s disappearance as the author.

386 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘The Impressionists and Edouard Manet’, p. 29.

representation, and illusion, copyists, concerned not with truth (knowledge), but with the appearance of things. In Plato's view, truth is beyond our grasp.'³⁸⁷

'Derrida,' I continue, 'interrogates 'truth'; in so doing he acknowledges the duplicity of his act, that is to say, "It is not possible to show that the belief in a truth is in error without implicitly believing in the notion of a truth."'"³⁸⁸ Derrida

387 In order to determine the true value of poetry and painting, Plato [Socrates] asks 'what is representation?' To illustrate the true order of representation Plato reasons that the bed is a 'type' of furniture, of which there can only be one original. And, since God is by virtue the true progenitor, then only God can have true knowledge of the original, in other words, God is the creator of the 'real' bed. A second bed is reproduced from the original by a manufacturer of furniture, the joiner. This in turn is imitated by the painter who produces a third bed. The painter in Plato's view has neither true knowledge of the original bed, since this is the domain of god, nor is he like the joiner a maker or manufacturer of the bed. The painter is by virtue of his art concerned with the representation of things – with the appearance of things – in this respect he is two steps removed from the truth – producing a copy of a copy of a bed. Representation and truth in Plato's view are a considerable distance apart; the painter like the poet, Plato writes: 'knows nothing of value about the things he represents; representation is a kind of game; and shouldn't be taken seriously; and those who compose tragedies in iambic and epic verse are without exception, outstanding examples of representors. [Plato speaking through Socrates is referring to Homer]. (Op. cit., Plato, 'Poetry and Unreality' *Plato: Republic*, pp. 344–62, 354.

388 Op. cit., Barbara Johnson, 'Translator's Introduction', *Jacques Derrida: Dissemination*, vii – xxxiii, p. x. Johnson is a distiller of the first order, bringing clarity to Derrida's text, and to her translation of Mallarmé's *Divigations*, a difficult undertaking given the complexity of both Derrida and Mallarmé's reading/writing. In his undoing of truth, Derrida interrogates a Western philosophical system defined by opposition, Johnson elaborates:

The task of undoing the history of *logocentricm*, in order to disinter *différance* would thus appear to be a doubly impossible one: on the one hand, it can be conducted by means of revelation, representation, and rectification, which are the logocentric notions par excellence, and, on the other hand, it can only dig up something that is really nothing—a difference, a gap, an interval, a trace'. (Ibid., x.)

acknowledges the paradox of his method. In order to deconstruct Plato's model, he must operate between oppositions – in the space between being and not being. He asks. "What is literature", framing his question between two texts, between Plato and you, Mallarmé, between literature and truth.'³⁸⁹

'Derrida,' Mallarmé repeats, as if trying to recall the name.

'Yes,' I say, 'Derrida. I saw him earlier on the beach, before you arrived, at least I think it was him. He appeared to be deep in conversation with another man, if I

Johnson asks: 'How, then, can such a task be undertaken? Provoking the question: how does reading get done? In anticipation of the conclusion to this thesis; the play of difference between word, image, and sound as modes of apprehension, and, as effects, is understood as a play of reciprocal relations – as an infinite play of signs. In her critique of Derrida and indeed the 'logcentric' philosophical tradition, Cavarero writes: 'Derrida opens up the philosophically disturbing theme of the voice and, at the same time imprisons it in the very metaphysical box it was meant to disturb. (Op. cit., Cavarero, p. 215.) For Cavarero, Derrida's concept of presence in metaphysics functions as 'the guarantee of an evident and necessary truth, and thus this concept of presence is 'foundational'. (Ibid., p. 215). In other words, Derrida maintains the opposition of speech to writing, even though his interest in the voice emerges according to Cavarero from writing conceived as: 'différance that orients the theoretical axis in which Derrida places the theme of the voice, making it play a metaphysical role in opposition to the anti-metaphysical valence of writing. (Op. cit., Cavarero, 'Appendix: Dedicated to Derrida', p. 220.)

389 Op. cit., Derrida, 'The Double Session', *Dissemination*, p. 177. Mallarmé's 'Mimesis' is reproduced by Derrida in 'The Double Session', where it is placed on the same page as a segment from Plato's *Philebus*, juxtaposed with notes taken from Mallarmé's *Le Livre*, which are placed on the reverse side. (Op. cit., Derrida, 'The Double Session', p. 175–6). Derrida's title, 'The Double Session', references Mallarmé's notes for *Le Livre*, fragments of which appear in Derrida's text. (Ibid., p. 176) The first note numbered one [I] by Mallarmé, includes the phrases "Such is the double session", and "thus gives two sessions". (Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Le Livre de Mallarmé*) The title of Derrida's book *Dissemination*, and essay, 'Dissemination' [included therein], acknowledges Plato's seed, Mallarmé's 'throw' [disseminated chance] (Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Mystery of Letters', *Divigations*, p. 236), and Phillipe Sollér's *Numbers*. Mallarmé's overwhelming contribution to Derrida's *Dissemination* makes it difficult to separate Derrida's thought from Mallarmé's words – Derrida belongs to the 'line of the mind' proposed by Mallarmé. 'The Double Session', is remarkable; a treatise on the act of reading and a tribute to Mallarmé the progenitor. It is impossible to do justice to the text given the scope of this thesis, except to point the reader to its pages, and [beyond].

am not mistaken, Foucault. Both men were dressed in black; Derrida appeared to carry a book, and Foucault a spade. I wonder if they are here to dig, or to bury, either way the ground is rich – and many truths are buried here, not least a Viking ship.³⁹⁰

‘A bitter prince of the reef!’ Mallarmé says, his smile turning to laughter.³⁹¹

390 The figure of Hamlet is signified [‘mourning-clothes’] in ‘The Play par excellence’ (Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Hamlet’, *Divigations*, p. 124). Hamlet, Igitur, and the Master of *Un coup de Dés*, haunt these shores. Their acts of hesitation accumulate in the dialogues [written] and in the place where the dialogues take place, the beach [spoken and performed]. Foucault’s presence initiates a signifying chain linking the beach, and cemetery to ‘Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias’ (Op. cit., Foucault, p. 1). Places of this kind, Foucault writes, are ‘outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality’. (Ibid., p. 5) The prospect of excavation and resurrection – of the dead, and of the living, outside of time, and in real space anticipates Foucault’s ‘epoch of simultaneity’,

We are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. (Ibid.)

In this place, on this beach, artefacts are born – remnants that date to the Mesolithic period and beyond, belonging to the Celts, Romans, Saxons, and Vikings who once settled here. This place is linked to other spaces, and to other deeds – the deeds of the Danes, recalling that Danish Prince, Shakespeare, the Stage, and Queen Elizabeth I. Voyages across the Irish Sea and the Atlantic are recalled, ships and pirate ships – bound and boundless space becomes displaced.

And if we think, after all, that the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea [...] The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates (Ibid., p.9)

391 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 422).



Fig. 7.2

‘Yes, Derrida’s act is one of suspension. Derrida reads ‘Mimesis’, pirouetting across its pages – that is Derrida reads your reading of *Pierrot’s Murder of His Wife*.³⁹² And, through your ‘white as yet unwritten page’, through Pierrot’s ‘mute soliloquy’, he unfolds his double-vision on the page.’³⁹³

392 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Mimesis’, *Divagations*, p. 141. In ‘Mimesis’, Mallarmé’s recounts the operations of Pierrot’s mime, whose act is confined to a perpetual allusion without breaking the ice or the mirror: he thus sets up a medium, a pure medium, of fiction. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Mimesis’, p. 141.) ‘Nothing takes place other than the place’, (Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*). In Derrida’s reading, ‘the mime mimes’ reference. He is not an imitator; he mimes imitation’, performing a ‘supplementary’ act, an act of doubling, a ‘double mark’. (Op. cit., Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, p. 210). Like Mallarmé, Derrida returns the reader to the question of representation, to Plato’s simulacrum; the copy of a copy, and, to ‘allusion’, to the ‘event’, that never takes place, and I would add, to the place of the absence of an event, to the stage and page. (Mallarmé, ‘Stages and Pages’, *Divagations*, pp. 156–63.)

393 Op. cit., Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, pp. 181–85. Mallarmé’s writing of Pierrot’s ‘mute soliloquy’ performs the paradox in which silence speaks alone (soliloquy, from Late Latin *soliloquium*, from Latin *solus* ‘alone’, and *loqui* ‘speak’, (OED). Derrida’s reading of the paradox performs a duplicitous act, Barbara Johnson writes:

Derrida duplicates and analyses the ways in which Mallarmé's texts mime their own articulation, including their own blank spaces among their referents, and deploy themselves consistently with one textual fold too many [surplus] or too few [lack] to be accounted for by the reading that would seek only the text's "message" or "meaning". (Op. cit., Johnson, *Dissemination*, p. xxviii).

And this is the point, meaning can never be fixed. Mallarmé excites the reader's eye – restoring sight and, the power of reflection, 'between the sheets and the eye there reigns a silence still, the condition and delight of reading'. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Mimesis', p. 141.) Reading between Plato and Mallarmé, Derrida reveals the signifying chain at play, an infinite structure that frustrates any desire for meaning – one that generates '*différance*'. Derrida's deferral of meaning or act of suspension brings me to Deleuze's reading of the Baroque fold, which Deleuze writes: 'invents the infinite work or processes. Deleuze considers Mallarmé a Baroque poet, a master of the fold, whose operations become embodied in the recurring motif of the fan [Hérodiade] Deleuze writes: 'The fold of the world is a fan or "*l'unanime pli*" (unanimous fold).' Paradoxically, Deleuze's reading of Leibniz and Mallarmé circles back to Plato's concept of truth, and to writing in the soul, which Deleuze differentiates from Leibniz's concept of Monad,

The folds in the soul, where inflection becomes inclusion (just as Mallarmé writes that folding becomes layering): we're no longer seeing, we're reading. Leibniz begins to use the word "to read" at once as the inner act in the privileged region of the monad, and as the act of God in all of the monad itself. (Gilles Deleuze, 'What is Baroque', *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Giles Deleuze, translation by Tom Conley, Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 1993 [Gilles Deleuze, *Le Pli: Leibniz et la Baroque*, 1988, Paris: les Éditions de Minuit] pp. 27–38, 31)

While the scope of this thesis prevents an in-depth analysis of the differences between Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and Derrida's essay: 'Difference' (1968), a distinction must be made in light of the Mallarméan space. Central to this distinction are the terms 'Immanence' and 'Transcendence', which differentiate Deleuze and Derrida's respective philosophical approaches in the field of the 'metaphysics of presence'. Derrida wants to go beyond a dominant 'logocentric' philosophical tradition built on binary oppositions, transcending ontology, and a metaphysics based on being-as-presence. Deleuze, who like Derrida is indebted to Heidegger's critique of ontology [*Being in Time*] takes a different course, embracing the metaphysics of presence, in pursuit of an imminent ontology. Deleuze considers 'being' a difference, and time a repetition. It could be said that both Deleuze and Derrida arrive in the same space [metaphysics of presence] by 'the line of the mind' [philosophical lineage] only to take a different course. Deleuze is concerned with doing metaphysics, and Derrida undoing the metaphysical tradition. Deleuze considers the metaphysical space 'open', open to appropriation, transformation, and open to performing dynamic operations in other contexts. Derrida considers the metaphysical tradition closed, but open to disruption, to interruption, he writes:

Différence 'is' neither this not that, neither sensible not intelligible, neither positive not negative, neither superior nor inferior, neither active nor passive, neither present not absent, not even neutral, not even

'Between Plato and you, sound and silence, the spoken word, and the written word, Derrida simultaneously articulates his '*différance*', undermining Plato's opposition, which is to say the truth attributed to speech by virtue of the speaker's presence – opposed to writing, that lesser form, that 'flattened out logos', transcription of inner speech, that copy.'³⁹⁴

subject to a dialectic with a third moment, without any possible sublation (*Aufhebung*). Despite appearances, then it [*différance*] is neither a concept nor even a name; it does *lend itself* to a series of names, but calls for another syntax, and exceeds even the order and the structure of predicative discourse. It 'is' not and does not say what 'is'. It is written completely otherwise. (Op. cit., Derrida, 'Différance')

Yet there appears to be an affinity between Deleuze and Derrida, perhaps this is not philosophy, but poetry, perhaps this affinity is Mallarmé. Reading between Heidegger and Mallarmé, Deleuze unfolds the ideal fold. He describes an operation which performs a similar movement to the chiasmic structure/model produced in this reading of Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*.

a fold that differentiates and is differentiated [...] a Difference that endlessly unfolds and folds over from each of its two sides, and that unfolds the one only while refolding the other, in a coexisted unveiling and veiling of Being, of presence and withdrawal of being. (Op. cit., Deleuze, p. 30).

394 The following note is an abridged version of Derrida's unravelling of Plato's order. The book is considered by Plato to be a dialogue or discourse – albeit, silent, mute, internalised speech. Thinking considered an inward dialogue – is speechless. The process of thinking follows from doxa [opinion prior to discourse] doxa spoken aloud [presented to an interlocutor] becomes discourse [logos] and as soon a logos has been formed, the possibility of dialogue comes into being. If, as Derrida points out in his reading of Plato the dialogue is not with an interlocutor:

What I then hold is still a discourse, but it is soundless, aphonic, private— which also means deprived of its mouthpiece, it's voice, this amputated dialogue—amputated of its vocal organ as well as of its other—that Plato [Socrates] resorts to the "metaphor" of the book. (Op. cit., Derrida, 'Double Session, p. 184.)

In *Philbeus*, Plato writes Socrates speech:

It appears to me that the conjunction of memory with sensation, together with the feeling consequent upon memory and sensation, may be said as it were to write words in our souls. And when this experience writes what

is true, the result is that true opinion and true assertions spring up in us, while when the internal scribe that I have suggested writes what is false, we get the opposite sort of opinion and assertion. (Ibid., Derrida, 'Double Session, p. 175.)

In Derrida's reading, Plato's book as metaphor represents the lack of presence of the other [interlocutor]; the book is compared to the soul, which is in commune with itself. The book becomes a substitute for a real dialogue, for real presence, the book can only imitate the living discourse, therefore writing is interpreted as imitative – a duplicate of a living voice, or 'present logos'. Derrida writes:

The Platonic book, its truth or falsity only declares itself at the moment when the writer transcribes an inner speech, when he copies into the book a discourse that has already taken place and stands in a certain relation of truth (of similarity) or falsity (dissimilarity) with things themselves. (Op. cit., Derrida, 'Double Session, p. 185.)

Derrida concludes that Plato's conception of the book is first: '*The double parricide/The parricidal double*' (Plato denounces Homer as mimetic poet through Socrates speech). Derrida plays a familial game – literally reflecting the relation between 'paternity and language' [Johnson]. Johnson writes: 'Plato, a son figure, is writing, from out of the death of Socrates, of Socrates' condemnation of writing as parricide.' (Op. cit., Johnson, p. xxvi)

Secondly, Derrida refers to 'The double inscription of mimesis', and its divisions – a good and bad mimesis, which he writes Plato wants to cut in two, to separate good from bad, in order to contain 'madness and 'harmful play'. Reinforcing an opinion built on opposition, and, opposing 'contradictory beliefs' [Socrates]. Once poetry or painting is transcribed, it lacks truth, since it is not present to itself, it can only anticipate the book to come. By the same virtue 'writing in the soul is present', therefore true, whereas the transcribed word is untrue – lacking presence. Speech, as discussed, is present to both the utterer and to itself, it is, by virtue of this presence true, unlike writing which can only imitate speech. We return to Plato's order, and to Derrida's challenge to the order of presence. I would add that Plato's 'writing in the soul', and 'speech', considered to be true by virtue of their presence, are measured in relation to the conception of a divine presence, the true progenitor – God. This returns to Deleuze's reading of Leibniz's and Mallarmé's conception of the 'total book', which Deleuze believes each achieved perfectly in the form of a 'book of monads'. He writes:

The Book of monads, in letters and little circumstantial pieces that could sustain as many dispersions as combinations. The monad is the book or the reading room. The visible and legible, the outside and the inside, the façade and the chamber, are however not two worlds, since the visible can be read (Mallarmé's journal), and the legible has its theatre (both Leibniz's and Mallarmé's theatres of reading). Combinations of the visible and the legible make up "emblems" or allegories dear to the Baroque sensibility. We are always referring to a new kind of correspondence or mutual expression, an *entr'expression*, fold after fold (Op. cit., Deleuze, p. 31).

‘To read,’ Mallarmé says. ‘That practice—To lean, according to the page, on the blank, whose innocence inaugurates it, forgetting even the title that would speak too loud: and when, in a hinge, the most minor and disseminated, chance is conquered word by word, unfailingly the blank returns, gratuitous earlier but certain now, concluding that there is nothing beyond it and authenticating the silence—’³⁹⁵

‘Yes,’ I say. “In the constant neutrality of the abyss”, the title is doubled, duplicated, and disseminated in a throw.³⁹⁶ Letters dispersed like the dots of the

³⁹⁵ Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Mystery of Letters’, *Divigations*, p. 236.

³⁹⁶ Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 424). Mallarmé’s doubling of the title of *Un coup de Dés*, signifies two modes of reading. Firstly, a conventional narrative form is suggested in the title page, where one word follows another in linear sequence. Secondly, a fragmented form, in which the title is cut up and disseminated across the twelve double pages. Mallarmé’s gesture activates the blank space – simultaneously performing an act of remembering and forgetting, as fragments, that is, bound and unbound words surface, and disappear like half-remembered thoughts. The expanse of the large page format, and the visual layout of the words over twelve unbound pages, which fold onto one another like waves in an expansive sea, announces Mallarmé’s ‘spatial-temporal’ construction. A construction which refuses differentiation in either ‘temporal’ or ‘spatial’ terms. Mallarmé’s ‘spatial-temporal’ construction can be linked to W. J. T. Mitchell’s ‘abolition of the space-time differential’, which he considers the basis for the ‘generic distinction between painting and poetry’ proffered by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, in his desire to separate the arts. (W. J. T. Mitchell, ‘The Politics of Genre: Space and Time in Lessing’s Laocoon’, *Representations*, No 6, 1984, 98 – 115, p. 103. See also Lessing, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* [1766] translated by Ellen Frothingham, Boston: Robert Brothers, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887). Mitchell’s critique of Lessing’s separation of time [poetry] and space [painting] leads him to re-evaluate the “laws of genre”, which he argues, ‘are artificial, man-made’, and which conceal other inequalities and ideologies.

dice – fall. Words surface and disappear with the tide – revealing the transformation of the page as it takes place. One domain is linked to another *in absentia*, the fold, becoming the vertical axis, becoming a mast, becoming the ‘I’ of the reader, the ‘form of a sign’, becoming the sign of a cross.³⁹⁷ The abyss.’

The terms “space” and “time” only become figurative and improper when they are abstracted from one another as independent, antithetical essences that define the nature of an object. The use of these terms is, strictly speaking, a synecdoche, a reduction of the whole to the part. (Ibid., p. 104)

For Derrida, Mallarmé’s title performs an act of suspension, ‘the title ensures its suspense, along with its contours, its borders, and its frame’. (Op. cit., Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, p. 179) In this reading the relation between title and the main body of text is established through a re-appraisal of the syllabic count. This gesture initiates Mallarmé’s performative operation, leading to accumulations of dots, numbers, letters, syllables, and lines, which move along the vertical axis [metaphoric] and horizontal axis [metonymic] simultaneously. Any movement along the horizontal axis calls to mind the Baroque line, which Deleuze characterises as: ‘a line that would move exactly according to the fold, and that would bring together architects, painters, musicians, poets and philosophers. (Op, cit., Deleuze, p. 34). In this respect my reading of *Un coup de Dés* performs a transdisciplinary act, this can be seen in the work, its operations, and processes: which fold and unfold the space of thinking, reading, writing, making, painting, spacing, pacing, counting, and speaking. For a comprehensive explanation of the syllabic count and repercussion of a syllabic reading of the space of *Un coup de Dés*, see Appendices, Appendix E: Syllabic Count of *Un coup de Dés*, p. 458–504)

³⁹⁷ See, Jakobson’s ‘Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles’ (Op. cit., Jakobson, ‘Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances’, p. 119. In my reading the architectural, axiomatic structure is maintained across domains and simultaneously undermined as the axis shifts at its point of origin – tilting towards the horizontal axis, threatening collapse, and the possibility of aligning itself with the horizon line.

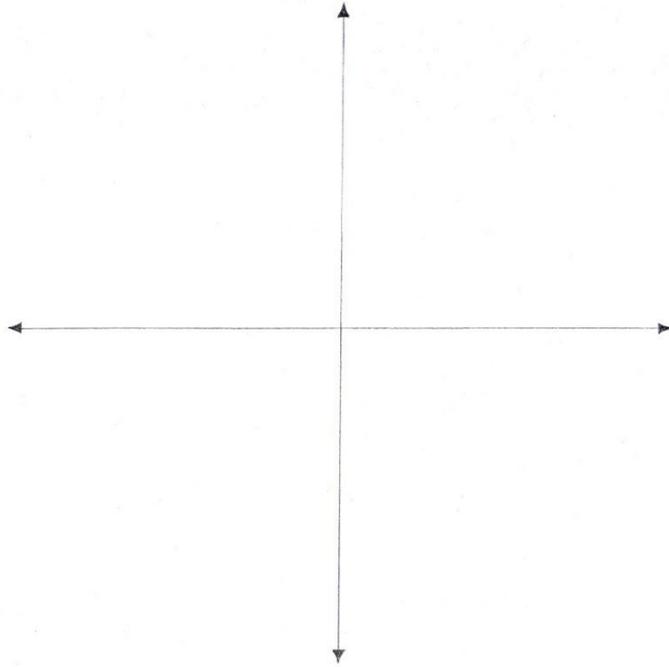


Fig 7.3

*the shadow buried in the deep veiled by this variant sail | to the point of
matching the span | with a gaping trough like the shell | of a ship | listing
to this side or that*³⁹⁸

³⁹⁸ Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 418).



Fig 7.4



Fig 7.5

Fig 7.6

Fig 7.7

‘What is the relation of the blank page; a flat two-dimensional surface, to the surface of painting, and, by extension, the framed space of film?’ I ask, only to differentiate by recalling the process of scanning the pages of *Un coup de Dés*. I explain the process of digitally manipulating each image of the page in photoshop, increasing light levels, pushing the image to the point of disappearance [white out] – curious to see if the shadows and other anomalies which appear when scanning documents will reveal these metaphoric figures [Fig. 7.4 – Fig. 7.7]³⁹⁹ I describe a

399 See, *Variant Sail # I – XII*, Portfolio of Works.

series of spaces unfolding in time – spaces which undermine the physical material of the page, which is suspended in virtual space – locked into a code of zeros and ones. At the same time I explain to Mallarmé how the page, placed on the scanning bed, remains intact; recalling the original matter of the page, and Plato's unmade bed. I recall how these transitional acts are traced in digital space and reproduced as hard copies, as digital prints. The flat two-dimensional space of the page being present, acting in the space of the digital photograph. How each image is bound to the form of the page and moves beyond the space of the page and photograph, activating the space of the imagination through a series of substitutions – along the 'metaphoric axis', and through association along the 'metonymic axis'. And, how this movement is symbolically manifest in the monument [vertical axis] and in the spatial arrangement of the poem; in the sound patterns and semantic relations of words which move like recurring wave-crests along the horizontal axis folding into one another in a bound and boundless sea (Fig.7.8). Calling to mind Homer's *Odyssey*, the Greeks, Olympia, the twelve Gods of Mount Olympus, the twin peaks of Mount Parnassus, the Muse, the Siren, the Parnassian poets, you.

400

400 The complexity of *Un coup de Dés* is breath-taking; Mallarmé's unbound pages reference other texts – bound and unbound works. Gordon Millan notes Mallarmé 'condenses as many layers of meaning as possible into a single line whilst seeking to establish as close a relationship as possible between the sound patterns of his verses and the meanings they conveyed'. (Op. cit., Gordon Millan, p. 134.)



Fig 7.8

*la mer par l'aïeul tentant ou l'aïeul contre la mer*⁴⁰¹

Mallarmé speaks from the margin of the sea, casting words across the 'shadow haunted main', recalling the voyage of Telemachus in search of his absent father.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 420).

⁴⁰²Op. cit., Homer, *The Odyssey*, p. 22.

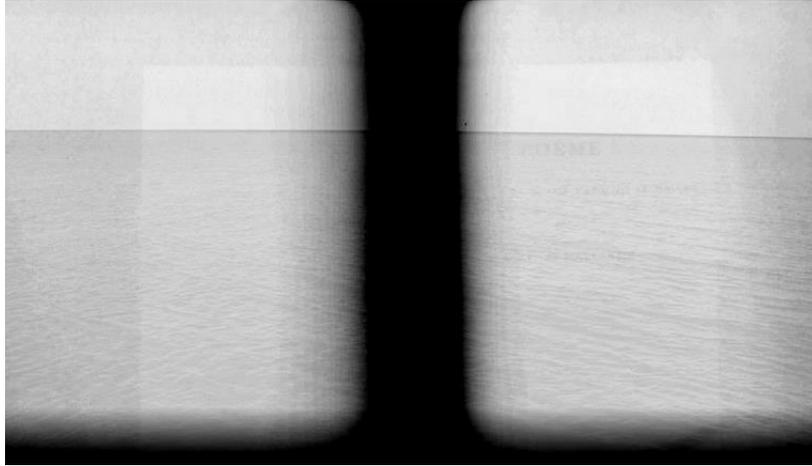


Fig 7.9

“The shadow buried in the deep by this variant sail,” I repeat aloud, silently weaving Mallarmé’s words, recalling a game of chance, the act of doubling, a double gesture, a double re-mark.⁴⁰³

la mer par l’âieul tentant ou l’âieul contre la mer | une chance oiseuse |

Fiançailles | dont | le voile d’illusion rejailli leur hantise | ainsi que le

fantôme d’un geste | chancellera | s’affalera | folie⁴⁰⁴

403 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 418. See Derrida reading between Plato and Mallarmé in ‘The Double Session’, as Barbara Johnson writes ‘Derrida’s writing is always explicitly inscribed in the margins of some pre-existing text’. (Op. cit., Johnson, ‘Translator’s Introduction’, *Jacques Derrida: Dissemination*, p. x.)

404 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 421).

the sea attempting via the old man or the latter versus the sea | an idle chance | Nuptuals | whose | veil of illusion being splashed back their obsession | along with the wrath of a gesture | will falter | and fall | sheer folly

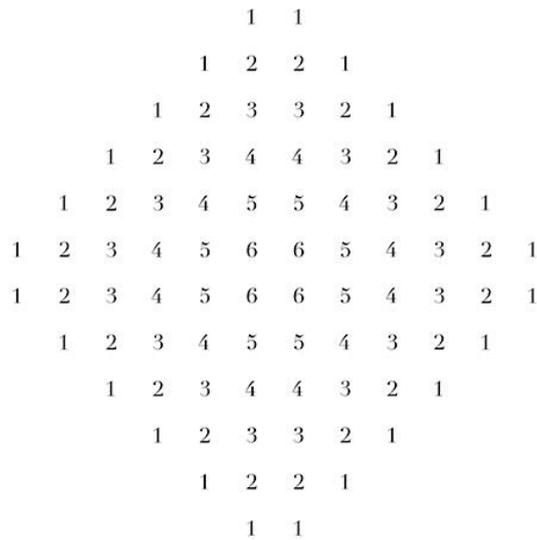


Fig. 7.10

‘A marriage, a mirage, a mirror, a murmur, ‘opening up its parallel pages’, recalling the symmetry at the centre of *Un Coup de Dés*.⁴⁰⁵ A coupling, two dice, two sixes falling – the alexandrine in play.’⁴⁰⁶ I continue, comparing my chiasmic structure to ‘the form and pattern of a thought, placed for the first time in finite space’ performing its own doing and undoing in concert.⁴⁰⁷ (Fig.7.10) Recalling the

405 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Sages and Pages’, *Divagations*, p. 161.

406 Ibid. Twelve syllables are attributed to the line ‘*le voile d’illusion rejailli leur hantise*’ [veil of illusion being splashed back their obsession]. (See Appendix F: Syllabic Count of *Un coup de Dés*, p. 450.) The line does not conform to the traditional metre of the alexandrine, however; it performs a marriage [*Fiançailles*] of convenience – the old from is present [twelve syllables] in the new form [free form] of *Un coup de Dés*. Mallarmé writes: ‘the ear, freed from a gratuitous inner counter, feels pleasure in discerning all the possible combinations and permutations of twelve beats. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Crisis of Verse’, *Divagations*, p. 203). Mallarmé’s description of Henri de Reignier’s poetics serves to describe Mallarmé’s own game: ‘the poet with acute tact who considers the alexandrine the definitive jewel’, who plays a game of his own invention, discreet and proud like the genius he has instated, and revealing the transitory trouble poets have with the hereditary instrument. (Ibid., Mallarmé p. 203).

407 Op. cit., Valéry, ‘Concerning A Throw of the Dice’, *Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé*, pp. 307–16, 309.

paradox of presence and absence, which as Gordon Millan points out, “lies at the very heart of your poetic universe”,’ I say to Mallarmé. ‘Bringing me back to you, back to Plato, back to Derrida’s challenge to Plato’s order and back to Adriana Cavarero, to *logos*, to dialogue; to thought and to song.’⁴⁰⁸

408 Op. cit., Millan, *Mallarmé: A Throw of the Dice*, p. 168. In Cavarero’s reading of *logos*, which she describes as duplicitous, the realm of thought, separated from the realm of speech, places the semantic over the phonic, mind over body (Op. cit., Cavarero, p. 57). Thought [thinking] considered mute, visible to the eye of the mind belongs to the realm of ideas, to Plato’s concept of truth; to ‘the immaterial sphere of thought’ (Ibid., Cavarero, p. 50), in other words to Platonic Idealism. Speech [speaking] concerned with language, with the sonorous, understood as, ‘a system of signification’ is linked to sound, to phonetics, to phonemes and morphemes, to letters and syllables, to the constitutive elements of linguistics. (Ibid., p. 53). It is this division between speech and thought in the Western philosophical tradition that for Cavarero leads to the ‘devocalisation of *logos*’. Mallarmé’s expressed interest in linguistics, and his conception of language as ‘imperfect’, that is failing to express the truth of its object, leads to his ‘crisis of verse’, (Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Divigations*, p. 205). Gordon Millan writes: ‘Mallarmé had come to realise that language [...] was in reality nothing more than a collection of meaningless conventional signs’. (Op. cit, Millan, p. 135). The relation of words to things, that is the significance of the resemblance of words to the things they signify lies at the heart of Foucault’s analysis of the Western epistemological tradition. Foucault’s archaeology of thought suggests that thought is determined by prevailing and successive epistemologies, operating as a series of transformations. (Michael Foucault, *Words and Things [Les mots et les choses*, Paris: Gallimard, 1966] Derrida unpicks the signifier – signified relation, which in the Western philosophical tradition is based on the premise that the sign stands for what is not present; for the absence of presence. In her critique of Derrida’s deconstruction Cavarero writes:

The distinction between signifier and signified, in whose horizon metaphysics thinks the sign, is fictitious. Deconstruction shows this distinction to be fictitious because the whole area in which meaning proliferates—whether as an articulation of difference or as a relation among these differences—is nothing but a continual movement of signs that defer to one another, in an interminable play of referential traces that have no origin. (Op. cit., Cavarero, p. 217).

In this sense Derrida’s deconstruction is indebted to the metaphysical crisis, ‘the abyss’, at the heart of Mallarmé’s poetics and aesthetics. The failure of language for Mallarmé to correspond to its object [sound and sense] and the impossibility of any fixed meaning provides a symbolic turning point, precipitated by Mallarmé’s revaluation of the oppositions at the heart of a universe determined by being and nothingness, by presence and absence. In the Oxford English Dictionary, the verb precipitate: from the Latin



Fig. 7.11

My thoughts drift to Derrida's 'signifying chain', to proliferations and traces, to accumulations and complications. I think about my tendency to layer word,

praecipitat-is to be 'thrown headlong', from the verb *praecipitare*, from *praeceps*, *praecip(it)*- 'headlong'-from *prae* 'before'+ *caput* - 'head'.The original sense of the verb was 'hurl down, send violently', hence 'cause to move rapidly', calling to mind the abyss at the heart of *Un coup de Dés*.

*le mystère | précipité | hurlé | dans quelque proche tourbillon d'hilarité
et d'horreur | voltage outour du gouffre | sans le joncher | ni fuir | et en
berce le vierge indice*

*the mystery | hurled down | howled out | in some imminent swirl of
hilarity and horror | hovers on the brink of the abyss | without sprinkling
it | or escaping it | and draws from it the soothing virgin sign*

image, and sound. I picture thoughts stacked up, piled high. I imagine thought stalking thought. I picture words, signifying words – I watch them topple and fall. I see brushmark on brushmark – a palimpsest, a gesture traced, a double gesture, one layer overlapping another or folding into one another, wet paint on wet paint denying a point of origin – a beginning (Fig. 7.11). I hear your voice, out here is this place – where the land meets the sea, and the sea meets the sky. Your voice covers mine.



Fig.7.12

I consider other cumulative processes in my work and in my reading of *Un coup de Dés* – traces in ‘real’ and ‘virtual’ space. These acts of repetition executed in ‘real’ space of writing, painting, and walking are transformed in ‘virtual’ space using digital technologies producing serial configurations and temporal and spatial compressions. In a series of digital works re-articulating Mallarmé’s constellation as dots and numbers, the page is re-presented as both a series of

sequential transitions, and as one compressed image. The real space of the page ambiguously re-stated in digital space is present and not present.

'The pages of *Un coup de Dés*,' I explain to Mallarmé, are re-articulated in photoshop by adjusting transparency and opacity, revealing other spaces. Paradoxically, the space appears everywhere and nowhere, made visible by words, dots, or numbers occupying the space, through the play of their inequalities which are perceived as movement as they differentiate themselves in the page. In the videos and sound recordings of my reading of *Un coup de Dés*, image and sound are manipulated and layered, producing cumulative effects. These hybrid forms operate in a 'pause' in the shift from one signified 'space' to another signified 'space'. These are confused spaces; transgressors seeking their own terms, in the process undermining the terms of 'medium specificity' and autonomy. Such spaces, defy Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's thesis, *Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting*, in which he considers poetry: an art of time, of the ear, played out successively, and painting: an art of space, of the eye, experienced simultaneously.⁴⁰⁹

409 Op. cit., Lessing, *Laocoön*. Lessing's discourse is located in a contested field which broadly speaking comprises two schools of thought. One proposes similarity between painting and poetry; the other differentiates between what has come to be known as the sister arts. Lessing writes:

If it be true that painting employs wholly different signs or means of imitation from poetry,—the one using forms and colours in space, the other articulate sounds in time,—and if signs must unquestionably stand in convenient relation with the thing signified, then signs arranged side by side can represent only objects existing side by side, or whose part so

exists, while consecutive signs can express only objects which succeed each other, or whose parts succeed each other, in time. (Op. cit, Lessing, *Laocoön*, p. 91).

Lessing cautions against exceeding the limitations of the medium,

Painting and poetry should be like two just and friendly neighbours, neither of whom indeed is allowed to take unseemly liberties in the heart of the other's domain, but who exercise mutual forbearance on the borders, and effect a peaceful settlement for all the petty encroachments which circumstances may compel either to make in haste on the rights of the other. (Ibid., p. 110).

In Clement Greenberg's address to Lessing: 'Towards a Newer Laocoön', he proposes Abstract Art as a reaction to confusion in the arts; for Greenberg, the value of art lies in emphasising the medium's specificity: 'Purity in art consists in the acceptance, willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art. (Clement Greenberg, 'Towards a Newer Laocoön' [1940], *The Collected Essays*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986, pp. 23–37.

More recently W. J. T. Mitchell argues that Lessing's distinctions between the temporal and spatial arts are reliant on the artificial 'laws of genre',

The tendency of artists to breach the supposed boundaries between spatial and temporal arts is not a marginal or exceptional practice, but a fundamental impulse in both the theory and practice of the arts, one which is not confined to any particular genre or period. (W. J. T. Mitchell, 'The Politics of Genre: Space Time in Lessing's Laocoon', *Representations*, No 6, CA: 1984, 98–115, (Ibid. p. 100).

Mitchell's challenge to Lessing supports my own findings. In this performative reading of *Un coup de Dés*, the temporal and spatial are bound to one another, like the bound and boundless ocean of Homer's *Odyssey*: 'A sea so vast and dread that not even in a twelve month could a bird hope to wing its way out of it'. (Op. cit., Homer, *The Odyssey*, p. 37.) Mitchell's analysis of Lessing suggests a way to unravel this contested field, one which coincides with my comparative reading of Manet's *Olympia*, and Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*, that is the emergence of a space beyond the 'purified space' of painting and poetry. Mitchell credits Lessing's *Laocoön* with establishing a principle of division or set of oppositions which can be used to support both sides of the argument. Mitchell asks two important questions, first, and critically: 'how adequate are Lessing's basic distinctions between temporal [poetry] and spatial arts [painting] as instruments of analysis. Second: What historical conditions prompted Lessing to make these distinctions? In my comparative reading of Manet's *Olympia*, and Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*, the emergence of a female form at the centre of Manet's painting and Mallarmé's poem, returns me to the problem of Lessing's divisive act of separation, and to Mitchell's reading of the division which in Lessing becomes gendered.

'*Un coup de Dés,*' I continue, 'refuses Lessing's distinction – the page reveals itself as a shifting space – performing a series of transformations. Meanings accumulate, compressions defy the logic of differentiated time and space, like the Deleuzean fold: "We glimpse the visible through the mist as if through the mesh of a veil [...] fold after fold".'⁴¹⁰

Mallarmé stops suddenly. He appears surprised by the scene, as if he had encountered it for the first time. I follow his line of sight, tracing the arc of his thought, from left to right and back to centre. I wait for him to speak. The sky appears heavy – pressing down on the horizon, making it vague. I notice two figures in the distance, turning their backs to the horizon, moving towards us. I wonder if they will reach us before the rain. I wonder if Mallarmé recognises them.

'In what, exactly does verse inhere?'⁴¹¹ Mallarmé asks, raising his arms – and turning his palms to the sky before answering the question.

Paintings, like women, are ideally silent, beautiful creatures designed for the gratification of the eye, in contrast to the sublime eloquence proper to the manly art of poetry. Paintings are confined to the narrow sphere of external display of their bodies and of the space which they ornament, while poems are free to range over an infinite realm of potential action and expression, the domain of time discourse and history. (Ibid., Mitchell, p 109).

This entangled relation is unravelled in Chapter Eight. For a summative account of my reading of the discourses examining the difference between the so called spatial and temporal arts, see (Appendices, Appendix H: Expanded Notes to Chapter Seven, p. 517.)

⁴¹⁰ Op. cit., Deleuze, *The Fold*, p 30.

⁴¹¹ Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Stages and Pages', *Divigations*, p. 159.

‘Not always in the artifice of blanks or in the arrangement on the page in books; every piece of cut-up text by itself does not make one; it’s only through the repetition of its multiple game that I perceive the metrical pattern at all. This transformable fabric around everything undulates until, at a certain point, it bursts with the luxury essential to versification, spaces itself out, disseminates itself, and preciously fits the verbal action on stage: is this a happiness? More! I’ve almost reached an instinct!’⁴¹²

‘Your act of spacing opens these “parallel pages” – folding together the space of poetry and painting.’⁴¹³

Mallarmé replies, ‘Like an opera without orchestra or song, just spoken; at present the book will suffice to open up the inner stage and whisper echoes into it. A versified collection summons one to an ideal representation: motifs of exaltation or dream are linked together or detach themselves, according to the design of their individuality. One portion sways in a rhythm or movement of thought,

412 Ibid.

413 Reading between Plato’s concept of mimesis and Mallarmé’s ‘Mimesis’, Derrida arrives at ‘the paradox of the supplementary double’, that is something like and unlike the thing it imitates or duplicates.

If discourse and inscription (writing-painting) thus appear alternately as useful complements or as useless supplements to each other, now useful now useless, now in one sense, now in another, this is because they are forever intertwined together within the tissue of the following complicities or reversibilities... They are both measured against the truth they are capable of. They are images of each other and can replace [*suppléer*] the other when the other is lacking. Their common structure makes them both partake of *mnēmē* and mimesis, of *mnēmē* precisely by dint of participating in mimesis. (Op. cit., Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, p. 190.)

another opposes it: both of them swirl around, where there intervenes, emerging like a mermaid whose tail is taken for foliage of the curlicues of an arabesque, a figure, which the idea remains.’⁴¹⁴

‘The Siren.’ I say picturing the reclining figure of Manet’s *Olympia* in the pages of an open book.

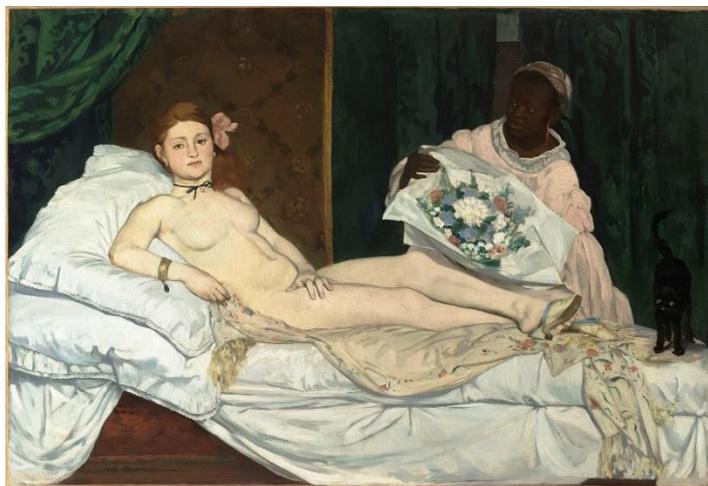


Fig. 7.13

‘The grid appears in many guises in Manet’s paintings.’⁴¹⁵ I continue. ‘In *Olympia*, a vertical gold line at the centre of the painting, reminiscent of the fold separating

414 Op. Cit., Mallarmé, ‘Stages and Pages’, *Divigations*, p. 160

415 See Foucault’s excellent analysis of Manet’s work, which owes much to Mallarmé’s essay, ‘The Impressionists and Eduard Manet’. Foucault refers to three rubrics in Manet’s work: first, the spatial properties of the canvas; secondly, Manet’s treatment of light, [internal and external]; and thirdly, the placement of the viewer in relation to the picture. He draws attention to Manet’s axial organisation, which he rightly claims accomplishes a flattening of the space, signalling a break with the representation of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface, with the art of illusion. (Michel Foucault ‘Manet and the Object of Painting’, translated by Matthew Barr, with an introduction by Nicolas

the verso and recto of the book creates a picture of two halves [Fig.7.13]. Manet's use of the vertical and horizontal axes draws attention to the material space of the canvas. Once the material construction of the painting comes under scrutiny, its 'reality', so to speak – the nature of painting, of 'artifice', the 'real' and the 'ideal' follow in quick succession. In this respect, Manet opened the space of painting – as you opened the space of poetry. Manet sought to "educate the public eye", just as you sought to give agency to the reader.⁴¹⁶ Manet achieves this by undermining the conventions of representational painting and linear perspective that dominated Western art before your "symbolist window" reflected this division. It is the 'eye' of the beholder, the 'reader' of word and image, who is thrown. The astonished 'eye' is denied a fixed viewpoint in Manet's painting. In *Un coup de Dés*, the reader is denied the convention of linear sequence. The reader rewrites the space – a double inscription.⁴¹⁷

Bourriaud, *Michel Foucault: Manet and the Birth of the Viewer*, London: Tate Publishing 2009. [Paris: Éditions de Seuil 2009]).

416 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'The Impressionists and Edouard Manet', p. 30.

417 A comparative analysis of Mallarmé's treatment of the space of poetry [page] and Manet's treatment of the space of painting [canvas] reveals shared aesthetic concerns between poet and painter. The challenge Manet's *Olympia* presents to the viewer; that is, the effect of Olympia's direct gaze, which simultaneously undermines the visual order of Cartesian perspective, and the role of the viewer as passive observer, has been discussed at length, by numerous art historians. Martin Jay makes the point: 'In addition to its de-eroticising of the visual order, it had also fostered what might be called de-narrativisation or de-textualisation' (Op. cit., Jay, 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity', p. 8). In a similar way Mallarmé's spatial aesthetics undermines the conventional order of reading, and the reader's relation to the space of the words. In this sense Mallarmé and Manet challenge the order of things, undermining the imperatives of an art historical context determined by linear perspective and narrative sequence.

Mallarmé replies. 'In this impartial history of the work of the chief of the new school of painting, I would say that the transition period in it is by no means to be regretted. Its parallel is to be found in literature, when our sympathies are suddenly awakened by some new imagery presented to us; and this is what I like in Manet's work. It surprised us all as something long hidden, but suddenly revealed. Captivating and repulsive at the same time, eccentric, and new, such types as he gave us were needed in our ambient life. In them strange though they were, there was nothing vague, general, conventional, or hackneyed. Often, they attracted attention by something peculiar in the physiognomy of his subject, half hiding or sacrificing to those new laws of space and light he set himself to inculcate, some minor details which others would have seized upon.'⁴¹⁸

'In what might seem like an unorthodox gesture,' I interject, 'I want to show the emergence of a 'new space', operating between Manet's revolutionary treatment of the space of painting, and the revolutionary spatial poetics of *Un coup de Dés*. I have singled out Manet's *Olympia* as a point of origin. In so doing the question of framing, of theatre, brings me full circle to where the seeds of your revolution were sown.'

'*Olympia*; that wan, wasted courtesan, showing to the public for the first time, the non-traditional, unconventional nude.'⁴¹⁹ Mallarmé says.

⁴¹⁸ Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'The Impressionists and Edouard Manet', p. 29.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

'As naked and as unabashed as the pages of *Un coup de Dés*,' I reply, turning slowly to face Mallarmé.

INTERLUDE



Figure 7.14

CHAPTER EIGHT

Manet Me Mallarmé



Fig. 8.1

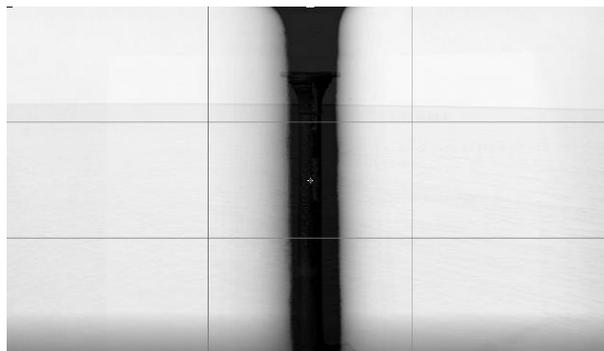


Fig. 8.2

I approach the twelve unbound pages of *Un coup de Dés* – a painter approaching the space of poetry, moving between painting and poetry, becoming painter – poet.⁴²⁰

⁴²⁰ The painter-poet, poet-painter relation dominating Western art before Lessing drew attention to the limits of each. For a summative account of my reading of the discourses examining the difference between the so called spatial and temporal arts, see. (Appendices, Appendix H: Expanded Notes, p. 517).

The figures in the distance appear closer – mimicking our movements. If we maintain our course to the horizon and if they continue moving in a straight line toward us, we will meet. I imagine four points, four vertical lines now equidistant; the sides of a square – a square dance. This is a bold abstraction. The mathematical space of perspective is a construct. Perspective cannot feel the soft ground beneath my feet; it cannot perceive or experience these shifting sands; it does not know this place as I do.

‘Have you read Erwin Panofsky’s essay on perspective?’ I ask. ‘He believes that perspective transforms perceptual space into “mathematical space”, producing a “single quantum continuum”. He writes:’

For the structure of an infinite, unchanging and homogeneous space – in short, a purely mathematical space is quite unlike the structure of psychophysiological space: Perception does not know the concept of infinity; from the very outset it is confined within certain spatial limits imposed by our faculty of perception.⁴²¹

421 Op. cit., Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, pp. 29–30.

'This brings me to your "false mansion, suddenly dispelled in mists, which laid a limit on the infinite".'⁴²²

'I content myself,' Mallarmé says, 'with reflecting on the clear and durable mirror of painting, that which perpetually lives and dies every moment, which only exists by the will of the Idea, yet constitutes in my domain the only authentic and certain merit of nature – the Aspect. It is through her that when rudely thrown at the close of an epoch of dreams in the front of reality, I have taken from it that which only properly belongs to my art, an original and an exact perception which distinguishes for itself the things it perceives with the steadfast gaze of a vision restored to its simplest perfection.'⁴²³

'Returning, to the space of poetry and painting – to *Un coup de Dés*, and Manet's *Olympia*.' I resume. 'In your essay you politicise the aesthetics of the Impressionists [*Intransigents*], comparing the artist with "the modern worker".'⁴²⁴

'Of course. The transition from the old imaginative artist and the dreamer to the energetic modern worker is found in Impressionism. The participation of a hitherto ignored people in the political life of France is a social fact that will honor the whole of the close of the nineteenth century, a parallel is found in artistic matters, the way being prepared by an evolution which the public with rare

⁴²² Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 423).

⁴²³ Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'The Impressionists and Edouard Manet', p. 34.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

prescience dubbed, from its first appearance, *Intransigent*, which in political language means radical and democratic.⁴²⁵

‘It also means ‘blank slate’, to wipe everything clean – to begin again. “The political Intransigents admit no compromises, make no concessions, accept no constitution [...] The terrain on which they intend to build their edifice must be a blank slate.”⁴²⁶ I say, quoting Louis Enault.

425 Ibid. p. 33. *Intransigent* see: Appendix G: Glossary, p. 508.

426 Louis Enault, ‘Movement artistique: L’exposition des instranigeants dans la galeriede Durant-Ruelle [sic]’, *Le Constitutionnel*, 10 April 1876. (Cited by Eisenman, Op. cit., p. 192). Eisenman credits Enault with extending the metaphor of the ‘blank slate’, to the ‘Intransigeants of paint’, who: ‘unburdened by the lines that the great draughtsman used to mark the contours of figures, or by the harmonies colours that offered such “delicacies to the eyes of dilettantes”’ (Ibid., p. 192). In other words, to free themselves from the constraint of classical tradition favoured by the Academies, bringing about the ‘separation of Academy from State’. (See for example: The Neo-classical style favoured by David in *The Death of Marat*. See also the separation of Church from State, and appropriation of ‘sacred spaces’ for secular communion and Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*. See also a corresponding philosophical shift symbolised in the form of an overdetermined vertical axis of objective truth supporting the Western hierarchical order, to an undetermined horizontal view signified by difference – by the mobile nature of thought epitomized in the Deleuzian ‘Fold’. Here the metaphor is extended to Mallarmé’s *Un coup de Dés* – with reservation. The ‘blank slate’ as metaphor is ambiguous; a blank page may exceed the limits of its frame, but can it undo the limits of its form? Or escape the endless play of associations: all the other white flights; Mallarmé’s ‘other white things’, (Mallarmé, ‘Reminiscence’, *Divagations*, p. 26.) As Derrida puts it: ““whiteness”, accrued to themselves the blanks that stand for the spacing of writing’, (Op. cit., Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, *Dissemination*, p. 260). Mallarmé and Manet, accomplish their respective revolutionary forms [hybrid forms] through a reappraisal of the ‘blank slate’, and its structural organisation, including its divisions and subdivisions. The mathematical principles serving older forms; in Mallarmé’s case the Alexandrine, is commented on by Mitsou Ronat:

Thus the “gulf of the blank page” is no longer the symbol of creative impotence; Mallarme is the navigator, the pale Vasco – who, thanks to the number, wants to mark the space of his starry sky, for the page is above all a mental and abstract space. (Op. cit., Ronat, ‘Le « coup de dés »: forme fixe?’ p. 144,)

See also Broodthaers’s declaration that Mallarmé ‘invented modern space’, (Op. cit., Broodthaers, MTL-DTH exhibition catalogue, p. 110). Manet exposes the artifice of linear

I want to lay bare your “white as yet unwritten page” – to lie between the sheets – to touch their silent order.⁴²⁷ I want to know the limits of this place, the contours of each fold – the shape of each forbidden note.

‘In *Un coup de Dés*,’ I say, ‘the space is divided at the centre by a fold [*pli*] forming a vertical axis around which the pages rotate [Fig.8.3]. Like the gold dividing line of Manet’s *Olympia*, the vertical axis simultaneously divides and unites the two halves [Fig.8.4]. Closer scrutiny reveals a parallel arrangement between your

perspective and pictorial construction, that is, the illusion favoured by classical ideals. Manet’s blank page/canvas is what it is: a flat, ambiguous shifting surface, performing, and staging perceptual experience as a differentiated relation. Panofsky credits Manet and the Impressionists with dissolving ‘forms without jeopardising the solidity and unity of the space and the object in the space’. (Op. cit., Panofsky, p. 42). The paradox as Panofsky rightly claims resides in:

...the phenomena that so long as antique art makes no attempt to represent the space between bodies, its world seems more solid and harmonious than the world represented by modern art: but as soon as space is included in the representation, above all in landscape painting, the world becomes curiously unreal and inconsistent, like a dream or mirage. (Ibid., p. 42).

Foucault rightly claims that Manet’s figures are not located in the ‘real space of perception’. (Op. cit., Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting*, p. 39) Distance, he writes: ‘cannot be given to perception’, rather, it is signalled using older methods. (Ibid., p. 41). Foucault explains: ‘Manet makes use of this strongly archaic techniques which consist of making the figures diminish ... to signify or symbolise a distance which is not actually represented’. (Op. cit., Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting*, p. 41). Mallarmé employs a similar strategy in his typographic staging of *Un coup de Dés*. Words in smaller type face appear to recede in the page, and words in large point size push forward giving the impression at least of infinite space. See Robert Pickering’s account of the radical revision of the limits of the page at the turn nineteenth century, and conception of the page as a ‘stage for inscription’. (Op. Cit., Pickering, ‘Writing and the Page: Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Valéry’, pp. 56–71). In other words for Mallarmé and Manet form and content are inseparable, or as Derrida writes: ‘These veils, sails, canvases, sheets, and pages are at once the content and the form, the ground and the figure, passing alternately from one to the other. (Op. cit., Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, p. 260).

⁴²⁷ Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Mimesis’, *Divigations*, p. 140.

pages and Manet's sheets, between *Un coup de Dés* and Manet's diptych – a redoubling – a *double entendre* [Fig. 8.5, and Fig. 8.6].⁴²⁸



Fig. 8.3

428 A diptych is defined as: 'a painting, especially an altar piece, on two hinged wooden panels which may be closed like a book', or 'an ancient writing tablet with two hinges leaves with waxed inner sides'. From late Greek *diptukha* 'pair of writing tablets', neuter plural of Greek *diptukhos* 'folded in two', from *di-* 'twice' + *ptukhe* 'a fold' (*OED*) To di[e] twice, two deaths, death throws, recalling Odysseus's descent into Hades and Mallarmé's two abysses. Strictly speaking Manet's *Olympia* is not a diptych; it does, however, appear to be a picture of two halves, recalling the classical idealism of the academies, and the organisation of the page/canvas favoured by for example, David in *The Death of Marat* and *The Death of Socrates*. Manet, like David draws attention to the structural organisation of the grid and its aesthetic and political import.

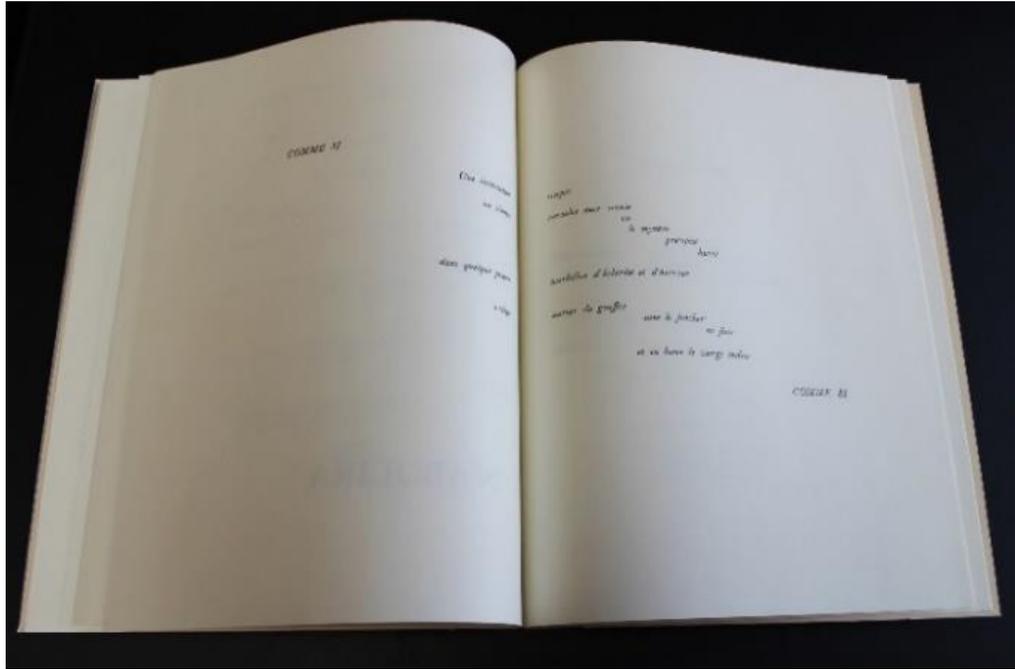


Fig. 8.4

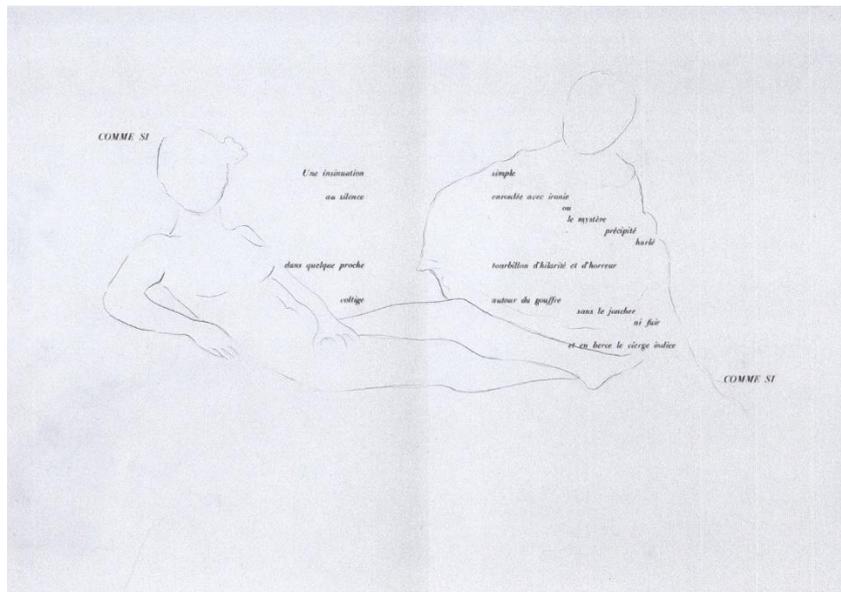


Fig. 8.5

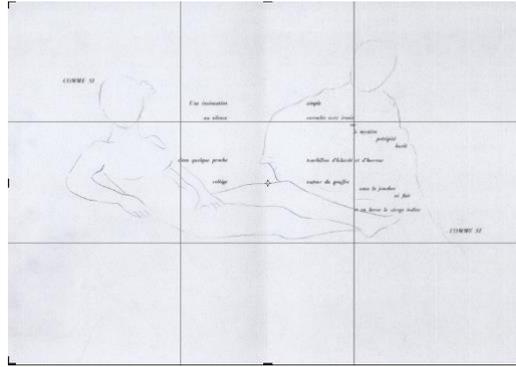


Fig. 8.6

'I have spoken of the difficulty in establishing the spatial dimensions and proportions of *Un coup de Dés*,' I say, cautiously glancing in Mallarmé's direction, wondering if my proof will encourage him to reveal his secret ways.'⁴²⁹

'Or abstract vision, being well versed, which spaciouly, grants the printed page an equal range.'⁴³⁰ Mallarmé says, smiling.

The laughter lines fanning out from the corners of his eyes look deeper than before. Deleuze is right, Mallarmé is a "master of the fold". The fold of the world, a fan or "*l'unanime pli*".⁴³¹ Or two fans, "a sign so plain that you cannot miss it... a

429 Based on my calculations, the page dimensions which best represent Mallarmé's idea establish a page proportion of 2:3, and margin proportions of 1:1:2:3, equal to those determined by Tschichold in his 'Golden Canon of book page construction'. (Op. cit., Tschichold, 'Consistant Correlation Between Book Page and Type Area, pp. 36–63).

430 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Music and Letters', *Divigations*, p. 189. See Valéry's account of Mallarmé's organisation of the 'page as a visual unity' (Op. cit., Valéry 'On A Throw of the Dice', *Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé*, p. 312).

431 Op. cit., Deleuze, 'What is Baroque', *The Fold*, p. 30. The infinite act proposed by Deleuzean fold is: 'not a fold in two—since every fold can only be thus – but a "fold-of two," and entre-deux, something "between" in the sense that a difference is being differentiated. (Ibid., Deleuze, 'The Pleats of Matter', p. 10).

winnowing –fan”.⁴³² Two sets of six oars fanning out from star board and port sides in one of the twelve Homeric ships – twelve oars circling in perpetuity through storm-tossed seas.

‘Manet’s *Olympia*,’ I continue, to escape Mallarmé’s gaze, ‘demonstrates the same proportions as *Un coup de Dés* give or take a couple of centimetres.⁴³³ This art of mirroring – that is, the reflective game of doubling, your double indication—splitting, repeating, an echo, a twin, a double duplet returns you and me to the “stage and page”; to the double gesture of mimesis.⁴³⁴ The Hymen.’

For Derrida, the Mallarméan fold is ‘re-folding, a re-plying, a supplementary re-making of the fold’. (Op. cit., Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, *Dissemination*, p. 238) The fold appears in many guises in Mallarmé’s verse: in fans, pages, sheets, sails, veils, wings, waves, plumes, elaborated by Deleuze and Derrida. See also *Fan* (Belonging to Mme Mallarmé), and *Another Fan* (Belonging to Mlle Mallarmé, (Op. cit, Mallarmé, *Collected Poems and Other Verse*, p. 57).

432 Op. cit., Homer, p. 155.

433 Based on the dimensions of Manet’s *Olympia* provided by Musée d’Orsay, Paris 130.5cm x 190cm (51.4 inches x 74.8 inches), I calculate proportions to be approximate to 2:3. (Imperial inch: $51.4 \div 2 = 25.7 \rightarrow 51.4 + 25.7 = 77.1$ inch = more or less 2:3. Metric: $130.5 \div 2 = 65.25 \rightarrow 130.5 + 65.25 = 195.75$ cm = more or less 2:3).

434 Doublet: from Middle English: from old French, ‘something folded’, also denoting a fur-lined coat, from Double ‘double’. Doublet also refers to the same number on two dice thrown at once. (*OED*) Duplet: from mid seventeenth century (as a dicing term in the sense of *doublets* (see *doublet*): from Latin *duplus* ‘duple’, on the pattern of *doublet*. Duplet a pair of equal notes to be performed in the time to three.

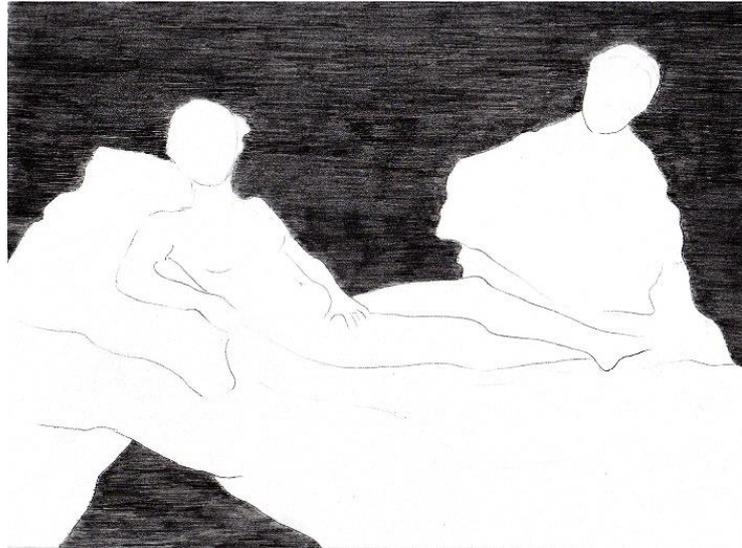


Fig 8.7

‘Yes,’ Mallarmé says. ‘This: The stage illustrates but the idea, not any actual action, in a Hymen (out of which flows Dream), tainted with vice yet sacred, between desire and fulfilment, perpetration and remembrance; here anticipating, there recalling, in the future, in the past, under the false appearance of a present. That is how the mime operates, whose act is confined to a perpetual illusion without breaking the ice or the mirror: he thus sets up a medium, a pure medium, of fiction.’⁴³⁵

‘Placing you and me between Plato and Derrida, between speech and writing, betwixt poetry and painting, in the space between all oppositions – “The Hymen”.’

436

435 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Mimesis, Divigations*, p. 140.

436 Reading Mallarmé’s notes for *Le Livre*, Derrida writes:

The old opposition between speech and writing no longer has any pertinence as a way of testing a text that deliberately deconstructs that

opposition. Such a text is no more “spoken” than it is “written”, no more *against* speech than *for* writing, in the metaphysical sense of these words. Nor is it for any third force, particularly any radicalism of the origin or of the centre. (Op. cit., Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, *Dissemination*, p.182).

This must be read in relation to the paradox of presence and absence, and related philosophical discourse built on such oppositions. For Derrida, signs defer to one another in an endless ‘play of referential traces’ which as Cavavero points out, ‘have no origin’. (Op. cit., Cavavero, ‘Dedicated to Derrida’, p. 217) Cavavero’s ‘devocalization of Logos’ confronts a system which she believes ‘relegates the voice to the status of those things that philosophy deems unworthy of attention’, (Ibid.), anticipating in my reading the emergence of the siren’s voice at the centre of *Un coup de Dés*, and Victorine Meuret’s emergence as painter in Manet’s *Olympia* (Ibid). The conception of centre as origin of the female voice is discussed by Penny Florence whose exploration of ‘gender-in-signification’ in Mallarmé’s work leads her to claim:

In Mallarmé’s later poems women merge with the poetic process partly through transference of his codes for poetry (whiteness, flight, light, potential utterance, etc. (Op. cit., Florence, p. 129).

The emergence of ‘Woman – as – sign’ in Florence’s reading is also articulated in my transgressive reading of the space of poetry and painting and of visual and aural signs, which as I show are gendered in ‘silent’ ways. Silence is articulated in Luce Irigaray’s ‘hierarchy of transmission’, whose source [woman/ muse] is silenced, and replaced by the voice of the poet who will forget her presence and lose his way by substituting his master [ful] teaching for the teaching of the muse, the origin, the truth. (Luce Irigaray, *In the Beginning, She Was*, London: Bloomsbury, 2013.) Cavavero refers to the sirens as ‘monstrous figures who duplicate, in many ways the, the function of the Muses’. (Op. cit., p. 103). Cavavero also differentiates between the voice of the Muse which is only audible to the poet, and the Siren’s ‘pure vocal sonority, a phonic modulation without words’, and audible to all. (Ibid., p. 104). These fine worked threads underscore my findings; that is, the emergence of a female voice at the centre of *Un coup de Dés*, manifest in word, image, and sound, in the song of the siren. My reading differentiates between the symbolic order of tradition, and a new symbolic order operating across gender and genre, revealing the play of oppositions. In other words, the play of multiple voices, which become audible to all in Mallarmé’s potent and democratic gesture. At the risk of complicating this weave further, W.J.T. Mitchell’s reading of Lessing’s ‘laws of genre, namely, the laws of gender’ surfacing ‘in an unguarded moment of free association’, reveal a list of ‘Gender – Genre’ oppositions underpinning Lessing’s thesis. Painting is equated with space, natural signs, a narrow sphere, imitation, body, external, silent, beauty, eye, and the feminine. Poetry is equated with time, arbitrary man-made signs, infinite range, expression, mind, internal, eloquent, sublimity, ear, the masculine. Lessing’s division between poetry and painting, supports the master narrative which renders woman mute. (Op. cit., Mitchell, ‘The Politics of Genre: Space and Time in Lessing’s Laocoön’, pp. 108–109). Mitchell’s analysis of Lessing’s division in this context reveals the complexity of the task but also a denouement as it takes place on the page.

Foucault and Derrida appear closer now, Foucault is pointing to something in the distance; at first, I thought it was at you and me, but then I realised he was pointing to something beyond us, beyond our line of sight.

‘Derrida,’ I continue, ‘traces the word hymen to the word sew, writing: “The hymen is thus a sort of textile. Its threads should be interwoven with all the veils, gauzes, canvases, fabrics, moirés, wings, feathers, all the curtains and fans that hold within their folds all—almost—of the Mallarméan corpus”.’⁴³⁷ He links the word hymen to hymn, which appears in the pages of your notes for *Le Livre*. The hymn of the hymen is linked by association to reading, to the weave of a song, and by extension a wedding song or song of mourning, making me think of the veiled Penelope of Homer’s *Odyssey*. “That most circumspect daughter of Icarius”, wife to Odysseus, mother to Telemachus.⁴³⁸ Penelope – artful mistress bound to loom and spindle; to weaving her veil of tears, while “speech shall be the men’s care”.⁴³⁹

‘If,’ I continue, ‘Telemachus is born to speech, and Penelope to weaving her silent poems on a “fine wide weave”, then by necessity she must conceal her form. Penelope’s silent protest, suspension of death is woven into the fabric of her grief

437 Op. cit., Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, *Dissemination*, p. 213. See also Penny Florence, reading of the ‘Mallarméan corpus’, in ‘Gender in signification’, (Op. cit., Penny Florence, *Mallarmé, Manet and Redon*, p. 131).

438 Telemachus bids his mother to return to her proper sphere, the sphere of weaving, while he, ‘master of the house’ in his Father’s absence attends to men’s care – that is to say, speech. (Op. cit., Homer, *Odyssey*, p. 10).

439 Ibid., p.11.

by day and unravelled by night. In a similar way, I read your words, writing them into the fabric of my thought by day – undoing, unpicking their difference by night.’

‘In this act of reading—writing accomplishes its end. Done to death; a shroud albeit of fine gossamer thread; like the hymen of Derrida’s weave, it “only takes place when it doesn’t take place”.’ I say, quoting Derrida.⁴⁴⁰

With all the undecidability of its meaning, The Hymen only takes place when it doesn’t take place, when nothing really happens, when there is an all-consuming consummation without violence, or a violence without blows, or a blow without marks, a mark without a mark (a margin), etc., when the veil is, without being, torn, for example when one is made to die or come laughing.⁴⁴¹

‘To di[e] twice,’ I repeat. ‘Two deaths, death throws, recalling Odysseus’s decent into Hades, your two abysses, Mallarmé, Voltaire’s “two chasms”, a necessary death – or a supplementary death inaugurated by Derrida’s writing.’⁴⁴²

440 Op. cit., Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, p. 213.

441 Ibid.

442 Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 143. See Blanchot’s reading of the Mallarméan abyss as a necessary despair: ‘whoever delves into verse dies: he encounters his death as an abyss’. (Op. cit., Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p, 38).

“Nothing will have taken place but the place except perhaps a constellation”.’ I continue, recalling Mallarmé’s words.⁴⁴³ ‘Because out here, where the land meets the sea and the sea meets the sky, this in-between all spaces differentiated by a non-existent line; this false division, perpetual horizon, this limiting circle is, as you say, “a false mansion”, like the church, “some rock suddenly dispelled in mists which laid a limit on the infinite”.’⁴⁴⁴

Mallarmé meets my gaze, then facing the horizon, he says, ‘If we turn to natural perspective (not that utterly and artificial science which makes our eyes the dupes of a civilised education, but rather that artistic perspective which we learn from the extreme East—Japan for example) – to look at the sea pictures of Manet, where the water at the horizon rises to the height of the frame, which also interrupts it, we feel a new delight at the recovery of a long obliterated truth.’⁴⁴⁵

443 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 425–6.

444 Ibid., p. 423. See also, (Op. cit, Foucauld, ‘Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias’).

445 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘The Impressionists and Edouard Manet’, p. 31. Mallarmé’s comments pre-date Foucault’s observation that Manet’s figures are not located in the ‘real space of perception’ (Op. cit., Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting*, p. 39). Mallarmé anticipates Norman Bryson’s extraordinary analysis of the decentring of the subject in the visual field, through a reappraisal of Sartre (*Being and Nothingness*), and Lacan (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*), and Japanese Philosopher Kitarō Nishida, and his student Keiji Nishitani, who he credits with,

A much more thoroughgoing displacement of the subject in the field of vision, which finds expression in Śūnyatā translated as “blankness,” “emptiness,” or “nihility”. The concept of blankness [...] relocates the gaze, le regard, in an expanded field where a number of conceptual transformations become necessary and urgent [...] concerning the question of where the subject resides, under the Gaze and in the expanded field of Śūnyatā, “blankness”; and concerning, in the practice of painting, the repercussions of the structures of le regard, the Gaze, and

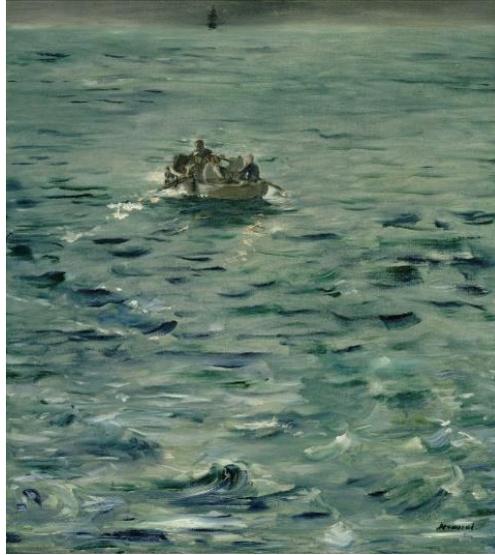


Fig 8.8

Śūnyatā, blankness or emptiness, at the level of brush, pigment, and frame.(Op. cit., Bryson, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', *Vision and Visuality*, pp. 87–113, 88).

Bryson's essay is acknowledged in the spirit of my comparative reading of Manet's *Olympia* and Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*; both perform a radical de-centering of the subject in the visual field, by undermining the limitations of western perspectival tradition (Manet), and linear sequence (Mallarmé). Manet and Mallarmé expose convention as construct, forcing the subject (reader/ viewer) to re-negotiate their position in relation to the object of painting and writing. Rather than experiencing the object through the tunnel vision of perspective, or narrative, the subject is implicated in a transformative field as it takes place. The remaining chapters borrow from Bryson's reading of Nishida, and Nishitani's concept of 'Śūnyatā', or field of 'radical impermanence', which dissolves the subject-object relation in a transformative field determined by difference, which Bryson compares to Derrida's 'différance' (Ibid., p. 97). Bryson illustrates his reading with the example of *Ch'an* painting, also referred to as 'flung-ink painting', which unlike traditional calligraphy cannot be contained, 'it is thrown, as one throws dice'. 'What breaks into the image is the rest of the universe, everything outside the frame.' (Ibid., p. 103). Bryson's description of flung-ink lends itself well to Manet's dissolution of the frame, and Mallarmé's unbound pages. Bryson does not make historical claims about the East and West and their traditions, similarly such a reading is beyond the scope of this thesis. The inclusion of the concept of 'Śūnyatā', and 'flung-ink painting', signals a difference which circles back to 'blankness or emptiness, at the level of brush, pigment and frame. (Ibid, p. 88). For an excellent account of the differences between Western and Japanese and Chinese aesthetics see Hubert Damisch, *Theory of a /Cloud/: Toward a History of Painting*, California CA: Stanford University Press, 2002.

‘What is there before perspective imposes its order? The ‘real space’ of painting, you describe opposes illusion. “Nature has taken place; it can’t be added to.”⁴⁴⁶

For Krauss,⁴⁴⁷ I say restating her words: “the grid opposes perspective [...] unlike perspective, the grid does not map the space of a room or a landscape or a group of figures onto the surface of a painting. Indeed, if it maps anything, it maps the surface of the painting itself. It is the transfer in which nothing changes place”.

‘Foucault,’ I add, ‘refers of a game of “horizontal and verticals”, a geometric principle of division at work in Manet’s paintings. The repetition of vertical and horizontal axes established in the weave of the canvas is echoed in the architecture of Manet’s painting, and its support, the frame.⁴⁴⁸ For Foucault the flattened-out space of Manet’s paintings signal a break with the representation of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface, “a tipping point” – a space between illusion and truth – “the event rather than a monument”.’⁴⁴⁹

446 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, *Divigations*, p. 187.

447 Op. cit., Krauss, p. 52.

448 Op. cit., Foucault, p. 44. Foucault considers Manet a precursor to abstract painting, and the painters Mondrian, and Kandinsky. See Mondrian’s tree series establishing his lineage and progression from representation to pure abstraction.

449 Op. cit., Foucault. In Nicholas Bourriaud’s reading of Foucault’s reading of Manet, Manet ‘is the event which inaugurates modern painting’; he writes: ‘Foucault begins by locating the tipping points in the field of knowledge: by identifying with the clinical precision which characterizes it, these moments where discourse splits up into a “before”, and “after”.’ (Ibid., p.14). Foucault writes:

Manet in effect is one who for the first time, in Western art, at least since the Renaissance, at least since the quattrocento, allows himself to use and in a way to play with, at the very interior of his painting, even at the

‘Returning to the frame,’ Mallarmé says, ‘The secret of this is found in an absolutely new science, and in the matter of cutting down the pictures, and which gives to the frame all the charm of a merely fanciful boundary, [...] this is the picture, and the function of the frame is to isolate it.’⁴⁵⁰

interior of what they represent, the material properties of the space on which he paints. (Ibid.)

Foucault’s ‘tipping point’ can be compared to the ‘rupture’ identified in Krauss’s reading of the fading monument as a commemorative representation at the turn of the nineteenth century, and the emergence of a space qualified by its negative condition, ‘a kind of sitelessness, or homelessness, an absolute loss of place’. (Op. cit., Krauss, ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’, p. 32). Krauss elaborates: ‘In being a negative condition of the monument modernist sculpture had a kind of idealist space to explore a domain cut off from the project of temporal and spatial representation.’ (Ibid., p. 31). See also Derrida’s ‘event’. Derrida likens the episteme dominating Western science and philosophy to the history of the concept of a structure, which he calls an ‘event’. (Op. cit., ‘Structure Sign and Play’, p. 351.) He describes the external form of the ‘event’ as a rupture and a redoubling’ based on his concept of ‘thestructurality of a structure’ defined by a centre or fixed origin limiting the play of the structure’. (Ibid., p. 352.) Derrida identifies an inherent paradox at the heart of the structure, that is a ‘centre that is within the structure and outside it’, undermining the concept of a coherent centered structure or fixed origin. (Ibid.) As such, the ‘event’ or ‘rupture’, which is the ‘absence of a centre or origin’ undermines the limiting play of the structure. In other words, meaning can never be fixed,

Everything became discourse—provided we can agree on this word—that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely. (Ibid., p. 354.)

⁴⁵⁰ Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘The Impressionists and Edouard Manet’, p. 31. See Gayle Zachmann’s excellent analysis of Mallarmé’s ‘quest for the scientific language’, and the influence of technological innovation, including optics and photography at the turn of the nineteenth century on the development of Mallarmé’s aesthetics. Gayle Zachmann, *Frameworks for Mallarmé: The Photo And The Graphic Of An Interdisciplinary Aesthetic*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008.

‘Yes,’ I say. ‘And, to reveal the space once ‘denied’, that is, real space of painting and poetry, “suddenly dispelled in mists”.⁴⁵¹ Now recalled, framed, and organised along geometric lines. Not linear perspective, but a “double orientation”, of the vertical and horizontal lines favoured in traditional Chinese painting, “whose forays to the four limits of the empire correspond to the need to reconstitute its expanse rhythmically, classify its various spaces virtually, and at the same time define the cycle of the seasons”.⁴⁵²

451 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 423). Foucault makes a similar point,

Since the *quattrocento* it was the tradition in Western painting to try to make the viewer forget, to try to mask and sidestep the fact that painting was put down or inscribed on a certain fragment of space which could be a wall, in the case of a fresco, or a panel of wood or again a canvas or again a piece of paper; to make the viewer forget, therefore that the painting rests on this more or less rectangular surface and in two dimensions, and substitutes for this material space on which the painting rests a represented space which denies in a sense, the space on which it is painted; and it is in this way that painting, since the *quattrocento*, has represented three dimensions even while it rests on a plan of two dimensions, (Ibid., p. 29).

452 Op. cit., Hubert Damisch, p. 216. It is the ‘double orientation’, favoured by Chinese aesthetics which provides a counter point to a Western metaphysical tradition built on opposition as outlined by Derrida, ‘The second term in each pair is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first, a fall away from it. Hence, absence is a lack of presence.’ (Op. cit., Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. xiii). By contrast, Chinese thought suggests a correlative duality, or dualism signified in the symbol’s ‘yin’ and ‘yang’; this coupling of supposedly opposing forces, does not privilege one over the other, rather,

A landscape is governed by the same rhythm as the order of the world; like the universe itself it is engendered by the interplay of two principles, two antithetical emblems, in accordance with the rhythmic concept that governs all Chinese thought whether mystical or philosophical, the concept that is expressed by the formula *yi yin, yi yang* (literally ‘one yin’, ‘one yang’), which may be symbolised by any image that conveys two, contradictory aspects. (Op. cit., Hubert Damisch, p. 215).

My thoughts turn to the folds of *Un coup de Dés*. A form emerges, like the figure of the woman concealed in the shadows on the riverbank.⁴⁵³ In my desire to know these forms, to touch them, to hold them to perceive them, I discover the space that exists between us. Between you and me – I uncover a duplet, two notes performed in the time of three.⁴⁵⁴

‘The shadow buried in the deep by this variant sail.’⁴⁵⁵ Mallarmé says interrupting my thoughts.

453 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘The White Waterlily’, p. 35.

454 On the subject of ‘I’, see, (Preface: A Note to the Reader, p. vii–xv). In this chapter a parallel is drawn between the ‘I’ walking, speaking, writing, painting, weaving, singing, signing, and sighing, and the emergence of the female voice, embodied in the Siren occupying the centre pages of *Un coup de Dés*, and the Muse of Manet’s *Olympia*, that is, Victorine Meurent the painter, and model reclining on white sheets. Florence’s articulation of ‘I’ becomes pertinent to my reading of the emergence a female voice at the centre of poem and painting,

The personal pronoun is a shifter, and indexical symbol, one which focuses on the overlap between code and message on the Subject. The relation between the semiotic sequence in any language-code and the person uttering it is conventional, that of the symbol. ‘I’ on the page has no necessary association with me, only with the one who utters – that is with the sender of a message, a semiotic function. (Op. cit., Florence, ‘Gender–in–Signification’, pp. 127–139.)

In this [my] reading an act of [I]dentification is performed. In a paradoxical shift ‘I’ am both inside and outside of the text, ‘I’ am the reader, and ‘I’ am the author of this reading. It is ‘I’ who identifies with the figure of the Siren, inscribed in the silence of *Un coup de Dés*, and the figure of Victorine Meurent painter made muse. In this strange reversal, made strange by Manet and Mallarmé, the female presence at the centre of poem and painting is revealed – Mallarmé and Manet are displaced.

455 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un Coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 418).

'Recalling "the number that cannot be another", [*l'unique Nombre qui ne peut pas | être un autre*],' I say, stopping to face Mallarmé.⁴⁵⁶ 'The sum is in the shadow, in *l'ombre, nombre, ombre, sombre*, in *umbra* and *penumbra* in in the play of light and dark. In the "puerile shadow" (*son ombre puerile*), "caressed and polished and restored", (*caressé et polie et rendue et lavée*); like the alexandrine a line of twelve syllables.'⁴⁵⁷

Shadows are gathering in the words; like dark clouds, these dark forms "overshadow a dim and dainty form, erect in her siren sinuosity".⁴⁵⁸ In the pages of *Un coup de Dés*, the sign of **SI** is echoed and mirrored in **COMME SI COMME**

SI, as if the dice were insinuated; as if two and one placed side by side – as **21**,

the full potential of a dice throw – [in]dice.⁴⁵⁹

456 Ibid. The line: '*l'unique Nombre qui ne peut pas | être un autre*', placed across the fold of double page five comprises twelve syllables, like the traditional alexandrine.

457 Ibid.

458 Ibid. The emergence of the figure of the siren, as both visual and verbal sign from the centre pages of *Un coup de Dés*, raises the question of origin. Florence considers Mallarmé's poem *Hérodiane* to be: 'a poem, a female figure, a locus for Mallarmé's struggle with language' (Op. cit., Florence, 'Gender-in-Signification', p. 129). Florence's comments might also refer to *Un coup de Dés*, and to her observation that Mallarmé's treatment of women as signifiers in a male history, intersects with his 'self-observation in language'. (Ibid.)

459 The sign of '*si*' is discussed in Chapters Three and Four, where it is established that the poem operates under '*si*' contained in '*in(s)inuation*', a sign that proliferates in the centre pages of *Un coup de Dés*, in and across translation. The relation of the dice to the syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés* is discussed in Chapters Four and Five. See also the French word '*indice*', which sounds like 'in dice', and translates as 'a sign'.



Fig 8.9

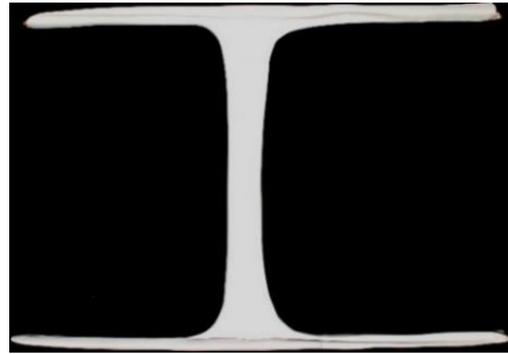


Fig 8.10

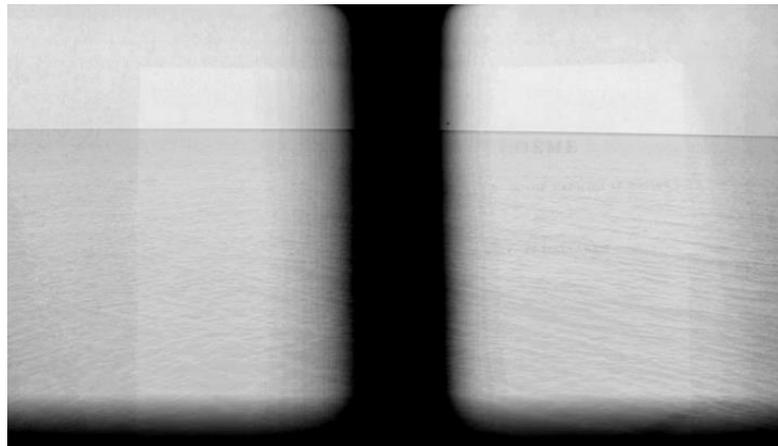


Fig 8.12

'Returning to the fold.' I say. 'When I place these figures against the page, a new form emerges; a *'mise en abîme'*, a fold within a fold. I am at sea, looking through a window, not a round porthole favoured by the ancient Mariner, but a rectangular window recalling journeys across the Irish Sea [Fig. 8.12]. I see the

opposing forces summed up in day and night, in black and white – in the division that binds us together. Betwixt and between you and me.'

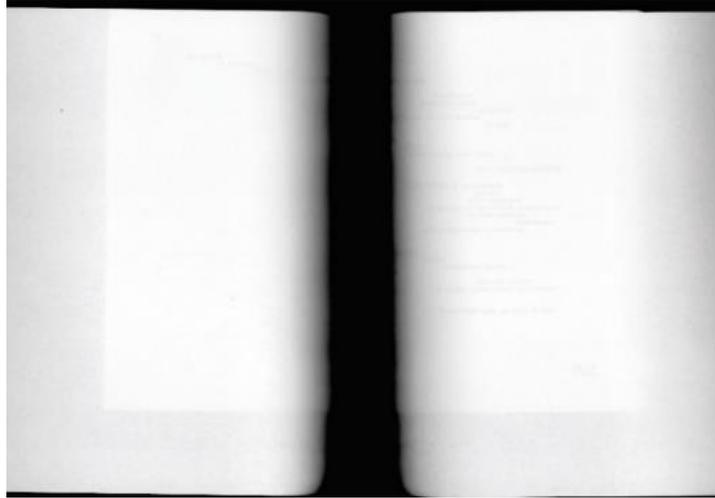


Fig 8.13

'It occurs to me', I add, 'that the sculptures echo the form of the figure in the digital prints, paradoxically, the sculptures assuming three-dimensional form appear to flatten the space. This is noticeable in the reversals and inversions of black and white, when a white form is placed against a black ground – the shadow cannot be cast (Fig. 8.11). In the digital prints, the dark edges of these nascent forms cannot be separated from the light; like the dark shores of the sea, they refuse to be bound by day or night. In this sense the centre is ambiguous as movement is implied in the transition from dark to light, from light to dark. In this digitally crafted illusion, a drama of infinite space is performed; in the space between you and me, which is always becoming; and which can never be fixed.'

'Language is imperfect.' Mallarmé says.

I think of Samuel Beckett's *Unnamable*, recalling his words: "Whether all grow black, or all grow bright, or all remain grey, it is grey we need, to begin with, because of what it is, and of what it can do, made of bright and black, able to shed the former, or the latter, and be the latter or the former alone. But perhaps I am the prey, on the subject of grey, in the grey, to delusions."⁴⁶⁰

'Woman,' Mallarmé says as if reading my thoughts, 'is by our civilization consecrated to night, unless she escapes from it sometimes to those open air afternoons by the seaside or in an arbor, affectionated by the moderns. Yet, I think the artist would be wrong to represent her among the artificial glories of candlelight or gas, as at the time the only object of art would be woman herself, set off by the immediate atmosphere, theatrical and active, even beautiful, but utterly inartistic.'⁴⁶¹

'Manet's *Olympia* accomplishes something else,' I say. 'Granted his muse is not "consecrated to night" or confined to the shadows like the figure occupying *la belle page*.⁴⁶² She is illuminated by day; thrown into the light.'⁴⁶³

460 Op. cit., Beckett, *The Unnamable*, p. 11.

461 Op. cit, Mallarmé, 'The Impressionists and Edouard Manet', p. 30.

462 *La belle page* the beautiful page is proportionate, in ratios 2:1.

463 The scope of this thesis does not permit a longer reflection on Manet's use of light, except to establish that by choosing to illuminate his subject with 'real' light, that is light coming from outside of the canvas, Manet undoes the illusion, and, in the same breath implicates the viewer in his drama. Mallarmé writes: 'Manet paints the truth', he achieves this not by, 'reflected lights', which 'discolour flesh tints', but by the light of day which 'plunders reality from the figures yet seems to do so to preserve their truthful aspect'. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, p. 31). This reading, like Foucault's comparative reading, establishes Manet's break with tradition, that is, the convention of situating the light source 'either



Fig 8.14

from the inside the canvas, or from outside, a luminous source which is directly represented or simply indicated by rays of light: an open window'. (Op. cit., Foucault, p. 58) Foucault links Manet's treatment of light with the scandalous reception of the painting when it was first exhibited in 1865, 'Three elements – nudity, lighting, and we who surprise the game...It is we who render her visible; our gaze upon Olympia is the lantern.' (Ibid., p. 66.) Light coming from outside of the space the canvas undoubtedly dissolves the boundary between 'inside' and 'outside', between *Olympia* and the viewer, who like the reader of *Un coup de Dés* becomes implicated in the drama, and who it could be said also experiences or senses the presence of the painter at work [Manet] in *Olympia*, and the poet [Mallarmé] in *Un coup de Dés*. In this regard the viewer becomes the painter, the reader, the poet, in an imaginative exchange of places, anticipating the transition from reader to author.

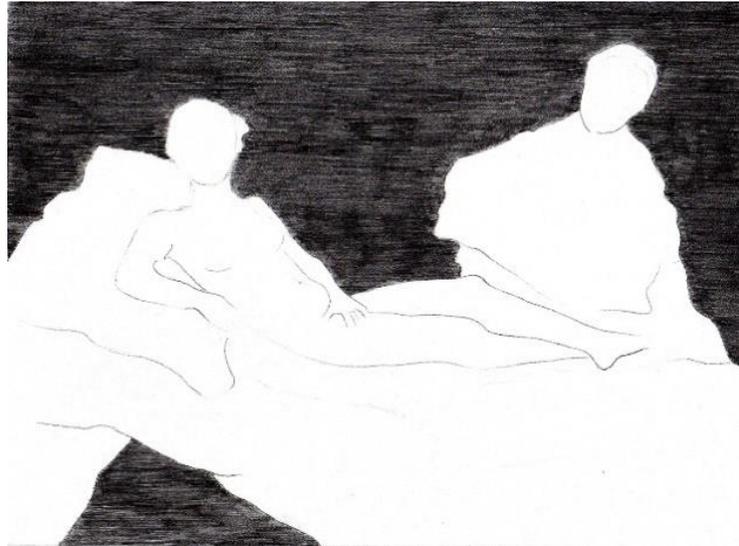


Fig 8.15

‘And how?’ Mallarmé asks. ‘By this fusion or by this struggle ever continued by surface and space between colour and air. Open air – that is the beginning and the end of the question we are now studying. Aesthetically it is answered by the simple fact that there in the open air alone can the flesh tints of a model keep their true qualities, being nearly equally lighted on all sides.’⁴⁶⁴

‘The truth,’ I interrupt, ‘like “rosy fingered dawn” illuminates stage and page.’⁴⁶⁵ However, there is more to Manet’s *Olympia*. The light appears so intense it is blinding. The figure of *Olympia* appears to reflect light back, simultaneously revealing and obscuring her form. In this flattened space, this play of light and dark, *Olympia* initiates a game of a different order. A silent order. Like the Siren who is bound to the Sea, *Olympia* is bound to the white expanse of the page;

⁴⁶⁴ Op. cit, Mallarmé, ‘The Impressionists and Edouard Manet’, p. 31.

⁴⁶⁵ Op. cit., Homer, *The Odyssey*, p. 75.

enveloped in its folds. As if this were not enough, when I look into *Olympia's* eyes, I am met by my own reflection – I see myself where I am not. I am inside and outside the picture. I feel disorientated. To distance myself from the drama of which I am now a part, I look to the figure in the shadows, to the past as it were, to tradition. And I notice she is looking to *Olympia*, directing my gaze, telling me where to look. Now I am looking at *Olympia* and I see myself reflected in her gaze. I am caught in this eternal triangle, this *ménage à trois* – enveloped in the drama as it unfolds. Now I see that the drama is always unfolding, like the circular movement at the centre of your poem.⁴⁶⁶ I am part of the unfolding – leading me to back to I.'

⁴⁶⁶ In Manet's *Olympia* the figure of the maid in the shadows will always be looking towards *Olympia*, to the present, and 'I' the figure standing outside the picture will always be met by *Olympia's* gaze; she is present to me as I am present to her. In the context of this comparative reading of the space of *Un coup de Dés* and Manet's *Olympia*, the figure of the maid may appear overlooked. The formal implication of a reductive reading of the space is intended to expose the fallacy of binary oppositions summed up in black and white, rather than ignore the political import of the role of the black servant at the service of art and master in the context of Colonialism. Griselda Pollock provides an excellent account of the position of the 'other woman', the servant and model Laure in her reading of Manet's modernist 'masterwork'. Pollock distinguishes between Laure the modern working class woman, 'black Parisienne' depicted by Manet 'within the metropolitan modernity, and not as either black darkness (Zola) or exotic attribute of venal sexuality (Gilman), which is where she stands in typical histories'. (Griselda Pollock, 'A Tale of Three Women: Seeing in the Dark, Seeing Double, at least, with Manet', *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, London: Routledge, 1999, p. 285. It would be interesting to extend Pollock's comparative reading to include Mallarmé's poem *Une négresse par la démon secouée* [A negress aroused by the devil...]

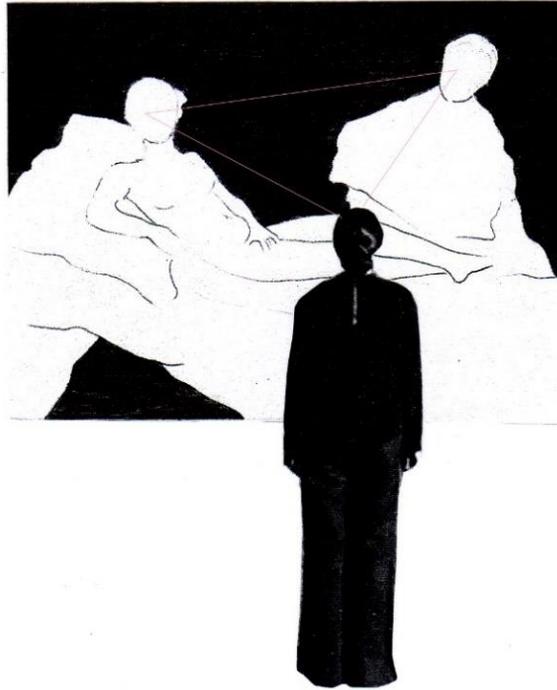


Fig 8.16

‘It occurs to me,’ I say, laughing, ‘that this world is full of envelopes. And envelopes are full of secrets.’⁴⁶⁷ I know how to open envelopes – I have, as you know, read all your letters.’

⁴⁶⁷ A connection between italic script and the handwritten note, including a confidential aside or secret note has been established. The word ‘*insinuation*’ (centre pages) reinforces the idea; that is, an indirect reference, a whisper, an innuendo signified in the sign of *Si*, and in the siren, whose contours are defined both visually (typography), in the words (meaning), and in their sound (alliteration). It is no coincidence that the emergence of the siren becomes manifest in the italic script used exclusively to signify her form, her voice, her song, that is the source, the emission at the centre of *Un coup de Dés*. Closer inspection of the typographic layout reveals twelve variations, including the sixteen point italic type face used to signify the siren, (see, Appendix E: Typographic Analysis of *Un coup De Dés*, p. 431–57) In the resounding chorus (double page nine) six variations of type face are used to effect; the presence of the siren is inferred:

Down falls | the quill | a rhythmic suspension of disaster | to bury | itself
 in the primordial spray | whose frenzy formerly leapt from there to a peak
 | that is blasted | in the constant neutrality of the abyss

These words circle back to the abyss, to the origin, to the source of language, to the siren and the muse. In Cavarero’s words: ‘The Sirens are monstrous figures who duplicate, in many ways the function of the Muses; in the Odyssey they narrate by singing’. (Op. cit., Cavarero, p. 103). Above all, a female presence embodied in the Siren is a ‘harmonious voice—a pure vocal sonority, a phonetic modulation without words’ (Ibid., p.104). Central to Cavarero’s thesis, is the idea that the ‘pure voice prevails over speech’ returning the reader to Plato’s concept of presence, and a metaphysical tradition based on opposition. Cavarero writes: ‘This minor history is the converse of the major history in which the pure semantic opposes itself to the sonorous power of speech.’ (Ibid., p. 106). Calling to mind Mallarmé’s poetic ideal,

The literary charm, if it is not to liberate, outside of a fistful of dust or reality without enclosing it, in the book, even as a text, the volatile dispersal of the spirit, which has to do with nothing but the musicality of everything. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters, p.185.)

In *Un coup de Dés*, Mallarmé, like Manet, fashions his idea between the sheets, between tradition and a new form of writing. In this symbolic gesture, this game of dissemination is full of clues. ‘In the constant neutrality of the abyss’, that is in the syllabic count of *par la neutralité identique du gouffre*, twelve syllables of the alexandrine attest simultaneously to tradition, and to a form not bound by the conventions of the alexandrine. At the same time, rhythm and numbers continue the game of counting. ‘In the constant neutrality of the abyss’ the play of twelve is divided at the centre by a caesura into two halves, two sixes, like the dice, and like the caesura at the heart of my thesis. But there is another twist in this *mise en abîme* the syllabic count reveals the chiasmic pattern in the line, and as such mirrors the game initiated in my chiasmic structure. Of course, *gouffre* may also be counted as two syllables.

par la neutralité identique du gouffre

1 1 4 4 1 1

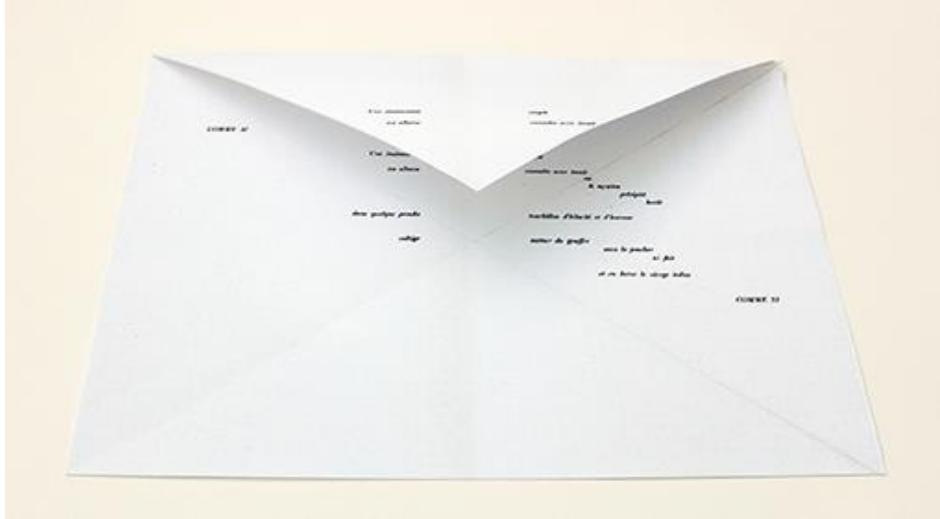


Fig 8.17

Mallarmé is laughing too. 'And, the bouquet,' he says, 'yet enclosed in its paper envelope, and the gloomy cat, apparently suggested by one of the prose poems of the author of the *Fleurs du Mal*, and all the surrounding accessories, were truthful, but not immortal – that is, in the ordinary and foolish sense of the word – but they were undoubtedly intellectually perverse in their tendency.'⁴⁶⁸

468 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'The Impressionists and Edouard Manet', p. 29.



Fig 8.18

'Olympia is immortal.' I say. 'It doesn't matter that she is made of flesh and bone, that these coloured notes, "flesh tints", are "re-created touch by touch".⁴⁶⁹ What matters is that these envelopes open into real space – onto the light of day, revealing the architecture of the space in relation to the space occupied by the viewer/reader. Any conception of the traditional support as a fixed and immobile structure is denied. The frame, like the envelope is a construct which will become

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., Mallarmé.

undone. Manet's "denied space" collapses the frame, just as Foucault claims, Manet invents the "picture-object".⁴⁷⁰

'I think it is time to turn back,' I say, noticing that Derrida and Foucault appear to have disappeared. I scan the beach; I see no sign of them. It occurs to me that they prefer to operate out of sight, in the footnotes, so to speak.

Here in the silence, between the sheets, the mystery, hurled down howled out in some immanent swirl of hilarity and horror, hovers on the brink of the abyss.

'Your gesture, like Manet's, reveals the truth by revealing the source. The Siren, like Victorine Meurent, reveals her silent ways – her voice.' I speak.

470 Op. cit., Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Michael Foucault: Manet and the Birth of the Viewer', p. 17. Bourriaud writes:

With Manet, painting brutally ceased to be a normative space which assigns to the author and the viewer their respective places in the service of a general idea and freezes their status, and becomes a space in relation to which the viewer must place himself, reminded of his mobility and his ontological disinclination before a flat object, deprived of depth, which the light strikes in full shot – especially that which illuminates *Olympia* 1863. Thus, what vouches for Manet's painting is the definite birth of an individual exiled from his certainties regarding his place in the world, and plunged violently into a universe where the mirror, the pictorial surface and the physical reality see themselves from now on divided to form three distinct realities. Manet thus invents the 'picture-object'. (Ibid).

INTERLUDE



Fig 8.19

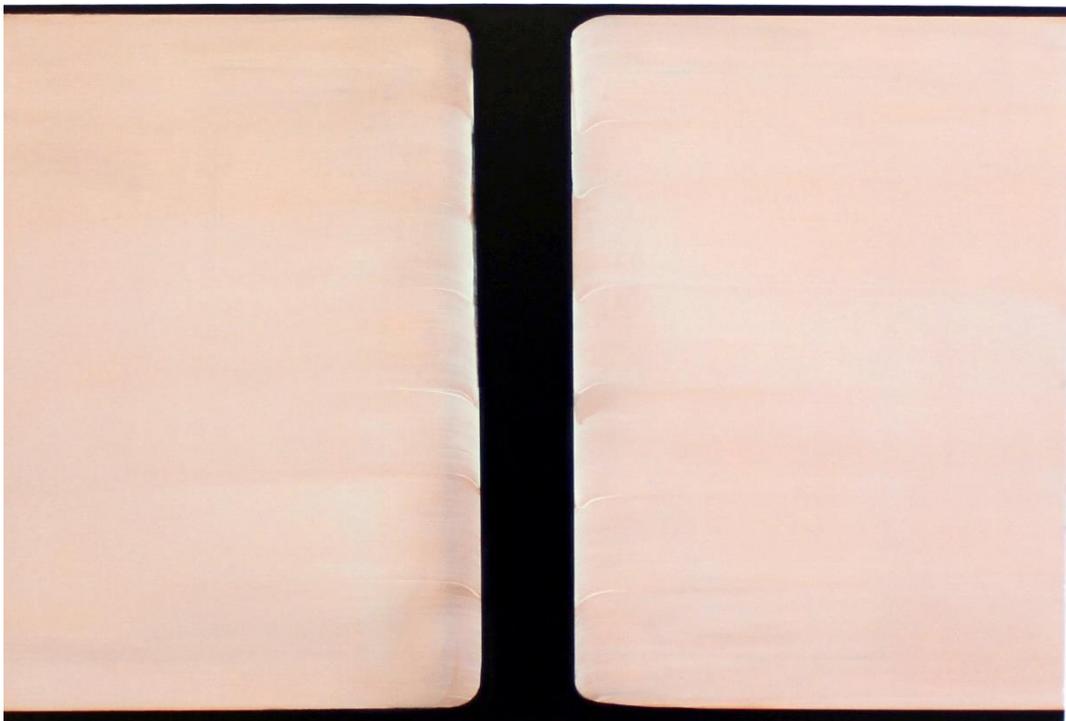


Fig 8.20

CHAPTER NINE

Mallarmé Me Martin



Fig 9.1

In Greek mythology, Hera is said to have induced the Sirens to compete with the Muses in a singing competition, which the Muses won. In a triumphant gesture, they plucked the feathers from the wings of the sirens which they used to crown their glory. The sirens turned white, and in their anguish threw themselves into sea. These white featherless creatures are known as the “the white ones”, the islands.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷¹ According to Caroline M. Galt, Stephanus of Byzantium’s reference to ‘the white ones,’ is to the city of Aptera, also known as “the wingless city”, the site of a musical contest between the muses and the sirens. The sirens lost, ‘white and wingless they leapt from the cliff and into the bay and became the Leucaea, or white islands that, three in number dot the water of Suda Bay’. Caroline. M. Galt, ‘A Marble Fragment At Mount Holyoke College From The Cretan City Of Aptera’, *Art And Archeology: An Illustrated Magazine*, Volume 6, May 1920, 143 –154, 150.

She is standing beside me with her back to the world.⁴⁷²

‘Walking seems to cover time and space but in reality, we are always just where we started,’ she says.⁴⁷³

Mallarmé has reached the islands, an archipelago of three tidal islands: *Little Eye*, *Middle Eye*, and *Hilbre Island* also known as *Hildeburgh’s Eye*, located at the mouth of the estuary of the River Dee, where the river runs down to the Irish Sea.⁴⁷⁴

‘The island is named after St Hildeburgh. She is believed to have lived here in isolation, dedicating her life to prayer.’ I say, taking my place beside Mallarmé and Agnes at the foot of Hildeburgh’s Eye.

‘A life of reflection, not unlike the solitary life of an artist,’ I whisper almost to myself.

‘So long as we carry solitude inside.’ Mallarmé says.⁴⁷⁵ ‘A necessary solitude when it appears to be only a matter of appearing to dream. We need that flight—

472 Agnes Martin writes, ‘Classicists are people who look out with their backs to the world.’ Martin is referring to an idealist model of art; the kind of perfection that can only be achieved in the mind, and to Plato’s ‘Allegory of the Cave’. (Agnes Martin, ‘The Untroubled Mind’, Selected Writing, *Agnes Martin*, New York, NY: Whitney Museum of Modern Art, p. 15).

473 Op. cit., Martin, ‘Selected Writings: Journal Excerpts’, *Agnes Martin*, Whitney Museum of Modern Art, New York, p. 26.

474 Hilbre Island is associated with St Hildeburgh who is believed to have lived on the Island as an anchorite in the Seventh Century. ‘The name derives from its dedication to St Hildeburgh a Saxon holy woman whose name was joined to *eg* meaning ‘island’, *Hildeburgheye* gradually evolved into Hilbre.’ (Stephen J. Roberts, ‘Medieval Wirral 1066–1500’, *A History of Wirral*, Andover: Phillimore & Co, 2007, pp. 65–93, 81).

475 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Solitude’, *Divigations*, pp. 271 – 5, 274.

–into ourselves; recently we could still do it. But the Self—isn’t it already becoming distant, in order to withdraw?’⁴⁷⁶

Agnes replies, ‘Many artists live socially without disturbance to the mind, but others must live the inner experience of the mind, a solitary way of living.’⁴⁷⁷

‘The art critic Hilton Kramer refers to your work as “a religious utterance, almost a form of a prayer”.’⁴⁷⁸ I know that you object to the mantle of mystic or seer. I agree with your stance – to accept such a mantle would be to misunderstand your practice.⁴⁷⁹ In the context of your contemplative approach, the word

476 Ibid.

477 Op. cit., Martin, ‘Selected Writings: Reflections’, *Agnes Martin*, p. 23. Martin lived alone in Taos, New Mexico from 1968–1993 in an adobe house which she built with help of the architect Bill Katz. The land was surrounded by water in the winter, cutting her off for months at a time. Gallerist and friend Arne Glimcher describes these periods of isolation as her most productive. (Arne Glimcher, see *Arne Glimcher in Conversation with Francis Morris*, Tate Modern, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAdCqj-wuww>).

478 Hilton Kramer, ‘An Art That’s Almost Prayer’, *Art View*, *New York Times*, May 16, 1976, p. 91. Glimcher makes a similar point suggesting the viewer, ‘think of the lines [of Agnes Martin’s paintings] as a mantra as much as a visual experience, and the repetition as the repetition of a sound’. (Op. cit., *Glimcher in Conversation with Francis Morris*).

479 Jacquelynn Bass skilfully unpicks the philosophical strands of Western and Asian thought that may have shaped Martin’s ideas. Bass juxtaposes biographic detail from Martin’s life, and writing, with her extensive knowledge of the Bible, including the Old Testament, John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Plato’s *Republic*, John Dewey’s *Art as Experience*, and the philosophical teachings and practices of Zen Buddhism, and writings of Taoist sages Chuang Tzu and Lao Tzu. Bass locates Martin’s exposure to Zen teachings through John Dewey’s friend D. T. Suzuki, who lectured at Columbia University at the time of Martin’s attendance. (Jacquelynn Baas, ‘Agnes Martin: Readings For Writings’, *Agnes Martin*, edited by Francis Morris and Tiffany Bell, London: Tate Publishing 2015, pp. 222–35) See also Barbara Haskell’s account of the influential teachings of Taoism, and Zen Buddhism in America through the free lectures on Zen given by D. T. Suzuki at Columbia University in 1949–51 which she writes ‘triggered the interest of an entire generation of artists, including Ad Reinhardt and John Cage’. (Op. cit., Barbara Haskell, ‘Agnes Martin: The Awareness of Perfection’, p. 95). See, John Cage, *Waiting*.

utterance is significant, paradoxically manifest in your silent ways. First in the quiet that comes with being alone, then in your practice of waiting, sitting in a chair – like the Taoist practice of ‘sitting in oblivion’. The Taoists wanted to engender a sense of continuity with the world, to empty the mind to transcend the limits of time and space. It seems to me that your act of waiting gives rise to a wordless space, a clearing. Is this the space of revelation? It also occurs to me that this space has all the attributes of your painting. I am thinking especially of *The Islands*, the twelve Islands.⁴⁸⁰

Agnes smiles. ‘I used to meditate until I learned to stop thinking. I don’t start to paint until I have an inspiration.’⁴⁸¹

‘You equate inspiration with waiting and waiting with revelation.’ I continue. ‘Your description of a fully formed image of a painting in the mind recalls Federico Zuccari’s belief in an internal design or idea first present in the mind of God, then engendered in the mind of the artist through divine inspiration.’⁴⁸²

480 All references to *The Islands* are to the Tate Modern 2015 installation which formed part of a large-scale retrospective exhibition of Agnes Martin’s work, (*The Islands I–XII*, Acrylic paint and graphite on canvas, twelve parts, each 182.9 x 182.9cm, (6 x 6 feet).

481 Martin, Agnes Martin interview with Chuck Smith and Sono Kuwayama, Taos, New-Mexico, November 1997. (<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/agnesmartin>). Francis Morris writes, ‘Martin’s denial of influence is allied to her repeated crediting of ‘inspiration’ as the source of each painting.’ (Op. cit., Morris, ‘Agnes Martin: Innocence and Experience’, pp. 54–65, 56). Morris’s art-historical approach places Martin between Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism. Morris traces the effect of the art and artists on Martin’s work through a genealogy of the grid (Ibid).

482 In ‘Drawing Now’ Bernice Rose points to Renaissance writer Giorgio Vasari who believes drawing originates in the intellect of the artist, and Federico Zuccari who equates *disegno* with idea, whose dual aspects: *disegno interno*, the internal design first present in the mind of God, is engendered in the mind of the artist and *disegno esterno* the

Zuccari's concept of inspiration is similar to Plato's distinction between 'what is', and 'what comes to be'; that is, the distinction between a unique intelligent design or model, and a world that comes to be modelled on what 'is' "intelligible, and eternally stable".⁴⁸³

'Of course,' both pre-suppose a belief in 'God', in the idea of perfection, and in the desire to model the ideal. I know from your writings that you do not believe in God.'

'Nor in a 'cause'.⁴⁸⁴ Agnes replies. 'I believe in the recurrence, that this is a return to classicism. Classicism is not about people, and this work is not about the world. We call Greek classicism idealism; idealism sounds like something you can strive for; they didn't strive for idealism at all. Just follow what Plato has to say, Classicists are people who look out with their backs to the world. Classicism represents something that is not possible in the world – more perfection than is possible in the world.⁴⁸⁵ I would like my work to be recognised as being in the classical tradition (Coptic, Egyptian, Greek, Chinese), as representing the ideal in

realisation of the idea articulated as form, embodied as a visual representation of the idea. (Bernice Rose, *Drawing Now*: New York, NY: The Museum of Modern Art, 1976, p. 9.)

483 Donald. J. Zeyl, 'Introduction', Plato: *Timaeus*, translation by Donald. J. Zeyl, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000, pp. xiii – xcv, xxix.

484 Martin writes, 'The most troublesome anti-freedom concept is our belief in a transcendent supreme authority.' (Op. cit., Martin, 'Selected Writings: What is Real', *Agnes Martin*, p. 31).

485 Ibid., Martin, p. 15.

the mind. One must see the ideal in one's own mind. It is like a memory of perfection.⁴⁸⁶

'In the Platonic sense we are limited by necessity, by the constraints of the physical world.' I say, indicating that we should sit on the rocks at the edge of the sea.

'The attraction of a theatre that offers a mere representation for those who can't see the things themselves! Of the play written every night in the folio of the sky and mimed in the gestures of his passions by man.'⁴⁸⁷ Mallarmé's says, climbing onto the rocks.

We sit in a row with our backs to the world, waiting for the tide to turn.

486 Op. cit., Martin, 'Selected Writings: Response to Art', *Agnes Martin*, p. 24.

487 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Scribbled at the Theatre', *Divigations*, p.118–9.



Fig 9.2

'The future's a blank page,' Agnes says, 'I pretend that I am looking at the blank page. I look in my mind for the unwritten page. If my mind is empty enough, I can see it. I don't paint the plane; I just draw this horizontal line.'⁴⁸⁸

488 Op. cit., Martin, 'Selected Writings: The Untroubled Mind', *Agnes Martin*, p. 16. By contrast Broodthaers declares after spending his vacation sitting in a chair, 'I'll never write another line... the lines in my hand will have to do. They're already written down.' (Op. cit., Broodthaers, *Investigating Dreamland*, p.30). Is he referring to the practice of meditation, and if so, do the effects of such a practice tend towards a reductive art? The work of Reinhardt, Martin, and John Cage, to name some of the artists engaged in the meditative practice of 'emptying the space', particular to Zen Buddhism and Taoist teaching, differs fundamentally from a reductive tendency shaping the work of some of their Western contemporaries, who were classified as 'minimalist'. I use the term 'minimalism' cautiously, accepting James Meyer's observation, 'that we come closer to the truth in viewing minimalism not as a movement with a coherent platform, but as a field of contiguity and conflict, of proximity and difference. (James Meyer, 'Introduction', *Minimalism: Art and the Polemics of the Sixties*, New Haven, C T: Yale University Press, 2013, p. 4). Meyer's unravelling of the field and the artists, exhibitions and associated writings emerging in New York in the early sixties builds on Greenberg's endorsement of a 'reductive tendency' that would 'eliminate any and every effect that might...be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art'. (Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting', *The Collected Essays And Criticism: Volume 4, Modernism With A Vengeance*

I think of Mallarmé's "white as yet unwritten page", of Pierrot's mute soliloquy, and Derrida's double-vision of the page.⁴⁸⁹

'It occurs to me,' I say, turning to Mallarmé, and then Agnes, 'that your approach to the space of poetry and painting has much in common with the ancient Chinese practice of writing and painting. In traditional Chinese calligraphy and

1957–1969, edited by John O'Brien, Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1993, pp. 85–94, 86). Meyer considers two impulses driving a reductive tendency in art and literature, both issuing from Abstract Expressionism. The first, described by Greenberg as 'a reaction against the "handwriting" and "gestures" of Painterly Abstraction'. (Op. cit., Greenberg, 'Post-Painterly Abstraction', *The Collected Essays And Criticism*, pp. 192–202, 94) See also Gestural Abstraction, Jackson Pollock, Willem De Kooning, Franz Kline. The Second, a reaction to and development of the Colour Field painters: against the transcendental claims made Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, and Barnett Newman, but indebted to their attempts to abolish form. Newman is instrumental in this development, and to Martin who aligns herself with Newman, Rothko, and Reinhardt.

I owe quite a bit to the Abstract Expressionists because they gave up defined space; that is, the arrangement of things in space; how far they are apart. And they got infinite space that is what I think I have too – infinite space. And they gave up forms. There were to be no recognisable forms in Abstract Expressionism. What surprised me is that their paintings were so different; nothing can be so different as Pollock and Rothko; but they believed the same. (Martin, *Agnes Martin: With My Back To The World*, produced and directed by Mary Lance, music by Steve Peters, New Deal Films Inc, 2003, duration 57mins.)

Meyer identifies the New Realities Exhibition 1962 as a moment, before the emergence of the terms that come to define a 'minimalist aesthetic', when the distinction between, Abstract Expressionism, Pop-Art and Minimalism was unclear, citing Larry Poons: 'For a few moments everything existed on the same walls, and it was fine'. (Op. cit., Poons, cited by James Meyer, 'The Emergence of Judd and Morris' Minimalism: Art and the Polemics of the Sixties, p. 56). It is in this context between Abstraction and Minimalism that Martin's work is most frequently discussed. This reading adds another dimension, Martin's *Islands* [blank pages] read through Mallarmé's white space, and the discourses shaping this thesis shift toward the East, towards Japan and China.

489 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Mimesis', *Divigations*, p. 140–1. See also, the 'tabula rasa' which re-surfaces in the 'blank slate' of the Intransigents, Mallarmé's 'other white things', Derrida's 'space of writing', Penny Florence's reading of gender signified in Mallarmé's 'white things', and a 'mental and abstract space' which Mitsou Ronat equates with Mallarmé's 'blank page'.

painting the space between the brush marks take on their own significance.⁴⁹⁰

The philosopher Hubert Damisch makes the point better than I. he writes, “The digression by way of China has manifested the fundamentally materialist articulation between emptiness and the substratum to which a painting is applied—emptiness acting as the substratum, the substratum acting as emptiness; and at the same time, it has revealed the meaning of the work by means of which Western painting has simultaneously endeavoured to obliterate the fact of that annihilation.”⁴⁹¹

490 Op. cit., Damisch, p. 224.

In these gaps the paper or linen has a value of its own. The artist does not wish to deny the surface as a whole by covering it entirely [...] Chinese painting and Chinese writing always derive part of their radiance from (shen Zai) from the quality of the paper or silk that is used. Some calligraphers even thought that the radiance should take precedence over the xing shi, the material body of the character drawn. (Ibid., p. 124)

491 Op. cit., Damisch, p. 226. Damisch’s comments recall Foucault’s reading of Manet, who ‘plays with the very interior of his painting’, including the material properties of the space on which he paints. (Op. cit., Foucault, *Manet And The Object Of Painting*, p. 29) The influence of Japanese prints on Manet and the Impressionists is the subject of numerous texts. Here I draw attention to Mallarmé’s comparison between the Japanese technique of framing and dividing the picture plane and Manet’s ‘sea-pieces [...] where the water at the horizon rises to the height of the frame, which alone interrupts it [...] ‘the recovery of a long obliterated truth’. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘The Impressionists And Edouard Manet’, p. 31.) Manet’s rejection of the Western perspectival tradition; the illusion of a three dimensional space on a two dimensional surface, in favour of the flat picture plane is particular to Japanese painting. The principles of traditional Chinese poetry and painting in respect of Mallarmé’s white page, and Martin’s white paintings is signified in their respective treatment of the ‘blank page’. In the Chinese tradition, the space of writing, drawing, and painting is not simply at the service of the latter; neither is it complicit. The space exerts a force of its own as a ‘real’ differentiated space with its own physical characteristics. It also operates as shifting space, analogous, metaphoric, and dynamic, a space full of potential. I am indebted to Hubert Damisch’s excellent and comprehensive account of the subject which opens with a line from Mallarmé’s poem *‘Salut’*, taking its title from Henry Weinfield’s translation of the poem. (Op. cit., Hubert Damisch, *Our Sheet’s White Care*, *A Theory of / Cloud*, pp. 182–231, 182).

Turning to Agnes, I say, ‘I want to return to the principle of division conjured up in your line, which I think, is synonymous with the principle of division in traditional Chinese landscape painting. I am referring to the Chinese practice of “setting aside the place for the sky and that of the earth... only in the middle part does one set about determining the landscape”.⁴⁹² This orientation, unlike traditional Western landscape painting, does not delimit the field; rather it “establishes a correlation between the two terms that it presents as separate only in order to open up the field in which they can interact, and in which the dialectical process prompted by their opposition can take place”.⁴⁹³ Unlike a western tradition built on opposition and division, as Derrida outlines, this union between the sky and the earth is determined by the middle, by the space left empty. In her capacity as “regulator of rhythm, the person who gets yin and yang to act in concert”, the painter, participates in the space between the two which “is seen as the resolution of the contradiction of the sky and earth, and at the same time as a way of passing beyond it”.⁴⁹⁴ In *Un coup de Dés*, this “united horizon”, marriage, [*fiancailles*] “conjures up the negated object with the help of allusive and indirect words, which constantly efface themselves in a complementary silence”.⁴⁹⁵

492 Op. cit., Damisch p. 211. ‘A Chinese painter [...] is the regulator of rhythm’, (Marcel Granet, *La Pensée chinoise*, p. 318, cited in Damisch, p. 217.).

493 Ibid., p. 212.

494 Ibid., p. 217.

495 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un Coup de Dés*, see, Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 400. See also, Op. cit., *Mallarmé: Oeuvres Complète*, p. 187.

‘As it was in the beginning, there was no division and no separation.’ Agnes replies.⁴⁹⁶

‘Your paintings are not landscapes in the traditional sense, Agnes, nor do they present a single point of view, a “Cartesian self-enclosure”.⁴⁹⁷ The twelve almost identical square paintings divided into equal parts present multiple points of view – infinite horizons. The ‘empty middle’ in traditional Chinese landscape painting like the abyss at the heart of *Un coup de Dés* is a site of ‘infinite potential’, making me think of the ‘clearing’ we discussed earlier, the space of revelation and, “the recovery of a long obliterated truth”.⁴⁹⁸

‘The Abstract Expressionist gave up defined space; that is, the arrangement of things in space, how far they are apart. And they got infinite space, that is what I think I have too – infinite space.’⁴⁹⁹ Agnes says, watching sand drain from hands thickened with time.

496 Op. cit., Martin, ‘Beauty is the Mystery of Life’, p. 18.

497 Op. cit., Bryson, ‘The Gaze In The Expanded Field’, p. 96

498 Op. cit., Mallarme, ‘The Impressionists and Edouard Manet’, p. 31.

499 Op. cit., Martin, *Agnes Martin: With My Back to the World*, New Deal Films Inc.



Fig 9.3

‘It seems to me, Agnes, that your line is drawn from the silence [Fig. 9.3] The seemingly endless horizontal threads tracing a course across the canvas are as wordless as the Siren’s song described by Adriana Cavarero as, “pure voice, inarticulate song, acoustic vibration, cry”.⁵⁰⁰ Your infinite line reverberates, like the siren you sing, but you “do not narrate”.’⁵⁰¹

Agnes replies with her usual deliberation ‘It is thought that the intellect is responsible for everything that is thought and done, that everything can be put

⁵⁰⁰ Op. cit., Cavarero, ‘The Fate of the Sirens’, *For more Than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, p. 106.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

into words. But there is a wide range of emotional response that we make that cannot be put into words.⁵⁰² My interest is in experience that is wordless and silent, and in the fact that this experience can be expressed for me in artwork which is also wordless and silent.⁵⁰³ You know John Cage wrote a book called *Silence*, in the very first line he said, “there is no such thing as silence”.⁵⁰⁴ I think there is. When you walk into a forest there are all kinds of sounds, but you feel as though you have stepped into silence. I believe that is silence. John Cage believed in chance, and I very strongly disagree.⁵⁰⁵

‘I know this experience of silence.’ I interrupt. ‘It thickens the air. It makes me still – then I can hear.’

‘To face a white sheet of paper which seems to demand the lines dreamed of for so long.’⁵⁰⁶ Mallarmé says enigmatically.

502 Op. cit., Martin, ‘Selected Writings: Beauty Is The Mystery Of Life’, *Agnes*, p. 10.

503 Agnes Martin, ‘The Still and Silent in Art’, cited in Thomas Mc Evilly, ‘Grey Geese Descending: The Art of Agnes Martin’, *Artforum*, 25, 1987, p. 99.

504 John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, Marion Boyers, London, 2011 [Calder and Boyers, 1968]

505 Agnes Martin, Interview by Irving Sandler, *Art Monthly*, September 1993, 12 –15, p. 12. See also Jacquelynn Bass’s account of Martin’s exposure John Dewey’s book *Art as Experience*, supporting a belief that ‘the world is not comprised of objects, but of happenings, or experience’. (Op. cit., Bass, ‘Readings for Writings’, p. 230).

506 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Henri Cazalis, May 1867, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, pp. 74–6, 74.

I picture the fine graphite lines defining Agnes's canvas. Bryony Fer refers to Martin's absorption in the "subject's interiority", in the palpable repetition of her line, "a self-reference so intense that it is like an interior monologue."⁵⁰⁷ The analogy is fitting. I picture a line of words composed of thread. I imagine teasing the end of the thread until flattened words become a line, or infinite lines differentiated to the point of making no sense.

'We have located an ideal space for our discussion,' I say, turning to Agnes, then to Mallarmé. 'Let me begin with a line from *Un coup de Dés* which translates as "a limit on the infinite".⁵⁰⁸ I find the line perplexing, perhaps because it presents a paradox which I seem to understand intuitively. However, when I try to unravel the line, it is I that is undone, making me wonder if a different approach might reveal the contradiction inherent to the paradox.'

'I am suggesting a comparative reading of the space of the twelve unbound pages of *Un coup de Dés* [Fig. 9.4], the twelve white paintings that make up *The Islands* [Fig. 9.6], and a recent video installation, titled: *On Some Vacant and Higher Surface* [Fig. 9.5], showing two blank dice being thrown repetitively – first in slow motion, then in 'real time'. This gesture is accompanied by the sound of dice being shaken, then thrown, and falling into/onto an ambiguous space/surface. The

507 Bryony Fer, 'Infinity', *The Infinite Line: Remaking Art After Modernism*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 46–63, 56.

508 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 423).

sound is punctuated by silence which occurs after the fall of the dice and before they are cast again.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁹ See Portfolio of Works.

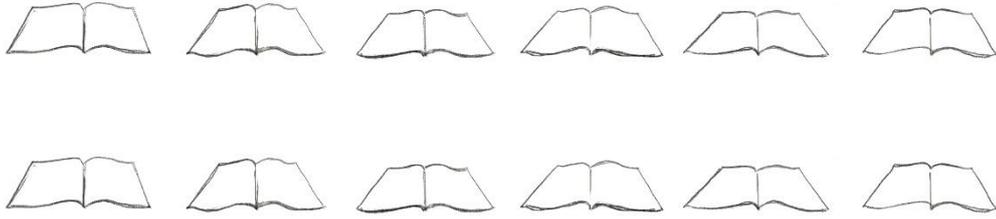


Fig 9.4

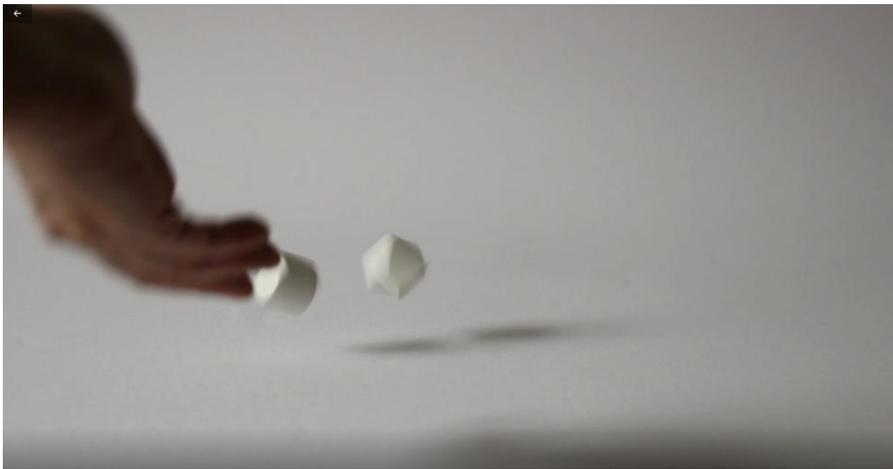


Fig. 9.5



Fig 9.6

‘Let me begin with a precis of my findings.’ I say, lodging my foot between the rocks to secure my position.

‘First of all,’ I continue. ‘The number twelve is integral to the structural organisation of each work; to the number of pages [Fig.9.4] canvases [Fig.9.6] and faces of the dice [Fig. 9.5] Secondly, the unity of each work is determined by the relation of the part to the whole, each page, canvas, and dice face is conceived in relation to the other. Thirdly, the dimensions, proportions, and scale; the division of each page, canvas and dice is intrinsic to the work and to its reception. Finally, all three works operate in an infinitely nuanced white space.’

‘The significance of the number twelve to my reading of *Un coup de Dés*, has been established.’ I say, adding. ‘The spatial and typographic division of the twelve unbound pages by the number twelve in relation to the traditional form of the alexandrine has been disclosed. Analysis of divisions of the pages in relation of the twelve faces of the dice and their numbers, reveals a series of new configurations.

⁵¹⁰This is demonstrated in the construction of a numerical model whose relation to my syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés*, to the traditional form of the alexandrine, and to the free form of verse, can be seen to be coded in the structural arrangement of *Un coup de Dés*. The symbolic relevance of the number twelve to the master’s throw of the dice is, as I have shown, linked to Hamlet and to Igitur to the space between day and night. Their acts of hesitation play out in the space

⁵¹⁰ See Portfolio of Works.

between the words revealing an ideal space where nothing has been written and everything is possible.'

'As if this were not enough!' I add. 'Now I want to consider the relation of your twelve *Islands* to the twelve blank faces of my cubes (blank dice), and by association, Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*.'

Turning to Agnes, I say. 'I have established that Mallarmé's "profund calcul", is not one of chance but a calculated act.'⁵¹¹ I have demonstrated page proportions of *Un coup de Dés* to be 2:3, which, like Villard De Honnecourt's Diagram, are based on a geometric system of harmonious divisions, and sub-divisions, which divides a line into equal parts – infinitely.'

Mallarmé interjects, saying. 'At the same time, following the same instinct for rhythm that chose him, the poet doesn't forbid himself from seeing a lack of proportion between the means unleashed and the result.'⁵¹²

'Agnes,' I continue, unable at first to comprehend Mallarmé's contradiction. 'The divisions and subdivisions of your lines make me wonder about the relation of the rectangle to the square.'

'I have never painted a grid that has squares,' Agnes says, smiling. 'A square is sort of harsh, aggressive. A rectangle is more relaxed. A square is like some people you

511 See Valéry on Mallarmé's construction of a new poetics; on a 'verbal and visual system' based on 'profound calculations', (Op. cit., Valéry, 'Concerning A Throw of the Dice', p. 311).

512 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'The Mystery in Letters', *Divigations*, p. 232.

meet, overconfident, aggressive, then you meet a rectangle, they're soft, more agreeable.⁵¹³ When I cover the square surface with rectangles, it lightens the weight of the square; destroys the power of the square.'⁵¹⁴

'Plato would explain your preference for the rectangle in proportionate terms,' I reply, smiling. 'The rectangle by nature is mutable, able to constitute other forms. The square is limited by nature, assured in its form. Plato reasons, "Any surface bounded by straight lines is composed of triangles. Every triangle, moreover, derives from two triangles, each of which has one right angle triangle and two acute angles".'⁵¹⁵

'Plato differentiates between the scalene right angled triangles which like Mallarmé's rectangle is based of proportions of 3: 2.' I say adding, 'triangles of these proportions can constitute other configurations, tetrahedron, octahedron, and icosahedron, which Plato links respectively to fire, air, and water. The isosceles right-angled triangle, by comparison, has proportions of 1:1. "Arranged in sets of four whose right angles come together at the centre, the isosceles triangle produces a single equilateral quadrangle [i.e., a square]. And when six of these quadrangles were combined, they produced eight solid angles, each of which were constituted by three plane right angles. The shape of the resulting

513 Op. cit., Martin, *Agnes Martin: With My Back to The World*, New Deal Films Inc.

514 Op. cit., Martin, cited in 'Agnes Martin: 'The Beautiful Daughter All of Her Ways Are Empty'', Anna C. Chave, p. 142.

515 Op. cit., Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 43.

body so constructed is a cube and it has six quadrangular equilateral faces.”⁵¹⁶

Plato links the cube to earth. Furthermore, he claims, “Of the two [right-angled] triangles, the isosceles has but one nature, while the scalene has infinitely many”.

⁵¹⁷ In other words, it is by nature more adaptable, which may account for its agreeable nature!’ I say turning to Agnes.

‘Of course,’ I add, ‘if I were to place the cubes (blank dice) side by side they would form a rectangle becoming infinitely more agreeable.’

Agnes and Mallarmé smile as they lodge their feet into the rocks below securing their position.

‘The tide is coming in,’ Mallarmé says.

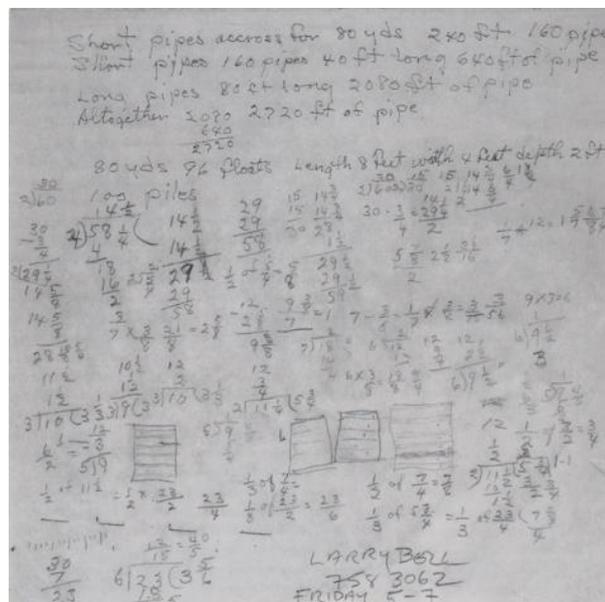


Fig 9.7

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., Plato., p. 46.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., Plato., p. 44.

After an indefinite pause. I turn to Agnes, asking ‘what significance do you ascribe to the dimensions, proportions, and scale of *The Islands*?’

She replies. ‘I see the painting in my mind and translate the scale to a larger canvas mathematically.⁵¹⁸ For thirty-five years I painted six by six foot canvases.⁵¹⁹ They need to be big enough, as big as the person looking at it – to step into it. As you would cross an empty beach to look at an ocean.’⁵²⁰

‘The idea of a fully formed image in the mind and its realisation as a scaled-up version of the original appears to be proportionate to how the painting is experienced.’ I say. ‘In other words, you appear to be a conduit, translating the silence—silence you equate with an experience of being in nature. Since the experience is not of nature, it is fitting that this mathematically determined abstract space is governed by vertical and horizontal lines. The lines demonstrate a paradox, they are both present and absent, conceived in the mind as an idea, given form in an act that signals an encounter with time and space.’⁵²¹ Your line

518 Op. cit., Martin, *Agnes Martin: With My Back To The World*. Tiffany Bell notes that from 1974–1992, Martin worked in two primary scales: small (12 x 12 inches) and large (72 x 72 inches). Op. cit., Tiffany Bell, ‘Happiness Is The Goal’, *Agnes Martin*, London: Tate publishing, pp.18–31, 30.

519 Ibid. Martin concedes that at the age of eighty-six she is too old to handle the larger six by six stretcher, finding a five by five canvas easier.

520 Op. cit., Martin, *Agnes Martin: With My Back To The World*.

521 See the paradox of presence and absence inscribed in Leonardo’s line in Chapter One. In this chapter Martin’s concept of line circles back to Leonardo, if only to differentiate itself in his line, ‘The line has in itself has neither matter nor substance and may rather be

like the horizon line does not exist in the real world. This line connects you to Leonardo, and it separates you; his line is attached to a perspectival model and yours to the flat geometric space of the Modernist grid.⁵²²

'I like the horizontal line better than any other line.' She replies. 'It isn't related to anything in this world. It goes out. Horizontal lines have meaning – just like music.⁵²³ And, music is the highest form of art, completely abstract.⁵²⁴ Some musicians compose music about music, Beethoven composes music about experience, happiness, joy – it has meaning. Lots of painter's paint about painting, but my painting is about meaning. I use the horizontal line to get to the meaning.'⁵²⁵

'Ah, this twin intellectual procedure, notable in symphonies, found in the repertoire of nature and sky. I know, people want to limit the mystery in Music; when writing aspires to it.'⁵²⁶ Mallarmé says turning to face to Agnes.

She replies, 'Our response to line and tone and colour is the same as our response to sounds. Like music, abstract art is thematic. It holds meaning for us that is beyond expression in words.'⁵²⁷ Let us turn to the abstract response, the response

called an imaginary idea than a real object; and this being its nature it occupies no space.' (Op. cit., Leonardo, 'Linear Perspective: Definition of the Nature of the Line', p. 47.)

522 See, Rosalind Krauss, 'Grids', *October*, Volume. 9, 1979, 50–64.

523 Op. cit., Martin, *Agnes Martin: With My Back to the World*.

524 Op. cit., Martin interview with Chuck Smith and Sono Kuwayama.

525 Op. cit., Martin, *Agnes Martin: With My Back to the World*.

526 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'The Mystery in Letters', *Divigations*, p. 232.

527 Op. cit., Martin, *With My Back to the World*. Mallarmé aspires to the effects of music, 'combining the attributes of Music and Letters', which he refers to as the 'Mystery' (Op.

we make in our minds free from concrete environment. We know that it prevails. We know that it is infinite, dimensionless, without form and void. But it is not nothing because when we give our minds to it we are blissfully aware.'⁵²⁸

cit., Mallarmé, 'Music and Letters', *Divigations*, p. 194). Greenberg distinguishes between the 'suggestive' power of music which 'replaced poetry as the paragon art', and 'music as a method of art, rather than as a kind of effect', which he locates at the turn of the nineteenth century. The appeal of music as an 'abstract art', an art of 'pure form', with its 'emphasis on the physical, the sensorial' according to Greenberg, provided a 'purist' ideal,

leading the avant-garde to a radical delimitation of their fields of activity for which there is no previous example in the history of culture. The arts lie safe now, each within its 'legitimate' boundaries, and free trade has been replaced by autarchy. Purity in the arts consists in the acceptance, the willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art. (Op. cit., Greenberg, 'Towards a Newer Laocoön', 1940, p. 566).

Greenberg's concept of 'purity' acknowledges painting's debt to the abstract form of music, simultaneously locating Mallarmé's ideal, and Martin's desire for a pure abstract form which she recognises in 'Beethoven's symphonies with every note composed'. (Op. cit., Martin, 'Selected Writing: Beauty Is The Mystery of Life', p. 12). Greenberg's art historical imperative re-defines the limits of painting after Abstract-Expressionism, free from 'oppressive associations', free from literature. (Op. cit., Greenberg, 'Post-Painterly Abstraction'). Martin is placed historically alongside Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, and Barnett Newman, her geometric abstract canvases adhere to the formal qualities of a Greenbergian concept of 'purity', however her metaphysical claims challenge the boundaries of Greenberg's 'medium-specificity'. In a similar way her relationship with the minimalists is complicated; Martin's paintings have a 'minimalist look', however, her reductive tendency is a 'transcendent response [...] free from, and unrelated to the concrete environment,' unlike the 'minimalists' who strive for a non-referential art free from association. (Op. cit., Martin, *Selected Writings: What is Real*, p. 28) Martin places herself outside of the institutional critique defined by oppositional tendencies. Those who argued for painting's autonomy, Greenberg's medium-specificity, Michael Fried's *Art and Objecthood*, and those who wanted to dispel the myth of medium-specificity, to reach beyond the material limits and conventions of painting under high-modernism. Martin's refusal to locate herself in either camp places her in a metaphorical 'clearing'; as such, Martin's work, like Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*, at the turn of the nineteenth century, suggests an alternative reading of Modernism, by locating the work between such oppositional tendencies at the heart of the crisis, without the sanctuary of 'isms'.

528 Ibid.

‘When I first approached *The Islands*, your installation of twelve almost identical white square canvases,’ I say to Agnes, ‘before I could even contemplate the line, I become conscious of the space between me and the paintings.’⁵²⁹ It is difficult to explain the effect. The paintings seemed to activate the space between me and them undermining the division. At the same time, light particles appeared to hover across the surface of the paintings, charging the space, making me conscious of the division. I stood still for a long time, unable at first to discern perceptible differences between the framed space of the canvases, the walls, and the space of the gallery.’

‘It would be easy to compare this effect to the effect of light on the finest mist,’ I continue, ‘after all the paintings allude to nature, but it is more than this.’⁵³⁰ The pale colour washes dividing the abstract space of canvases simultaneously suggest and deny the landscape. The titles, *The Islands*, for example, or *On A Clear Day*, which, after all are composed of words, suggest a state of mind rather than a place.

529 Agnes Martin, *The Islands I–XII*, 1979, Tate installation 2015.

530 See, Krauss who cautions against reading Martin’s work through the lens of the Romanitic sublime,

It is this covert allusion to nature that the category of the abstract sublime has come to imply, with the abstract work always able to be decoded by its romantic double. Rothko read through Friedrich; Pollock read by Turner’s storms; Martin by Turner’s skies. (Rosalind Krauss, ‘The Cloud’, *Agnes Martin*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, pp. 155 – 65, 156).

Krauss has a point. It is easy to be seduced by these obvious associations. Krauss’s analysis of Kasha Linville’s reading of what she describes as ‘the three distances’ in Martin’s painting, provides an ‘experiential’ account more in keeping with Martin’s ‘experience of nature’ and closer to my reading of the space. (Ibid)

I understand this experience as the presentation of a series of spatial illusions, recalling Mallarmé's "false mansion suddenly dispelled in mists which laid a limit on the infinite".⁵³¹

'The poem like the paintings, is not about nature. It is not what is seen. It is what is known forever in the mind.'⁵³² Agnes interrupts.

'Yes,' I say. 'Perhaps this is possible because the experience of being in nature that you describe is a universal one, and because on an intuitive level [I] the viewer understand the game. By presenting the illusion, by activating the whole of the gallery space, [I] become implicated in the work. I am part of the installation; placed between a real and ideal space, the place you refer to as the 'locus', the locus of the works occurrence.'⁵³³

'On reflection, the 'locus' you speak of is like the 'empty middle' we discussed in relation to traditional Chinese painting. It is the space where poet and painter operate, where the master of *Un coup de Dés* stands in anticipation of a dice

531 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 423).

532 Op. cit., Haskell, 'Agnes Martin: The Awareness of Perfection', p. 99.

533 See Arne Glimcher on Martin's caution against the perils of pride, 'A potato farmer stands in front of his field saying, these are my potatoes, those aren't his potatoes any more than these are my paintings, we are both the locus where it happened.' (Op. cit., *Glimcher in Conversation with Francis Morris*).

throw. This the place where “nothing takes place but the place”.⁵³⁴ I say turning to Mallarmé.

‘It always happens, that in this place, what proffers itself is a mystery: to what degree does one remain a spectator, or to what degree does one presume to have a role?’⁵³⁵ Mallarmé says adjusting his position.

‘In my experience,’ I answer. ‘*Un coup de Dés* and the *Islands* places the ‘subject’ (the reader and seer) in the place of poet and painter at the ‘locus’. Not at the centre of a Cartesian visual field, but at the centre of a space in dissolution, an infinite field. The concept of ‘Śūnyatā’ which is based on the acceptance that everything is in a state of transformation, that everything carries within it the seed of its own destruction, implies a “radical impermanence”.⁵³⁶ “The entity comes apart. It cannot be said to occupy a single location, since its locus is always in the universal field of transformations: it cannot achieve separation from that field or acquire any kind of bounded outline. Because it cannot be said to enjoy independent self-existence, since the ground of its being is the existence of everything else. And it cannot present itself in the guise of an enduring Form.”⁵³⁷

Nishitani compares the object to a flower, whose existence is a phase of

534 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 425).

535 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘The Same’, *Divigations*, p. 249.

536 Op. cit., Bryson, ‘The Gaze in the Expanded Field’, p. 97.

537 Ibid., p. 97–8.

incremental transformations between seed and dust, its form can never be fixed.⁵³⁸

‘Perhaps.’ I suggest, ‘Closer scrutiny of the works in question, of what is the same, and what differs will unravel the mystery.’

‘If I may explain, and I will try to be brief as the tide is coming in.’

‘Let me begin. The square paintings are stable, fixed to the wall. They are unified in the gallery space. I move towards them. The square faces of the dice are bound to one another by their edges and unified in the cube. I hold the dice in the palm of my hand, I shake the dice causing them to move. The rectangular pages of *Un coup de Dés* are unbound, mobile, interchangeable. I hold the pages in the palms of my hands, turning the pages and re-arranging them; I curate their order.’

Then, to Agnes, I say. ‘The white gesso surfaces of each canvas reveal slight variations which become more perceptible over time.⁵³⁹ Tonal shifts, fluid and

538 Ibid., p. 98–9.

539 Martin primed her canvasses, which were either cotton duck, or linen, with a white gesso ground, usually in two layers the first with brush strokes running vertically top to bottom, and then horizontally left to right. The grounds are rough to touch reflecting the gypsum or chalk compounds that make up the primer. Martin applied watered down acrylic washes carrying traces of colour from top to bottom in a series of repetitive brush strokes that can be heard chasing a path across the course ground of the canvas, demonstrated in a recent video recording of the artist at work. Fine, hand drawn, graphite lines run horizontally from one edge of the canvas to the other following her mathematically calculated divisions which are registered at the edge of the canvas. The lines trace the imperfection of the surface, at times appearing to disappear in the course gesso ground. Sometime two lines drawn together touch and separate as if one were the others shadow. Twelve canvasses hung on the gallery walls make up the installation; twelve parts performing difference as almost imperceptible colour shifts gives the appearance of a space in dissolution, making the whole space pulse. Glimcher likens the impact of seeing Agnes’s paintings to an encounter with Ad Reinhardt’s paintings, he

dilute as pale colour washes, undermine the stability of the surface. The graphite edges of the thin metal frames appear less defined against the white walls of the gallery which are not really white but rose-tinted, adding to the effect of a space in dissolution.'

'By comparison,' I continue. 'The white paper pages of *Un Coup de Dés* reveal their shadows, which play across the surface. At the centre, in the fold a figure rises like a column, a figure dressed in black, like the figure standing in front of Agnes's white paintings with her back to the world.'

'The wooden surface of the cubes, once spacing devises, assume the form of blank dice. Twelve square surfaces, like Agnes's square paintings, are gessoed white. However, unlike the paintings, "a cube is never perceived according to all its faces at once; it always retains something of a non-given at the heart of its givenness".'⁵⁴⁰ I say, recalling Meillassoux words.

'The cubes like Agnes's *Islands* adhere to the traditional rhetoric of painting. In Greenbergian terms they are medium-specific, paint is applied by the artist to a flat surface using a brush. Does this make the cubes paintings?' I ask. 'If so, should they be considered abstract or figurative? Are they paintings of cubes/blank dice

writes: 'Ad Reinhardt was making paintings that he believed were at 'the end of painting'. He was a close friend of Martin, and it looked like she was making paintings that might be at the beginning of painting. (Op. cit., Glimcher, *In Conversation with Francis Morris*).

⁵⁴⁰ Op. cit., Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, p. 19.

or are they cubes painted white? Are they sculptures or hybrid forms, or interchangeable transfigurations?’

Perhaps, I say, ‘they fall beyond the space of painting and poetry?’

I pause to reflect on the question. Mallarmé and Agnes appear to be looking at the same point in the distance. My thoughts turn to the art-historian Isabelle Graw. She might call them paintings by virtue of their ‘residual specificity’ or ‘medium–unspecificity’, defying the limits of Greenberg’s modernist painting.⁵⁴¹ Graw’s terms address the expanded field of painting signalling Krauss’s post-medium condition. I agree with Graw’s claim, that “painting has long since left its ancestral home—that is, the picture on the canvas—and is now omnipresent, as it were, at work in other art forms as well”.⁵⁴² I consider Graw’s other claims: that painting should be understood as a form of production of signs that is experienced as highly personalised. She presents a paradox, the medium can neither delimit the field, nor escape its boundaries by association. Paint, I think to myself, will always suggest painting. The question, what is painting is bound to the question of what painting is not, leading to differentiation and comparisons between painting and poetry, and to a hierarchy of genres.

541 Isabelle Graw, ‘The Value of Painting: Notes on Unspecificity, Indexicality, and Highly Valuable Quasi-Persons’, *Thinking Through Painting: Reflexivity and Agency Beyond The Canvas*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, pp. 45 – 57, 45.

542 Graw asks, ‘what are we referring to when we talk about painting. Do we mean painting in the sense of a medium, a technique, a genre, a procedure, or an institution? (Ibid).

‘The cubes (blank dice),’ I say, ‘like Agnes’s Islands are contained inside another space. Unlike Agnes’s paintings, they are thrown into a white field, casting shadows on the rectangular sheet of paper as they fall. The movement of the dice is recorded and framed, and later projected into a gallery space. These cubes or blank dice question the nature of space itself. The so called white and yet unwritten page, that is, the white two-dimensional rectangular sheet of paper onto/into which the cubes are cast is activated by the gesture, by the hand that reaches into the space.’

‘Futhermore,’ I add, the viewer experiences the gesture as an intrusion, an interruption into what at first appears to be a flat undifferentiated space. The cubes perform a similar operation, activating the space which must receive these three dimensional objects, and must therefore become a three-dimensional space. The cubes perform an intriguing transformation in the process, appearing as the interchangeable forms of tetrahedron, octahedron, and icosahedron, defying the limits of their form. The transformation is witnessed and captured in the fall of the cubes [blank dice] when rendered in slow motion. Once the fallen cubes [blank dice] become still, and quiet returns to the page, once they are retrieved, and before they are set in play again, we are left with nothing but the place.’

Finally, I say, ‘each of the spaces under scrutiny is activated by the presence of the reader/ viewer. I can take hold of the pages of *Un coup de Dés*, and begin, as I do in the middle, because there is no way of knowing where to begin, and because

“every thought emits a dice throw”.⁵⁴³ I can approach *The Islands* as I would the sea, understanding the analogy, ‘closing the division and passing proudly on’.⁵⁴⁴ ‘In the video *On Some Vacant and Higher*, I [the viewer] become implicated in the temporal and spatial operations of the work. This is achieved by juxtaposing the digital space of the video with the ‘real’ space of the gallery, the ‘real’ time of attendance in the gallery, with ‘slow’ time as it unfolds in the video. The boundaries of each space are breached by the hand that throws the dice, a gesture connecting the hand of the artist to the hand of the viewer by association; the inside [of the work] with the outside [of the work] analogue and digital touch. The framed space of the video reveals the ‘original’ space of the works construction as properties of paper, wood, and paint make their impact felt in the sound of the dice falling. A series of signifying sounds shatter the silence, like firecrackers or bombs going off, recalling Mallarmé’s book as bomb.⁵⁴⁵ The sound resonates in the gallery, re-writing the space with each new configuration, until silence emerges again from the noise. The cubes in the video are linked with two larger white cubes in the gallery space, making me wonder about a fourth dimension, a cube within a cube a tesseract. Two cubes side by side.’

543 Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 426.

544 Ibid.

545 Mallarmé reputedly declared, ‘The only bomb of which I am aware is a book’, when asked about his friend Félix Fénéon, then editor of *La Revue blanche*, involvement in the anarchist activities leading to an explosion at Chamber of Deputies, Paris (see, Op. cit., Gordon Millan *Mallarmé: A Throw of the Dice*, p. 298.

The tide is in. A mist has taken hold of the Island, making it impossible to see the Monument.

'It is too late to go back. We should take cover in the cave on the other side of the island,' I say.

INTERLUDE

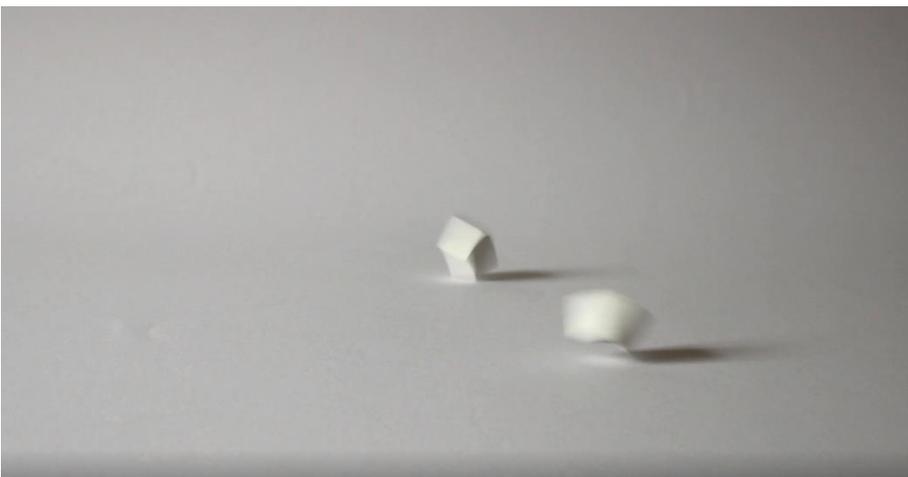
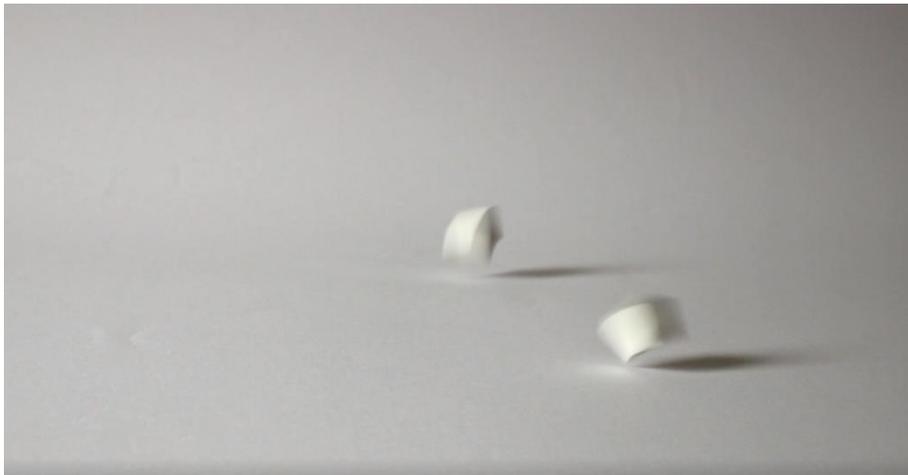
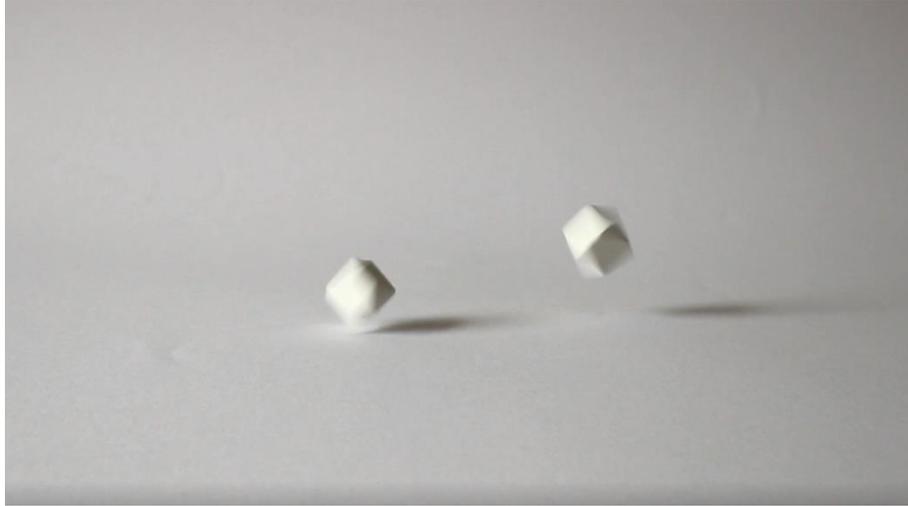


Fig 9.8

CHAPTER TEN

Martin Me Mallarmé

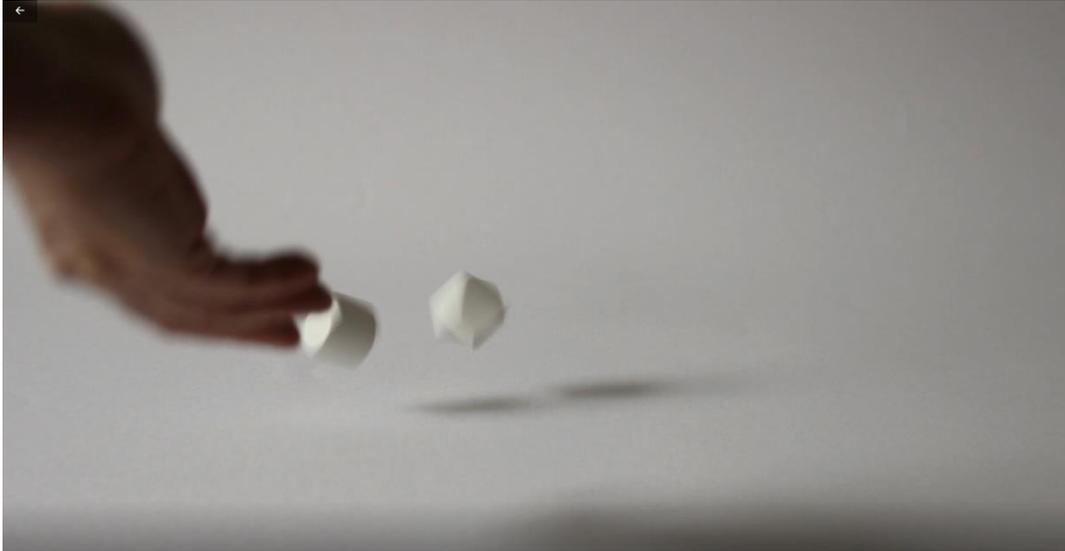


Fig. 10.1

It is difficult to gauge the depth of the cave, making me wonder if other figures are concealed in the recesses. As my eyes adjust to the darkness, I notice a small ledge inside the mouth of the cave. Agnes and Mallarmé approach the ledge and sit down. Standing close to the cave entrance I continue with my comparative reading of *Un coup de Dés*, *The Islands*, and *On Some Vacant and Higher Surface*.

‘This would suggest,’ I say, ‘that: writing like drawing and painting may be bound to, not bound by one surface or another. The addition or subtraction of one material or another, activates the surface, leaving a mark, trace, or sign, this may be visible or invisible, and carries with it the codes and conventions specific to the medium, but not limited by the medium. The meaning ascribed to each mark, trace, or sign, including the process of inscription, is shaped historically, culturally, and philosophically, regardless of convention which seeks to limit the field. The

norms and conventions delimiting each field are continually challenged, re-defined and disseminated across disciplines as one aspires to the effects of the other. The dissolution of boundaries defining the material limits of a discipline simultaneously expands the field, and circles back to the question of differentiation. What can be said to be 'medium-specific' remains contested and subject to comparison.⁵⁴⁶

'Isabelle Graw,' I continue, 'asks: "How do we define painting once it has merged with other procedures—from the readymade and linguistic propositions to the insights of institutional critique?"⁵⁴⁷ Graw's conception of painting, "not as a medium, but as a production of signs that is experienced as highly personalised", produces a bond between the object (painting) and the absent subject (artist). Taking Alfred Gell's definition of artworks as 'indexes of agency', Graw argues that painting's value resides in its "particular ability to suggest social agency".⁵⁴⁸ The "latent presence" of the absent subject imbues the object with the presence of

546 For a summative account of my reading of the discourses examining the difference between painting and poetry, see Appendices, Appendix H: Expanded Notes, p. 517.

547 Op. cit., Graw, 'The Value of Painting: Notes on Unspecificity, Indexicality, and Highly Valuable Quasi-Persons', p. 50. Graw's expanded concept of painting, exploits the term 'liveliness' to capture the effects of paintings expansion into 'real life, as in the Combine paintings of Robert Rauschenberg [...] And those Conceptual art practices emerging in the late nineteen-sixties that relied on different technologies, such as film, photography, or diagrams. (Ibid., p. 48.)

548 Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 7, cited in Graw (Ibid., p. 46.)

the artist, the object attains subject status, and painting becomes “a highly valuable quasi-person”.⁵⁴⁹

‘Andrew Blauvelt writes, “It would not simply be enough to ask what makes a painting a painting, but rather to understand the ways in which painting differs from itself”.⁵⁵⁰ This suggests something specific to painting; that painting is what

549 Ibid., p. 54. Graw eschews Greenberg’s modernist critique of painting defined by the norms and conventions of the medium in favour of a ‘medium-unspecific concept of painting’, albeit one imbued with a ‘residual-distinctness’ and ‘quasi-presence’ of the absent painter (Op. cit., Graw, p. 45.) Graw employs Ilka Becker’s term, ‘re-mediatization’ to refer to the process of ‘different media re-fashioning and re-modelling each other’ in the context of Krauss’s ‘post-medium condition’, thereby undermining perceived boundaries, and ‘the modernist idea of an art defined by the ‘essence of its medium’ as irrelevant. (Ibid., p. 47–8) Peter Geimer challenges Graw’s interpretation of the indexical sign in painting as ‘highly personalised’: ‘The will to trace subjectivity in art seems to me to be effective in a medium-encompassing way, and not specific to painting’ (Ibid., Geimer, ‘Questions for Isabelle Graw’, *Reflexivity and Agency Beyond the Canvas*, p. 60.) Graw locates ‘painting’s specific indexicality’ in an art-historic context, beginning with Alberti’s claim for painting’s intellectual superiority, reinforced by Hegel’s ‘principle of finite and infinite subjectivity’, supporting the idea of ‘painting as a thinking subject’, pre-eminent in its ‘capacity for subjectivity’, (Ibid., p. 52–3. See also: G. W.F. Hegel, “The Romantic Arts,” in *Aesthetics, Lectures on Fine Art*, vol 2, translation by T. M. Knox, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, cited in Graw, Ibid.) ‘Painting as a Highly Valuable Quasi-Person’ is attributed to painting’s art-historic subject status, reinforced by its attribution to an author, thereby loading the work with ‘intentionality’. (Ibid., p. 54.). Taking Marx’s definition of value as a “purely social” phenomenon, Graw claims that, ‘painting’s capacity to appear particularly saturated with the lifetime of its author makes it the ideal candidate for value production. Furthermore, the hand of the artist need not touch the surface of the painting since ‘indexical effects can be observed in mechanical or anti-subjective painterly procedures as well’. (Op. cit., Graw, ‘The Value of Liveliness: Painting as an Index of Agency in the New Economy’, p. 80.).

550 Andrew Blauvelt, ‘No Visible Means of Support’ in *Painting at the Edge of the World*, edited by Douglas Fogle, Minneapolis MN: Walker Art Center, 2001, p. 125. Cited in Craig Staff’s essay ‘Painting as Painting’, commissioned by Castlefield Gallery, Manchester for ‘Real Painting’ [2015] an exhibition about the essential grammar of painting, about ‘what painting does’.

it is not. In the field of *sūnyata*, “things exist in the ways they do not exist, under a mode of constitutive negativity or emptiness”.⁵⁵¹

‘How’ I ask, ‘can painting be recognised in today’s expanded-field, when as André Rottmann points out, the “medium appears to have dispelled its once-uncontested material basis.”⁵⁵² Rottmann concludes, “Painting is moving beyond the limitations of its traditional material support, without abolishing its ancestral discursive and institutional scaffolding altogether. The paradigms that provided the very basis of painterly articulations have not been annihilated, but are disseminated across an expanded array of practices, materials, media, and sites.”⁵⁵³

‘I agree with Rottmann,’ I continue, ‘however; the institutional scaffolding Rottmann refers to belongs to a Western art tradition – a limited field. To understand the term ‘expanded field of painting’ I have looked beyond the hegemony of a “Cartesian self–enclosure”, which places the subject at the centre

551 Op. cit., Bryson, ‘The Gaze in the Expanded Field’, *Vision and Visuality*, p. 99. Drawing on Nishitani’s aphorisms: ‘fire does not burn fire, and ‘water does not wash water’, Bryson compares Sartre and Lacan’s decentering of the subject with Nishitani’s decentred ‘field of transformation’, in which the object can only be understood in comparative terms. Fire differentiates itself by burning what lies beyond itself, likewise water becomes water by wetting that which is dry. (Ibid.) Bryson justifiably likens Nishitani’s differentiation in the ‘field of transformation’ to Derrida’s *différance* (Ibid., p. 98).

552 Op. cit., Rottmann, ‘Introduction’, *Thinking Through Painting: Reflexivity and Agency Beyond The Canvas*, pp. 9–13, 10.

553 Ibid.

of the visual field, reinforcing “a state of mutual confirmation and fixity” between the subject and object.⁵⁵⁴

‘Bryson’s analysis of *Sūnyata*, I add, ‘provides the framework for this comparative reading. In the field of *Sūnyata* the concept of “subject-entity and object-entity” can only be preserved if a perceptual frame is placed around the object. In a Cartesian perspectival model this is a slice of infinity, a pyramid, “a segment of the total field surrounding the viewer omnidirectionally”.⁵⁵⁵ Once the “frame is withdrawn, the object is found to exist as part of a mobile continuum”, the centralised subject falls apart, “the subject-entity and object-entity literally break up”.⁵⁵⁶

I consider the mobile pages of *Un coup de Dés*, always turning and folding back on themselves, how they come to be inhabited by multiple points of view. I picture twelve almost identical paintings forming *The Islands* encompassing me, forcing me to turn to contemplate the whole. The whole installation including me, and the space between me and the paintings, are subject to the effect of light making everything appear in a state of perpetual formation and dissolution, recalling the chiasmic structure at the heart of *Un coup de Dés*.⁵⁵⁷

554 Op. cit., Bryson, p. 96.

555 Ibid., p. 97.

556 Ibid.

557 See Portfolio of Works. See also Nishitani’s ‘transformative field’, and analogy of the flower: ‘The form of the seed is already turning into the form of the flower, and the flower is already becoming dust’ (Op. cit., Bryson, p. 99.). Bryson concludes the present state of the flower is inhabited by the seed of its past, and its future dust, ‘whose effect is that the flower is never presently there, any more than seed or dust are there (Ibid.)

'In all of these works,' I say, 'in Manet's *Olympia*, *Un coup de Dés*, *The Islands*, and *On some Vacant and Higher Surface*, the frame, as I have shown is dismantled by drawing attention to its artifice, thereby undermining its structure. Manet's "game of 'verticals and horizontals [...] cut like right angles'", exposes a weave within a weave.⁵⁵⁸ The horizontal lines tracing a grid across the surface of the *Islands*, appear only to disappear in a space already in a state of dissolution.⁵⁵⁹ In *Un coup de Dés* the hidden typographic grid organising the page fragments, revealing a sea of crosses, suggesting multiple horizons, and readings along different axis.'⁵⁶⁰

558 Op. cit., Foucault, '*Manet and the Object of Painting*', p. 48.

559 Martin writes,

When I first made a grid, I happened to be thinking of the innocence of trees and then this grid came into my mind and I thought it represented innocence, and I still do, and so I painted it and then I was satisfied. I thought, this is my vision. (Martin, transcription from interview with Suzan Campbell, May, 1989, Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, cited by Francis Morris in '*Agnes Martin: Innocence and Experience*', Op. cit., p. 65.)

Martin's coupling of tree and grid connects her to Mondrian's Abstract project; progression from representation to pure abstraction, see Mondrian's Tree Series (1910-1914). See also Foucault who considers Manet a precursor to Mondrian and Kandinsky's Geometric Abstraction (Op. cit., Foucault, p. 44).

560 Mallarmé's typographic layout, determined by the logically ordered structure of the grid, and its subsequent deconstruction exposes the fallacy of its order, and the master narratives supporting its structure, locating *Un coup de Dés* at the threshold of modern and post-modern aesthetics. See, Drucker's insightful parallel between Mallarmé's typographic layout and the structural organisation along various axis in advertising and commercial printing trades. (Op. cit., Drucker, *The Visible World*, p. 55.) See also, Linda Goddard's re-evaluation of Mallarmé's engagement with the 'physical and cultural aspects of the newspaper, and its influence on his work on a visual and theoretical level'. (Op. cit., Goddard, '*Mallarmé, Picasso and the Aesthetic of the Newspaper*', p. 294).

‘In my own work,’ I say, ‘in *‘On some Vacant and Higher Surface’*, a series of bounded spaces test the limits of their walls. The cube is undermined when thrown and represented as a transitive form by slowing time – thereby revealing the limitation of ‘real time’ frame by frame (Fig. 10.1).⁵⁶¹ The dynamic movement of the cubes falling into/onto the empty white space cannot be contained by the frame. Sometimes the cubes fall outside, suggesting something beyond the frame, “the dark remainder [...] those uncountable places where the viewer is not”.⁵⁶² Bryson compares the Japanese technique of ‘flung-ink’, with the act of throwing the dice. In both practices, the force of the gesture exceeds the control of the

⁵⁶¹ See Portfolio of Works: Video Installation, *On Some Vacant and Higher Surface # 1, and # 2*, 2018. The term ‘transitive’, understood as ‘passing from one state to another; changeable; not lasting, transient (*OED*) is used to refer to the mutable form of the cube, and to its status as both painting and sculpture, with the potential to be literally and metaphorically thrown into other discursive fields. David Joselit’s use of ‘transitive’ to ‘express an action which passes over to an object’ (*OED*), is used to ‘capture the status of objects within networks—defined by their circulation from place to place and their subsequent translation into new contexts’. (Op. cit., Joselit, ‘Painting Beside Itself’, p. 128.) He concludes, ‘Painting since the nineteen nineties has folded itself into the institutional critique without falling into the modernist trap of negation, where works on canvas are repeatedly reduced to ‘degree zero’ while remaining unique objects of contemplation and market speculation’. (Ibid., p. 129.) Joselit appropriates Roland Barthe’s term ‘writing degree zero’ to describe a neutral position, ‘a style of absence which is almost an ideal absence of style’, exemplified in the work of French nouveau roman novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet (Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero [Le Degré zero de l’écriture*, 1953], translated by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith, New York, NY: Hill & Wang, 1977, p. 75.) See also Anna Lovatt’s appropriation of Barthe’s term and re-contextualisation through drawing: ‘drawing degree zero’, to explain Martin’s resistance to the drawn line as a form of ‘graphological disclosure and connoisseurial consumption with which the medium of drawing has historically been aligned’ (Op. cit., Lovatt, p. 102.)

⁵⁶² Op cit., Bryson, p. 103.

thrower, and the limitations of the frame, thereby “what breaks into the image is the rest of the universe, everything outside of the frame”.⁵⁶³

Two figures stop close to the cave entrance, then continue without acknowledging our presence.

‘Manet pushes Olympia into the real light of day, making me wonder who is looking at who, who is signifying who.’ I say.

‘Manet paints the truth.’ Mallarmé replies. ‘He achieves this not by ‘reflected lights’, which ‘discolour flesh tints’ but by the light of day which plunders reality from the figures yet seems to do so in order to preserve their truthful aspect.’⁵⁶⁴

‘As you plunder reality from the figures of *Un coup de Dés*, whose pages like some white butterfly, flit everywhere, and nowhere disappearing in the light.’⁵⁶⁵ I say turning to face Mallarmé.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘The Impressionists and Edouard Manet’, p. 30.

⁵⁶⁵ Mallarmé’s appropriation of the large format layout and typographic arrangement favoured by the newspaper and journal, launches *Un coup de Dés* into the real world and associated modes of circulation. Goddard make a similar point ‘the change of format from book to newspaper liberates *Le Livre*, transporting it from the seclusion of the cloister to the light of day’. (Op. cit., Goddard, p. 300.) In this sense Mallarmé fuses traditional verse with the visual format of the newspaper anticipating Picasso’s collage (see, *Bouteille, verre et journal sur une table*, 1912, cited by Goddard, Ibid., p. 294). Duchamps Readymade, and Rauschenberg’s Silkscreen Paintings, *Barge* 1962-63. In *Barge* Rauschenberg combines the expressive tropes of abstract expressionism with media images often appropriated from newspapers and transferred using different techniques. Rauschenberg places real and abstract gestures side by side, associative chains are set in play, as are strange and predictable juxtapositions articulating a dynamic field where tradition and conceptual practices merge.

Mallarmé, replies. ‘When I see a new publication lying on a garden bench, I love it when the breeze flips through the pages and animates some of the exterior aspects of the book, no one, perhaps, since there has been reading, has remarked on this. This might be an occasion to do so, when freed, the newspaper dominates, mine, which I put aside, it blows over to a rose hedge, where it struggles to cover the blossoms ardent and proud confabulation, unfolds in the flower bed; and I’ll leave it there, along with the flower-words in their muteness, and technically I propose to note down how this discard differs from the book, which is supreme. A newspaper remains a starting point; literature unburdens itself there as much as it wishes. Folding is with respect to the page printed whole, a quasi-religious indication; the large sheets are less striking than the thick stacks of pages, which offer a tiny tomb for the soul.’⁵⁶⁶

‘This tomb, monument to the dead, encloses night.’ I say noticing that my eyes have adjusted to the darkness of the cave.

Mallarmé continues. ‘Along with free-verse and prose with calculated line breaks, I don’t know of any other use of language that even remotely resembles these two: except the poster or advertisement, which had taken over from the newspapers—it has often made me fantasize as if before a new language and the originality of the Press. The articles known as the First Nights, admirable in the only contemporary form possible, because they belong to all eternity, are really

⁵⁶⁶ Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘The Book as Spiritual Instrument’, *Divigations*, p. 226–7.

poems, simply more or less good poems: rich void, enamelled, or glued together.’⁵⁶⁷

I imagine words carried on the wing falling like ‘flung-ink’, exceeding the limit of the page.

Sunlight fills the cave entrance, momentarily blinding me. ‘The mist has cleared. We should walk back to the monument. From there we could watch the sun set.’ I say stepping into the light.

‘Arne Glimcher said you warned him that: “If he kept looking at *The Islands* they would make him blind”.’⁵⁶⁸ I say, turning to Agnes

She replies. ‘My paintings have neither objects nor space nor time nor anything – no forms. They are light, lightness, about merging, about formlessness, breaking down form.’⁵⁶⁹

‘This is interesting.’ I say. ‘Your description of ‘formlessness’ is like the concept of Sūnyata as an expression of the dissolution of subject and object in a transformative field.’

‘At the risk of complicating matters further,’ I venture, ‘I want examine, however briefly, Graw’s concept of painting as a ‘model of subjectivity’ when placed in the

567 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, *Divigations*, p. 196.

568 Op. cit., *Arne Glimcher in Conversation with Francis Morris*.

569 Op. cit., Martin, ‘The Untroubled Mind’.

field of Sūnyata. To test Graw's claim, I want to compare modes of transcription in *Un coup de Dés*, *The Islands*, and *On Some Vacant and Higher Surface*. If, as Graw maintains, painting, more than other disciplines is charged with the presence of its author, because of its "specific indexicality", that is the preponderance of indexical signs found in painting, read as traces of the artist.⁵⁷⁰ This would suggest that the subject (artist) is absorbed into the object (painting), undermining painting's status as an independent art-object. On the contrary, Graw maintains "painting is saturated with what one imagines to be the person of the artist', but not 'reduced to this person'".⁵⁷¹

'In a contradictory twist,' I add, 'Graw proposes that: "What prevents the reduction of this painterly product to its maker is its specificity."⁵⁷² Furthermore, Graw claims painting is saturated with the life and labour time of its author, while

570 Op. cit., Graw, 'The Value of Livliness: Painting as an Index of Agency in the New Economy, p. 80. Graw adopts Charles Peirce's indexical model which connects the index physically to its object, making an organic pair. (Ibid., p. 92) Graw's emphasis falls not the 'physical connectedness of the index to its object', rather, 'the index's faculty for evoking such a physical connection' (Ibid.). In painting, Graw maintains, the indexical sign suggests, the (imaginary) presence of the artist, 'irrespective of whether or not the painting has been touched by the artist'. (Ibid, p. 93). Peter Geimer points out, that Graw's use of the term 'indexicality' presents an alternative 'trait' to photography, where 'index, trace and reprint count as modes by which an object registers itself physically' and does not require the presence of an author [...] opening up an empty space of subjectivity and intentionality'. (Op. cit., Geimer, 'Questions for Isabelle Graw, *Thinking Through Painting: Reflexivity and Agency Beyond the Canvas*, p. 59.). See, also, Index, Sign and 'indice', Appendix G: Glossary of Terms, p. 491).

571 Ibid., p. 91.

572 Ibid. Graw qualifies her statement by acknowledging 'a degree of medium-specificity', or 'residual specificity' at one level of artistic production but questions the Greenbergian tendency to reduce painting to its medium.

remaining distinct from it.”⁵⁷³ Her insistence that the indexical sign in painting is connected to the presence of the absent author based on the “labour of the author not on the mode of inscription” is significant, if not contradictory. If, as Graw maintains, painting’s subject status is equal to the sum of the artist labour-time, plus painting’s “residual specificity” whether “mechanical or anti-subjective painterly procedures” are involved in tracing such activity, how then can the mode of inscription be separated from the labour-time of the artist which is manifest in the indexical sign, the trace?’⁵⁷⁴

573 Ibid, p. 101. Graw claims that ‘labour is stored in the painting, compressed and experienced by the viewer all at once rather than unfolding over time’, echoing Lessing’s distinction between the temporal and spatial arts. (Ibid, p. 100)

If it be true that painting employs wholly different signs or means of imitation from poetry, —the one using forms and colours in space, the other articulate sounds in time,—and if signs must unquestionably stand in convenient relation with the thing signified, then signs arranged side by side can represent only objects existing side by side, or whose part so exists, while consecutive signs can express only objects which succeed each other, or whose parts succeed each other, in time. (Op. cit, Lessing, Laocoön, p. 91).

In *Un coup de Dés* and *The Islands*, the work is experienced as both, temporal and spatial, and can be apprehended simultaneously or sequentially, as one of twelve parts, or as twelve parts of one. This is not to say that the part is equal to the whole, since each is differentiated in the space, but closer scrutiny of the part reveals the difference illuminating the field of transition. The author and the reader operate in the space between all oppositions, unable ‘to occupy a single location, since its locus is always the universal field of transformations’ in a field of ‘radical impermanence. (Op. cit., Bryson, p. 97.)

574 Op. cit., Graw, ‘The Value of Livliness: Painting as an Index of Agency in the New Economy’, p. 80.). For example, Martin’s paintings invested with the labour of her gestures can be seen to be traced in every brush mark and drawn line simultaneously plotting a course across the canvas. At the same time exceeding the limits of both space and time, moving beyond the frame, wall, gallery, and horizon, including everything outside of the frame. The artist Lize Lou’s exhibition *Solid/Divide*, comprising a series of square mono-chromatic abstract paintings/objects appear from a distance to suggest multiple horizons. The paintings are composed entirely from beads sewn into the surface invested with the language of painting and the labour-time of twenty-five artists working

‘This raises a number of theoretical and philosophical questions concerning the significance of the mode of inscription as a guarantor of the presence of the author, even without recourse to the hand of the artist.’⁵⁷⁵ I say. ‘In *The Islands* and *Un coup de Dés*, two modes of inscription are implied in a single line, recalling the dual concerns of drawing in the Renaissance as conceptual and graphological.’

576

‘I have established that the horizontal lines in *The Island’s* perform two movements: stretching from one edge to the square to the other suggesting a

in collaboration with Liza Lou the artist who conceived the work. In both cases the labour-time is clearly invested in the mode of inscription, furthermore the mode of inscription particular to both works transgresses disciplinary boundaries. In Martin’s *Islands*, painting and drawing merge, similarly in Lou’s painting/object the rhetorics of painting merge with craft. The indexicality of each gesture is simultaneously linked to the conventions of the medium, and to the mode of inscription. Martin’s pencil line to drawing and to the hand of the artist. The bead work to craft and to the hand of the artisan. Both works are equally invested with the labour time of the artist, imbued with the presence of the absent artist. These disciplinary hybrids refuse to be moored, thereby, undermining the idea of painting’s singular ‘indexical faculty for evoking such a physical connection’. (Ibid. p. 92).

575 Graw quotes Frank Stella, who sought to rid painting of sentiment that might otherwise confuse and complicate painting’s object status, ‘painting is a sort of handwriting’, an indexical sign that can be ‘read as traces of the producing person’. (Op cit., Graw, ‘The Value of Painting’, p. 50) Graw, however, insists that the trace of the artist is present in work that avoids handwriting that is, work that attempts to ‘eliminate the subjectivity of the artist from the painting’, for example Gerhard Richter’s squeegee paintings, and Wade Guyton’s mechanically produced, printed black paintings. (Ibid.) Graw concludes that, ‘the more negation there is of the handwriting, the more this negation will be considered to be part of the handwriting of the artist’; either way the presence of the artist cannot be eliminated from the work irrespective of the mode of inscription. (Ibid., p. 51.)

576 Bernice Rose’s excellent essay locates Martin among her contemporaries in an exhibition of drawing at The Museum of Modern Art, 1976. Rose re-evaluates drawing’s prerogatives in the advent of Conceptual Art in the nineteen sixties, beginning with a reflection on the Renaissance, when drawing was conceived as ‘both a poetic and scientific discipline with the highest intellectual credentials. (Op. ct., Rose, ‘*Drawing Now*’, Museum of Modern Art, p. 10). See also (James Meyer, ‘Introduction’, *Minimalism: Art and the Polemics of the Sixties*, New Haven, C T: Yale University Press, 2013.

linear course, at the same time the line ‘goes out’ exceeding the limits of the frame.⁵⁷⁷ Similarly, *Un coup de Dés* performs two movements suggested in the first and last words of the poem presenting an elliptical form. And, at the same time, the fragmented lines refuse the convention of linear narrative.’

‘There’s not a single word that has not cost me several hours research,’ Mallarmé says. ‘The first word, which contains the first idea, not only helps create the general effect of the poem, but also helps to prepare the last word.’⁵⁷⁸

‘There is no doubt that *The Islands*, and *Un coup de Dés* are composed with great deliberation, and that the grid plays a conceptual and symbolic role in the structural organisation of both works, as it does in *On Some Vacant and Higher Surface*.’ I reply. ‘Closer scrutiny of the twofold nature of line in *Un coup de Dés*, and *The Islands* reveals another parallel. In *The Islands*, the line is ambiguous, hand drawn, yet graphic by nature. It traces the act of becoming line, at the same time it refuses to describe anything other than becoming line.’⁵⁷⁹ Anna Lovatt considers

577 Op. cit., Martin, *Agnes Martin: With My Back To The World*.

578 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Henri Cazalis, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, 26–7, p. 26. Mallarmé is referring to his poem *L’Azur*, however, the principle applies to the elliptical form of *Un coup de Dés*.

579 The divisions of Martin’s grids follow her exacting mathematical calculation, which are realised by plotting points at the edge of each canvas. A thread connecting the points horizontally guides her hand as the pencil traces the line of her grid. Anna Lovatt attributes the nuance of Martin’s line to the ruler used to guide her pencil, ‘when shifts in pressure do occur, they stem from the exigencies of Martin’s materials – finding that a longer ruler caused her line to give with the canvas, for instance she used a smaller one to draw each line in sections’, and, not as Jonathan Katz writes, to ‘the sensitive response to the imperfections in the canvas’s weave, the famed “tremolo” that is the guarantor of the artist presence’. (Op. cit., Lovatt, ‘In Pursuit of the Neutral: Agnes Martin’s Shimmering Line’, *Agnes Martin*, London: Tate Publishing, pp. 99–106, 101.) Lovatt difference between the hand drawn line in *The Islands* which may be said to authenticate the

your line as “drawing degree zero”, purging the medium of its conventional associations, opposing the idea that your “work is nothing if not an index of your hand”, a guarantor of your presence.’⁵⁸⁰

‘Lovatt’s insistence that your desire for perfection is a rejection of the traditional convention of drawing as both graphological and conceptual, fails to acknowledge the duplicity of your line which tends towards a linear structure whose infinite permutations are signalled and set in motion by the hand. Furthermore, the presence of absence implicit in your line is signalled in the act of drawing. You are joined and separated by a line that remains eclipsed by your hand.’ I say, imagining

presence of the artist, and the mechanical line of Martin’s series of thirty-six screen prints, showing variants of the grid titled: *On a Clear Day* (1973). See also comparisons between Martin’s subjectivity, evidence of touch, brushstroke, and signature and the Minimalist’s anti-subjective stance which sought to purge the work of any trace of the author.

580 Op. cit., Lovatt, p. 102. Lovatt appropriates Barthes term ‘degree zero’ and re-contextualises it as ‘drawing degree zero’, to explain Martin’s resistance to the drawn line as a form of ‘graphological disclosure and connoisseurial consumption with which the medium of drawing has historically been aligned’. Lovatt claims that Martin’s attempt to rid her work of any imperfections can be linked to ‘purging the medium of its conventional associations’ thereby ‘neutralising it [...] defusing its representational and autographic functions’. (Ibid) In an art-historical context Martin’s rejection of a minimalist aesthetic, and acknowledgement of her debt to the Abstract painters Newman, Rothko, and Rheinhardt, rather than the Gestural Abstraction of Jackson Pollock, Willem De Kooning, and Franz Kline, locates her in a discursive field; at the same time her work slips quietly between these modes of expression.

I made the mistake of showing with the Minimalists. They have a quite different philosophy, non-subjective, that means none of their emotions were discerned in the work. They tried to be not there. I am not a minimalist. I am an abstract expressionist; I believe in having my emotions recorded in the painting. I sign my name on the back!’ Op. cit., Agnes Martin, *Agnes Martin: With My Back To The World*.

Penelope weaving her silent poems on a 'fine wide weave', by necessity concealing her form.⁵⁸¹

'Between the sheets and the eye there reigns a silence still, the condition and delight of reading.'⁵⁸² Mallarmé says, brushing the sand from his coat.

'A parallel can be established in *Un coup de Dés*.' I reply.' The graphic line of the Didot font suggests both an impersonal voice in the upright Roman letters, while the personal slant of the italic font suggests a handwritten note.'

'Poetry is beautiful only in impersonal garb, by which I mean typographic garb: except of course if one engraves it to give the edition an element of immutability and monumentality. Find one of the finest Roman types that exists and have it engraved. I say Roman, since poetry seems more definitive to me like that than in italics, which is close to handwriting.'⁵⁸³

'A connection between italic script and the handwritten, including a confidential aside or secret note has been established.'⁵⁸⁴ I say. 'The word '*insinuation*' at the centre of *Un coup de Dés* re-enforces the idea; that is, an indirect reference, a whisper, an innuendo signified in the sign of *Si*, and in the siren, whose contours

581 Op. cit., Homer, *The Odyssey*, pp. 16–7.

582 Op. cit., Mallarmé, 'Mimesis', *Divigations*, p. 141.

583 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Edmond Deman, April 7th, 1891, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, pp. 174–5, 175. Linda Goddard notes, Mallarmé's 'preference for a neutral type face' that of Firmin-Didot used in *Un coup de Dés*, was also used in contemporary newspapers. (Op. cit., Goddard, p. 298)

584 See Appendix E: Typographic Analysis of *Un coup De Dés*, p. 431–457.

are defined visually in the typography of the words and in their sound. It is no coincidence that the emergence of the siren becomes manifest in the italic script used exclusively to signify her form, her voice, her song the source, the emission at the centre of *Un coup de Dés*.⁵⁸⁵

‘The point I wish to make’ I continue, ‘is that in *Un coup de Dés*, and *The Islands* the mode of inscription cannot be separated from the labour of the artist. I include in the labour the thoughts and actions of the artist and their realisation in the work. By drawing attention to the dual operations of line, that is its graphological and conceptual function, and potential fusion, evident in the hand-made and mechanical procedures of *Un coup de Dés* and *The Islands*, I suggest that the mode of inscription is bound to the indexical sign across disciplines. In other words, form and content are bound to one another.’

‘In *Un coup de Dés*, the dual mode of inscription suggests the presence and absence of the author. The author is present in the complex organisation or design, in a constellation which Valéry compares to “the form and pattern of a thought, placed for the first time in infinite space”.⁵⁸⁵ And absent since the structure refuses an authorial lead, presenting instead a set of possible relations – a game. Thrown by the unconventional layout and omission of rules, the reader must establish her game.⁵⁸⁶ *Un coup de Dés*, anticipates Derrida’s endless game of

585 Op. cit., Valéry, ‘On A Throw of the Dice’, *Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé*, p. 309.

586 Mallarmé’s mutable, infinite structure initiates a democratic form of reading, summarised by Valéry:

signification, whose infinite structures frustrate any desire for meaning, generating 'différance'.

'In *The Islands*,' I say to Agnes, 'you are present and absent in the conception of the work, and in the work's reception. The viewer is surrounded by a network of threads, a field of difference, which like the transformative field of Sūnyata, suggests "a continuous motion of postponement, whose effect like that of the flower is never presently there, any more than seed or dust are there".'⁵⁸⁷

'In *On Some Vacant and Higher Surface* two modes of inscription mark the space. The hand of the artist, "cut off from the secret it withholds" prepares the blank dice and hesitates before "the wraith of a gesture" compels her to throw. This meaningless gesture, one that cannot produce a number, recalls Tadeusz Kantor's ritual act.' I say quoting directly from Kantor,

Syntax for the poet was an algebra he cultivated for itself. He loved at times to treat it in a generalised way certain turns of phrase that ordinary syntax offers only in exceptional cases, or else to interweave clauses in a sentence and to venture into a kind of literary counterpoint which produced skilfully planned contacts or spacings between terms or ideas. One might say he foresaw what will be discovered one day and which is already evidenced in more ways than one: that forms of speech are patterns of relations and operations which, by allowing us to combine or associate the signs of any given objects and heterogeneous qualities, can help to lead us to the structure of our intellectual universe. (Ibid., p. 305.)

Mallarmé's precedent anticipates other forms, other 'operators', for example Sol Le Witt's infinite structures.

587 Op. cit., Bryson, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', p. 99.

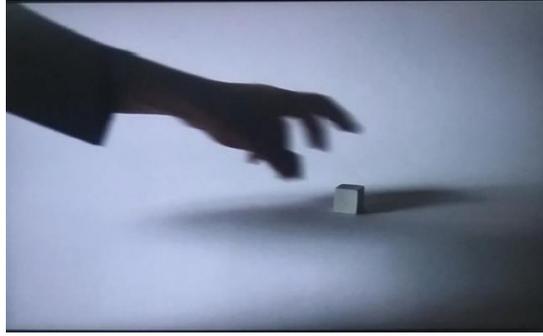


Fig 10.2

The atavistic gesture of a wo[man] who, at the threshold of history, wanted to make herself known. To do something for the second time, in an artificial fashion, on one's own account—a human account – to repeat something that had already been done by the gods, to leave oneself open to their jealousy and revenge, to take the risk, to face up to the awaiting catastrophe, knowing full well that the works involved are useless without prospects, once only, lacking in any luminous final meaning or any effect in life, a ritual set as if on the other side of life, in contrivance with death.⁵⁸⁸

'At the same time,' I say, 'all the possible permutations of a dice throw are compressed and held on the surface, in a series digitally animated drawings, which play at a distance from the video showing the blank dice being thrown [Fig.10.2].

In other words, two modes of inscription, the graphological and conceptual, are

588 Tadeusz Kantor, 'Illusion and Repetition', Kantor's Theatre of Emotion, Studio International: Journal of the Creative arts and Design, Vol 195, Number 993/4, 1982, 49–55, p. 49.

unified and separated in the space of the installation. The presence of the absent artist is at play in the work, in the analogue and digital manipulation of “every thought emitting a dice throw”.⁵⁸⁹

‘Returning to Graw’s idea that painting’s specific indexicality, its ability to suggest a strong bond between the “product and the absent person of its maker”, thereby giving rise to painting’s subject status and by association agency.’⁵⁹⁰ I continue, ‘I have shown, at least in these works that the presence of the absent author cannot be separated from the mode of inscription. And the mode of inscription from the form which like the form of thought suggests infinite possibilities; thoughtful constellations (Mallarmé), networks of lines that ‘go out’ into the world (Agnes), a mathematical model that constructs and deconstructs itself (my chiasmic structure). Furthermore, these works implicate the reader/viewer who is initiated into the game by the author-operator. The author and reader/viewer are interchangeable, they cannot be located as a separate entity because both exist simultaneously in the field of Sūnyata, and in the work, both of which are always in a state of transition, of becoming and un-becoming form. I have established that the subject and object exist in a field already in a state of dissolution. Similarly these works are imbued with presence and absence of the author who is also the reader, triggering a *‘mise en abîme’*, a field of Sūnyata with[in] a field of Sūnyata.’

589 Op cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés – An English Translation*, p. 426. See also Digital Portfolio of Works.

590 Op. cit., Graw, ‘The Value of Painting’, p. 50.

‘This brings me full circle, to Trentini’s definition of meta as an aesthetic category, the prefix ‘meta’ meaning ‘after’, as well as ‘beyond’, ‘with’ or ‘about’, which he states, “is a quality, not particular to the work but rather, the reflexivity supposed to be in the work is actually the reflexivity of the cognition of spectators projected in the work”.⁵⁹¹ Trentini likens this to Kant’s definition of the sublime, he states that ‘the structure “meta” lies in the subject, not in the picture. The experience of the metapicture should be named as the meta-experience of the picture’.⁵⁹²

‘In these works, as I have shown, the subject is the author and reader, furthermore both are implicated in the form of thought operating in a relational field defined by difference. As such, Trentini’s ‘meta quality’ can be located both in the picture as an intentional organising structure of symbolic signs, and as an aesthetic experience activated in the space between the reader and the text, as a sight of negotiation, one that leads to an experience described by Trentini as “meta cognitive embodied experience”.

‘To sum up,’ I say, ‘the white spaces of *Un coup de Dés*, *The Islands*, and *On Some Vacant and Higher Surface*, are activated by gestures that refuse to be differentiated in either temporal or spatial terms. Graw’s idea “that labour is stored in the painting, compressed and experienced by the viewer all at once rather than unfolding over time”, suggests that painting is somehow fixed, that it

⁵⁹¹ Op cit., Bruno Trentini, ‘The Meta as an Aesthetic Category’, *Journal of AESTHETICS & CULTURE*, vol. 6, 2014, p. 4.

⁵⁹² Ibid., Trentini, p. 7.

can contain time.⁵⁹³ Graw's distinction, like Lessing's comparison between poetry's temporal slant and painting's spatial bias, is dissolved as time and space merge in work which is after all in a state of transition. In W.J. T. Mitchell's words: "The terms 'space' and 'time' only become figurative and improper when they are abstracted from one another as independent, antithetical essences that define the nature of an object. The use of these terms is, strictly speaking, a synecdoche, a reduction of the whole to the part."⁵⁹⁴

'I wish the idea of time would drain out of my cells and leave me quiet even on this shore.'⁵⁹⁵ Agnes says, turning her back to the monument.

593 Op. cit., Graw, p. 101.

594 Op. cit., Mitchell, 'The Politics of Genre: Space Time in Lessing's Laocoon', p. 103.

595 Op cit., p. 26

INTERLUDE



Fig 10.3



Fig 10.3

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Mallarmé Me I



Fig 11.1

I am at sea again. I picture the battered frame of the raft of Odysseus, making me wonder about the fate of mast and sail.⁵⁹⁶ I picture my paintings undone; seeing how these hybrid forms perform their own undoing. It occurs to me that the paintings operate between languages, or perhaps they are of the language of poetry and painting. Letters articulated in the shadows; between the pages, where vertical forms surface like monuments to I [Fig.11.2].

⁵⁹⁶ Op. cit., Homer, *The Odyssey*, p. 79.

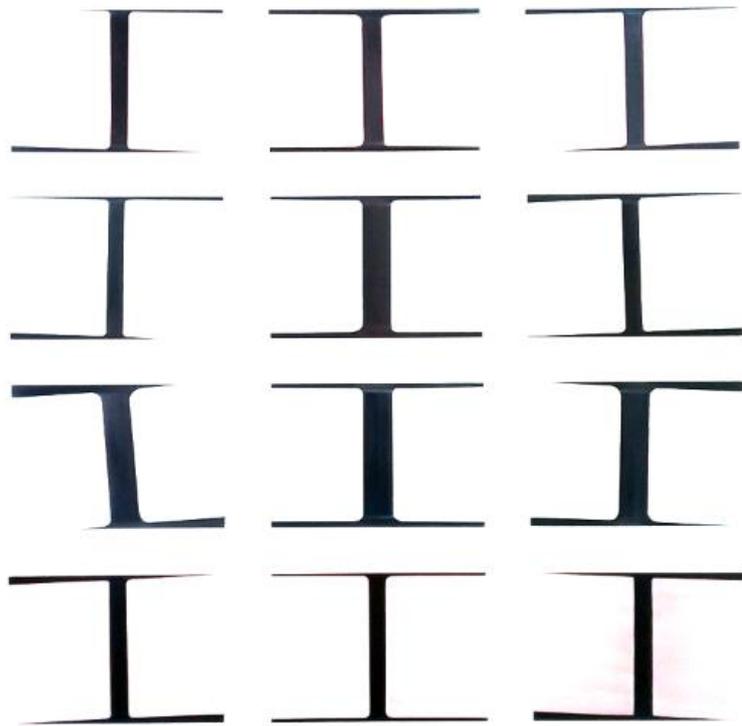


Fig 11.2

Variant forms are differentiated in the play of light and dark, articulated in vertical and horizontal brush strokes signalling a division – like the gold dividing line at the centre of Manet's *Olympia*. Or the 'mystery' at the centre of *Un coup de Dés*.

the mystery | hurled down | howled out | in some imminent swirl of
hilarity and horror | hovers on the brink of the abyss | without sprinkling
it | or escaping | and draws from it the soothing virgin sign ⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁷ Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, (see Appendices, Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation, p. 421.



598 After Derrida, 'this "I" a bit like "you", undergoes its own incessant violent re-inscription within the arithmetical machinery', which, as this thesis demonstrates, is always becoming and unbecoming form. (Op. cit., Derrida, *Derrida: A Documentary*, directed by Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman.) In this reading an act of [I] identification is performed. In a paradoxical shift 'I' am both inside and outside of the text, 'I' am the reader, and 'I' am the author of this reading. 'I' identify with the figure of the Siren, inscribed in the silence of *Un coup de Dés*, and in the figure of Victorine Meurent painter

Me⁵⁹⁹

LE MAÎTRE

Nota – mark

Handwritten

NOTE⁶⁰⁰

The sound of a cliché

falling

made muse. In this strange reversal, made strange by Manet and Mallarmé, the female presence at the centre of poem and painting is revealed – Mallarmé and Manet are displaced.

599 In French, 'Me' is the abbreviation for Maitre, as in notaire, and is not gendered strictly speaking, in the sense that its use as a title applies equally to a man or woman notaire. Le maître, in English the master is also the name given to notaries. In Roman antiquity notary refers to a slave responsible for taking notes in abbreviation for his master. Also, an officer who, in the primitive church, was responsible for collecting and preserving, in notes or abbreviations the acts of the martyrs. (*Le Littré*) Notary from Latin 'notarius', from nota 'mark' (*OED*)

600 A note that is and is not a note. A mark that is and not a mark. A sign that is and is not a sign. A poem that is [+] and is not [-] A poem.

S⁶⁰¹ ign*In advance**Fallen back*THE MASTER⁶⁰²

having brush and ink

having flesh and bone

603

601 A sign signified in *Si*, in the Song of the Siren, who only exists in the mind of the poet, who ascribes to her 'the power of song which can simultaneously make itself heard and transform itself into silence'. (Op. cit., Rancière, *Mallarmé: The Politics of the Siren*. p. 6). A sign retrieved from the depth of the sea by the poet, who 'draws from it a soothing virgin sign'. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*.) A signifying silence insinuated in the empty middle which is seen as 'the resolution of the contradiction of the sky/earth and at the same time as a way of passing beyond it'. (Op. cit., Damisch, 'Our sheets White Care', *A Theory of/Cloud*, p. 217).

602 In ancient Chinese painting, 'Once you have the brush and ink, you are a master; to have the brush but not the ink is a mistake; to have the ink but not the brush is also a mistake'. (Ibid., p. 207.) 'Ink and brush are like flesh and bone. If the ink makes the forms of the landscape expand, it is insofar as it confers its flesh upon the skeleton that the brush must provide' (Ibid., p. 209). A coupling, a union, a marriage – *Fiançailles*.

603 I call these forms *gestures*. They are the embodiment of the gesture of painting [brush-mark] and the sign of the gesture, the form of a sign. To cast the form, I trace my brush-mark into a bed of clay, pushing into the surface which is resistant to my gesture. I pour plaster into the indent, casting the absent gesture [brush-mark]. Once the form has set, I separate it from the bed of clay and take hold the object. The absent gesture [brushmark]

along with the wraith of a gesture



The arc of the brush

is embodied. The form is simultaneously liberated from the mould, and from the limitation of the painting surface. It has been cast out, recalling the Japanese practice know as, 'flung-ink', which is 'thrown' as one throws dice. What breaks into the image is the rest of the universe, everything outside the frame'. (Op. cit., Bryson, p. 103.)

A

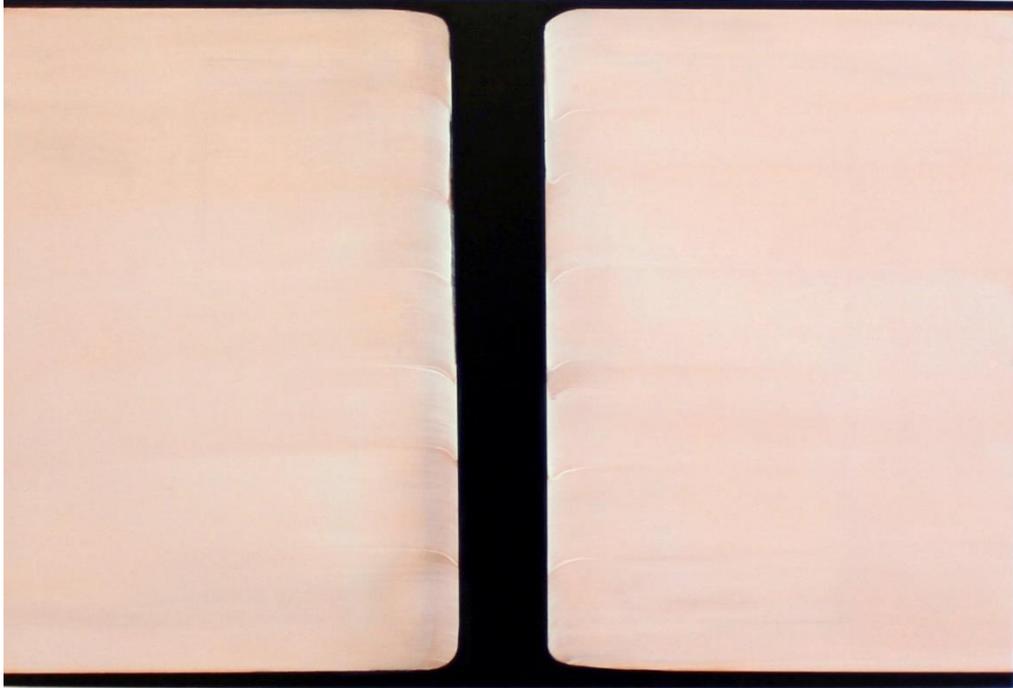
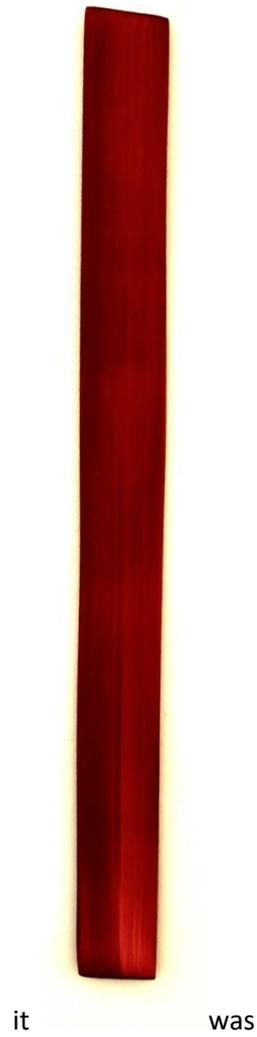


Fig 11.3

LIMIT⁶⁰⁴

604 The Chinese character for painting is ‘made up of limits, which ‘resemble paths.’ The order in which the brush-strokes are traced is analogous to the organisation of the space that places the painter in the ‘empty middle’, between the sky and the earth. ‘The initial horizontal stroke divides the top from the bottom, at the same time connecting the left to the right, while the vertical stroke assures the link between the top and the bottom, at the same time marking out the left/right articulation. (Op. cit., Damisch., p. 211.) In the painting above, a vertical brush stroke simultaneously divides and unifies the space. The horizontal brush-strokes carrying flesh tints fan out from the centre tracing a curve or imagined curve across the surface of the painting. The repetitive strokes establish a rhythm; each brush stroke articulated in the breath; each breath articulated in the brush stroke, a living form – a reciprocal gesture recalling the ebb and flow of the tide. These two movements like the to-ing and fro-ing of the brush in Chinese calligraphy establish a double orientation and a place for the poet/painter, who is seen as the ‘the regulator of rhythm. (Ibid., p. 217.) This ‘empty middle’, horizon, is synonymous with the space between words, the ‘blancs’, and their arrangement in the space of the page. Mallarmé’s constellation establishes the limits of meaning in a space where meaning is differentiated with each new encounter. ‘The intellectual armature of the poem conceals itself, is present – and acts – in the blank space which separates the stanza and in the white of the paper: a pregnant silence, no less wonderful to compose than verse itself’. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Oeuvres Complète*, p. 187).



IT WOULD BE

MUTE *note*

Fig 11.4

A⁶⁰⁵

605 An interruption. A pause. A suspension. A space between being and not being. A silent gesture. A note from the abyss. A sign pressing down on the horizon. A hand made gesture. A slip of the tongue articulating difference.

A wide brush



In Common

PLACE

no

o

NEVER

More shore⁶⁰⁶

606 *More shore*



Fig 11.5

INTERLUDE



Fig 11.6

CHAPTER TWELVE

I Me Mallarmé

I am out of time

There is no more space

INTERLUDE

CONCLUSION

January 2020

Dear Stéphane,

I missed you today. I decided to go to the monument even though you could not be there. I am at the monument now writing as you read this letter. The last time we were in this place you told me how Léo D'Orfer's had momentarily blinded you when he asked you define poetry. You told me you were so bruised by the request that you stuttered your reply. 'Poetry is the expression, in human language restored to its essential rhythm, of the mysterious meaning of the aspects of existence: in this way it confers authenticity on our time on earth and constitutes the only spiritual task there is'.⁶⁰⁷

*We have come full circle. This is why I am writing, to plan our next meeting, we will begin with the book, *Le Livre*, 'the orphic explanation of the earth'. I will send you the dates as soon as I know.*

Bernadette

6 February 2020

Dear Bernadette

⁶⁰⁷ Op cit., Mallarmé, Letter to LéoD'Orfer, 27th June, 1884, *Selected Letter of Stéphane Mallarmé*, p. 138.

*Your feastday, alas! And we're apart. I am going to write to you some brief sentences, I who would have had so much to tell you, because I have to rest after a few words.*⁶⁰⁸

*You must always remove the beginning and end of what you write. No overture and no finale. Do you think me mad? I'll explain to you one day that my madness lies elsewhere. For this morning all I need to do is embrace you with all my heart.*⁶⁰⁹

yours

Stéphane

608 Op. cit., Mallarmé, letter to Méry Laurent, 15th August, 1989, Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé, p.158.

609 Op. cit., Mallarmé, Letter to Henri Cazalis, 25th April 1864, Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé, 31–32, p. 32.

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<https://guitai.wordpress.com/category/analysis/> [accessed 19.09.14]

LIST OF FIGURES

Epigraph

Figure. 0.1: M. B. O'Toole, *After Turner: Seascape with Storm Coming On*, Charcoal on paper, 20 x 18cms, 1993. [J.M.W. Turner *Seascape with Storm Coming On*, c.1840]

Introduction

Figure. 0.2: M.B. O'Toole, *Reading Mallarmé*, digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2015.

Chapter One

Figure 1.1: M.B. O'Toole, *A Simple Insinuation*, video still, 2016.

Figure 1.2: Leon Battista Alberti, Illustration from *On Painting [De Pictura]*, 1450.

Figure 1.3: Albrecht Dürer, interpretation of Alberti's 'The Draftsman's Net', 1506.

Figure 1.4: M.B. O'Toole, *Monument to I*, digital photograph, 2016.

Figure 1.5: M.B. O'Toole, *Monument to I*, digital photograph, 2016.

Figure 1.6: M.B. O'Toole, Diagram of The Four Quadrants of the Cartesian System, 2016.

Figure 1.7: M.B. O'Toole, Diagram of Roman Jakobson's Two Axes of Language, 2016.

Figure 1.8: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés* (centre pages) Gallimard's Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF), 1914.

Figure 1.9: Cover of Stéphane Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*, Gallimard's Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF), 1914, placed alongside Marcel Broodthaer's, and Michalis Pichler's appropriation following the form of Éditions Gallimard, (NRF).

Figure 1.10: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés*, Gallimard's Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF), 1914.

Figure 1.11: Marcel Broodthaers, Artist book, *Un coup de Dés*, dimensions 32.4cm x 49.7cm x 3cm, 1969.

Figure 1.12: Michalis Pichler, Artist book, *Un coup de Dés*, dimensions 32.5 cm x 50.2 cm, 3.2cm, 2008.

Figure 1.13: Kazimir Malevich, *White on White*, 8, Oil on canvas, 79 cm x 79 cm, 1918.

Figure 1.14: Robert Rauschenberg, *White Paintings*, [three panel] latex paint on canvas, 182.88 cm x 274.32 cm, 1951.

Figure 1.15: Agnes Martin, *The Islands I–XII*, acrylic paint and graphite on canvas, twelve parts, each 182.9 x 182.9cm, 1979.

Figure 1.16: Agnes Martin, *The Islands I–XII*, Acrylic paint and graphite on canvas, twelve parts, each 182.9 x 182.9cm, 1979.

Figure 1.17: M.B. O'Toole, *Un coup de Dés* (centre pages), Gallimard's Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF), 1914, digital photograph, 2016.

Figure 1.18: Michalis Pichler, *Un coup de Dés j'amaïs n'abolira le Hasard (Musique)*, piano roll, 2009.

Figure 1.19: Claude Debussy, *Prélude: à l'après-midi d'un faune for Orchestra*, Edited by/ Herausgegeben von/Édition de Jean-Paul C. Montagnier, Ernst Eulenburg, 2007.

Figure 1.20: M.B. O'Toole, *A simple Insinuation*, video still, dimensions variable, 2016.

Figure 1.21: Marcel Broodthaers, Artist book, *Un coup de Dés*, dimensions 32.4cm x 49.7cm x 3cm, 1969.

Figure 1.22: M.B. O'Toole, Digital photograph of video still, dimensions variable, 2016.

Figure 1.23: M.B. O'Toole, Screen capture of portfolio of work, 2017.

Figure 1.24: M.B. O'Toole, Performance, digital photograph, 2017.

Chapter Two

Figure 2.1: M.B. O'Toole, *Resurrecting I*, video still from installation comprising 12 videos, each 12-minute duration, 2016-2017.

Figure 2.2: M.B. O'Toole, *Resurrecting I*, video still from installation comprising 12 videos each 12-minute duration, 2016-2017.

Figure 2.3: M.B. O'Toole, plaster cast of fold of a copy of the manuscript of *Un coup de Dés*, 2016.

Figure 2.4: M.B. O'Toole, plaster figures produced from casting the fold of a copy of a manuscript of *Un coup de Dés*, 2016.

Figure 2.5: M.B. O'Toole, plaster figures produced from casting the fold of a copy of a manuscript of *Un coup de Dés*, 2016.

Figure 2.6: M.B. O'Toole, plaster figures produced from casting the fold of a copy of a manuscript of *Un coup de Dés*, 2016.

Figure 2.7: M.B. O'Toole, *A Simple Insinuation*, video still, 2016.

Figure 2.8: M.B. O'Toole, *A Simple Insinuation*, video still, 2016.

Figure 2.9: Marcel Broodthaers, Artist book, *Un coup de Dés*, dimensions 32.4cm x 49.7cm x 3cm, 1969.

Figure 2.10: M.B. O'Toole, Installation, paint on plaster, canvas, dimensions variable, 2015.

Figure 2.11: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés* (centre pages), Gallimard's Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF), 1914.

Figure 2.12: Marcel Broodthaers, Artist book, *Un coup de Dés*, dimensions 32.4cm x 49.7cm x 3cm, 1969.

Figure 2.13: Michalis Pichler, Artist book, *Un coup de Dés*, dimensions 32.5 cm x 50.2 cm, 3.2cm, 2008.

Figure 2.14: Marcel Broodthaers, Artist book, *Un coup de Dés*, dimensions 32.4cm x 49.7cm x 3cm, 1969.

Figure 2.15: Michalis Pichler, Artist book, *Un coup de Dés*, dimensions, 32.5 cm x 50.2 cm, 3.2cm, 2008.

Figure 2.16: Michalis Pichler, Artist book, *Un coup de Dés*, dimensions 32.5 cm x 50.2 cm, 3.2cm, 2008.

Figure 2.17: M.B. O'Toole, *Resurrecting I*, video installation comprising 12 videos each 12-minute duration. SIA, Yorkshire Art Space, Sheffield. 2018.

Chapter Three

Figure 3.1: M.B. O'Toole, *Monument to I*, digital photograph, 2016.

Figure 3.2: M.B. O'Toole, *Monument to I*, digital photograph, 2016.

Figure 3.3: M.B. O'Toole, Diagram of the alignment of sun, supermoon and earth, graphite on paper, 21cm x 29cm, 2017.

Figure 3.4: M.B. O'Toole, *Overboard*, digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2016.

Figure 3.5: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés* (centre pages) Gallimard's Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF), 1914.

Figure 3.6: M.B. O'Toole, *On some Vacant and Higher Surface # 2*, video still, 2018.

Figure 3.7: M.B. O'Toole, *On some Vacant and Higher Surface # 2*, video still, 2018.

Figure 3.8: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 3.9: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 3.10: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 3.11: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Chapter Four

Figure 4.1: M.B. O'Toole, Diagram showing the Four Quadrants of the Cartesian System, graphite on paper, 21cm x 29cm, 2017.

Figure 4.2: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés* (centre pages). Gallimard's Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF), 1914.

Figure 4.3: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés* (centre pages) manuscript, 2017.

Figure 4.4: Sandro Botticelli, *Paradiso XXVI*, Sandro Botticelli's *Eighth Sphere (Heaven of The Fixed Stars)* c.1480–c1495.

Figure 4.5: M.B. O'Toole, (after Botticelli and Mallarmé), 2017.

Figure 4.6: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 4.7: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 4.8: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 4.9: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Chapter Five

Figure 5.1: M.B. O'Toole, *Resurrecting I*, video still, 2016-2017.

Figure 5.2: J. Quin, Digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2017.

Figure 5.3: Copy of *Un coup de Dés* Manuscript.

Figure 5.4: Copy *Un coup de Dés* Manuscript.

Figure 5.5: M.B. O'Toole, scale drawing showing the different double page format versions of *Un coup de Dés*, 2017.

Figure 5.6: M.B. O'Toole, scale drawing showing variant typographic layout in double page format versions of *Un coup de Dés*, 2017.

Figure 5.7: M.B. O'Toole, scale drawing showing variant typographic layout in double page format versions of the *Un coup de Dés*, 2017.

Figure 5.8: M.B. O'Toole, *i -Constellation*, scale drawing showing constellations of 'i' dots and diacritic, 2017.

Figure 5.9: M.B. O'Toole, scale drawing of Villard's Diagram as applied to *Un coup de Dés*, 2017.

Figure 5.10: M.B. O'Toole, *A simple Insinuation*, Video still, 2016

Figure 5.11: Google earth, aerial view from a point off the Meols coast facing out to the Irish Sea, 2016.

Figure 4.12: M.B. O'Toole, Untitled drawing, graphite on paper, dimensions variable, 2016.

Figure 5.13: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 5.14: Lusitana, The placement of a choir within Latin cross church, digital drawing, 2005.

Figure 5.15: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 5.16: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 5.17: Robert Smithson, *A Heap of Language*, Pencil on graph paper, dimensions: 16.51 cm, Museum of Modern Art, Moma, New York, 1966.

Figure 5.18: M.B. O'Toole, *A Common Upsurge is Shedding Absence ~1*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 5.19: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés* (centre pages), Gallimard's Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF), 1914.

Figure 5.20: M.B. O'Toole, digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 5.21: M.B. O'Toole, *A Common Upsurge is Shedding Absence ~2*, Digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 5.22: M.B. O'Toole, *A Common Upsurge is Shedding Absence ~1*, Digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Chapter Six

Figure 6.1: M.B. O'Toole, digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 6.2: Paul Nadar, original gelatin silver-print photograph of Mallarmé, The J. Paul Getty Museum collection, 1890.

Figure 6.3: Paul Nadar, original gelatin silver-print photograph of Mallarmé (detail), The J. Paul Getty Museum collection, 1890.

Figure 6.3: Paul Nadar, original gelatin silver-print photograph of Mallarmé (detail), The J. Paul Getty Museum collection, 1890.

Figure 6.4: Jacques-Louis David: *The Death of Marat*, 1793.

Figure 6.5: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Entombment of Christ*, Vatican Pinacoteca, (1602–1603).

Figure 6.6: Peter Paul Rubens, *The Descent from the Cross*, Cathedral of Our Lady, Antwerp, (1612–1614).

Figure 6.7: Jean-Baptiste Jouvenet, *La Déposition*, Musée du Louvre, Paris, 1697.

Figure 6.8: Ad Reinhardt, *Abstract Painting No. 5*, oil on canvas, 60 x 60 inches, 1962.

Figure 6.9: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 6.10: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 6.11: M.B. O'Toole, *A Heap of Gestures*, plaster, dimensions variable, 2014.

Figure 6.12: M.B. O'Toole, *339 Discarded Gestures*, plaster, dimensions variable, 2014.

Figure 6.13: M.B. O'Toole, *339 Discarded Gestures*, plaster, dimensions variable, 2014.

Figure 6.14: M.B. O'Toole, *339 Discarded Gestures*, plaster, dimensions variable, 2014.

Chapter Seven

Figure 7.1: M.B. O'Toole, Digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2016.

Figure 7.2: Nadar, *Pierrot Laughing*, gelatin-coated salted paper photographic print, dimensions, 27.3cm x 19.8cm, 1855.

Figure 7.3: M.B. O'Toole, Drawing, dimensions 21cm x 21cm, 2017.

Figure 7.4: M.B. O'Toole, *Variant Sail # 1*, Digital Print, 56cm x 38cm, 2015.

Figure 7.5: M.B. O'Toole, *Variant Sail # 1*, Digital Print, 56cm x 38cm, 2015.

Figure 7.6: M.B. O'Toole, *Variant Sail # 1*, Digital Print, 56cm x 38cm, 2015.

Figure 7.7: M.B. O'Toole, *Variant Sail # 1*, Digital Print, 56cm x 38cm, 2015.

Figure 7.8: M.B. O'Toole, Digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2016.

Figure 7.9: M.B. O'Toole, Digital Print, 56cm x 38cm, 2015.

Figure 6.11: M.B. O'Toole, *Every Thought Emits a Dice Throw*, digital drawing, dimensions variable, 2015-2018.

Figure 7.12: M.B. O'Toole, *Candy*, Oil on board, Diameter 90cm, 2014.

Figure 7. 13: Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, oil on canvas, 130.5 x 190 cm, Musées d'Orsay, Paris, 1863.

Figure 7.14: M.B. O'Toole, *Gesture*, Oil on plaster, 80 x 6 cm, 2015.

Chapter Eight

Figure 8.1: M.B. O'Toole, Digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2016.

Figure 8.2: M.B. O'Toole, Digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2016.

Figure 8.3: Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, oil on canvas, 130.5 x 190 cm, Musées d'Orsay, Paris, 1863.

Figure 8.4: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés* (centre pages), Gallimard's Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF), 1914.

Figure 8.5: M.B. O'Toole, after Manet's *Olympia*, and Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*, drawing graphite and ink on paper, 12cm x 18cm, 2018.

Figure 8.6: M.B. O'Toole, after Manet's *Olympia*, and Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*, drawing graphite and ink on paper, 12cm x 18cm, 2018.

Figure 8.7: M.B. O’Toole, after Manet’s *Olympia*, drawing graphite 12cm x 24cm 2018.

Figure 8.8: Edouard Manet, *L’Evasion de Rochefort*, Oil on canvas, 73 x 80cm, Musee d’Orsay, Paris, 1881.

Figure 8.9: M.B. O’Toole, Untitled, plaster, paint and board, dimensions, 2016.

Figure 8.10: M.B. O’Toole, Untitled, plaster, paint and board, dimensions, 2016.

Figure 8.11: M.B. O’Toole, Digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2016

Figure 8.12: M.B. O’Toole, Digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2016.

Figure 8.13: M.B. O’Toole, Digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2016.

Figure 8.13: M.B. O’Toole, *Variant Sail # 1*, Digital print, 56cm x 38cm, 2015.

Figure 8.14: Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, oil on canvas 130.5 x 190 cm, Musées d’Orsay, Paris, 1863.

Figure 8.15: M.B. O’Toole, after Manet’s *Olympia*, drawing, graphite on paper, dimensions, 12cm x 24cm, 2018.

Figure 8.16: M.B. O’Toole, after Manet’s *Olympia*, drawing, graphite on paper, dimensions, 12cm x 18cm, 2018.

Figure 8.17: M.B. O’Toole, *Mallarmé’s Envelope*, paper and ink, 12cm x 18cm dimensions, 2017.

Figure 8.18: M.B. O’Toole, *Manet’s Envelope*, paper and ink, 12cm x 18cm, 2017.

Figure 8.19: M.B. O’Toole, Digital photograph, dimensions variable, 2016.

Figure 8.20: M.B. O’Toole, *Variant Sail # 1*, oil on board, 56cm x 38cm, 2016.

Chapter Nine

Figure 9.1: M.B. O’Toole, *On some Vacant and Higher Surface # 1*, video still, 2018.

Figure 9.2: Agnes Martin, *The Islands I–XII*, acrylic paint and graphite on canvas, twelve parts, each 182.9 x 182.9cm, 2018.

Figure 9.3: Agnes Martin, still photograph, *With My Back To The World*, documentary film, directed by Mary Lance, 57-minute duration, 2003.

Figure 9.4: M.B. O'Toole, Untitled drawing, graphite on paper, dimensions, 21cm x 29cm, 2017.

Figure 9.5: M.B. O'Toole, *On some Vacant and Higher Surface # 1*, video still, 2018,

Figure 9.6: Agnes Martin, *The Islands I–XII*, acrylic paint and graphite on canvas, twelve parts, each 182.9 x 182.9cm, 1979.

Figure 9.7: Agnes Martin, a page from Martin's notes, including calculations for one of her works, 1961.

Figure 9.8: M.B. O'Toole, *On some Vacant and Higher Surface # 1*, video stills, 2018.

Chapter Ten

Figure 10.1: M.B. O'Toole, *On some Vacant and Higher Surface # 1*, video still, dimensions variable, 60-minute duration, 2018.

Figure 10.2: M.B. O'Toole, *On some Vacant and Higher Surface # 1*, video still, dimensions variable, 60-minute duration, 2018.

Figure 10.3: M.B. O'Toole, *On some Vacant and Higher Surface # 1*, video still, dimensions variable, 60-minute duration, 2018.

Figure 10.4: M.B. O'Toole, *On some Vacant and Higher Surface # 1*, video still, dimensions variable, 60-minute duration, 2018.

Chapter Eleven

Figure 11.1: M.B. O'Toole, *Variant Sail # 1*, oil on board, 56cm x 38cm, 2016.

Figure 11.2: M.B. O'Toole, *Variant Sail # 1*, (installation detail) oil on board, 56cm x 38cm, 2016.

Figure 11.3: M.B. O'Toole, *Variant Sail # 1*, oil on board, 56cm x 38cm, 2016.

Figure 11.4: M.B. O'Toole, *Gesture*, (Series 1), oil on plaster, 72 cm x 6 cm x 1cm, 2016.

Figure 11.5: M.B. O'Toole, *Gesture*, (Series 3), bronze, 72 cm x 6 cm x 2 cm, 2016.

Figure 11.6: M.B. O'Toole, *Untitled*, oil on plaster, wood, 121cm x 2.5cm x 2cm, 2016.

LIST OF FIGURES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Appendices

Appendix B: The Lahure Proofs

Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés* – An English Translation

Appendix D: A List of Editions of *Un coup de Dés*

Appendix E: Typographic Analysis of *Un coup de Dés*

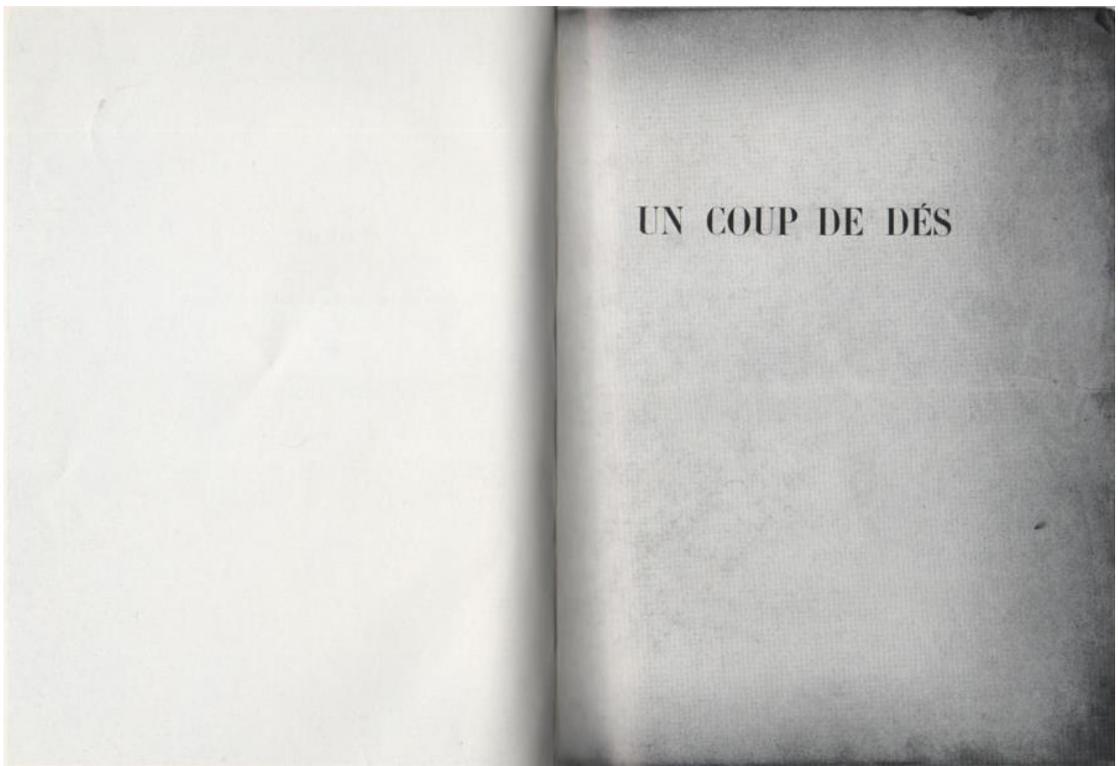
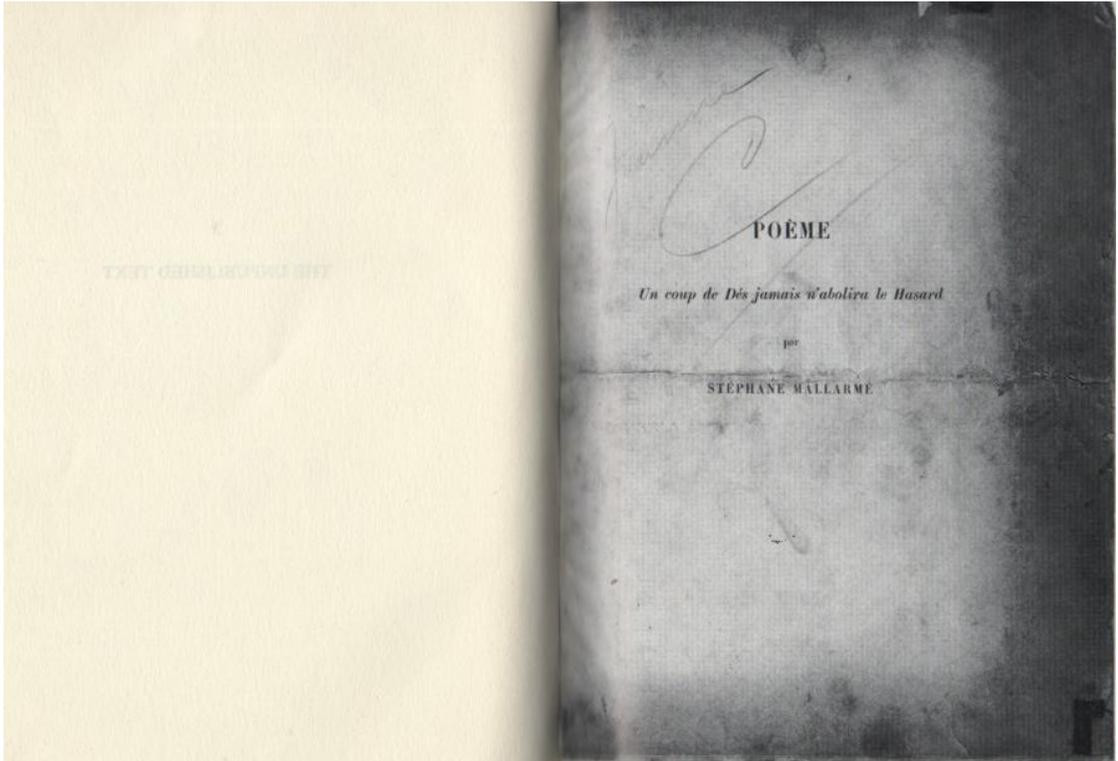
Appendix F: Syllabic Count of *Un coup de Dés*

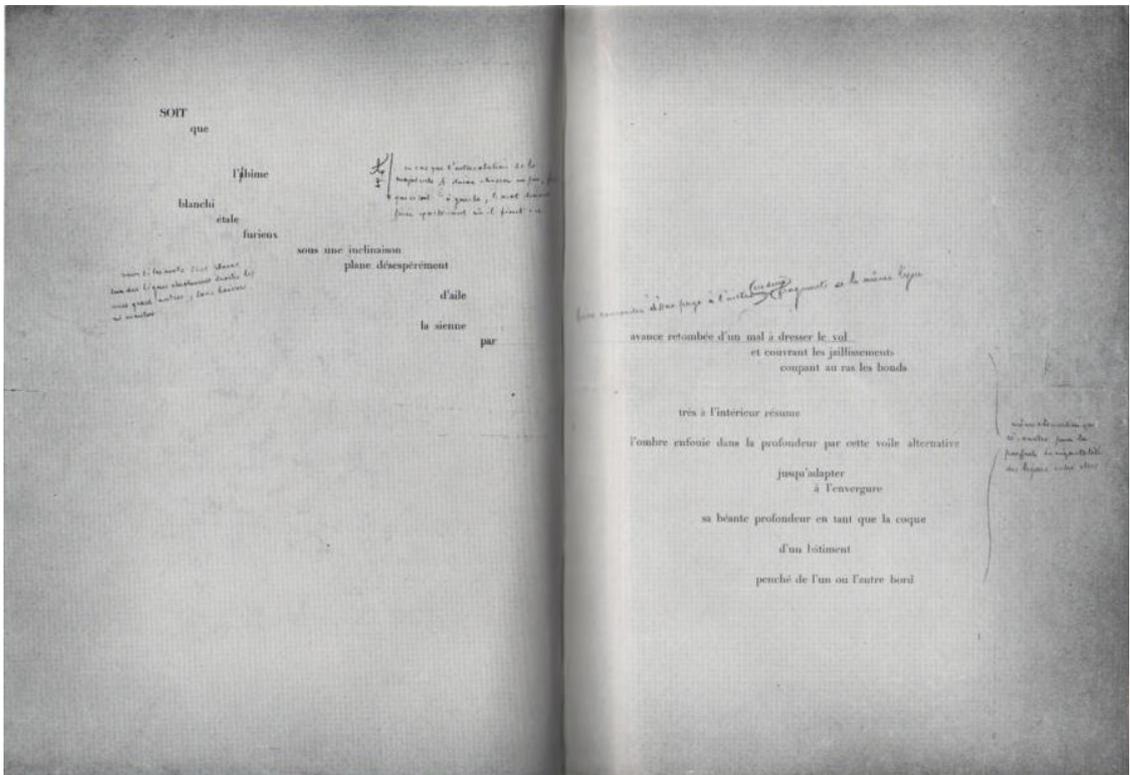
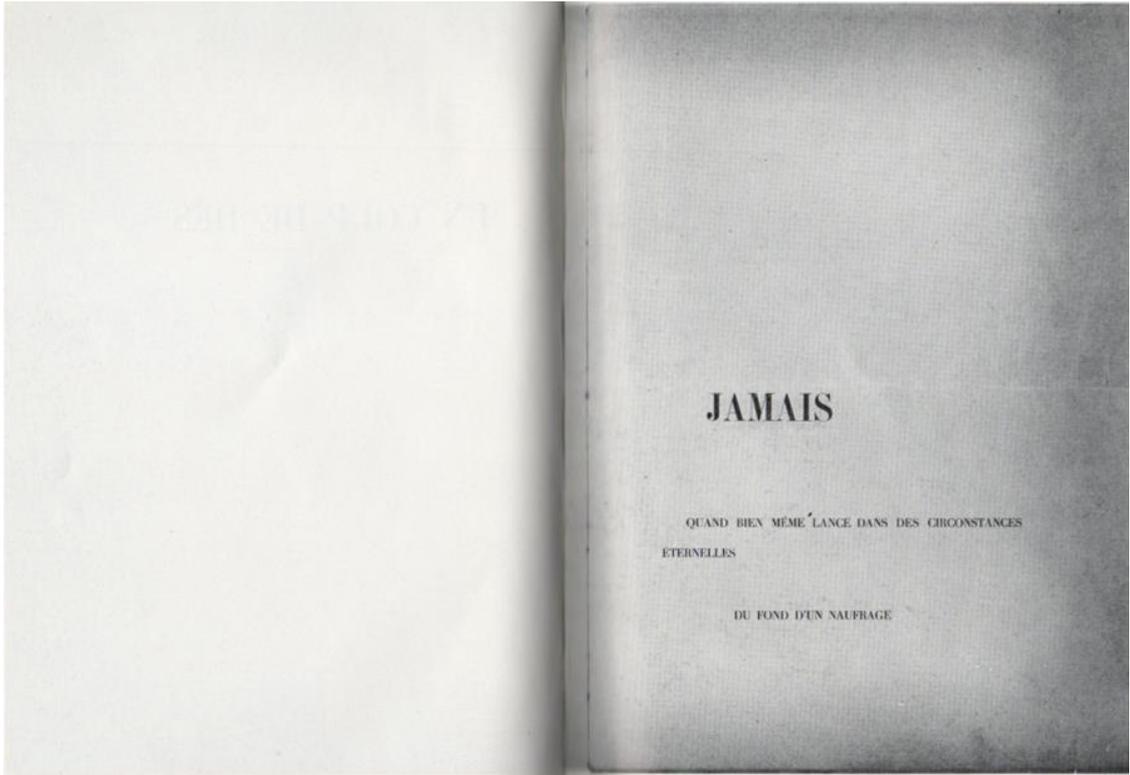
Appendix G: Glossary of Terms

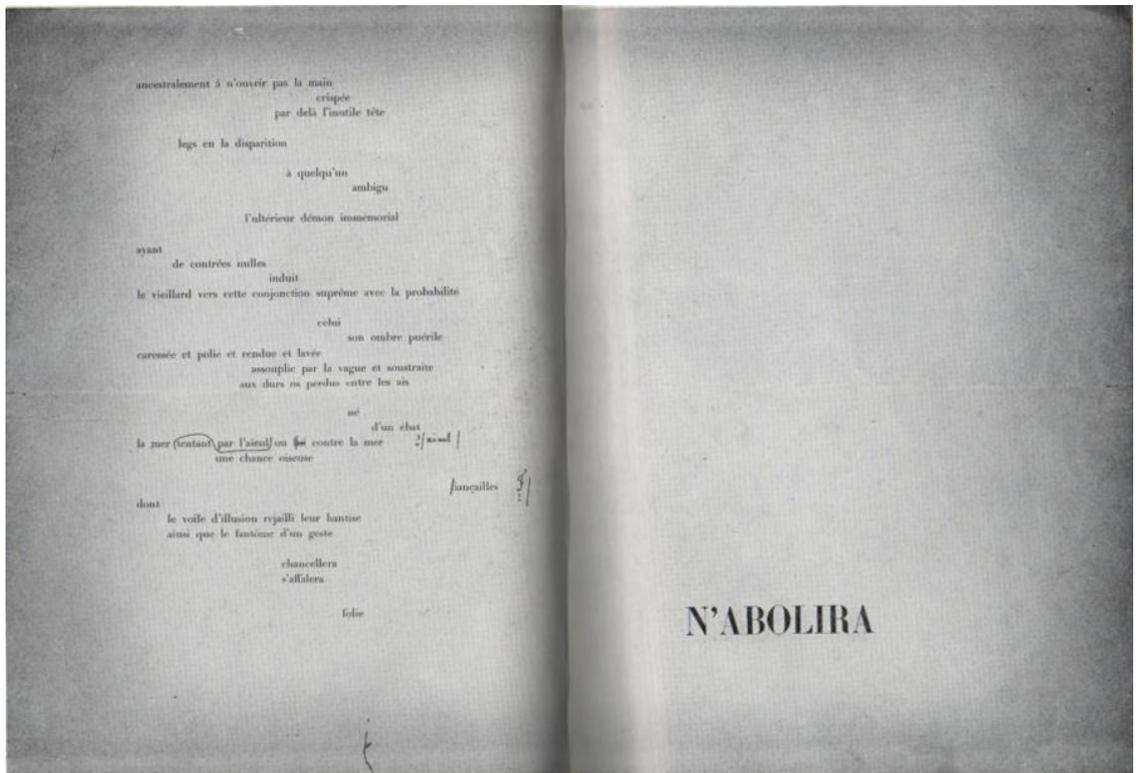
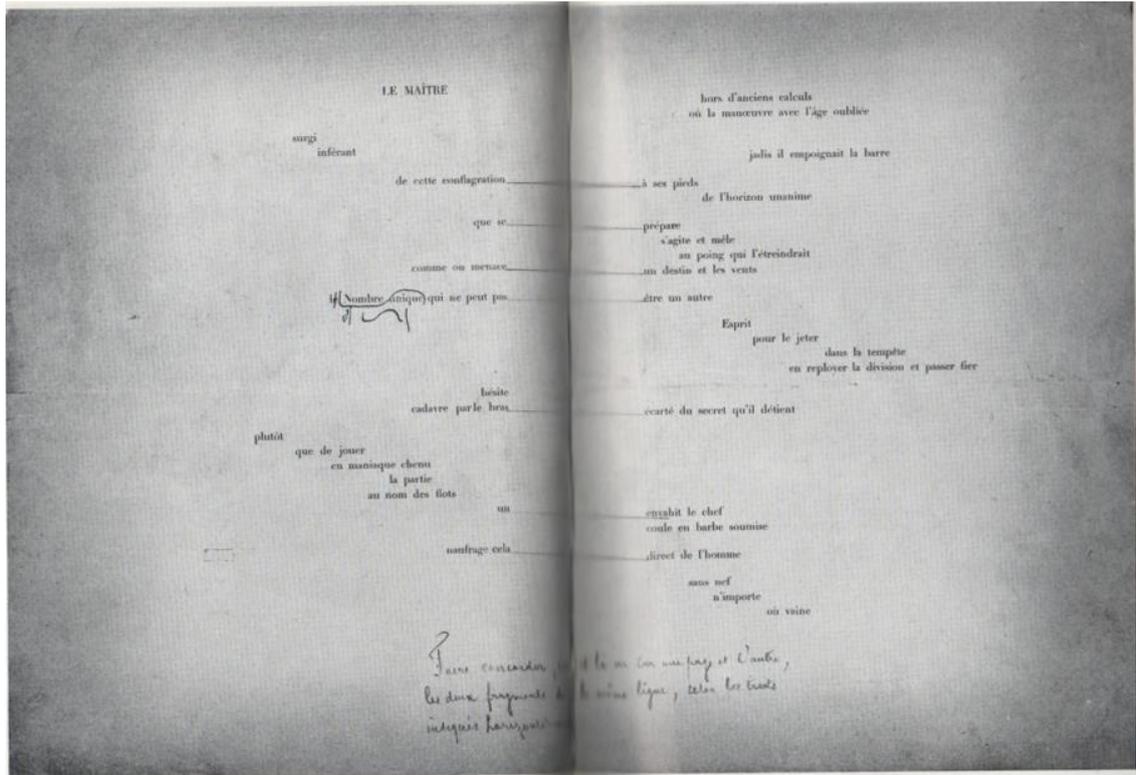
Appendix H: Expanded Notes

APPENDIX B: THE LAHURE PROOFS

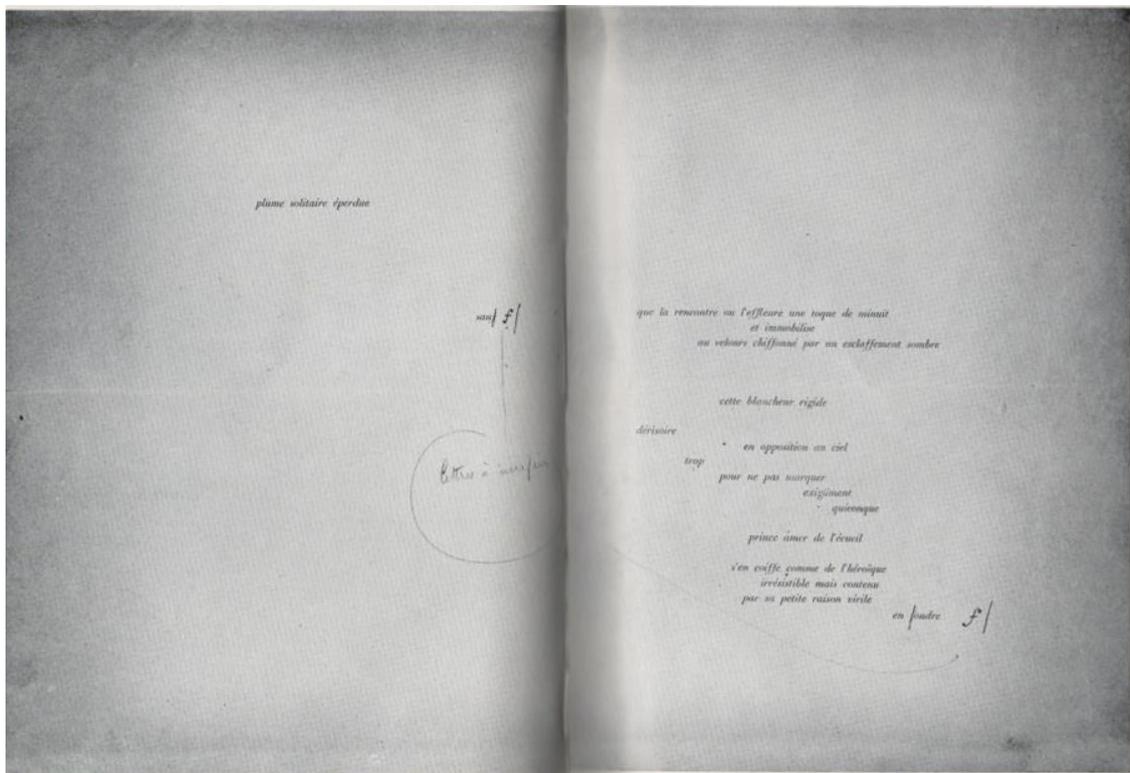
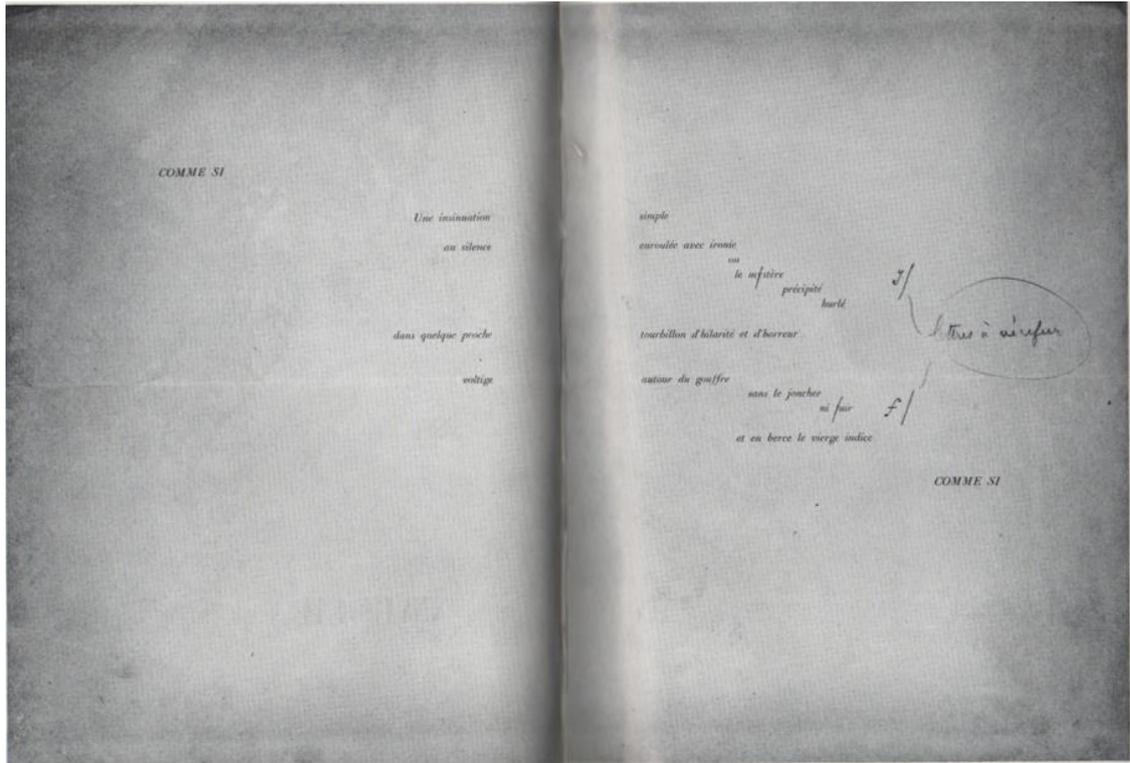
The Lahure Proofs: Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de Dés j'amais n'abolira le Hasard*, 1898. The following documents are copies of Robert Greer Cohn published facsimiles of the 'Lahure' proofs, including three of four lithographs by Odilon Redon intended for this publication, and housed in Houghton Library, Harvard, (Robert Greer Cohn, *Mallarmé's Masterwork: New Findings*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1966). A digital folio of the of the Lahure proofs can be is available at: [https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:434952194\\$1i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:434952194$1i)

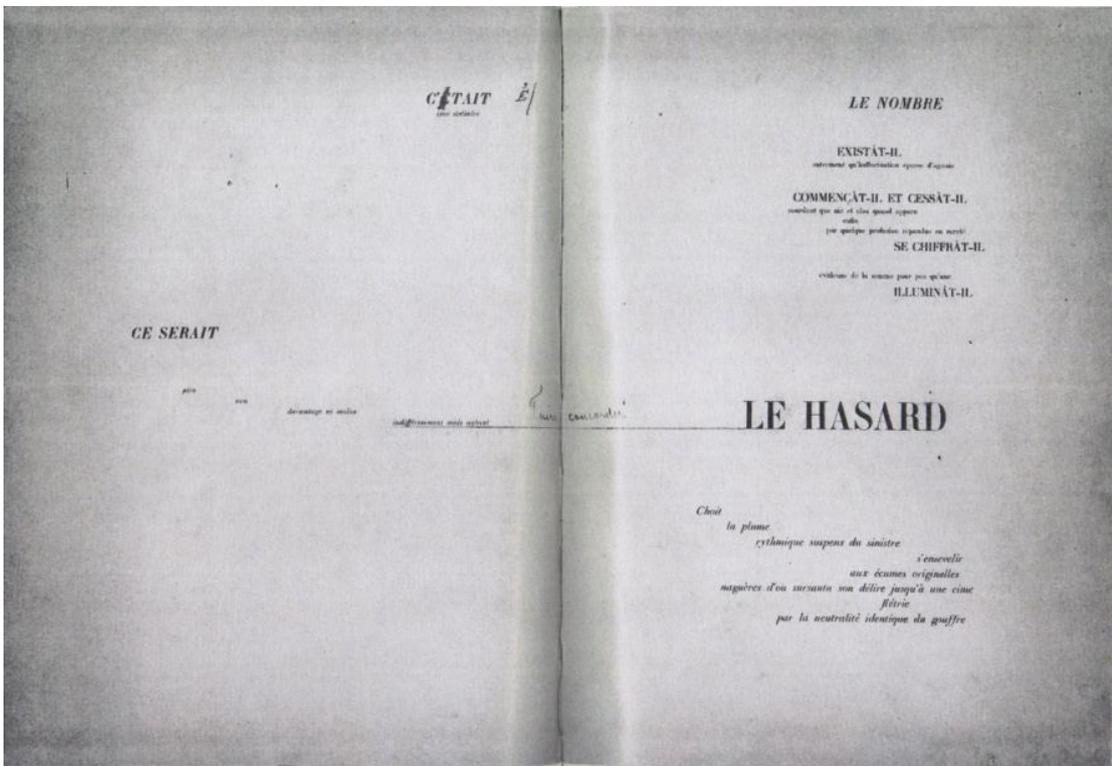
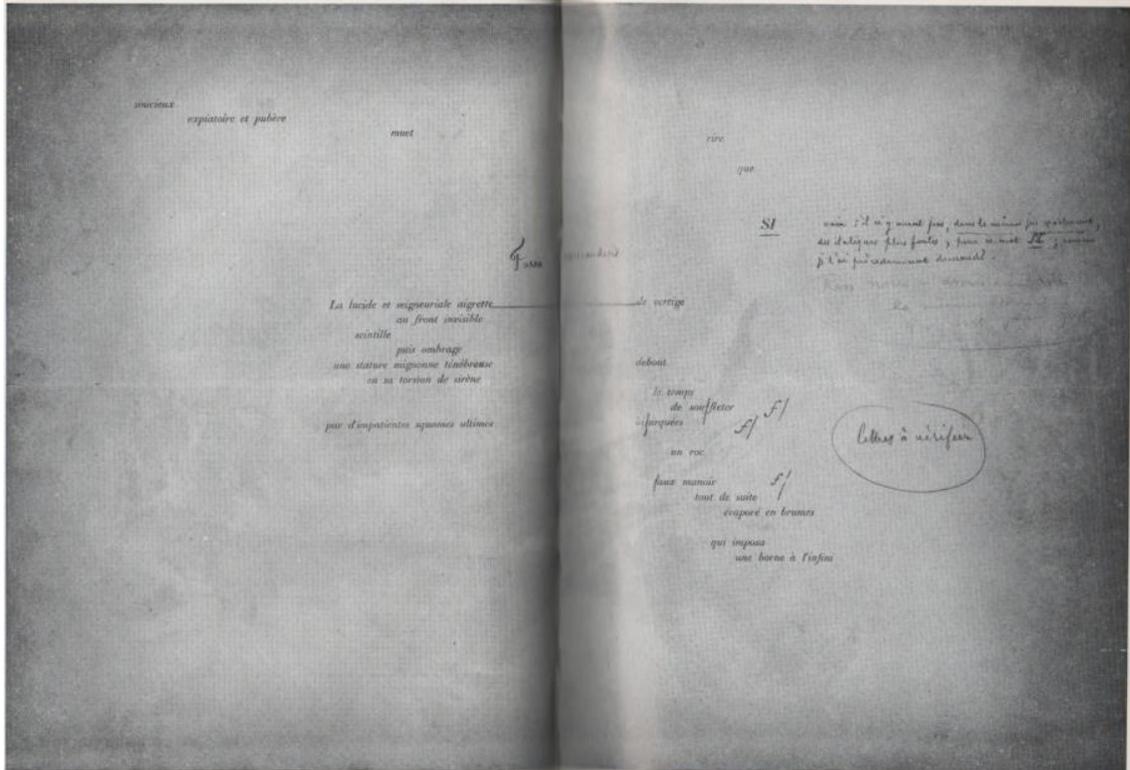


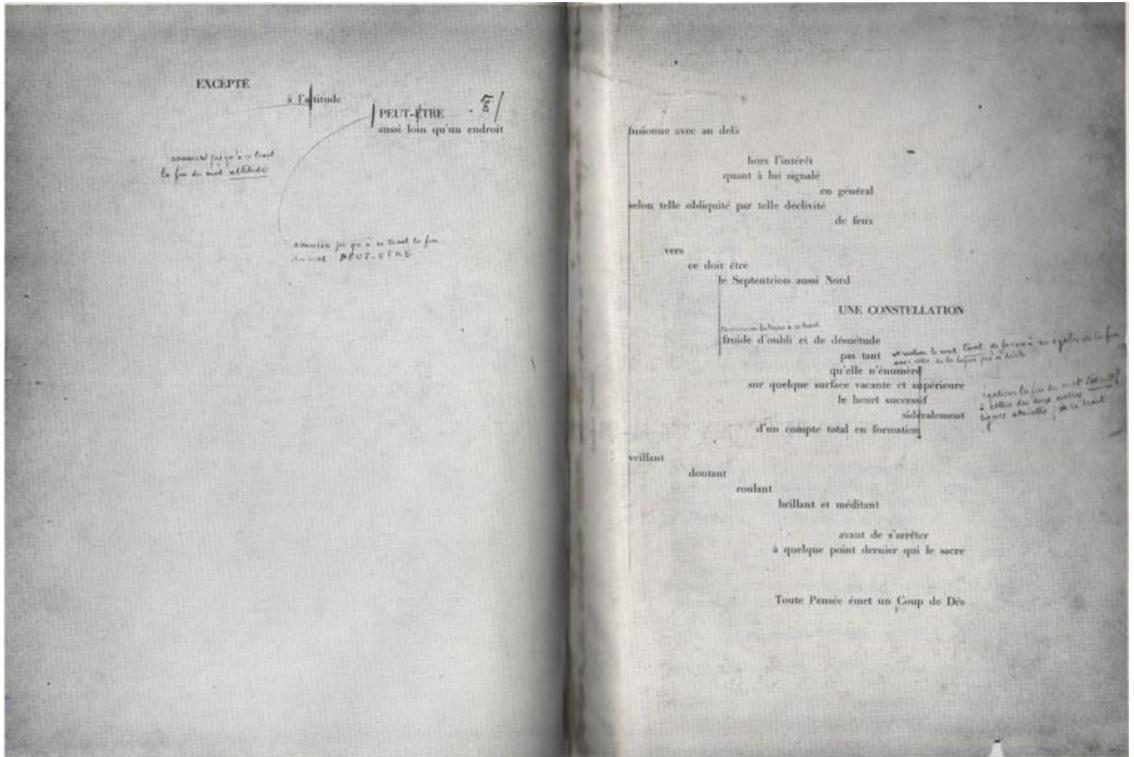
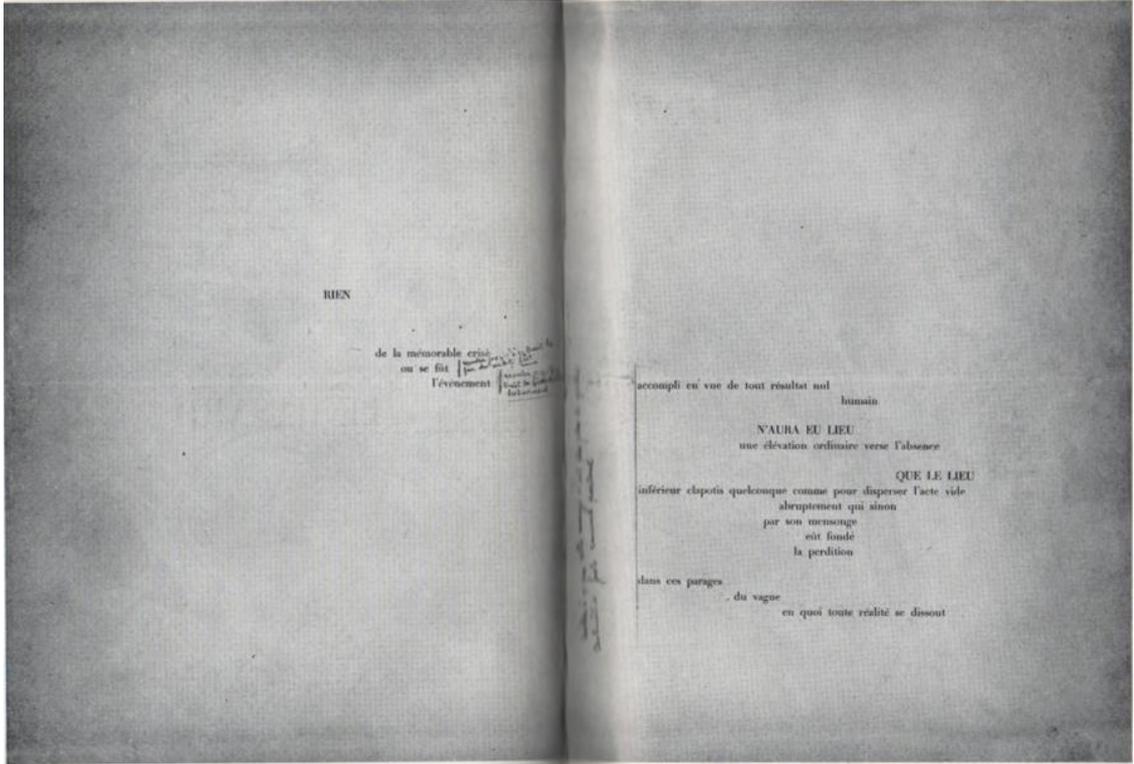




APPENDIX B: THE LAHURE PROOFS



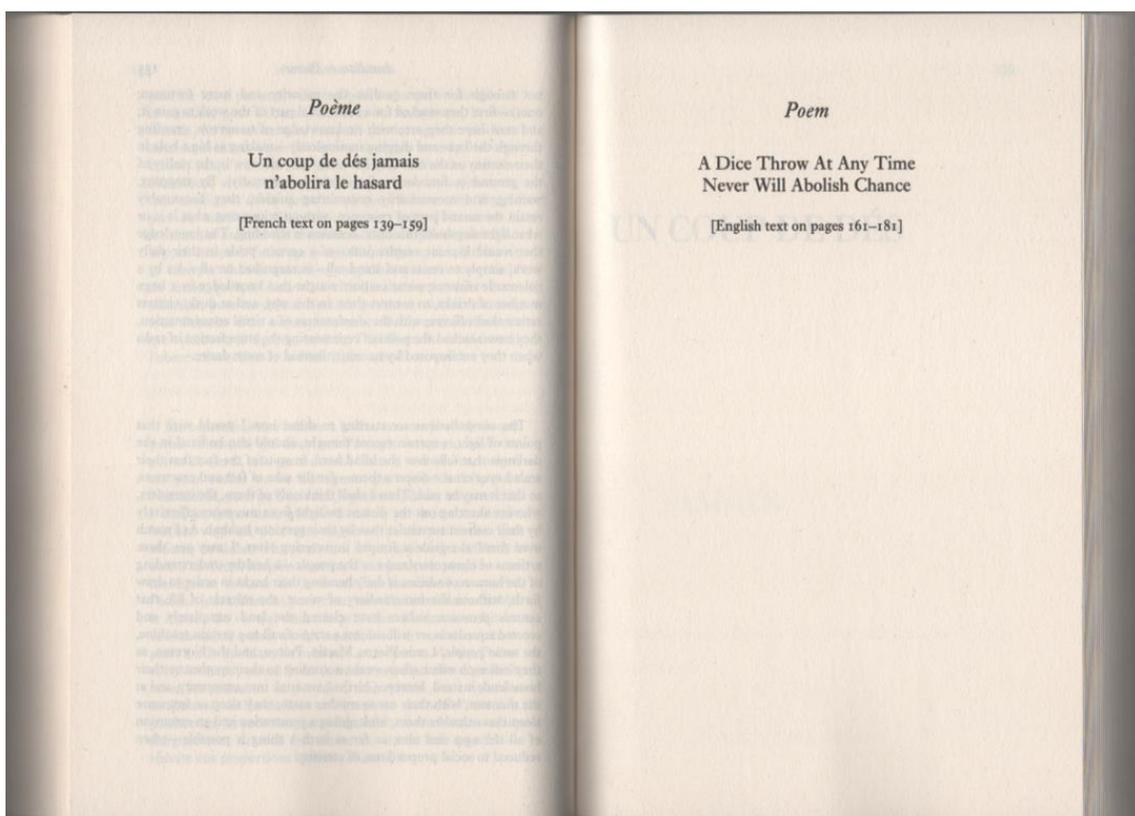


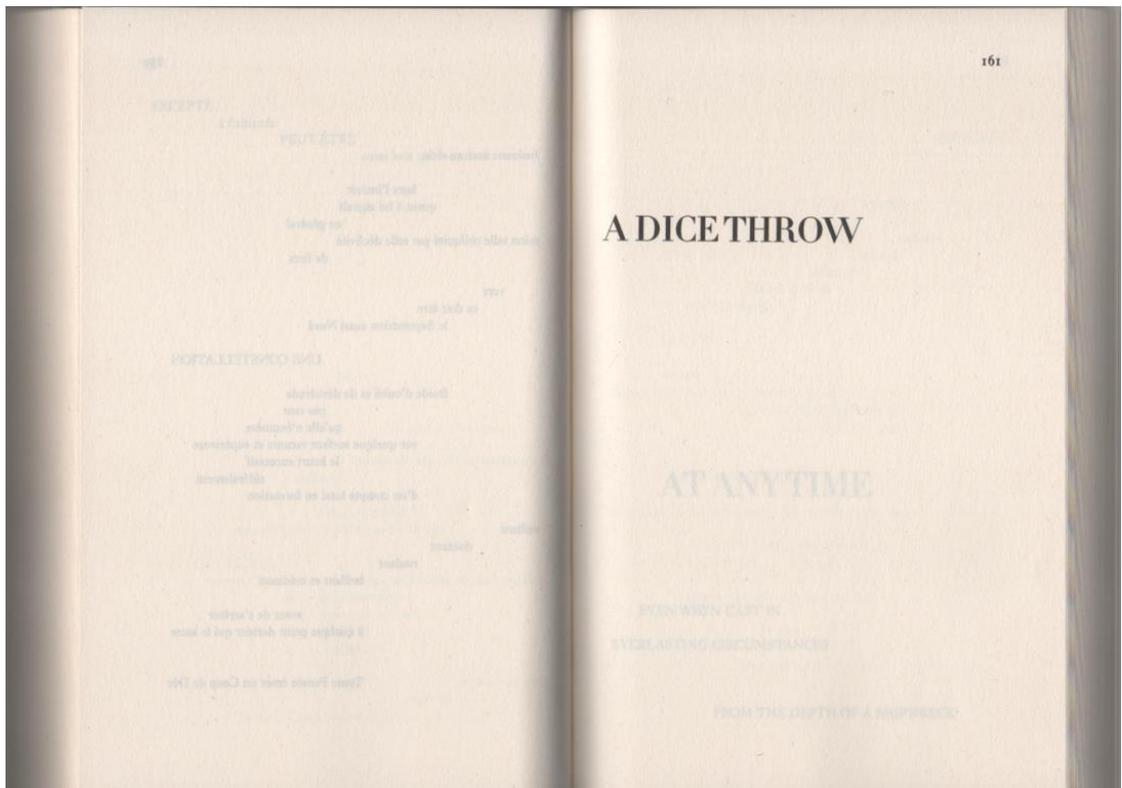
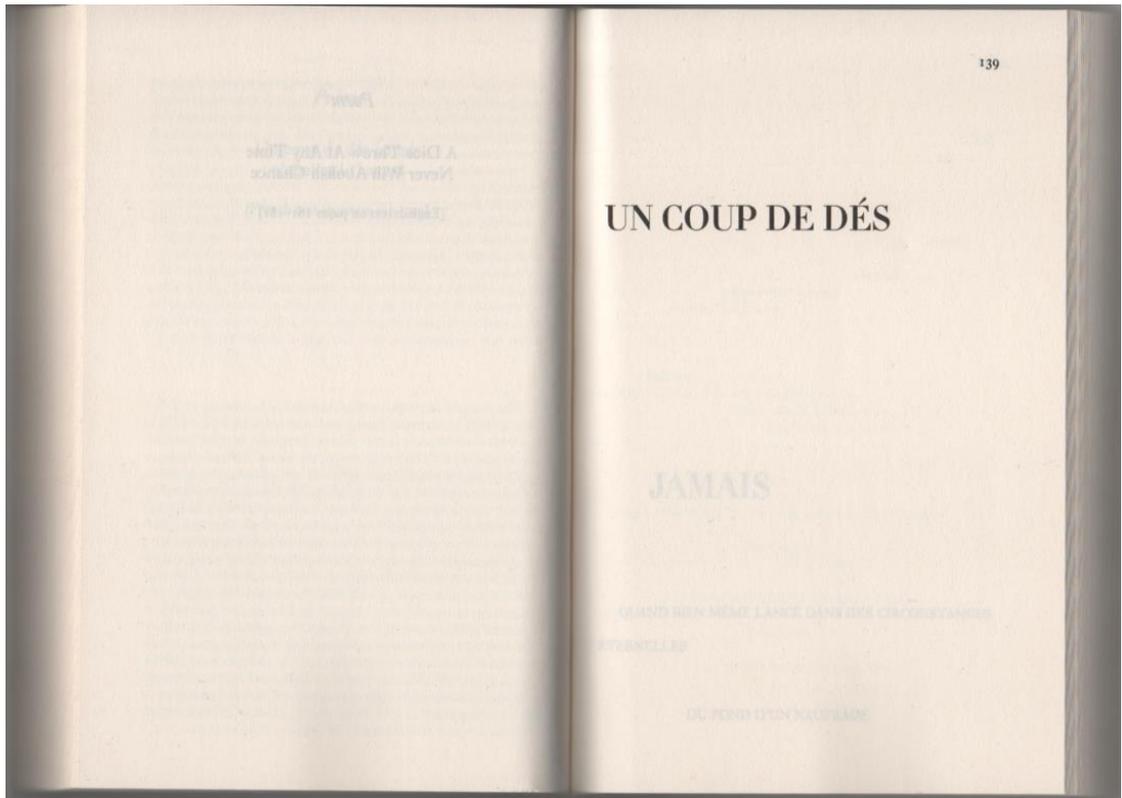


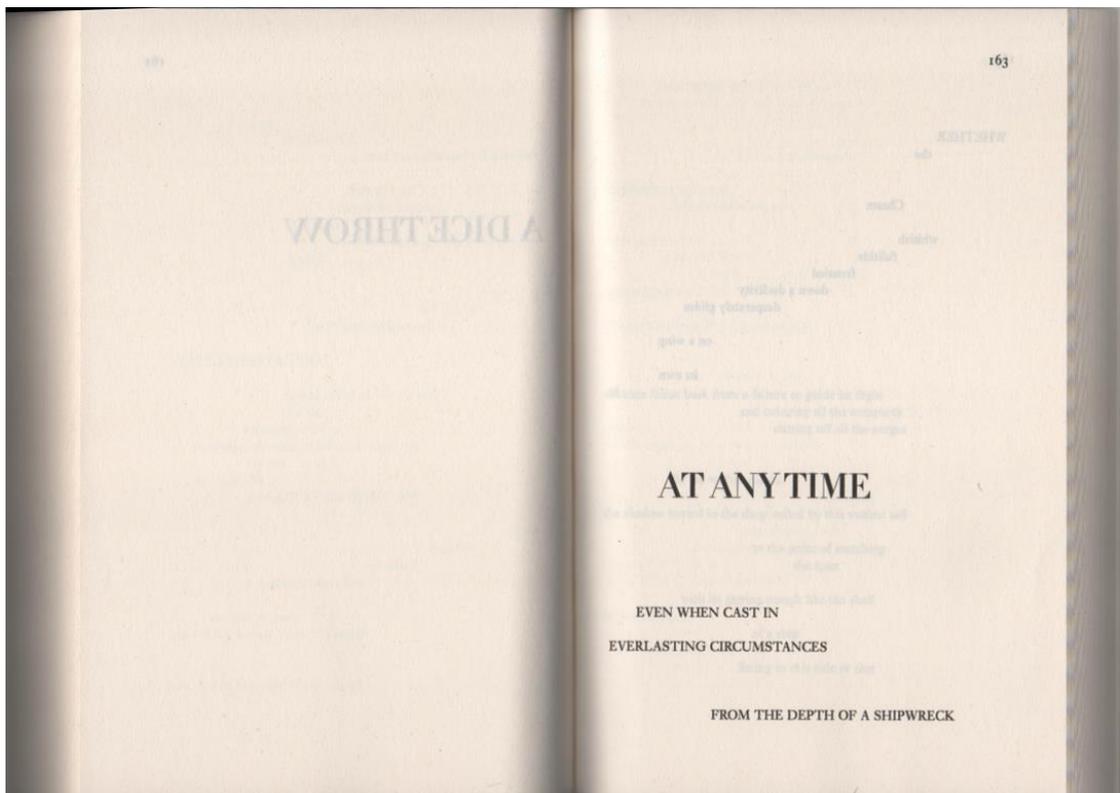
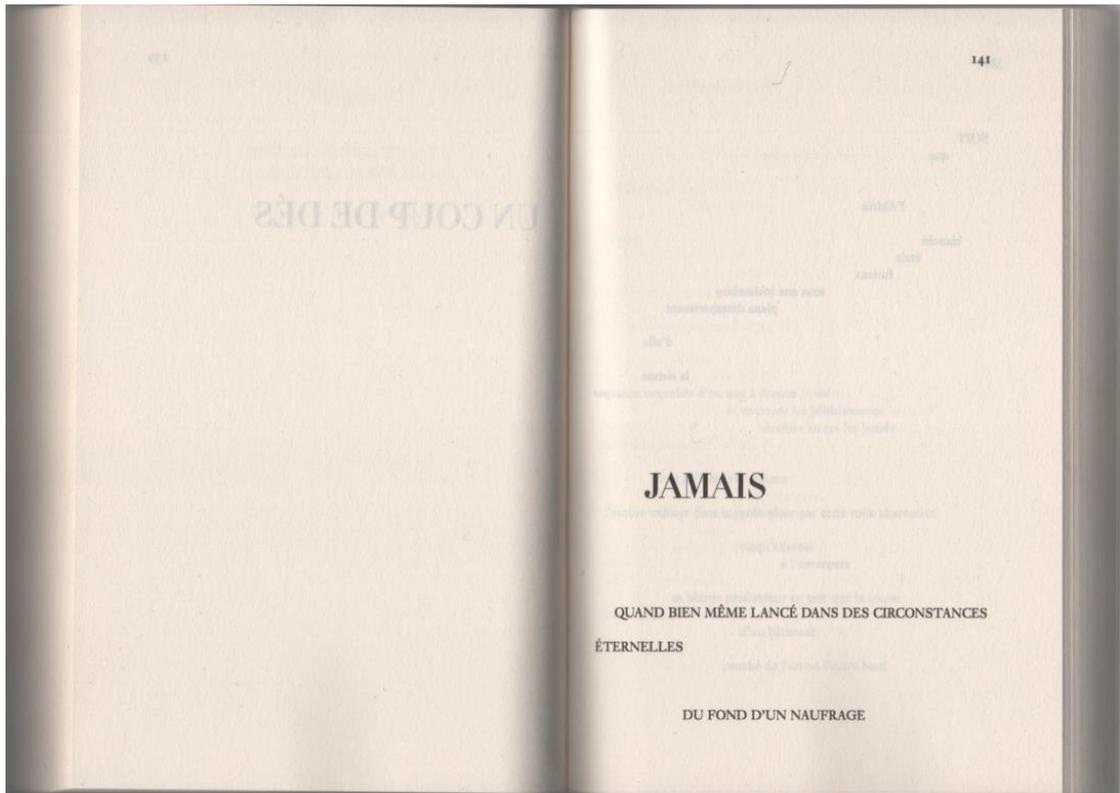


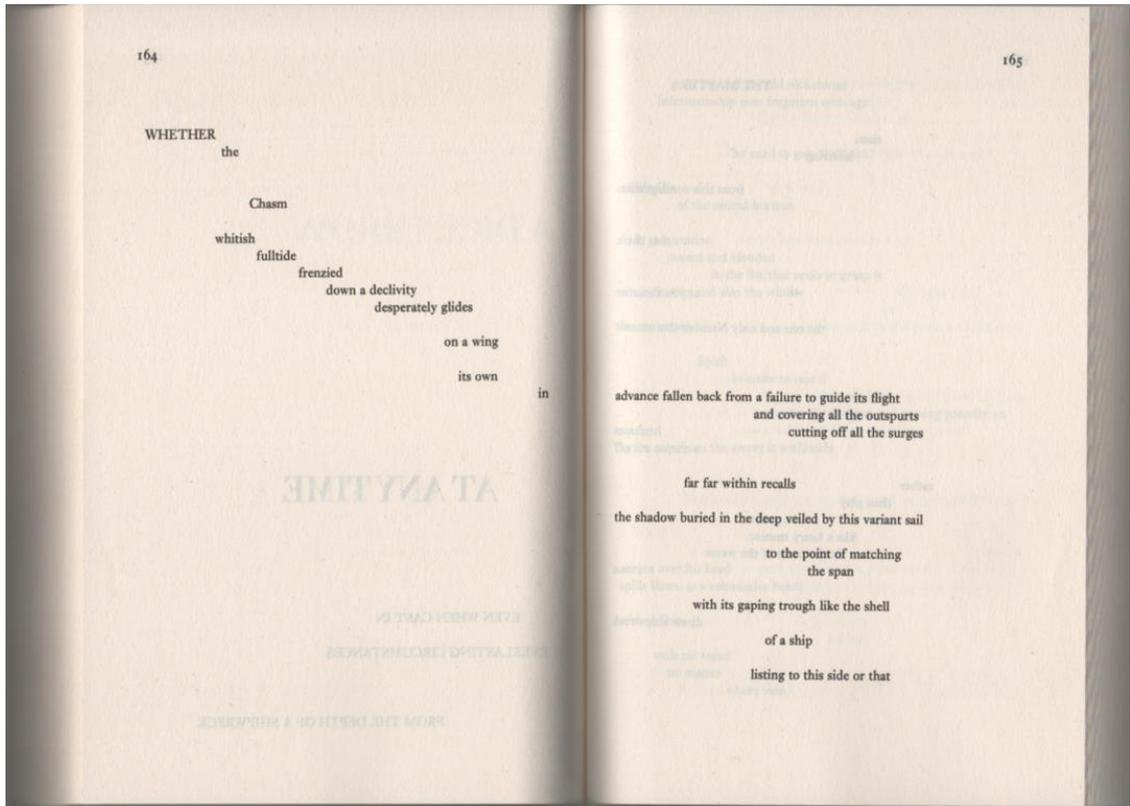
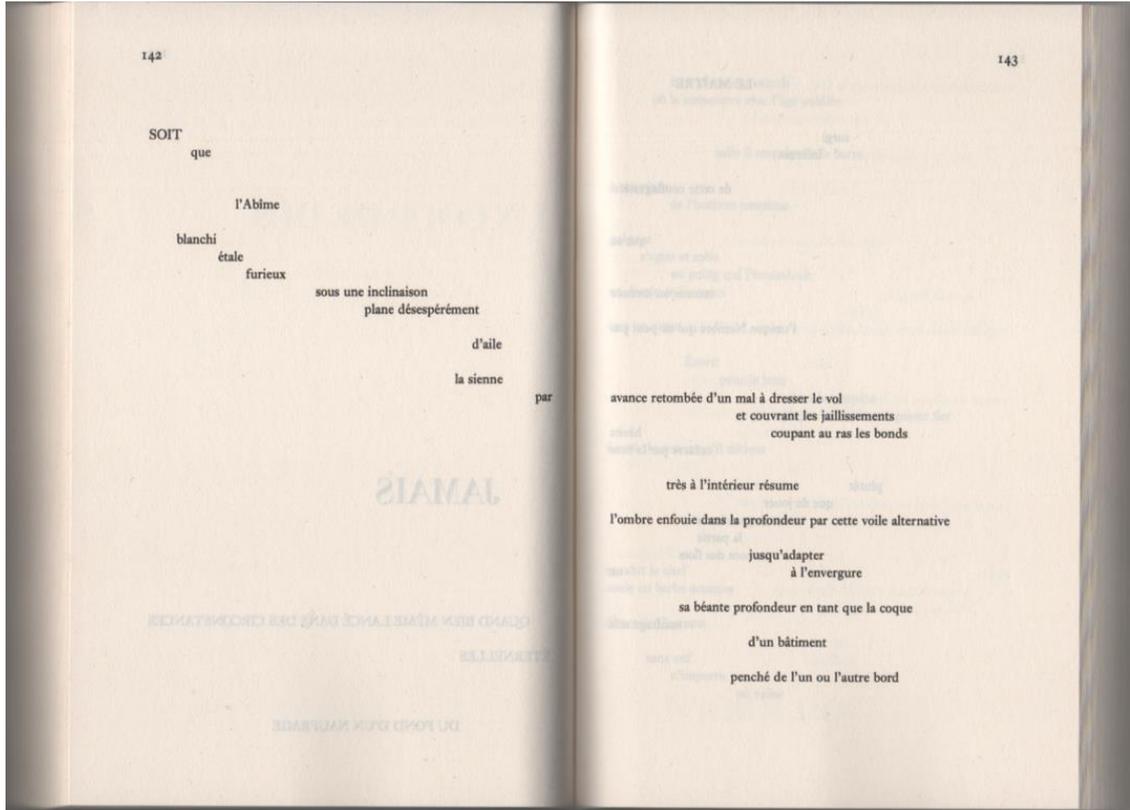
APPENDIX C: UN COUP DE DÉS – AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

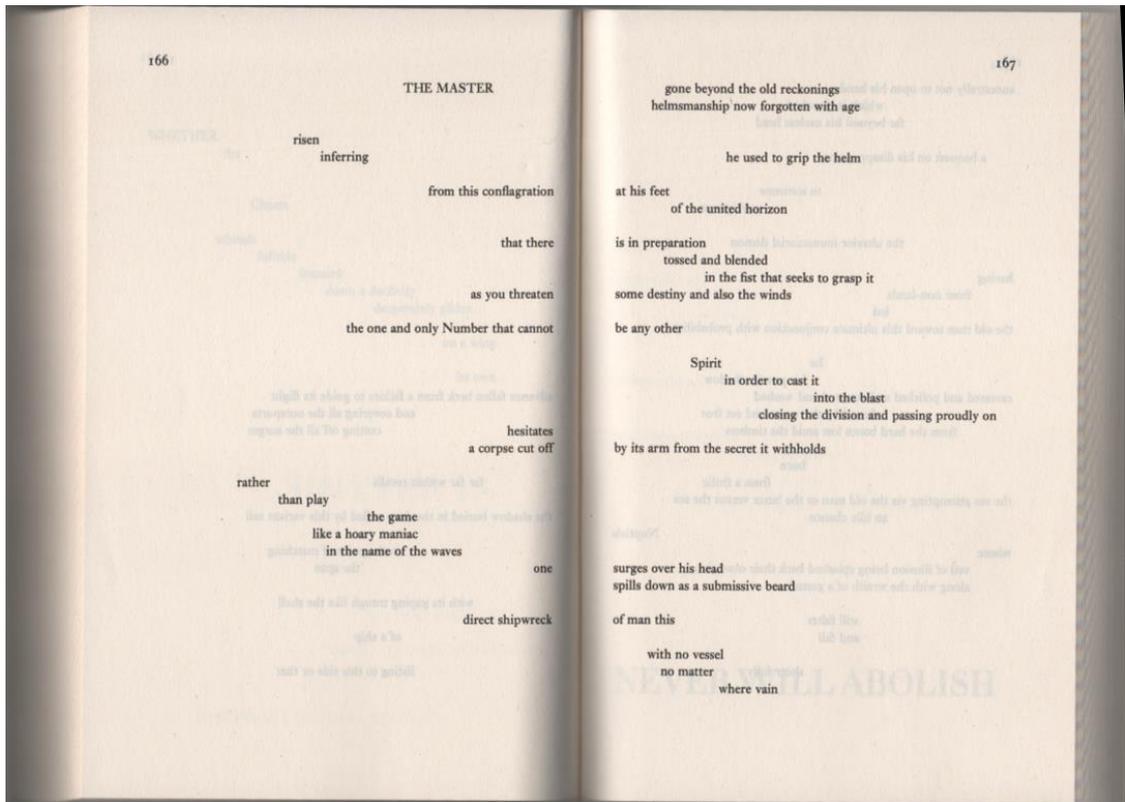
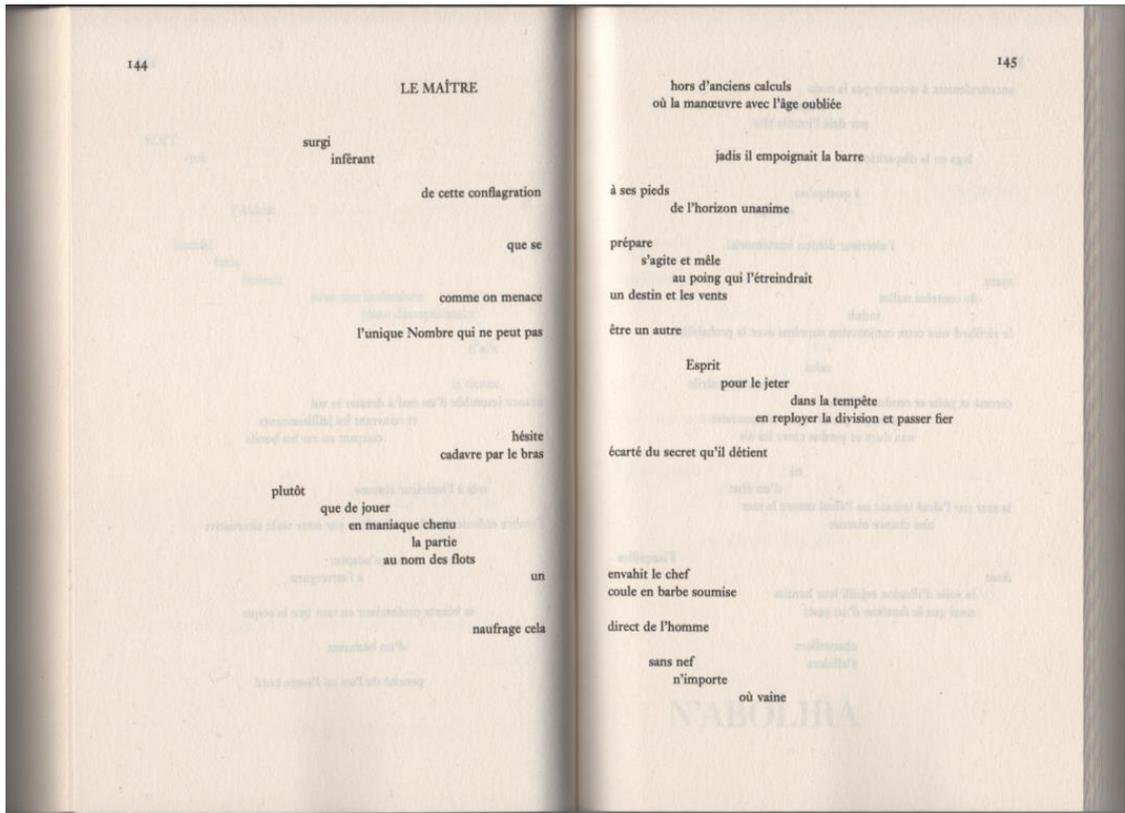
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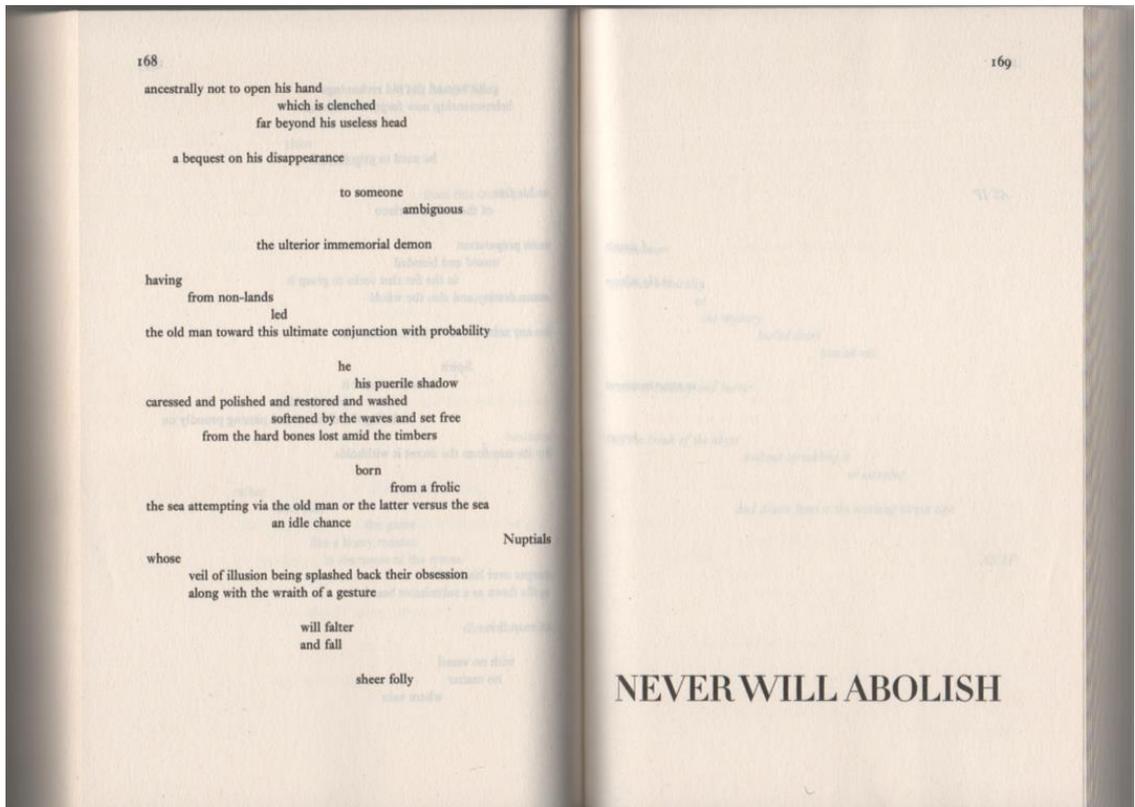
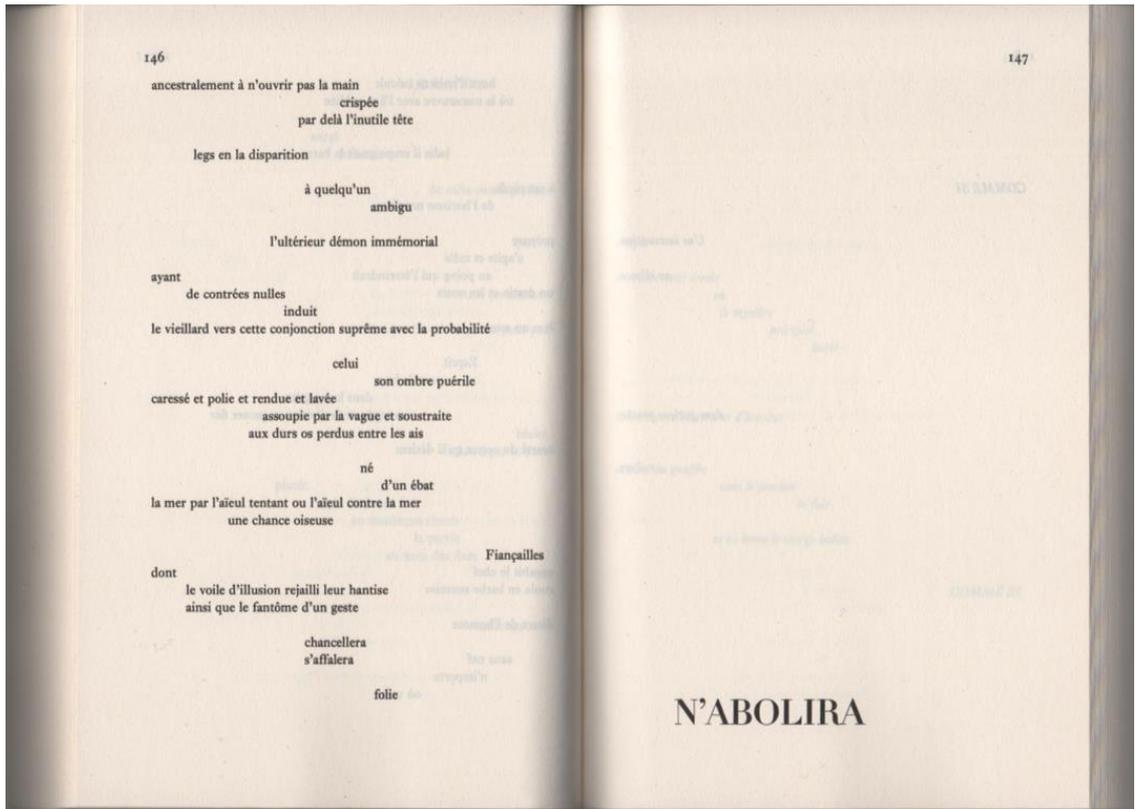


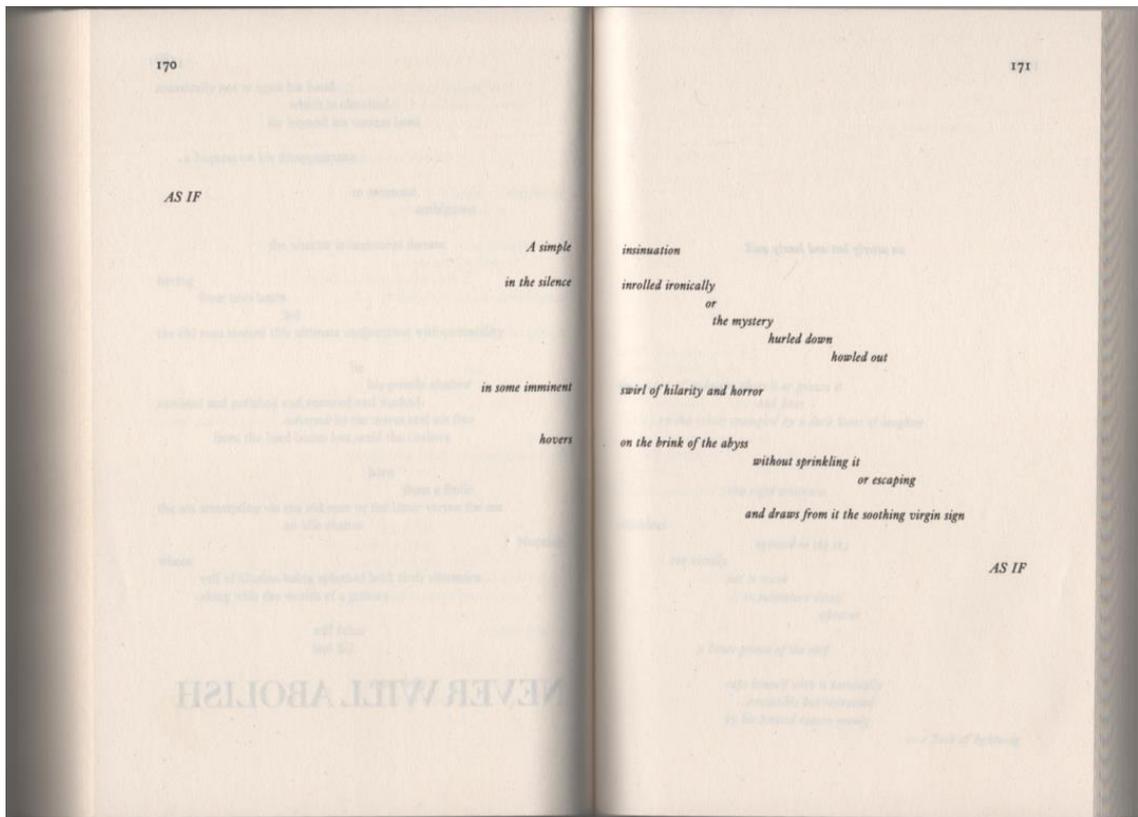
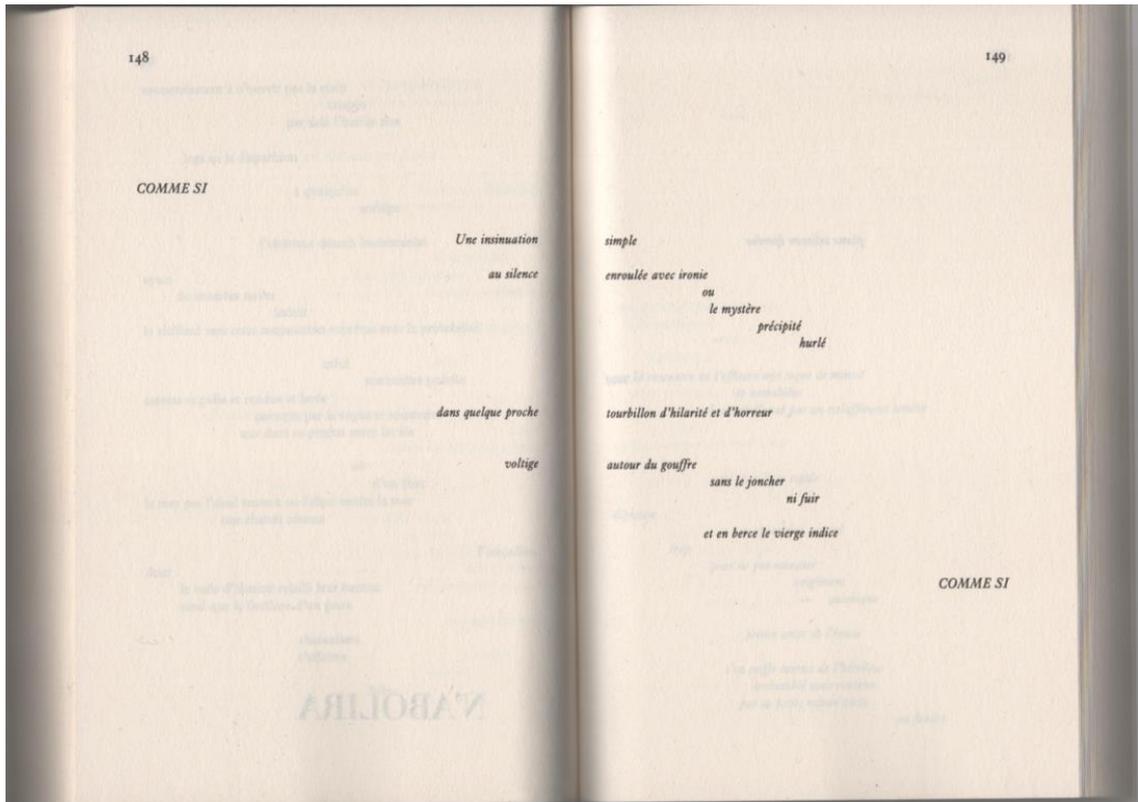


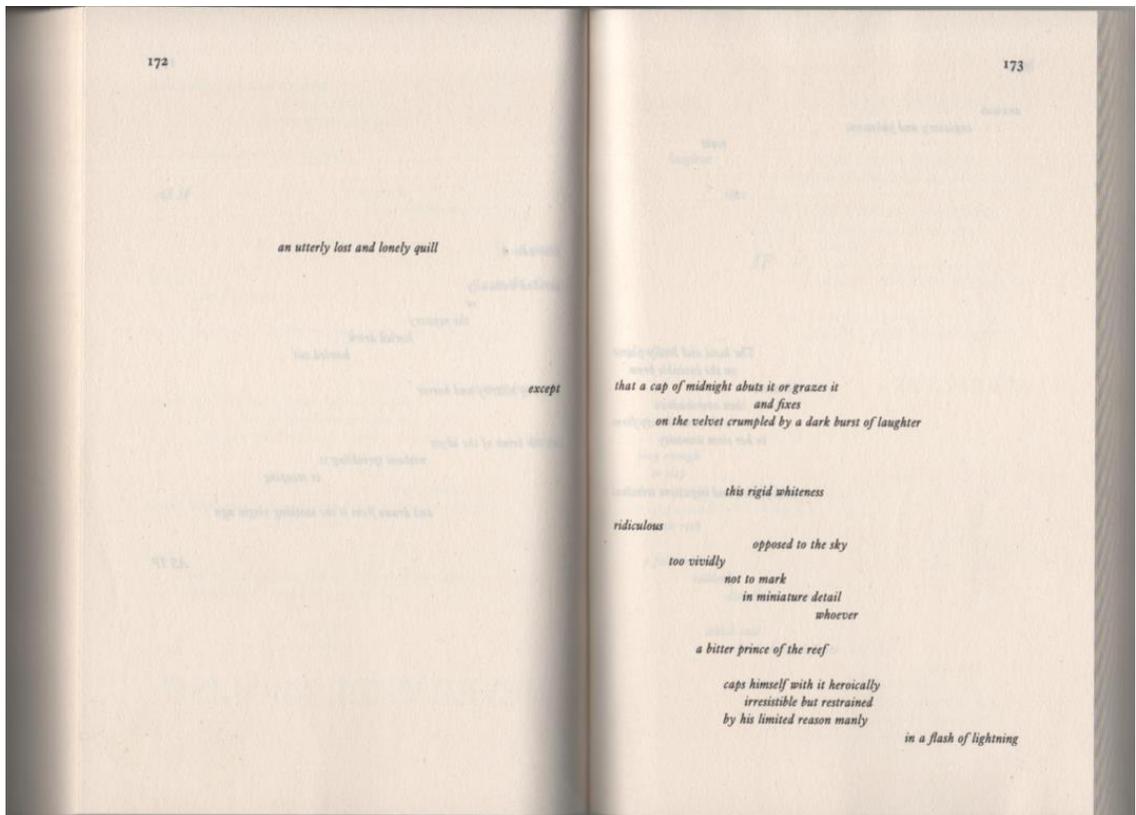
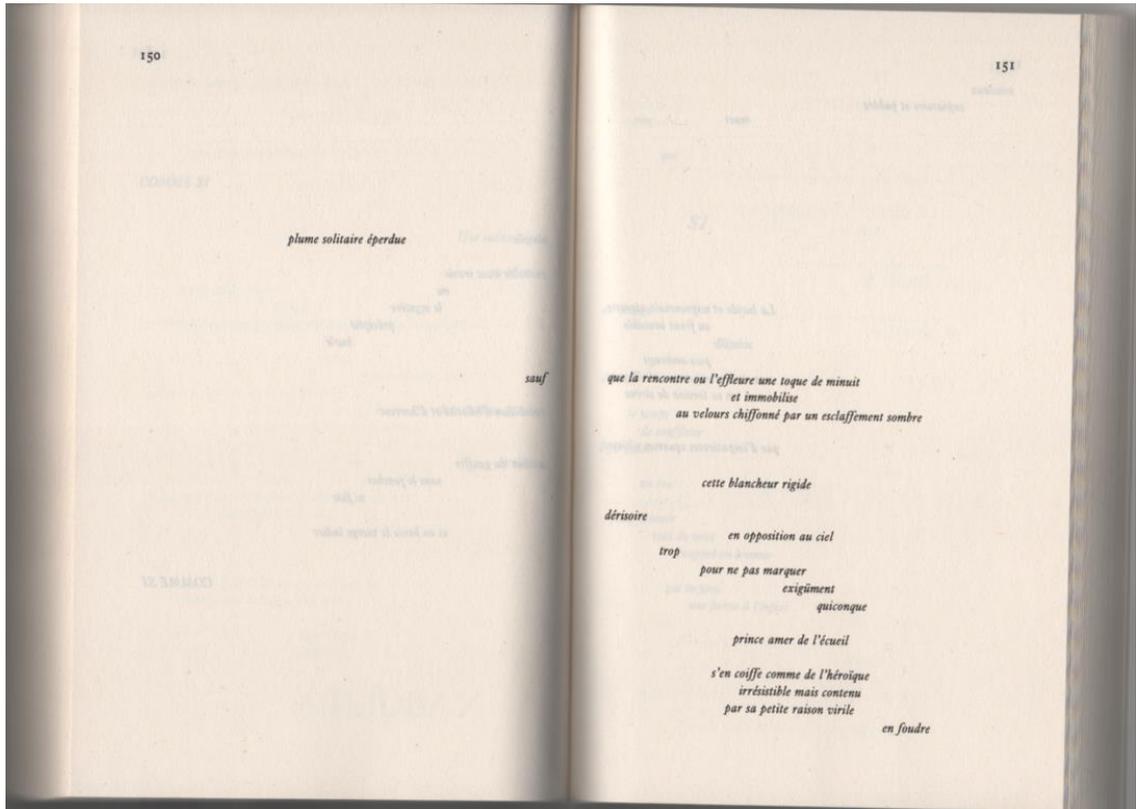


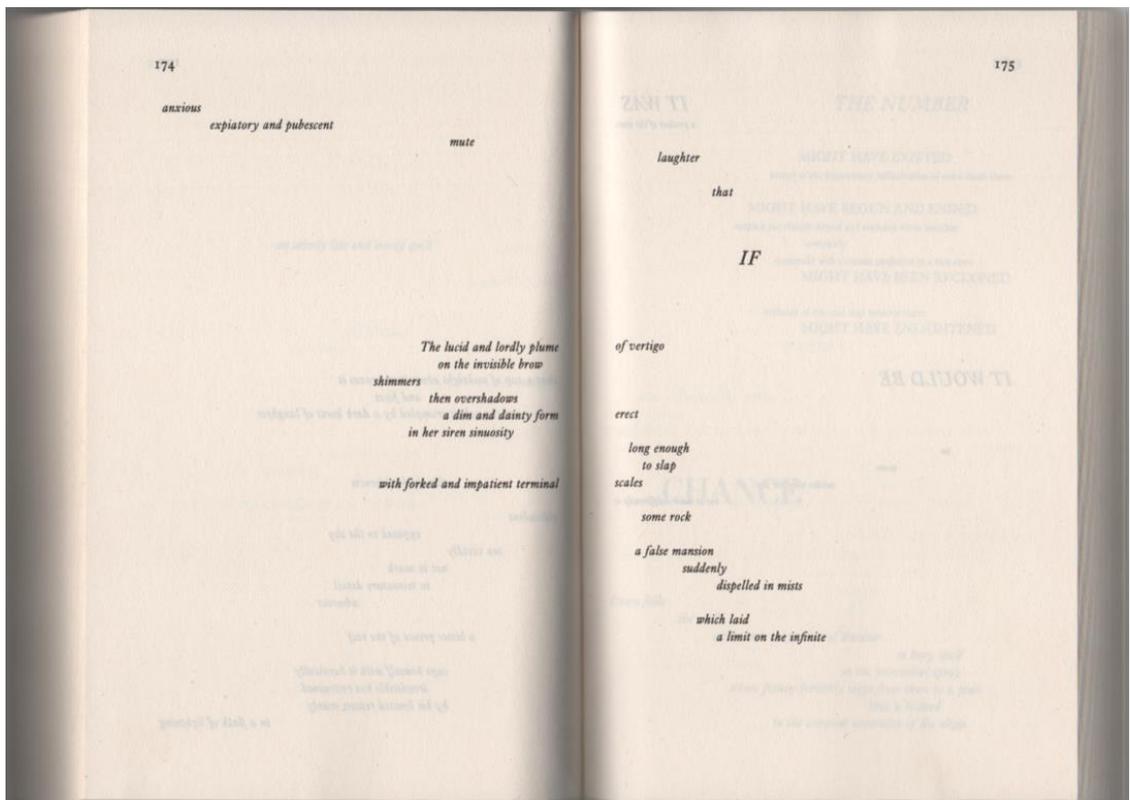
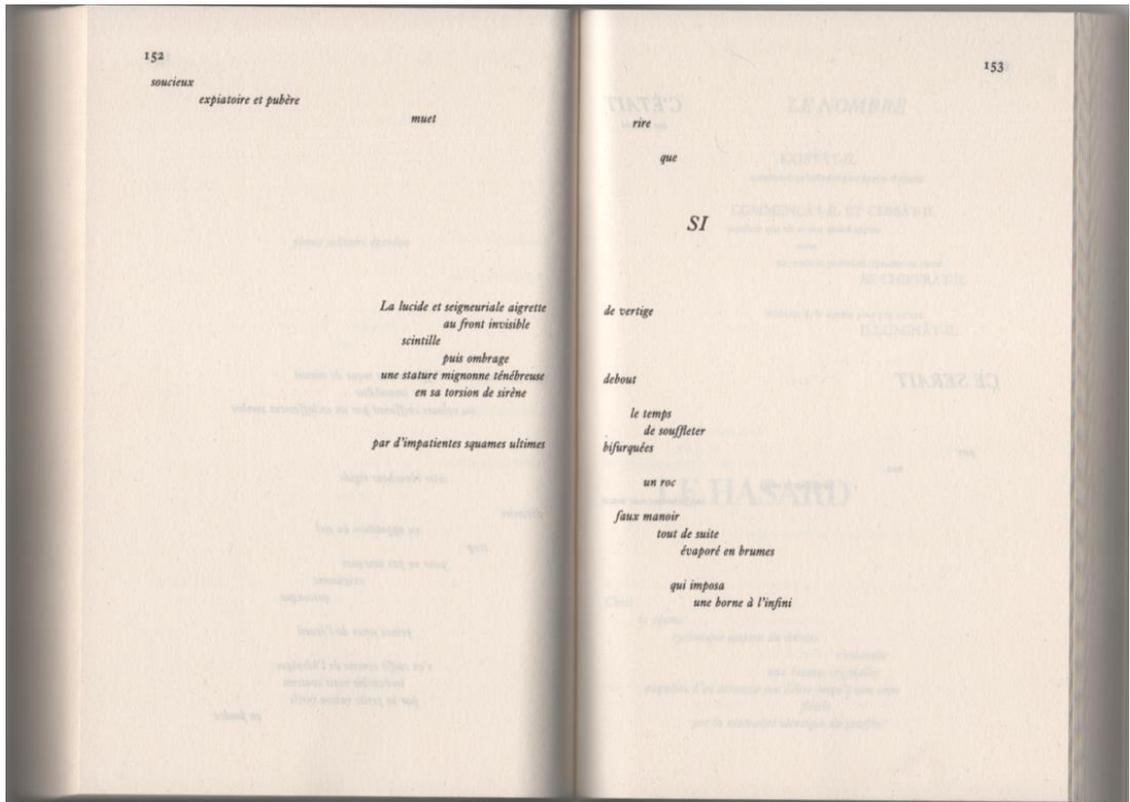


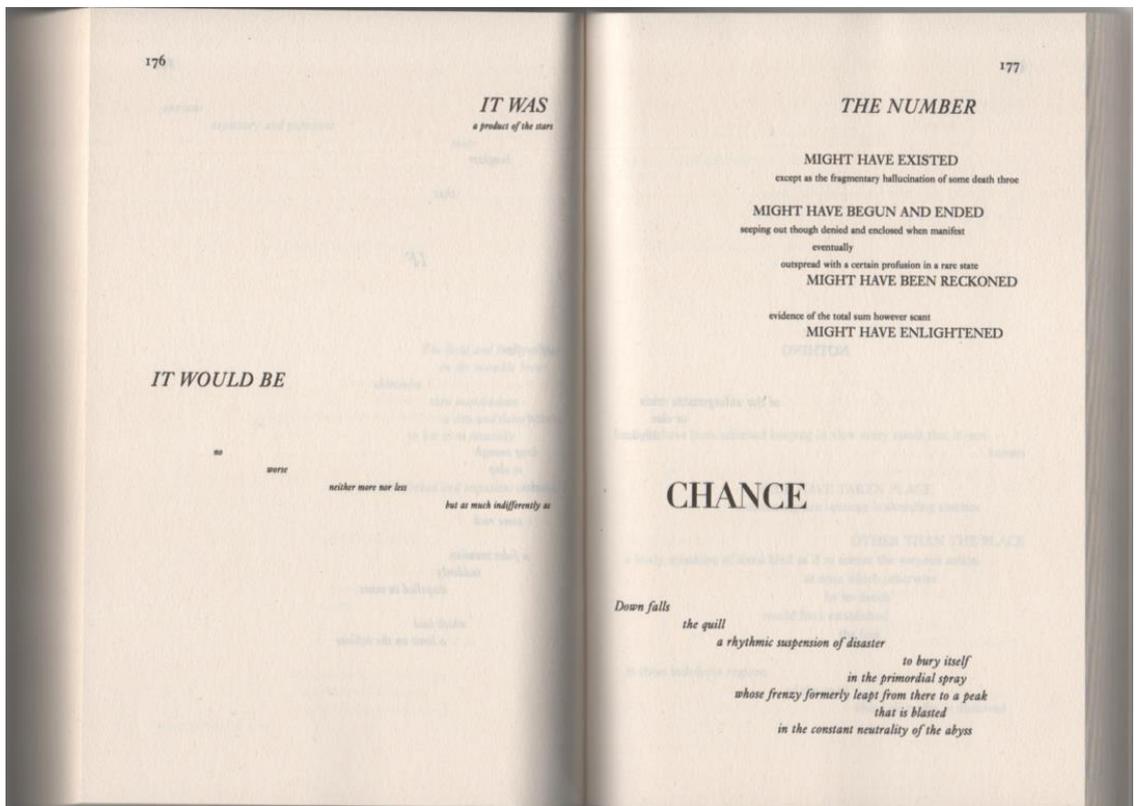
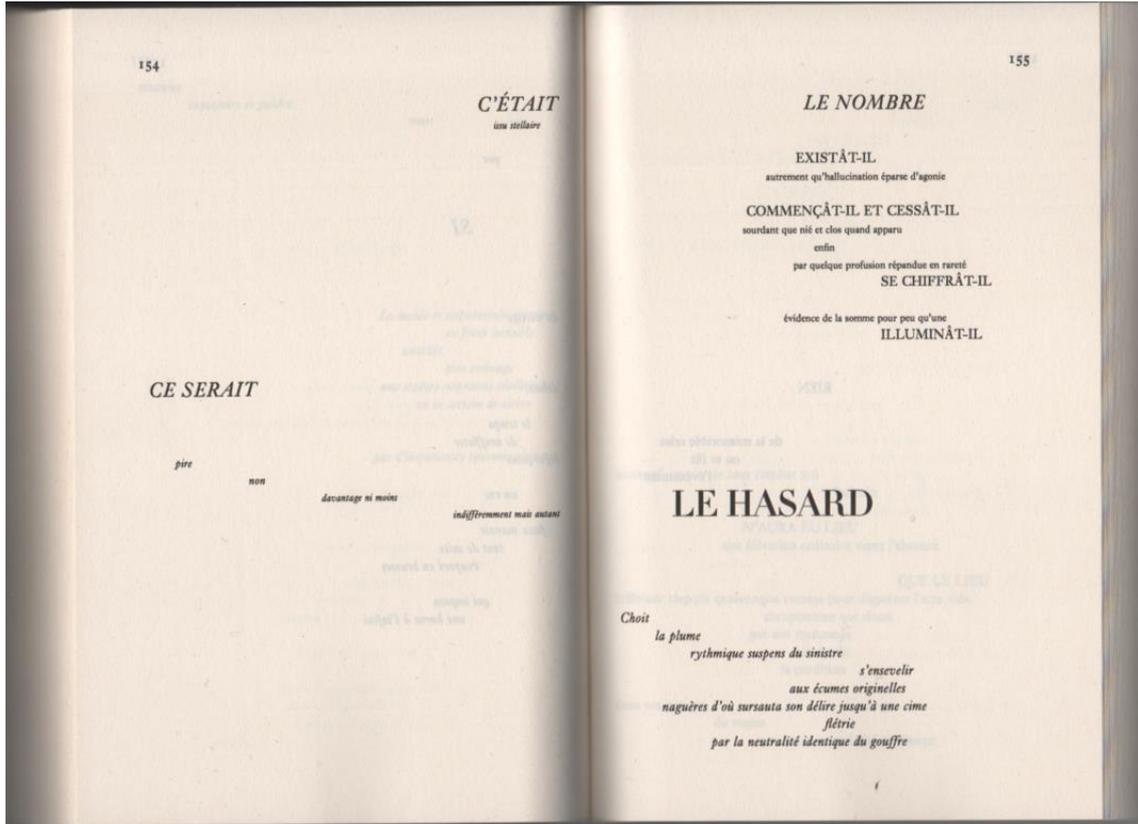


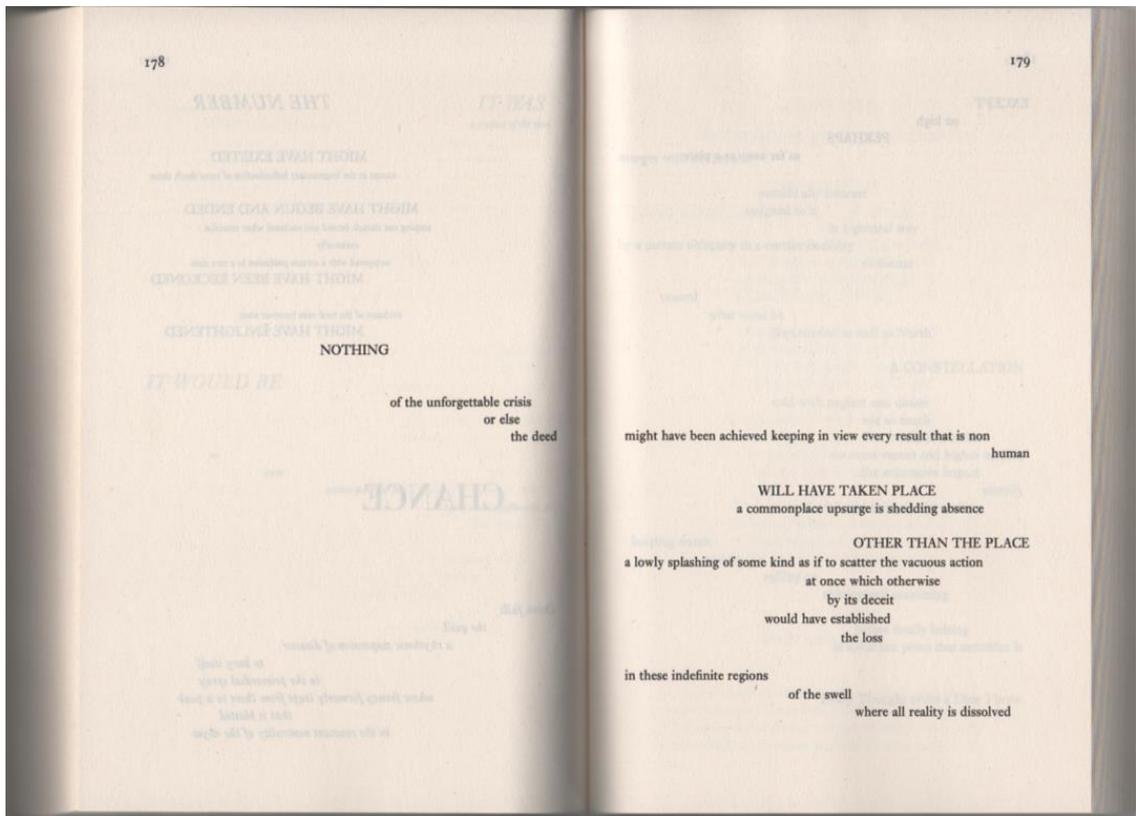
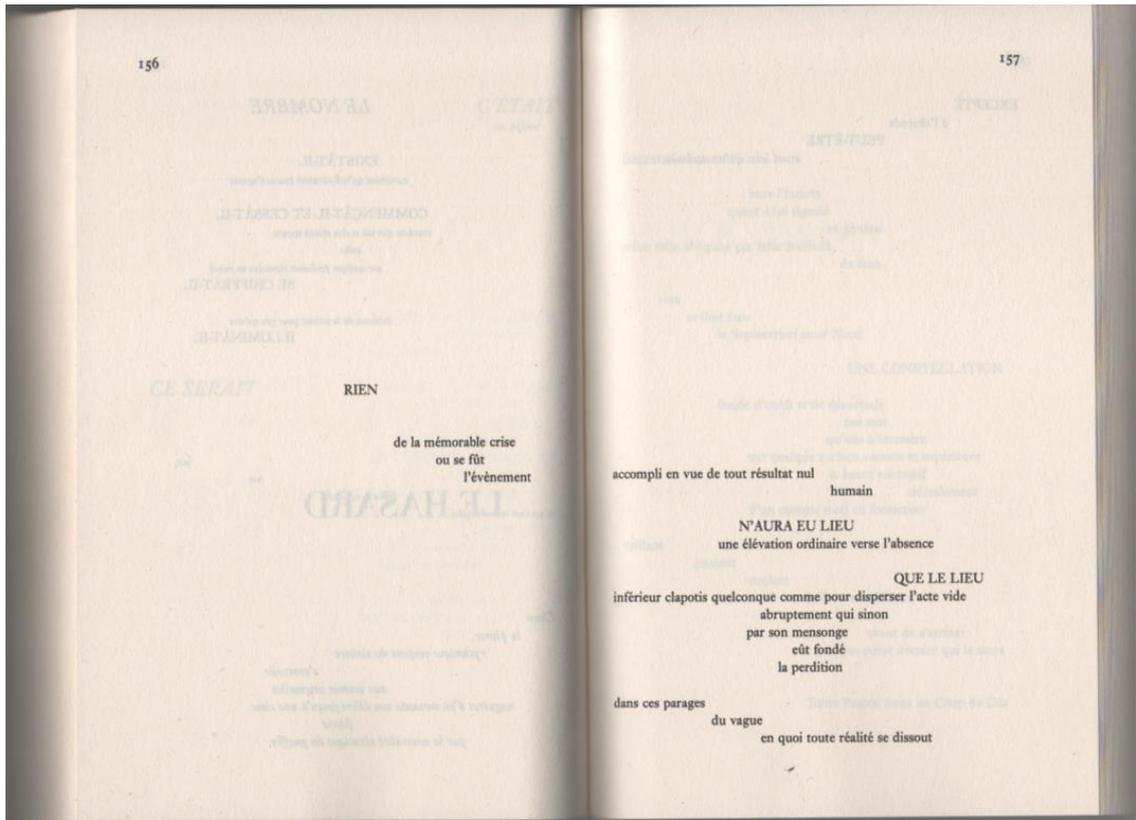


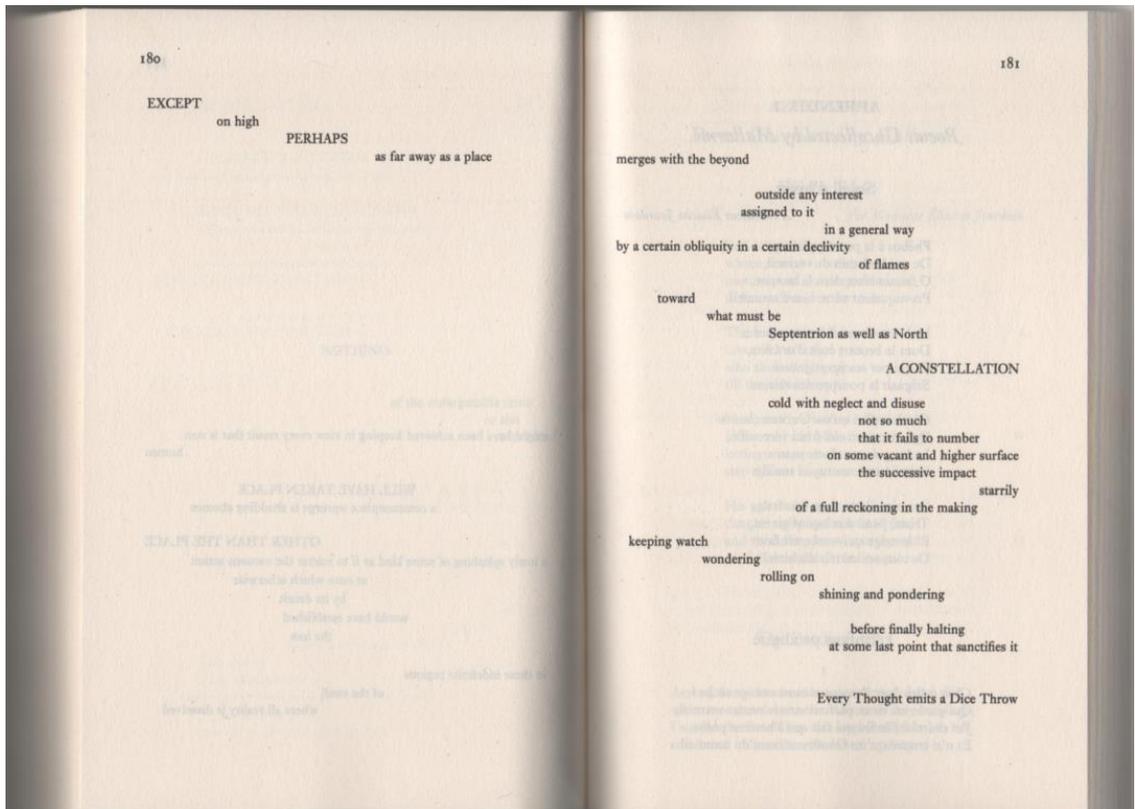
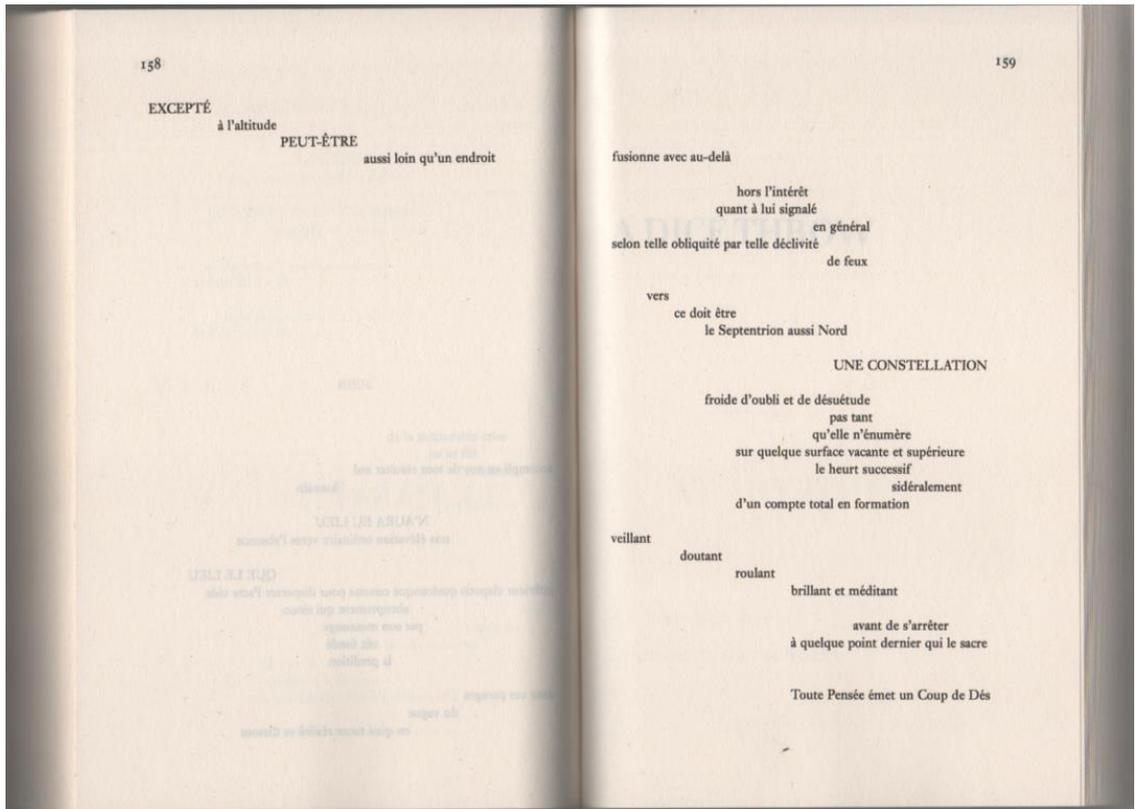




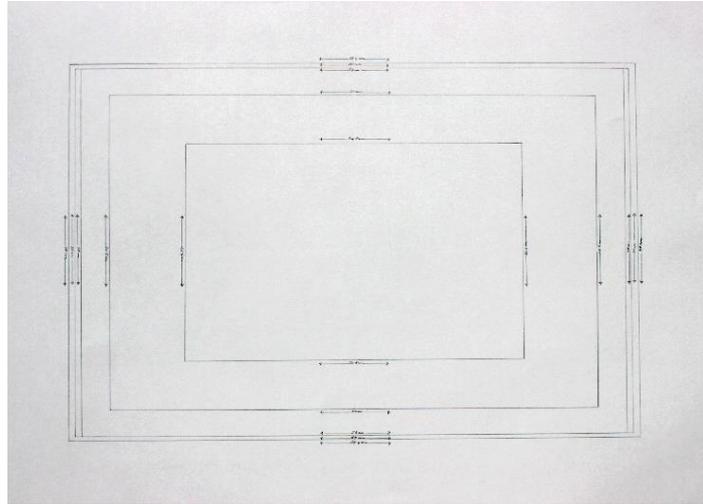








APPENDIX D: A LIST OF EDITIONS OF *UN COUP DE DÉS*



Above a diagrammatic representation of the comparative dimensions of the published editions of *Un coup de Dés* in the language of origin and in double page format, beginning at the centre.

Vollard Manuscript [centre]:

34.8cm x 22.4cm (double page,) 16.4cm x 22.4 cm (single page)

15.1 inches x 13.7 inches (double page), 7.5 inches x 13.7 inches (single page)

NRF Gallimard

50cm x 32.5cm (double page), 25cm x 32.5 cm (single page)

19.6 inches x 12.8 inches (double page), 9.8 inches x 12.8 inches (single page)

Michael Pierson:

56cm x 38cm (double page), 28cm x 38cm (single page)

22inches x 14.9inches (double page), 11inches x 14.9inches (single page)

Ypsilon Éditeur:

56cm x 38cm (double page), 28cm x 38cm (single page)

22inches x 14.9inches (double page), 11inches x 14.9inches (single page)

Mitsou Ronat:

57cm x 38 cm (double page), 28.5cm x 38 (single page)

22.4 inches x 14.9 inches (double page), 11.2 inches x 14.9 inches (single page)

Lahure Proofs:

58.4cm x 38.1cm (double page), 29.2cm x 38.1cm (single page).

23inches x 15 inches (double page), 11.5inches x 15 inches (single page)

List of Editions of *Un coup de Dés* in Chronological Order with notes.

Cosmopolis, 1897

Cosmopolis Magazine (Issue March 3, 1897, British) with preface and editor's note written by Mallarmé. This is the only version to be published before Mallarmé's death in 1898. It does not conform to Mallarmé's 'special pagination' [double page format], initially laid out as eleven double page spreads and printed as a single, in *Elizevir* font. Mallarmé used one type face, different point sizes, lower and upper case in Roman and Italics for dynamic effect.

Vollard Manuscript, 1898

Mallarmé produced a manuscript and subsequent proofs for the attention of the publishing house of Firmin Didot, detailing his desired layout, revisions and instructions for *Un coup de Dés*, intended for publication by Ambroise Vollard, and in double page format.

'Lahure' proofs, 1898

According to Cohn measurements 11 ½ x 15 inches (single page) 23 x 15 inches (double), or 29.2 x 38.1cm (single) 58.4 x 38.1 (double). Cohn, *Mallarmé's Master Work: New Findings*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1966, p. 80. Note there are several versions of the 'Lahure' proofs – archive material suggests slight variations in dimensions. See Danielle Mihram, 'The Abortive Didot/Vollard Édition of *Un coup de Dés*'. Gordon Millan proposes sixteen sets of proofs are known to exist, provided by the printers Firmin-Didot, including four completed lithographs by Odilon Redon. See, Millan, *Mallarmé: A Throw of the Dice The Life of Stéphane Mallarmé*, London: Sacker and Warberg, 1994, p. 313.

Gallimard's Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF), 1914

In 1914 *Un coup de Dés* was published by Gallimard's Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF), under the direction of Mallarmé's son-in-law, Dr Edmund Bonnoit, based on this manuscript, and printed by the Imprimerie Sainte Catherine, Quai St Pierre in Bruges. This version does not conform to the measurements and spatial layout desired by Mallarmé. Artists who have adopted the Gallimard format:

Marcel Broodthaers, 1969: (32.4cm x 49.7cm x 3cm)

Michalis Pichler, 2008: (32.5 cm x 50.2 cm, 3.2cm)

Michael Miranda, 2008: (32.5cm x 50cm x 2cm)

Eric Zyboya, 2011: (21cm x 29.7cm)

Cerith Wyn Evans 2009: (33.3cm x 50.8cm x 1 cm)

Jerérémie Bennequin 2014: (33cm x 50cm)

Mitsou Ronat, *The Change errant/ d'atelier*, edition of *Un Coup de Dés*, 1980

Mitsou Ronat collaborated with artist and typographer Tibor Papp to produce the first large double page Édition of *Un coup de Dés*, published by the Groupe d'Atelier. And, in addition with the participation of Phillippe Dôme, Jean Pierre Faye, Rudolfo Hindostroza, Claude Minière, Bruno Montels, Paul Nagy, and Jacques Roubaud.

Michael Pierson's Édition published by Ptyx, 2004.

Michael Pierson worked from photographs of one of the last sets of the Vollard edition project held at the Bibliothèque nationale. Reconstruction of the missing Didot font and the layout (or 'staging', in Mallarmé's terms) was completed with the help of graphic designer, Denis Péraudeau, painter and graphic artist Jorge Camacho, designer Mike Abrams, designer Alexandre Bruno, and the Ptyx Association.

Ypsilon Éditeur, 2007

In 2007 Ypsilon Éditeur published four volumes: the first is *Un coup de Dés* complete with reproductions of Odilon Redon's lithographs, originally intended for the unpublished Vollard edition. A second volume represents the first Arabic translation by the Moroccan poet Mohammed Bennis. A third volume *Relativement au poème – Un coup de dès jamais n'abolira le hasard* in relation to the poem – composed in three parts: *Journal d'une traduction* by Mohammed Bennis; *Brève histoire de l'édition Vollard du Dé* by Isabella Checcaglini; *Divagation* by Bernard Noël. The fourth volume comprises an Arabic translation of volume three.

APPENDIX E: TYPOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF UN COUP DE DÉS

I am not a typographer, nor do I pretend to be. It was never my intention to undertake a typographic analysis of *Un coup de Dés*, but to understand the rules of Mallarmé's game it became apparent that I would have to establish the layout of the page. This research recognises how exquisitely content and form are bound to one another and the significance Mallarmé attributes to his exacting typographic arrangement of the poem. However, the irrefutable fact remains that no definitive version of the poem was published before Mallarmé's un-timely death.

The difficulty in establishing the architecture of the poem is directly related to the uncertainty in establishing Mallarmé's intention, even with access to the annotated manuscript and proofs. The task mirrors the task of establishing meaning without recourse to the 'author's intention'; the pursuit of 'truth', like meaning itself cannot be established. This is the crux, and one of the main challenges, since there are several versions of annotated proofs, and every reading is individual. For a detailed summary of the various editions and versions of the poem, (see A Note on the Éditions, p. xix –xxiv, and Appendix D: List of Éditions of *Un coup de Dés*, p. 427–30).

Having sought the opinion of the British typographer Neil Crawford, who performed a typographic translation of *Un coup de Dés*, and because 'expert' opinion regarding the layout and its significance remains contested, I felt compelled to undertake my own count, which may appear unorthodox since I am not an 'expert' in this field. My count begins with the twelve double pages of *Un coup de Dés*. I register the dimensions of the page, each line, word, letter, and syllable, 'i' dot and dieresis is recorded. Each typographic variant of *Un coup de Dés* is reproduced in order of appearance, in the process revealing new relations and patterns of thought as they unfold.

1. = 36 point bold roman upper-case, (title page)

POÉME

POEM

2. = 24 point bold italic lower-case, (title page).

***Un coup de Dés jamais n'abolira le
Hasard***

***A throw of the Dice will never abolish
Chance***

3. = 16 point bold roman lower-case, (title page).

Par

By

4. = 24 point bold roman upper-case, (title page).

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

5. = 60 point bold roman upper-case, (p.3, p.5, p.11, p.19).

**UN COUP DE
DES | JAMAIS |
N'ABOLIRA LE
HASARD**

**A DICE THROW
AT ANY TIME
WILL NEVER**

ABOLISH CHANCE

6. = 16 point medium roman upper-case, (p. 5, p. 6, p. 8, p.19, p. 20, p. 21, p. 22, p. 23).

QUAND BIEN MEME LANCE DANS DES CIRCONSTANCES |
ETERNELLES | DU FOND D'UN NAUFRAGE || SOIT || LE
MAITRE || EXISTAT-IL | COMMENCAT-IL ET CESSAT-IL | SE
CHIFFRAT-IL | ILLUMINAT-IL || RIEN | N'AURA EU LIEU |
QUE LE LIEU || EXCEPTE | PEUT-ETRE | UNE
CONSTELLATION

EVEN WHEN CAST IN | EVERLASTING CIRCUMSTANCES |
FROM THE DEPTH OF A SHIPWRECK || WHETHER || THE
MASTER || MIGHT HAVE EXISTED | MIGHT HAVE BEGUN
AND ENDED | MIGHT HAVE BEEN RECKONED | MIGHT HAVE
ENLIGHTENED || NOTHING | WILL HAVE TAKEN PLACE |
OTHER THAN THE PLACE || EXCEPT | PERHAPS | A
CONSTELLATION

7. = 24 point bold italic upper case, (p. 17, p. 18, p. 19).

SI || C'ETAIT LE NOMBRE | CE SERAIT

**IF || IT WAS THE NUMBER | IT WOULD
BE**

8. = 16 point medium italic upper case, (p. 12, p. 13).

COMME SI | COMME SI

AS IF | AS IF

9. = 16 point medium roman lower case, (p. 6, p. 7, p. 8, p. 9, p. 10, p. 20, p. 21, p. 22, p. 23).

que | l'Abîme | blanchi | étale | furieux | sous une
inclinaison | plane désespérément | d'aile | la sienne | par
avance retombée d'un mal à dresser le vol | et couvrant les
jaillissements | coupant ou ras les bonds | très à l'intérieur
résume | l'ombre enfouie dans la profondeur par cette voile
alternative | jusqu'adapter | à l'envergure | sa béante
profondeur en tant que la coque | d'un bâtiment | penché
de l'un ou l'autre bord || hors d'anciens calculs | où la
manoeuvre avec l'âge oubliée | surgi | inférent jadis il

empoignait la barre | de cette confrigation à ses pieds | de
 l'horizon unanime \ que se prépare | s'agite et mêle | ou
 poing

qui l'étreindrait | comme on menace un destin et les vents |
 l'unique Nombre qui ne peut pas être un autre | Esprit |
 pour le jeter | dans la tempête | en reposer la division et
 passer fier | hésite | cadaver per le bras écarté du secret
 qu'il détient | plutôt | que de jouer | en maniaque chenu |
 la partie | au nom des flots | un enhavit le chef | coulee en
 barbe soumise | naufrage cela direct de l'homme | sans nef
 | n'importe | où vaine || ancestralement à n'ouvrir par la
 main | crispée | par delà l'inutile tête | legs en la disparition
 | à quelqu'un | ambigu | l'ultérieur démon immémorial |
 ayant | de contrées nulles | induit | le vieillard vers cette
 conjonction suprême avec la probabilité | celui | son ombre
 puérile | caressé et polie et rendu et lavée | assoupie par la
 vague et soustraite | aux durs os perdus entre les ais | né |
 d'un ébat | la mer par l'aïeul tentant ou l'aïeul contre la mer
 | une chance oiseuse | Fiançailles | dont | le voile d'illusion
 rejailli leur hantise | ainsi que le fantôme d'un geste |
 chancellera | s'affalera | folie || de la memorable crise | ou
 se fût | l'évènement accompli en vue de tout résultat nul |
 humain | une élévation ordinaire verse l'absence | inférieur
 claptois quelconque comme pour dispenser l'acte vide |
 abruptement qui sinon | par son mensonge | eût fondé | la
 perdition | dans ses parages | du vague | en quoi toute
 réalité se dissout || à l'altitude | aussi loin qu'un endroit
 fusionne avec au-

delà | hors l'intérêt | quand à lui signalé | en général | selon
 telle obliquité par telle déclivité | de feux | vers | ce doit
 être | le Septentrion aussi Nord | froid d'oubli et de
 désuétude \ pas tant | qu'elle n'énumère | sur quelque
 surface vacante et supérieure | le heurt successif |
 sidéralement | d'un compte total en formation | veillant |
 doubant | roulant | brillant et méditant | avant de s'arrêter
 | à quelque point dernier qui le sacre | Toute Pensée émet
 un Coup de Dés.

The | Chasm | whitish | full tide | frenzied | down a declivity
 | desperately glides | on a wing | its ow | / in advance fallen
 back form a failure to guide its flight | and covering all the
 outspurts | cutting off all the surges | far far within recalls |
 the shadow buried in the deep | veiled by this variant sail |
 to the point of matching | the span | with its gaping trough
 like the shell | of a ship | listing to this side or that | | gone
 beyond the old reckonings | helmsmanship now forgotten
 with age | risen | inferring | he used to grip the helm | from
 this conflagration at is feet | of the united horizon | that
 there is in preparation | tossed and blended | in the fist that
 seeks to grasp it | as you threaten some destiny and also the
 winds | the one and only number that cannot be any other |
 Spirit | in order to cast it | into the blast | closing the
 division and passing proudly on | hesitates | a corpse cut off
 by its

arm from the secret it withholds | rather | than play | the
 game | like a hoary maniac | in the name of the waves | one
 surges over his head | spills down as a submissive beard |
 direct shipwreck of a man this | with no vessel | no matter |
 where vain || ancestrally not to open his hand | which is
 clenched | far beyond his useless head | a bequest on his
 disappearance | to someone | ambiguous | the ulterior
 immemorial demon | having | from non-lands | led | the old
 man towards his ultimate conjunction with probability | he |
 his puerile shadow | caressed and polished and restored and
 washed | softened by the waves and set free | from the
 hard bones lost amid the timbers | born | from a frolic | the
 sea attempting via the old man or the latter versus the sea |
 an idle chance | Nuptuals | whose | veil of illusion being
 splashed back their obsession | along with the wraith of a
 gesture | will falter | and fall | sheer folly || of the
 unforgettable crisis | or else | the deed might have been
 achieved keeping in view every result that is non | human |
 a common upsurge is shedding absence | a lowly splashing
 of some kind as if to scatter the vacuous action | at once
 which otherwise | by its deceit | would have established |
 the loss | in these infinite regions | of the swell | where all
 reality is dissolved || on high | as far away as a place merges
 with the beyond | outside any interest | assigned to it | in a
 general way | by a certain obliquity in a certain declivity

| of flames | towards what must be | Septentrion as well as
 North | cold with neglect and disuse | not so much | that it
 fails to number | on some vacant and higher surface | the

successive impact | starrily | of a full reckoning in the
 making | keeping watch | wondering | rolling on | shining
 and pondering | before finally halting | at some last point
 that sanctifies it | Every Thought emits a Dice Throw.

10. = 16 point medium italic lower case, (p. 12, p. 13, p. 14, p. 15, p.16, p. 17, p. 19).

*Une insinuation simple | au silence enroulée avec ironie | ou
 | le mystère | précipité | hurlé | dans quelque proche
 tourbillon d'hilarité et d'horreur | voltage autour du gouffre |
 sans le joncher | ni fuir | et en berce l vierge indice | | plume
 solitaire éperdue | sauf que la rencontre ou l'effleure une
 toque de minuit | et immobilise |ou velours chiffonné par une
 esclaffement sombre | cette blancheur rigide | dérisoire | en
 opposition au ciel | trop | pour ne pas marquer | exigüment |
 quiconque | prince amer de l'écueil | s'en coiffe comme de l'
 héroïque | irrésistible mais contenu | par sa petite raison
 virile | en foudre | | soucieux | expiatoire et pubère | muet
 rire | que | La lucide et seigneuriale aigrette de vertige | au
 font invisible | scintille | puis ombrage | une stature
 mignonne ténébreuse | debout | en sa toursion*

*de sirène | le temps | de souffleter | par d'impatientes
 squames ultimes | bifurquées | un roc | faux manoir | toute
 suite | évaporé en brumes | qui imposa | une bourne a l'infini
 | Choit | la plume | rythmique suspens du sinistre | s'ensevelir
 | aux écumes originelles | naguères d'où sursauta son delire*

jusqu' a une cime | flétrie | par la neutralité identique du gouffre.

A simple insinuation | in the silence inrolled ironically | or | the mystery | hurled down | howled out | in some imminent swirl of hilarity and horror | hovers on the brink of the abyss | without sprinkling it | or escaping | and draws from it the soothing virgin sign | | an utterly lost and lonely quill | except that a cap of midnight abuts it or grazes it | and fixes | on the velvet crumpled by a dark burst of laughter | this rigid whiteness | ridiculous | opposed to the sky | too vividly | not to mark | in miniature detail | whoever | a bitter prince of the reef | caps himself with it heroically | irresistible but restrained | by his limited reason manly | in a flash of lightening | | anxious | expiatory and pubescent | mute | laughter | that | The lucid and lordly plume of vertigo | on the invisible brow | shimmers | then overshadows | a dim and dainty form erect | in her siren sinuosity | long enough | to slap | with forked and impatient terminal scales | some rock | a false mansion

| suddenly | dispelled in mists | which laid | a limit on the infinite | | Down falls | the quill | a rhythmic suspension of disaster | to bury itself | in the primordial spray | whose frenzy formerly leapt from there to a peak | that is blasted | in the constant neutrality of the abyss

11. = 10 point medium roman lower case, (p. 19).

autrement qu'hallucination éparse d'agonie | sourdant que nie et clos quand apparu | enfin | par
quelque profusion répandue en rareté | évendence de la somme pour peu qu'une

except as the fragmentary hallucination of some death throe | seeping out though denied and
enclosed when manifest | eventually | out spread with a certain profusion in a rare state |
evidenced in the total sum however scant

12. = 10 point medium italic lower-case, (p. 19).

Issu stellaire | pire | non davantage ni moins | indifféremment mais autant

A product of the stars | no | worse | neither more nor less | but as much indifferently as

TWELVE VARIATIONS:

6 Bold + 6 Medium

4 Bold Roman + 2 Bold Italic

4 Medium Roman + 2 Medium Italic

7 Roman Variations + 5 Italic Variations

6 Upper-case + 6 Lower-case

3 Roman upper-case + 3 Italic upper case

3 Roman lower-case + 3 Italic lower-case

- 1 = 60 –bold roman upper-case [p.3, p.5, p.11, p.19]:
- 2 = 36 –bold roman upper-case [p.1]
- 3 = 24 –bold roman upper-case [p.1]
- 4 = 24 – bold italic upper case [p.17, p.18, p.19]
- 5 =24 – bold italic lower-case [p.1]
- 6 =16 – bold roman lower-case [p.1]
- 7 = 16 – medium roman upper-case [p.5, p. 6, p. 8, pp. 19 –23.]
- 8 = 16 – medium roman lower case [p.6 –10, pp. 20 –23]
- 9 = 16 – medium italic upper case [p.12–13]
- 10 = 16 – medium italic lower case [pp.12–17, p. 19]
- 11 = 10 – medium roman lower case [p.19]
- 12 = 10 medium italic lower-case [p.18]

- p.1 = 4 variations [title]
- p.2 = blank
- p.3 = 1 variation [double page =1]
- p.4 = blank
- p.5 = 2 variations [double page =2]
- p.6 = 2 variations
- p.7 = 1 variation [double page =2]
- p.8 = 2 variations
- p.9 =1 variation [double page =2]

p.10 =1 variation

p.11 =1 variation [double page =2]

p.12 = 2 variations

p.13 = 2 variations [double page =2]

p.14 = 1 variation

p.15 = 1 variation [double page =1]

p.16 = 1 variation

p.17 = 2 variation [double page =2]

p.18 = 2 variations

p.19 = 5 variations [double page = 6]

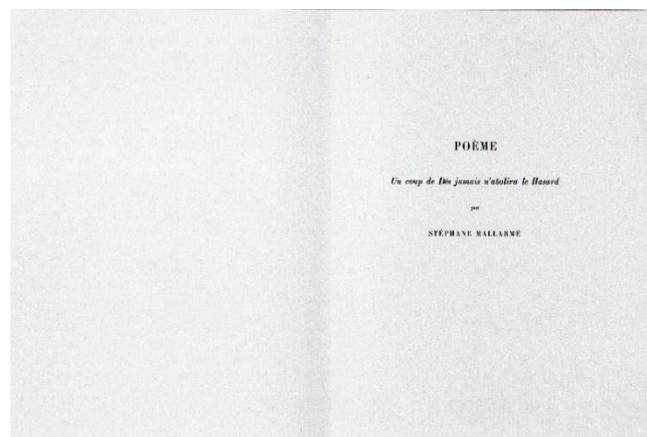
p.20 = 2 variations

p.21 = 2 variations [double page =2]

p.23 = 2 variations

p.24 = 2 variations [double page =2]

Page by page:



Title page

4 type variations:

36 point bold roman upper-case

24 point bold italic lower-case

16 point bold roman lower-case

24 point bold roman upper-case

4 lines

13 words

Syllabic count:

In the ordinary pronunciation, the word *poème* has only two syllables: *po-ème* 's. m. [(*po-ê-m'*); *dans la prononciation ordinaire, le mot n'est que de deux syllabes: poê-m'*] s. m. (*Le Littré*). However, according to : *Dictionnaire Littré* (*po-ê-m'*); in french verse, has three syllables.

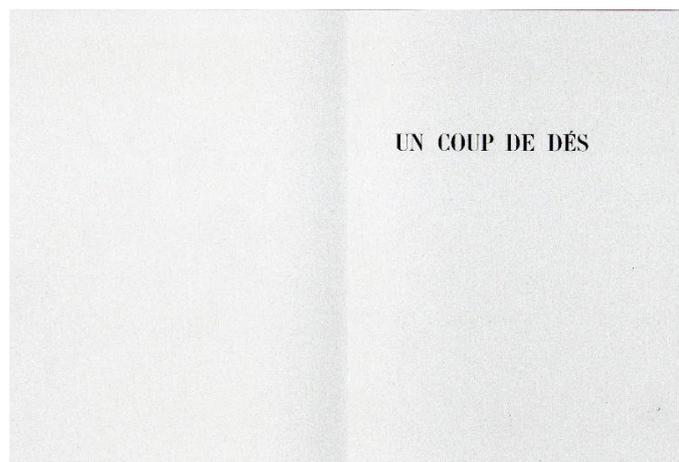
Possible variants : 2+13 +1+5 = 21

3+13 +1+5 = 22

2+13 +1+6 = 22

3+13 +1+6 = 23

3 dots



Double page 1 (single pages numbered 2–3)

1 type variation

60 point, bold roman upper-case (see: p. 3, p. 5, p.11, p.19)

Verso = blank

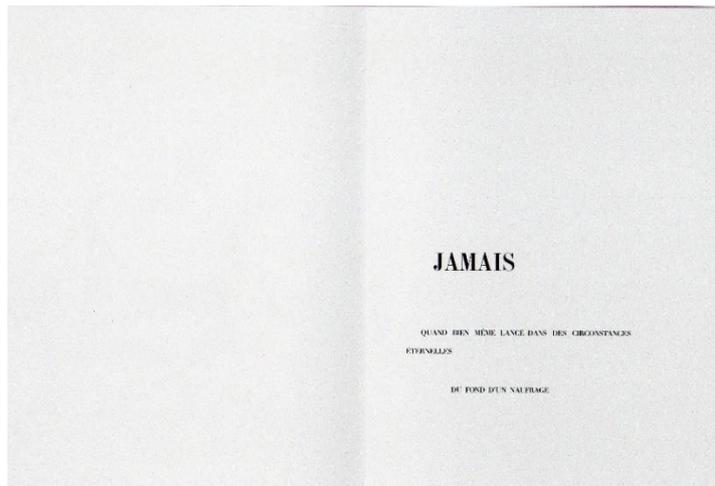
Recto = 1 type variation

1 line – recto

4 words – recto

4 syllables – recto

0 dots



Double page 2 (4–5)

2 type variations

60 point bold roman upper-case (see: p.3, p.5, p.11, p.19)

16 point medium roman upper-case (see: p.5, p.6, p.8, p.19, p.20, p.21, p.22, p.23)

Verso = blank

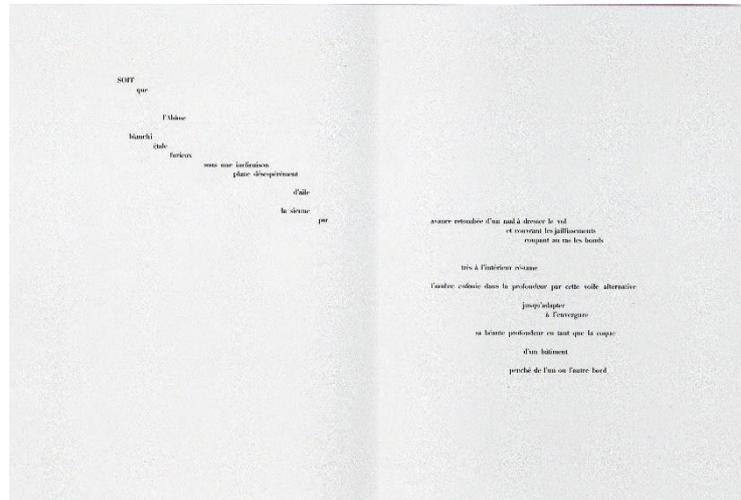
Recto = 2 variations

4 lines – recto

14 words – recto

22 syllables – recto

0 dots



Double page 3

2 type variations:

16 point medium roman upper-case (see: p.5, p.6, p.8, p.19, p.20, p.21, p.22, p.23)

16 point medium roman lower case (see: pp.6 –10, and pp. 20 – 23)

20 lines across the doublet.

11 lines – verso

10 lines – recto

1 cross line

74 words on doublet

17 words on the verso

57 words on the recto

115 syllables across the doublet

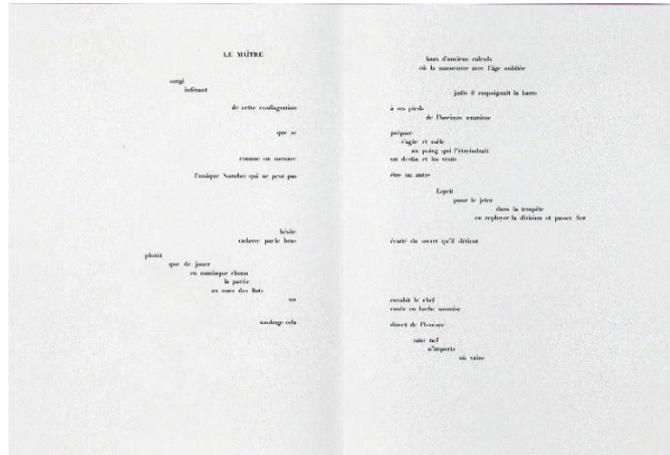
29 syllables on the verso

86 on the recto — Total syllabic count 115

19 dots – doublet

7 dots – verso

10 dots – recto



Double Page 4

2 Variations

Verso – 16 point medium roman upper-case (see: p.5, p.6, p.8, p.19 –23)

Recto – 16 point medium roman lower case (see: pp.6 – 10, pp. 20 –23)

16 lines – verso

21 lines – recto

28 lines – doublet

7 crossover lines

40 words – verso

78 words – recto

108 words – doublet

64 syllables – verso

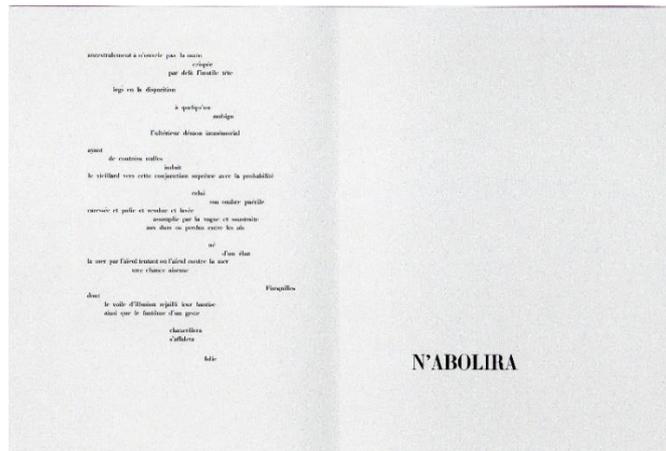
110 syllables – recto

175 syllables – doublet

9 dots – verso

29 dots – recto

38 dots – doublet



Double Page 5

2 Variations

Verso – 16 point medium roman lower case, (see: pp.6–10, pp. 20 – 23)

Recto – 60 point –bold roman upper-case, (see: p.3, p.5, p.11, p.19)

Doublet 2 variations

27 lines – verso

1 line – recto

28 lines – doublet

0 crossover lines

102 words – verso

2 words – recto

104 words – doublet

170 syllables – verso

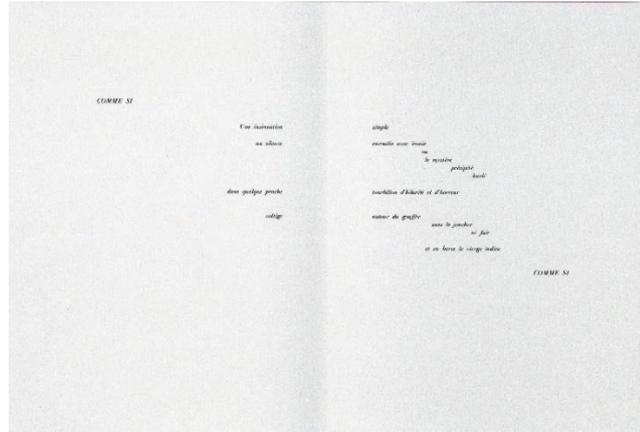
4 syllables – recto

174 syllables – doublet

43 dots – verso

0 dots – recto

43 dots – doublet [including diaeresis = 4]



Double Page 6 – centre pages

2 variations:

16 point medium Italic upper case COMME SI COMME SI (4 words)

16 point medium Italic lower face, (see: pp. 12 –17, p.19)

5 lines –verso

12 – lines recto

13 lines – doublet.

4 cross lines

10 words –verso

31 words – recto

41 words across the doublet

19 syllables – verso

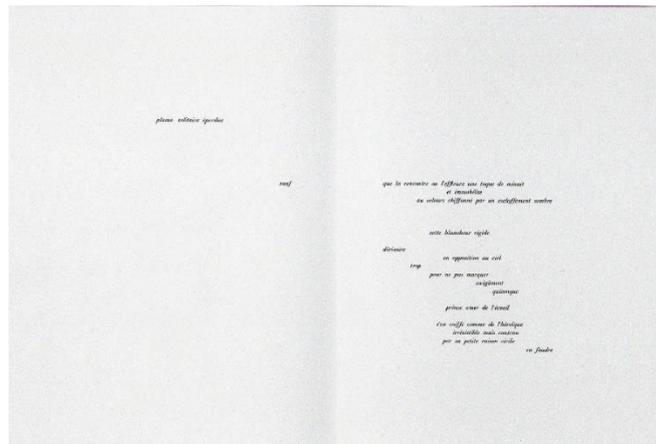
53 – recto

72 Syllables

5 dots –verso

14 dots –recto

19 dots – doublet



Double Page 7

1 variation:

16 point medium Italic lower face – verso, (see: pp. 12–17, p.19)

16 point medium Italic lower face – recto, (see: pp. 12–17, p.19)

2 lines –verso

15 – lines recto

16 lines – doublet.

1 cross lines

4 words –verso

56 words – recto

60 words – doublet

9 syllables – verso

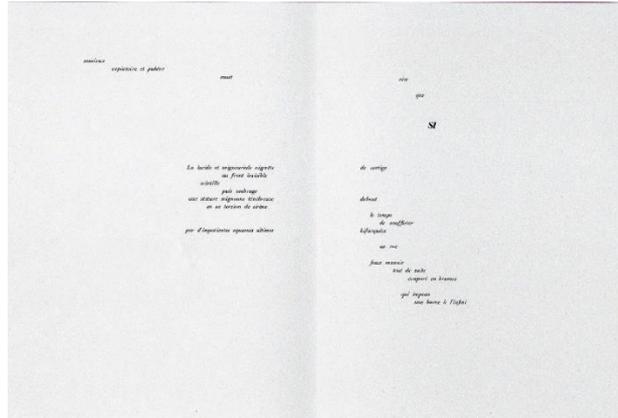
99 – recto

108 syllables – doublet

2 dots –verso

30 dots –recto

32 dots – doublet



Double Page 8

2 variations:

16 point medium italic lower case – verso, (see: pp. 12–17, p.19)

16 point medium italic lower case – recto, (see: pp. 12–17, p.19)

24 point bold italic upper case – recto ***SI*** (see: pp. 17–19)

10 lines –verso

14 lines – recto

23 lines – doublet.

1 crossover lines

30 words –verso

28 words – recto

58 words – doublet

62 syllables – verso

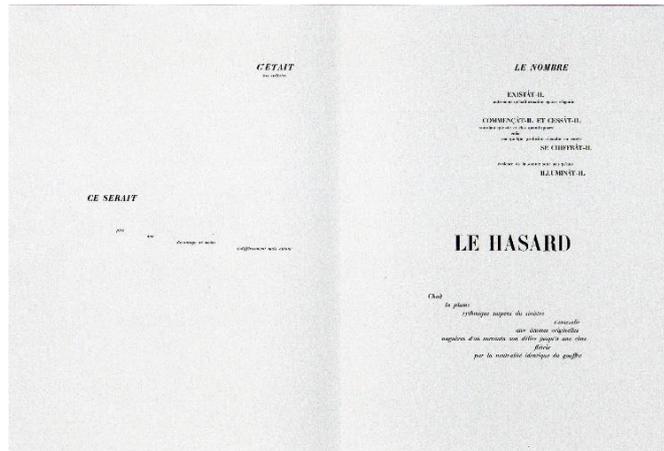
43 – recto

105 syllables – doublet

19 dots –verso

10 dots –recto

29 dots – doublet



Double Page 9

6 variations:

2 variations – verso

5 variations – recto

6 variations – doublet

24 point bold italic upper case, (see: pp. 17–19)

16 point medium roman upper-case, (see: pp. 19 –23)

10 point medium italic lower-case, (see: p.18)

10 point medium roman lower case, (see: p.19)

60 point bold roman upper-case, (see: p.3, p.5, p.11, p.19)

16 point medium italic lower case, (see: pp. 12 –17, p.19)

7 lines –verso

19 lines – recto

26 lines – doublet.

0 crossover lines

14 words –verso

73 words – recto

84 words – doublet

25 syllables – verso

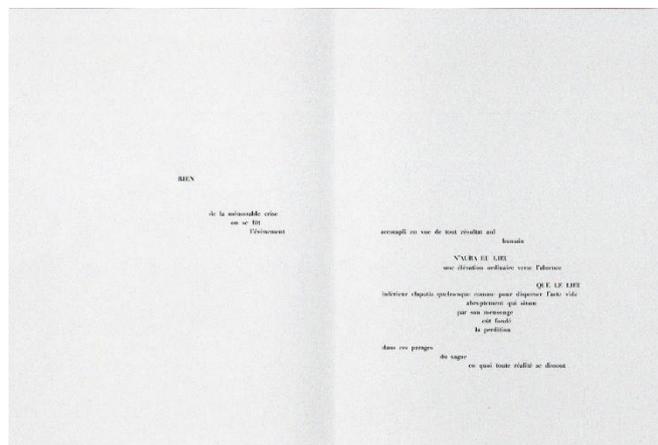
133 syllables – recto

158 syllables – doublet

8 dots – verso

21 dots – recto

29 dots – doublet



Double Page 10

2 variations:

16 point medium roman upper-case – verso and recto (see: p. 5, p.6, p.8, p.19 – 23)

16 point medium roman lower case – verso and recto (see: pp.6 –10, pp. 20 – 23)

4 lines –verso

13 lines – recto

26 lines – doublet.

1 crossover lines

10 words –verso

51 words – recto

61 words – doublet

16 syllables – verso

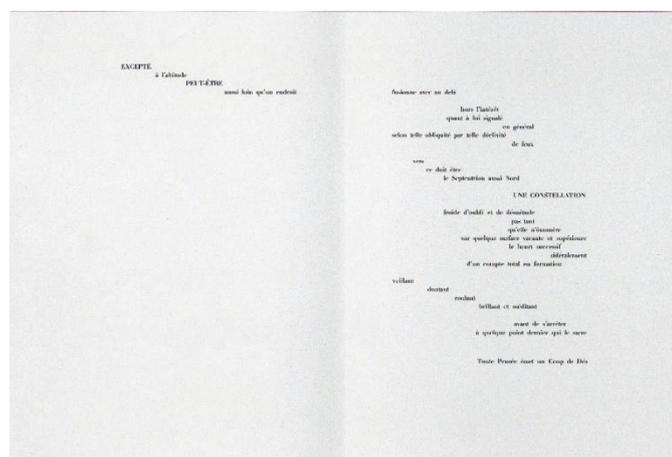
90 syllables – recto

106 syllables – doublet

1 dot –verso

17 dots –recto

18 dots – doublet



Double Page 11

2 variations:

16 point medium roman upper-case – verso and recto, (see: p. 5, p.6, p.8, p.19 –23)

16 point medium roman lower case – verso and recto, (see: pp.6 –10, and pp. 20 – 23)

4 lines –verso

24 lines – recto

27 lines – doublet.

1 crossover lines

11 words –verso

82 words – recto

93 words – doublet

16 syllables – verso

145 syllables – recto

161 syllables – doublet

4 dots –verso

23 dots –recto

27 dots – doublet

APPENDIX F: SYLLABIC COUNT OF *UN COUP DE DÉS*

The decision to conduct a syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés* was counter-intuitive given the fragmentary layout of the poem which problematizes such a count. At a glance the typographic arrangement suggests multiple approaches to reading along different axis – defying any one path. Quentin Meillassoux asks: ‘If there is a meter intrinsic and specific to *Un coup de Dés*, what does it number? And what exactly must we count to obtain it?’⁶¹⁰ Meillassoux is critical of Mitsou Ronat’s syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés*, justifying a ‘word count’ that ‘could play a role analogous to the quavering of the silent ‘e’, in a syllabic count of the poem. He cites Gustav Kahn’s unequivocal position as principal theorist of the new form of ‘free verse’, to support his thesis, ‘For Kahn, the essence of verse was not at all linked to the puerile counting of syllables or to the equally infantile matching of rhymes.’⁶¹¹ Mallarmé recognises the value of both traditional metre and free verse: ‘let us imagine the dissolution of the official verse form, the form now becoming whatever one wants, so long as pleasure repeats in it.’⁶¹² Mallarmé’s verse liberates the ‘ear’ in favour of an ‘individual game’, at the same time attributing a social function to traditional form, ‘I remain convinced that on grand occasions, poets will obey, solemn tradition, of which the preponderance come from the classic genius.’⁶¹³

In *Un coup de Dés*, both forms become manifest. The rule of constraint governing the alexandrine a line of twelve syllables as Meillassoux rightfully claims:

contains a principle of uncertainty within the narrow and marginal space of a simple letter, pronounced or elided at leisure. It is as if the poet desired to infinitise the alexandrine – to make of its twelve a fixed number that, at the same time, would not be a fixed number. To make of it a

610 Op., cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren: A Decipherment of Mallarmé’s Coup de Dés*, p 42.

611 Ibid., p. 22.

612 Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Crisis of Verse’, *Divigations*, p. 204.

613 Ibid., p. 205–6.

metre that, like chance, contains virtually its contrary option, free verse without a strict rule as to the pronunciation of the silent e.⁶¹⁴

Meillassoux believes the ‘principle of uncertainty’ governing the alexandrine is transferred by Mallarmé to *Un coup de Dés*. The complexity of the rule of constraint governing the syllabic count of the classical alexandrine and its use at the turn of the nineteenth century is beyond the scope of this essay. However, it is important to note the classical alexandrine demands adherence to the rules, the ‘silent e’, or elided ‘e’ presents a problem; should it be counted, or not? Should the count be reflected in the written form only, albeit implied in the spoken form, or does the spoken form allow more freedom, an individual song? How is it possible to apply such a rule to a non-linear presentation in the form of *Un coup de Dés*?

The letter ‘e’ signals a split between proponents of traditional fixed metre and advocates of free verse, notably Gustav Kahn and his followers. Meillassoux notes the ‘modernists’ considered adherence to metre to be a ‘social convention’, whereas adversaries to ‘traditional diction’ sought to rediscover the ‘music’ of the classical poets, free from constraint.⁶¹⁵ Mallarmé claims to ‘take back from music what rightfully belongs to poetry’.⁶¹⁶ He considers ‘verse is everything, as soon as one writes’.⁶¹⁷ Language is presented as a game; oscillating between forms, ‘the very strict, numerical and direct, with the play of its two parts, the former metre subsists, alongside experimentation’.⁶¹⁸ Mallarmé believes this fusion liberates the ear and voice of the reader who initiates her own game.

In place of the way the powerful romantic ear, at the beginning of the century, combined the doubleness of their undulating alexandrines with

⁶¹⁴ Op. cit., Meillassoux, p. 184.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., p. 180 – 81.

⁶¹⁶ Op. cit., Mallarmé, ‘Music and Letters’, p.183.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

their stressed caesuras and enjambments; fusion that undid itself towards integrity. A lucky discovery which seems to bring to a close yesterday's experiments is free verse—an individual modulation, because every soul is a rhythmic tangle.⁶¹⁹

This research supports Ronat's claim that the classic form of the alexandrine is written into the architecture of *Un coup de Dés*. However, it goes go further by establishing a reciprocal relation between a syllabic count of *Un cup de Dés* and the numbers of the dice, which I have reconfigured into a model representing the combinatorial potential of every throw of the dice. This complimentary relation between the structural arrangement of the poem and the dice, is echoed in the free form of verse, Mallarmé's constellation, and the traditional form of the alexandrine which are unified in the space of the page.

born from a frolic | the sea attempting via the old man or the later versus
the sea | an idle chance | Nuptuals⁶²⁰

How is it possible to conduct a syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés* given its constellationary presentation? How can such a 'problematic count' of the elided 'e' and dieresis be carried out given the 'principle of uncertainty' governing the traditional form of the alexandrine? Ronat makes a similar point: 'it is advisable to be careful, as the result is not the same according to the principles chosen'.⁶²¹ She proposes that 'the following principles as reasonable: - Counting the mute e according to the classical metric, - One page = one verse, - No dieresis, '- Crossing in the same body, one obtains the number 1224.⁶²² Roger Pearson, who supports Ronat's, count writes:

619 Ibid.

620 Op. cit., Mallarmé, (see Appendices, Appendix C: *Un coup de Dés*, p. 420).

621 Op. cit., Mitsou Ronat, 'Le « coup de dés »: forme fixe?' *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études francaises*, n°32, 1980, 141–7, p. 143.

622 Ibid

If one takes the double page as a single unit and observes the traditional rules for counting syllables (while also counting each diaeresis as one vowel), there are 1,224 syllables, or ‘positions métriques, in the poem as a whole (including its title- page) – 1.e. a multiple of 12 and 24 (and therefore, one might add, of the very numbers of the total itself – 12: 24).⁶²³

This approach, like Ronat’s and Pearson’s, includes the title page in the count – its inclusion is based on the integrity of the whole, which comprises twelve double page spreads. My syllabic count does not follow the strict rules governing the traditional form of the alexandrine. Rather, it was achieved through reading and re-reading *Un coup de Dés* aloud – in addition to listening to the many recordings and noting variants in cadence. Mallarmé’s dictionary of choice, *Le Littré*, was used to determine changes in pronunciation – between ordinary usage and French versification. For instance, according to *Dictionnaire Littré*: the word ‘conjunction’ (kon-jon-ksion, in poetry has four syllables). Other anomalies, often the product of fashion, were considered, for instance: the word: ‘ultérieur’ described in *Le Littré* as having four syllables in later verse, now it is three. However, the *Le Littré* did not have the final say, but it confirmed my suspicion that the rules may guide but they are not an absolute authority.

The question of word order is paramount since the course chosen will determine the count. If the reader is to follow Mallarmé’s rule – that is to determine an ‘individual game’, then one must chart one’s course. In my syllabic count I have followed the order of words beginning from the top of the title page, working down the page, left to right, across the double pages progressively. This is not to say that other readings (mine) were determined by this progression. A reading of my syllabic count, rendered as dots, then numbers reveal abstract forms, highlighting the paradox of a constellationary layout determined through progression.

If doubt directed repeated counts of the text – intuition prompted me to examine the relation of the number of syllables to the words themselves, and to a reflection of their

⁶²³ Op. cit., Roger Pearson, *Unfolding Mallarmé: The Development of a Poetic Art*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 259.

origin and meaning across translation. My method, though complex and demanding, is driven by Mallarmé's pursuit of the mystery of language. Mallarmé writes:

And what a study of the sounds and colour of words, the music and painting through which your thought must pass, however beautiful it may be if it is to become poetry!⁶²⁴

To test Ronat's syllabic count using her rules and to compare my reading with that of a French speaker familiar with the rules of French versification, I sought an independent syllabic count. Francis Baptiste Haselden, a post-graduate student of *École Normale Supérieure*, undertook the task. The results have been recorded, transcribed, and placed alongside my syllabic count. There are differences; this is to be expected, given the difficulties highlighted in this discourse. To appreciate these differences, I draw attention to a comprehensive record included in appendices.

For the benefit of the reader, I mention the title page as example. This page contains four lines: POÈME | Un coup de Dés jamais n'abolira le Hasard | Par | STEPHANE MALLARMÉ. The word poem has two or three syllables, according to: *Dictionnaire Littré* (po-ê-m'); in french verse, in ordinary pronunciation the word has two syllables: poê-m'). *Un coup de Dés jamais n'abolira le Hasard*, has thirteen syllables, this is beyond doubt, as is the word Par, which has one syllable. Stéphane Mallarmé has, either five or six syllables, depending on how one reads Stéphane, either as two, or three syllables. There are four possible syllabic counts of the title page – or four possible variants:

$$2+13 +1+5 =21$$

$$3+13 +1+5 =22$$

$$2+13 +1+6 =22$$

$$3+13 +1+6 =23$$

⁶²⁴ Mallarmé, letter to Cazalis, July 1865, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, p. 52.

Count 1: title page following normal French versification (Mitsou Ronat)

POÈME

. . . =3

Un Coup de Dés jamais n'abolira le Hasard

. =13

Par

. =1

STEPHANE MALLARMÉ

. 5

Total Mitsou Ronat 22

Count 2, title page normal French versification (Francis Haselden)

POÈME

. . = 2

Un Coup de Dés jamais n'abolira le Hasard

. =13

Par

. =1

STEPHANE MALLARMÉ

. = 6

Total: Francis Haselden = 22

The first row indicates Francis Haselden count, the second row, Mitsou Ronat, and third row, my count.

Un coup de dés

. . . . [4]

. . . . [4]

1 1 1 1 [4]

[4]

Total: F. H= 4

M. R= 4

Me = 4

JAMAIS

. . [2]

. . [2]

2 [2]

Quand bien même lancé dans des circonstances *

. [12]

. [10]

1 3 [12]

éternelles

. . . [3]

. . . [3]

1 1 1 [3]

Du fond d'un naufrage

. [5]

. [5]

1 1 1 2 [5]

Total: F. H = 22

M. R= 20

Me = 22

Soit

. [1]

. [1]

[1]

que

. [1]

. [1]

[1]

l'Abîme

. . [2]

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| . . . | [2] |
| | [2] |
| blanchi | |
| . . . | [2] |
| . . . | [2] |
| | [2] |
| étale | |
| . . . | [2] |
| . . . | [2] |
| | [2] |
| furieux | |
| . . . | [2] |
| . . . | [2] |
| 3 | [3] +1 |
| sous une inclinaison | |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| plane désespérement | |
| | [7] |
| | [7] |
| | [7] |

d'aile

. [1]

. [1]

[1]

la sienne

. . [2]

. . [2]

3 [3] +1

par

. [1]

. [1]

[1]

avance retombée d'un mal à dresser le vol *Alexandrine?

. [13]

. [13]

[13]

et couvrant les jaillissements

. [8]

. [8]

[8]

coupant au ras les bonds

. [6]

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| très à l'intérieur résumé | |
| | [8] |
| | [8] |
| | [8] |
| l'ombre enfouie dans la profondeur par cette voile alternative | |
| | [18] |
| | [17] -1 |
| 2 3 | [18] |
| jusqu'à adapter | |
| | [5] |
| | [5] |
| | [5] |
| à l'envergure | |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| sa béante profondeur en tant que la coque *Alexandrine | |
| | [12] |
| | [12] |
| | [12] |
| d'un bâtiment | |
| | [4] |

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| penché de l'un ou l'autre bord | |
| | [8] |
| | [8] |
| | [8] |
| | Total F. H = 113 |
| | M.R = 112 |
| | Me = 115 |

LE MAÎTRE

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| . . . | [2] |
| . . . | [2] |
| 2 | [3] +1 |
| hors d'anciens calculs | |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| où la manœuvre avec l'âge oubliée | |
| | [10] |
| | [10] |
| 3 | [11] +1 |
| surgi | |
| . . . | [2] |

| | |
|------------------------------|------------|
| . . . | [2] |
| | [2] |
| inférant | |
| . . . | [3] |
| . . . | [3] |
| | [3] |
| | (23/23/25) |
| jadis il empoignait la barre | |
| | [8] |
| | [8] |
| | [8] |
| de cette conflagration | |
| | [8] |
| | [7] -1 |
| 4 | [8] |
| à ses pieds | |
| . . . | [3] |
| . . . | [3] |
| | [3] |
| de l'horizon unanime | |
| | [7] |
| | [7] |
| | [7] |
| que se | |
| . . . | [2] |

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| . . . | [2] |
| | [2] |
| prépare | |
| . . . | [2] |
| . . . | [2] |
| | [2] |
| s'agit et mêle | |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| comme on menace | |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| au poing qui l'étreindrait | |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| un destin et les vents | |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |

l'unique Nombre qui ne peut pas

. [9]

. [9]

[9]

(Alexandrine across the fold *) (59/58/59)

être un autre

. . . [3] *

. . . [3]

[3]

Esprit

. . [3]

. . [3]

[2]

Pour le jeter

. . . . [4]

. . . . [4]

[4]

Dans la tempête

. . . . [4]

. . . . [4]

[4]

En reployer la division et passer fier *

. [12]

. [12]

[12] +1?

[12 syllables but not an alexandrine, closing the division!]

[12]? +1

(fier 2 ?)

Hésite

. . . [2]

. . . [2]

[2]

Cadavre par le bras écarté du secret qu'il détient

. [15]

. [15]

[15]

Plutôt

. . . [2]

. . . [2]

[2]

Que de jouer

. [4]

. [4]

[4]

En maniaque chenu

. [6]

. [5]-1

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|------------|
| 2 | [6] | |
| La partie | | |
| . . . | [3] | |
| . . . | [3] | |
| | [3] | (58/57/57) |
| Au nom des flots | | |
| | [4] | |
| | [4] | |
| | [4] | |
| Un | | |
| . | [1] | |
| . | [1] | |
| | [1] | |
| Envahit le chef | | |
| | [5] | |
| | [5] | |
| | [5] | |
| Coule en barbe soumise | | |
| | [6] | |
| | [6] | |
| | [6] | |
| Naufrage cela | | |
| | [5] | |
| | [5] | |
| | [5] | |

Direct de l'homme

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |

Sans nef

| | |
|-----|-----|
| . . | [2] |
| . . | [2] |
| | [2] |

N'importe

| | |
|-----|-----|
| . . | [2] |
| . . | [2] |
| | [2] |

Où vaine

| | |
|-----|------|
| . . | [2] |
| . . | [2] |
| | [2]? |

31/3131

Total F. H = 171

M. R = 169

Me = 175 Questions over fier

and vaine – come back to this.

ancestralement à n'ouvrir pas la main

. [11]

. [10] -1

4 [11]

crispée

. . [2]

. . [2]

[2]

par delà l'inutile tête

. [8]

. [8]

[8]

legs en la disparition

. [7]

[7]

à quelqu'un

. . . [3]

. . . [3]

[3]

ambigu

. . . [3]

. . . [3]

[3]

l'ultérieur démon immémorial

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| | [9] |
| | [9] |
| 4 5 | [11] +2 |
| ayant | |
| . . | [2] |
| . . | [2] |
| | [2] |
| de contrées nulles | |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| Induit | |
| . . | [2] |
| . . | [2] |
| | [2] |
| le vieillard vers cette conjonction suprême avec la probabilité | |
| | [19] |
| | [19] |
| 3 4 | [21] +2 |
| celui | |
| . . | [2] |
| . . | [2] |

[2] (72/71/76)

son ombre puérole

. [5]

. [5]

3 [6] +1

caressée et polie et rendue et lavée*

. [12]

. [12]

[12]

assouplie par la vague et soustraite

. [9]

. [9]

[9]

aux durs os perdus entre les ais

. [8]

. [8]

2 [9] +1

né

. [1]

. [1]

[1]

d'un ébat

(74/71/76)

Ainsi que le fantôme d'un geste

. [8]

. [8]

[8]

Chancellera

. [4]

. [4]

[4]

S'affalera

. [4]

. [4]

[4]

Folie

. . . [2]

. . . [2]

[2]

N'ABOLIRA

. [5]

. [5]

13 [4] -1

(23/23/22)

Total: F. H = 169

M.R. = 165

Me = 174

comme si

| | |
|-------|-----|
| . . . | [3] |
| . . . | [3] |
| | [3] |

une ?]iination simple

| | |
|-----------|--------|
| | [7] |
| | [6] -1 |
| 4 | |
| 1 6 2 | [9] +2 |

au silence enroulée avec ironie

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| | [11] |
| | [11] |
| | [11] |
| 2 | |

ou = 1

| | |
|---|-----|
| . | [1] |
| . | [1] |
| | [1] |

le mystère = 3

| | |
|-------|-----|
| . . . | [3] |
| . . . | [3] |
| 1 2 | [3] |

Précipité = 4

| | |
|---------|-----|
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| 4 | [4] |

Hurlé = 2

| | |
|-----|-----|
| . . | [2] |
| . . | [2] |
| 2 | [2] |

dans quelque proche tourbillon d'hilarité et d'horreur = 14

| | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| | [14] |
| | [14] |
| 1 2 1 3 1 3 1 2 | [14] |

voltige autour du gouffre (gouffre as 2 ?) +1

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| 2 2 1 1 | [6] |

sans le joncher

plume solitaire éperdue

. [8]

. [8]

[8]

sauf que la rencontre ou l'effleure une toque de minuit

. [15]

. [15]

[15]

et immobilise

. [5]

. [5]

[5]

au velours chiffonné par un esclaffement sombre*

. [13]

. [12] -1

2 [14] +1

cette blancheur rigide

. [6]

. [6]

[6]

dérisoire

. . . [3]

. . . [3]

[3]

en opposition au ciel

| | |
|-------------------------|---------|
| | [7] |
| | [7] |
| 5 | [8] +1 |
| <i>(See Le Littré)</i> | |
| trop | |
| . | [1] |
| . | [1] |
| | [1] |
| pour ne pas marquer | |
| | [5] |
| | [5] |
| | [5] |
| exigüment | |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| quiconque | |
| . . . | [2] |
| . . . | [2] |
| 3 | [3]? +1 |
| prince amer de l'écueil | |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |

s'en coiffe comme de l'héroïque

. [9]

. [9]

[9]

irrésistible mais contenu

. [9]

. [9]

[9]

par sa petite raison virile

. [9]

. [9]

[9]

en foudre

. . . [2]

. . . [2]

2 [3] + 1?

104/ 103/108

Total: F. H = 104

M.R = 103

Me = 108

soucieux

. . . [3]

. . . [2] -1

[3]

expiatoire et pubère

. [7]

. [6] -1

[7]

muet rire

. . . [3]

. . . [3]

2 [4] +1

que

. [1]

. [1]

[1]

SI

. [1]

. [1]

[1]

la lucide et seigneuriale aigrette de vertige*Alexandrine?

. [12]

. [12]

4 [13] +1?

de souffreter

. . . . [4]

. . . . [4]

[4]

par d'impatientes squames ultimes bifurquées* ?

. [14]

. [13]-1

3 [14]

un roc

. . [2]

. . [2]

[2]

faux manoir

. . . [3]

. . . [3]

[3]

tout de suite

. . . [3]

. . . [3]

[3]

éaporé en brumes

. [6]

. [6]

2 [7] +1

qui imposa

. . . . [4]

. . . . [4]

[4]

une borne à l'infini

. [7]

. [7]

[7]

Total: F. H = 103

M.R. = 100

Me = 105?

C'ÉTAIT

. . [2]

. . [2]

[2]

issu stellaire

. . . . [4]

. . . . [4]

[4]

LE NOMBRE

. . . [2]

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| | [2] |
| 2 | [3] +1 |
| EXISTÂT-IL | |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| autrement qu'hallucination épars d'agonie | |
| | [15] |
| | [14]-1 |
| | [15] |
| COMMENÇÂT-IL ET CESSÂT-IL | |
| | [8] |
| | [8] |
| | [8] |
| sourdant que nié et clos quand apparu | |
| | [11] |
| | [10] -1 |
| | [11] |
| enfin | |
| . . . | [2] |
| . . . | [2] |
| | [2] |
| par quelque profusion répandue en rareté*Alexandrine | |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| | [14] |
| | [12] -2 |
| | [14] 62/58/63 |
| SE CHIFFRÂT-IL | |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| évidence de la somme pour peu qu'une | |
| | [11] |
| | [11] |
| 3 | [10] -1 |
| ILLUMINÂT-IL | |
| | [5] |
| | [5] |
| | [5] |
| CE SERAIT | |
| | [3] |
| | [3] |
| | [3] |
| pire | |
| . | [1] |
| . | [1] |
| | [1] |
| non | |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------|
| | [2] |
| de la mémorable crise | |
| | [7] |
| | [7] |
| | [7] |
| ou se fût | |
| . . . | [3] |
| . . . | [3] |
| | [3] |
| l'évènement accompli en vue de tout résultat nul | |
| | [15] |
| | [15] |
| | [15] |
| humain | |
| . . | [2] |
| . . | [2] |
| | [2] |
| N'AURA EU LIEU | |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| une élévation ordinaire verse l'absence * | |
| | [12] * |
| | [12] |
| 5 | [13] +1 |

dans ces parages

. [4]

. [4]

[4]

du vague

. . . [2]

. . . [2]

[2]

en quoi toute réalité se dissout

. [11]

. [11]

[11] 101/100/105

Total: F. H = 101

M. R. = 100

Me = 106?

EXCEPTÉ

. [3]

. [3]

[3]

à l'altitude

. [4]

. [4]

[4]

PEUT-ÊTRE

| | |
|------------------------------------------------|--------|
| | [2] |
| | [2] |
| | [3] +1 |
| aussi loin qu'un endroit fusionne avec au delà | |
| | [14] |
| | [13]-1 |
| 2 | [14] |
| hors l'intérêt | |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| quant à lui signalé | |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| en général | |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| selon telle obliquité par telle déclivité | |
| | [14] |
| | [14] |
| | [14] |
| de feux | |

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| . . . | [2] |
| . . . | [2] |
| | [2] |
| vers | |
| . | [1] |
| . | [1] |
| | [1] |
| ce doit être | |
| | [3] |
| | [3] |
| 2 | [4] + 1 |
| | 57/56/58 |
| le Septentrion aussi Nord | |
| | [8] |
| | [7] -1 |
| 3 | [8] |
| UNE CONSTELLATION | |
| | [7] |
| | [6]-1 |
| | [7] |
| froide d'oubli et de désuétude | |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| | [10] |
| | [9] -1 |
| 3 | [11] +1 |
| 5 | |
| pas tant | |
| . . | [2] |
| . . | [2] |
| | [2] |
| qu'elle n'énumère | |
| | [4] |
| | [4] |
| 4 | [5] +1 |
| sur quelque surface vacante et supérieure*Alexandrine | |
| | [12] * |
| | [12] |
| | [12] |
| le heurt successif | |
| | [5] |
| | [5] |
| | [5] |

sidéralement

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| | [5] |
| | [4]-1 |
| | [5] |

d'un compte total en formation

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| | [10] |
| | [9]-1 |
| | [10] |

veillant

| | |
|-----|--------------|
| . . | [2] |
| . . | [2] |
| | [2] 65/60/67 |

doutant

| | |
|-----|-----|
| . . | [2] |
| . . | [2] |
| | [2] |

roulant

| | |
|-----|-----|
| . . | [2] |
| . . | [2] |
| | [2] |

brillant et méditant

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| | [6] |
|-----------|-----|

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| avant de s'arrêter | |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| | [6] |
| à quelque point dernier qui le sacre | |
| | [9] |
| | [9] |
| 2 | [10] +1 |
| | |
| Toute Pensée émet un Coup de Dés | |
| | [10] |
| | [10] |
| | [10] |
| 35/35/36 | |

Total F. H = 157

M.R. = 151

Me = 161

The final count = 1200 for the main body and 21 for the title page.

However, this is open to a possible count including the title page of 1224

Question over p.3 fier and vaine, p.9 gouffre

$$4+22+115+175+174+72+108+105+158+106+161= 1200$$

Title 21 (or 22 or 23)

The dots on the other hand are $252 = 12 \times 21$

Title 3

APPENDIX G: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

PREFACE

Dialogism:

Mikhail Bakhtin use of the term 'dialogic' as summarised by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, in the glossary to Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination*, is appropriated and represented here.

Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole-there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Which will affect the other, how it will do so and in what degree is what is settled at the moment of utterance. This dialogic imperative, mandated by the pre-existence of the language world relative to any of its current inhabitants, ensures that there can be no actual monologue. One may, like a primitive tribe that knows only its own limits, be deluded into thinking there is one language, or one may, as grammarians, certain political figures, and normative framers of "literary languages" do, seek in a sophisticated way to achieve a unitary language. In both cases the unitariness is relative to the overpowering force of heteroglossia, and thus dialogism.

Dialogue and its various processes are central to Bakhtin's theory, and it is precisely as verbal process (participial modifiers) that their force is most accurately sensed. A word, discourse, language, or culture undergoes "dialogization" when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, and aware of competing definitions for the same things. Undialogized language is authoritative or absolute.

Dialogue may be external (between two different people) or internal (between an earlier and a later self). Jurij Lotman in *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, translated by R. Vroon [Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1977] distinguishes these two types of dialogue as respectively spatial [A-B] and temporal [A-A'] communication acts [p. 91]. (Op. cit., Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Glossary, Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, p. 426-7.

Polyphonic:

From Greek 'many voiced'. A term for music in which one or more strands (instruments or voices) sound simultaneously, as opposed to monophonic music, with just a single line.

The word has been borrowed in discussing literature to suggest a work in which different points of view are allowed to co-exist, rather than being organised to support a single authorial position. (Martin Grey, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, London: York Press, 1999 [1994] p. 226.).

Mise en abîme:

Mise en abîme also written as Mise-en-Abyme, defined by Martin Grey as: '(Fr. 'put in the abyss'). A term for a self-reflexive repetition in a text. The central character of Gide's novel *The Counterfeiters* (1926) is a novelist working on a novel which is very like the novel itself [...] The term has been taken up in deconstructive criticism for the occasional glimpses of the 'solving emptiness' threat underlines the endless free-play of meanings in words, the revelations of an abyss of nothingness which is constantly covered and uncovered by the signs themselves'. (Martin Grey, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p. 181). See also Metafiction.

INTRODUCTION

Droste effect:

Droste Effect: John. J. White describes the 'The Droste effect, known in art as an effect of Mise-en-Abyme is the effect of a picture recursively appearing within itself.' See: John. J. White, 'The Semiotics of the Mise-en-Abyme, *The Motivated Sign: Iconicity in Language and Literature II*, edited by Olga Fischer and Max Nänny, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2001, pp. 29–53, 37.

CHAPTER THREE

Chiasmus:

Chiasmus: defined as: 'a rhetorical or literary figure in which words, grammatical constructions, or concepts are repeated in reverse order', (*OED*) The Poetry Foundation elaborates in its glossary: Repetition of any group of verse elements (including rhyme and grammatical structure) in reverse order, such as the rhyme scheme ABBA. Examples can be found in Biblical scripture ("But many that are *first* | Shall be *last*, | And many that are *last* | Shall be *first*"; Matthew 19:30). See also John Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' ("Beauty is truth, truth beauty"). More recently this literary device, has been used by several American contemporary poets, including Kathleen Fraser. In 'Wing' written in 1995, Fraser exploits the metaphor of the wing to reveal a chiastic structure that operates both visually and textually.

CHAPTER FOUR

F-hole: See:

F-hole, also known as the Amati f-hole, designed and perfected by the Amati brothers, sons of Andrea Amati (c. 1505 – c. 1578) who was responsible for the design and creation of the violin, viola and cello known as the “violin family”. See John Dilworth, ‘The Violin and Bow-Origins and Development’, *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, edited by Robin Stowell, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 1–29. Violin maker and restorer Andrew Dipper considers the relation between the geometric proportions of the f-hole developed by the Amati brothers and its tonal quality, when compared to earlier versions of the sound hole. He concludes that the f-hole is equal to a sphere, whose origin and terminus are the almost equally sized discs of the north and south poles, which form the upper and lower eyes of the f-hole. See Dipper, ‘Tracing the Development of Violin Design f-hole Through Peeling an Orange’, *The Strad*.

Indice:

‘*Indice*’, from the Latin. *indicium*, of the same root as *indicare*, *indicate*. *Indice* is defined as an exposed sign that indicates with probability, it is also defined as a clue. Further meanings include the optical term: refraction index, the ratio of the sine of the angle on incidence to the sine of the refraction angle. In *Le Littré* ‘*indice*’ is synonymous with *index*, it is linked to *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* – to an index of the Prohibited Books in Rome (*Dictionnaire Littré*. In *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the origin of ‘*index*’ and its plural noun ‘*indexes*’ or ‘*indices*’ from the late Middle Ages: from Latin *index*, *indic-* ‘forefinger, informer, sign’, from *in-* ‘towards’ + a second element related to *dicere* ‘say’ or *dicare* ‘make known’; compare with *indicate*. The original sense ‘index finger’ (with which one points), came to mean ‘pointer’ (late 16th century), and figuratively something that serves to point to a fact or conclusion; hence a list of topics in a book (‘pointing’ to their location). In mathematics the word ‘index’ has many different meanings. ‘Most commonly, it is used in the context of an ‘index set’ where it means a quantity which can take on a set of values and is used to designate one out of a number of possible values associated with this value. For example, the subscript i in the symbol a_i could be called the index of a . See: *Wolfram Math World*, ‘History and Terminology’, <http://mathworld.wolfram.com/Index.html>. Accessed on December 6th, 2017.

CHAPTER FIVE

Transposition:

The word *'transposition'*: from Late Latin *transposition* (n-) (see *trans-*, *position*). The prefix *trans* in chemistry denoting or relating to a molecular structure in which two particular atoms or groups lie on opposite sides of a given plane in the molecule, in particular denoting an *'isomer'* in which substituents at opposite ends of a carbon–carbon double bond are also on opposite sides of the bond. *Position*: from Old French, from Latin *positio* (n-), from *ponere* 'to place'. (*OED*) [*Oppose*: from old French *oppose*, from Latin *opponere* (see *opponent*) but influenced by Latin *oppositus* 'set or placed against', and old French *poser* 'to place'.]

Proteus:

In Greek mythology, **Proteus** (*/ˈprɒtiəs, -tjuːs/*; Ancient Greek: Πρωτεύς) is an early sea-god or god of rivers and oceanic bodies of water, one of several deities whom Homer calls the "Old Men of the Sea". Some who ascribe to him a specific domain call him the god of "elusive sea change", which suggests the constantly changing nature of the sea or the liquid quality of water in general. He can foretell the future, but, in a mytheme familiar to several cultures, will change his shape to avoid having to; he will answer only to someone who is capable of capturing the beast. From this feature of Proteus comes the adjective **protean**, with the general meaning of "versatile", "mutable", "capable of assuming many forms". "Protean" has positive connotations of flexibility, versatility, and adaptability. (Wikipedia)

CHAPTER EIGHT

Intransigent See:

For a comprehensive overview of the relation between title *Intransigent* and 'los intransigents', the 'anarchist wing of the Spanish Federalist Party of 1872', see: (Stephen F. Eisenman, 'The Intransigents Artist or How the Impressionists Got their Name', in Charles S. Moffett (ed), *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874–1886*, San Francisco, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986, pp. 51–9).

CHAPTER TEN

Sign See:

Sign. (Lat. 'mark') An action, noise, gesture, or object that is intended to convey information: the study of the different ways in which signs function is called semiotics. The American semiotician C.S. Peirce distinguished three main classes of sign: icon, index and sign proper (or 'symbol'). The 'sign proper' refers to the kind of sign which has no connection at all with that which it signifies other than through convention: the use of a red light to mean 'stop' at traffic lights, and 'green for 'go', is an obvious example. An 'icon' functions by means of similarities with what it signifies (rather than by convention

or causality), for example, a map shares features with the area with which it describes. An 'index' has a direct causal relationship with what it signifies, as, for example, smoke indicates a fire, in a way that is not simply a matter of convention or similarity. Language itself works through signs, whether written or spoken. In dealing with language, Saussure's distinction between the signifier (the sign or word itself) and the signified (what the sign or word means) is another fundamental insight of semiotics. Saussure stressed the arbitrariness of linguistic signs. (Op. cit., Martin Gray, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p. 264–5.).

APPENDIX H: EXPANDED NOTES

Note 1: In defence of Mitsou Ronat

Meillassoux is referring to Mitsou Ronat's reading of *Un coup de Dés*, and related essay: 'This Spontaneous and Magic Architecture'. See, *The Change errant/ d'atelier*, edition of *Un coup de Dés*, 1980, realised in collaboration with Tibor Papp, and with participation of Phillipe Dôme, Jean Pierre Faye, Rudolfo Hindostroza, Claude Minière, Bruno Montels, Paul Nagy, and Jacques Roubaud. Ronat equates the number twelve, its multiples, and divisions with the formal, structural, and typographic arrangement of *Un coup de Dés*. Proposing a 'numerical principle' at work in Mallarmé's poem, in which the visible constraint of tradition – the alexandrine, becomes invisible in the pages of the book. Ronat credits Mallarmé with creating a new genre, one that unites the traditional form with free verse, citing Roubaud in her summative argument: 'the poem narrates the literary catastrophe constituted in the death of the alexandrine and the event of free verse'. (Op. cit., Ronat, 'This Spontaneous and Magic Architecture' p. 2). In a subsequent essay Ronat concludes:

For Mallarmé, innovation is possible only if it is based on tradition: it chooses a number that has proved its "solidity" over the centuries and transposes its properties for the vector space of the blank page, the space of reading, which is superimposed on its rectangular plastic and pictorial space. Thus the "gulf of the blank page" is no longer the symbol of creative impotence; Mallarme is the navigator - the pale Vasco – who, thanks to the number, wants to mark the space of his starry sky, for the page is above all a mental and abstract space. (Ronat. 'Le « coup de dés »: forme fixe?', *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études francaises*, n°32, 1980, 141–7, 144).

Meillassoux acknowledges the crisis,

Ronat and Jacques Roubaud have rightly emphasized that the "memorable crisis" evoked in the second principal clause of *Un coup de Dés*, designates that "exquisite and fundamental crisis" occasioned by the emergence of free verse, a crisis during the course of which would be called into question the necessity, in poetry, of fixed meter and regular rhyme. (Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 21)

However, Meillassoux rejects Ronat's proposed synthesis between the traditional form of the alexandrine and free verse based on the authority of Ronat's mathematical calculations which are governed by a count of thirty-six lines per page. By undermining her calculations, he appears to dismantle her thesis; that is, a mathematical principle at the heart of the poem, in which twelve, its multiples and divisions are reflected in the number of pages, lines, and point sizes, even in Mallarmé's preference for Didot font, designed as she points out, by mathematical logic. I would argue Ronat's claim is

supported by Paul Valéry's observation regarding Mallarmé's 'profound calculations'. (Op.cit., Valéry, 'Concerning A Throw of the Dice', *Paul Valéry: Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé*, pp. 307–16, 311).

Meillassoux limits the significance of the number twelve to the 'material contours' of the poem, that is, the twelve double pages, or form 'dominating the setting of the text to be read', (Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 40). The content he argues is governed by a different number, by the number seven, which he argues is the true cipher of the poem (Ibid). Meillassoux's count based like Ronat's on a numerical principle suggests 'both the "play" of free verse, and the strict count of regular verse'. Meillassoux recognises *Un coup de Dés* as the first of a genre, a prototype, like the number in *Un coup de Dés*, 'unique'. However, his analysis goes further, Meillassoux concludes that 'its uniqueness is eventual, not arithmetical'. (Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and The Siren*, p. 164). Meillassoux analysis leads him to the alexandrine, to what he describes as a 'problematic count'. Meillassoux is referring to the rule of constraint governing fixed metre. In the alexandrine, a line of twelve syllables, the rule, Meillassoux as rightfully claims,

contains a principle of uncertainty within the narrow and marginal space of a simple letter, pronounced or elided at leisure. It is as if the poet desired to infinitize the alexandrine – to make of its twelve a fixed number that, at the same time, would not be a fixed number. To make of it a metre that, like chance, contains virtually its contrary option, free verse without a strict rule as to the pronunciation of the silent e.

In Meillassoux's reading, the 'principle of uncertainty' governing the alexandrine is transferred by Mallarmé to *Un coup de Dés*. The complexity of the rule of constraint governing the syllabic count of the classical alexandrine and its use at the turn of the nineteenth century is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is important to note the classical alexandrine demands adherence to the rules, the 'silent e', or elided 'e' presents a problem; should it be counted, or not? And should the count be reflected in the written form only, albeit implied in the spoken form, and does the spoken form allow more freedom?

The letter 'e' signals a split between proponents of traditional fixed metre and advocates of free verse, notably Gustav Kahn and his followers. As Meillassoux points out, the modernist considered adherence to metre to be a 'social convention', whereas adversaries to 'traditional diction', sought to rediscover the 'music' of the classical poets, free from constraint (Ibid., p. 180–1) Mallarmé claims to take back from music what rightfully belongs to poetry' (Op. cit., Mallarmé, Preface: A Note to the Reader, *Cosmopolis*, see Stéphane Mallarmé: *Collected Poems and other Verse*, p. 263.) However, Mallarmé's position is not clear cut, Mallarmé considers verse to be everything, as soon as one writes', acknowledging both forms, the 'very strict, numerical and direct, with the play of its two parts, the former metre subsists, alongside experimentation.' (Op. cit.,

Mallarmé, *Music and Letters, Divigations*, p. 183). It is this fusion that for Mallarmé liberates the ear and the voice of the reader who initiates her own game.

In place of the way the powerful romantic ear, at the beginning of the century, combined the doubleness of their undulating alexandrines with their stressed caesuras and enjambments; fusion that undid itself towards integrity. A lucky discovery which seems to bring to a close yesterday's experiments is free verse—an individual modulation, because every soul is a rhythmic tangle. (Ibid., p. 183–4.)

Mallarmé's critical essays 'Crisis of Verse', and 'Music and Letters' provide a clear insight into his 'seductive game with recognisable fragments of classical verse'. (Op. cit., Mallarmé, *Crisis of Verse, Divigations*, p. 206). The syntheses between traditional metre and free verse established by Mallarmé, is acknowledged by Ronat, Roubaud, Meillassoux among other scholars including myself. The significance of the form of the alexandrine in relation to *Un coup de Dés* remains contested. Meillassoux's critique of Ronat relies on his assumption that the manuscript is the definitive text.

this last hypothesis does not survive the examination of the manuscript of *Un coup de Dés* [to which Ronat did not have access], for the latter includes indications by both Mallarmé and the printer that belie any will to give pre-eminence to the number twelve in the physical publication of the poem. (Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and The Siren*, p. 27).

On the material falsity of Ronat's interpretation he cites N.D'Origny Lübecker, Bertram Marchel, and Mallarmé himself whose hand written notation in blue pencil is clearly evident on the manuscript of the poem, 'Each page text and blank is established on a cipher of forty lines'. ['Vollard' manuscript: 'chaque page texte et blancs est établie sur une chiffer de quarante lignes'] Meillassoux concludes, 'forty is neither a multiple of twelve, not even a multiple of six; it would therefore have made no sense, according to Ronat's hypothesis, to have attributed to it so generic a role in the composition'. (Ibid., p. 27)

The difficulty in establishing the architecture of the poem is directly related to the uncertainty in establishing Mallarmé's intention, even with access to the annotated manuscript and proofs. In this sense the task mirrors the problem of establishing meaning without recourse to authorial intention; the pursuit of truth like meaning itself cannot be established. This is the crux, in my view one of the main challenges since there are several versions of annotated proofs and every reading is individual. Charité proposes: 'the modern day reader must undertake the layout of the text in order to establish it'. (Op. cit., Charité, *The Dynamics of Space*, 1987, p. 47) For a detailed summary of the various editions of the poem, see (Appendix D: List of Editions of *Un coup De Dés*, p. 427–430).

To summarise: the only edition of the poem to be published before Mallarmé's death in 1898, was in *Cosmopolis* 1897, in single page format. Mallarmé did produce a manuscript

detailing his revisions and instructions for *Un coup de Dés* intended for publication by Ambroise Vollard, and in double page format. This edition was to include four lithographs by Odilon Redon. This version was never produced; however, in 1914 *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, (NRF) produced an edition based on this manuscript. Thus, Meillassoux concludes in his book there are ‘two versions of the poem, *Cosmopolis* (1897) and the manuscript (1897) of which only the second is faithful to the intentions of the author’. (Op. cit., Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 15). It is this version that Meillassoux refers to in his reading of the poem. It is also the edition appropriated by Marcel Broodthaers and Michalis Pichler, (see Chapter One and Two). This is an important distinction and my first point of departure from Meillassoux, Broodthaers, Pichler, and several other artists who have taken this format in their respective appropriations of Mallarmé’s poem.

I believe that an accurate grasp of Mallarmé spatial poetics is compromised, since the NRF edition has in my view much smaller dimensions than Mallarmé had wished. By placing his trust in the manuscript, by attributing authority to the hand of the artist, Meillassoux fails to acknowledge further proofs and revisions made by Mallarmé. It is, of course, reasonable to argue that since there are more than one set of proofs of the annotated manuscript outlining Mallarmé’s intentions, any reading is open to interpretation. For a detailed account of these proofs, see Danielle Mihram, *The Abortive Didot/Vollard Edition of Un coup de Dés*. Mihram notes: ‘The exact total number of sets of proofs (tentative and definitive) which were produced by Didot and corrected by Mallarmé during that year remains unknown’. (Op. cit., Mihram, p. 40).

Gordon Millan suggests sixteen different sets of proofs provided by the printers Firmin-Didot, including four completed lithographs by Odilon Redon (Op. cit., Millan, *Mallarmé: A Throw of the Dice The Life of Stéphane Mallarmé*, p. 313.) See also, A Note on the Editions, p. xix–xxiv). While reprints of the NRF edition reflect ‘the textual changes indicated by the The Lahure proofs’, its dimensions remain problematic; Charité writes, ‘the edition does not follow strictly the alignments (words, lines, margins) as scrupulously as Mallarmé demanded’. (Op. cit., Charité p. 46.)

The only proofs available to me are reproductions housed in the Houghton Library, Harvard, reproduced by Robert Greer Cohn in *Mallarmé’s Masterwork* (Op. cit.) These proofs suggest a large format book, larger than the NRF edition. Cohn gives the following dimensions for one set of ‘Lahure’ proofs housed in the Houghton Library: 11 ½ inches x 15 (single) 23 inches x 15 (double), Odilon Redon’s lithographs 11 x 14 inches x 2 & 7 ¼ x 9 inches. Cohn points out ‘the poet’s intentions could only be shown in print since “the type” is an integral part of the enterprise; in a sense he actually composed his poem on these sheets. Moreover, the text is modified in a few places, with indications in the poet’s handwriting’ (Op. cit., Cohn, *Mallarmé’s Masterwork New Findings*, p. 78) This would suggest that the proofs are a work in progress, a development of the manuscript and proof of the significance of Mallarmé’s revisions and dialogue with the printer towards the realisation of his desired form.

Mitsou Ronat acknowledges this difficulty, identifying ‘two major errors’ in the NRF edition; the dimensions of the page, leading to a displacement of the words, and loss of unity desired by Mallarmé. In ‘This Spontaneous and Magic Architecture’ she writes ‘the urgency for a new edition seemed incontestable’. (Ibid., p. 1) In 1980 Mitsou Ronat’s edition of *Un Coup de Dés* published by the Groupe d’Atelier, in collaboration with artist and typographer Tibor Papp, and based on her revision of the *Cosmopolis* publication and reading of annotated proofs and the manuscript was published. This large double-page format comprising of twelve unbound pages is, according to Charité ‘the best edition to date, preserving almost to the letter Mallarmé’s sense of space. (Op. Cit., Charité, *Dynamics of Space* p. 47). This view is shared by Dee Reynolds:

it was not until the edition by Ronat and Papp in 1980, that it appeared in an authentic form, with full-size pages, correct typeface sizes and proper alignment between the sides of the double page. (Op. cit., Reynolds, *Symbolist Aesthetics and Early Abstract Art*, p. 104.)

More recently, in her comprehensive study of Mallarmé’s contribution to the development of the artist book, Anna Sigrídur Arnar singles out Ronat and Papp’s edition of *Un coup de Dés* for respecting Mallarmé’s wishes, which she notes is ‘composed of six unbound folio leaves, each nestled within the other without a separate cover’ (Op. cit., Arnar, *The Book As Instrument: Stéphane Mallarmé*, p. 236) While, Charité, Reynolds, and Arnar regard this edition of the poem as the finest representation of Mallarmé’s idea to date, there are some minor criticisms of Ronat’s exacting knowledge of typography and the pre-eminence Ronat attributes to twelve. Reynolds points out ‘the prominence of numbers related to twelve in the type face sizes is less surprising if one takes into account that the French system of typographical measurement is based on units of twelve points, the ‘douze’ or ‘cicéro’ (Op. cit., Reynolds, *Symbolist Aesthetics and Early Abstract Art*, p.104). Reynolds remarks echo those made by typographer Neil Crawford who she consulted and, who I have also consulted. Following Ronat publication two other large format versions of the poem in French have been published. In 2004 Michel Pierson and Ptyx, published a version almost identical in layout to Ronat and Papp’s edition, also unbound and with no separate cover (dimensions 38 x 56cm). This version is distinguished by its use of rare Didot characters intended for the proposed Vollard edition, restored by Pierson and Ptyx. In 2007 Ypsilon Éditeur published four volumes: the first is *Un coup de Dés* complete with reproductions of Redon’s lithographs, originally intended for the unpublished Vollard edition, (Ypsilon Éditeur’s Edition 2007, (dimensions 38 x 56cm).

My reading leads me to conclude that Ronat has been dismissed out of hand by Meillassoux – he writes ‘the failure of Ronat’s hypothesis has doubtless been cause for secret relief on the part of many a Mallarmé scholar’ (Op. cit., Meillassoux, p. 39.) Is Meillassoux referring to his thesis? Would the development of his hypothesis have been thwarted had he accepted Ronat’s numerical calculations? Meillassoux has overlooked one or two incontrovertible facts in his dismissal of Ronat.

In order to undermine Ronat's thesis Meillassoux takes as proof, Mallarmé's statement: 'each page / text and blank/ is established on a cipher of / forty lines'. Conversely Mallarmé's statement can be used to support Ronat's thesis, and to undermine Meillassoux's refutation of Ronat. If, as Mallarmé points out 'each page / text and blank/ is established on a cipher of / forty lines', and the text and blank is included in this calculation, then Ronat's calculation of thirty-six lines is correct, based on Mallarmé's specification for margins of two centimetres.

Secondly, Mallarmé's forty lines contained in each page, if multiplied by the total number of pages, that is twelve double pages, is equal to four hundred and eighty lines. This is divisible by twelve and supports the pre-eminence Ronat gives to the number twelve. It also calls into question Meillassoux's conclusion 'that forty is neither a multiple of twelve, nor even a multiple of six' (Op. cit., Meillassoux, p. 27) making his statement questionable.

To conclude: my research findings suggest similarity between my reading and Ronat's reading of *Un coup de Dés*. Both readings establish the relation of content to form. Both readings propose the integrity of the poem; its spatial unity can only be determined by an accurate grasp of its spatial construction and typographical arrangement. My reading, like Ronat's reading places great significance on the number twelve, its divisions, and multiples in relation to the structural and typographical layout of the poem and its symbolic register. However, this research goes further. Establishing first an integral relation between the architectural space of the dice, whose sides when added together form six squares, or twelve sides, which are linked to the twelve double pages of *Un coup de Dés*, and to the alexandrine, a line of twelve syllables divided at the centre by a 'caesura'. Secondly, this research demonstrates a reciprocal relation between the dots of the dice and their numerical value to the alexandrine, a line of twelve syllables. This relation is established through a series of mathematical calculations and arrangements presented as digital drawings and animations. These findings support a closer examination of the syllabic count of *Un coup de Dés* in relation to the traditional form of the alexandrine, leading me to speculate that Mallarmé's hidden architecture is based on the traditional form of the alexandrine, though 'its elements are dispersed across the pages of the poem'. The research, like Ronat's establishes a synthesis between the traditional form and free form. Yet again there is difference; this reading reveals a chance operation at play, an infinite form that constructs and deconstruct itself. It contains 'a limit on the infinite' in principle, that is, 'the number that cannot be another'. The paradox is inherent in the form of the dice, which is symbolically present in the form of the poem and its syllabic count. The number cannot in principle exceed its form that is its sum of twelve. This is self-evident, in the dice and in a syllabic count of the poem, no word exceeds six syllables. At the same time, the potential of a dice throw, of infinite play is suggested in a celestial constellation, and in the free form whose meaning can never be limited by virtue of the form.

Note 2: *An overview of the arguments examining the difference between poetry and painting.*

The earliest recorded discourse comparing poetry and painting is attributed to the Greek lyrical poet, Simonides of Ceos (556–468 BCE), who writes: ‘poetry is a speaking picture: painting a silent poem’ [*Poema picture loquens, picture poema silens*]. (See, Plutarch, *De gloria Atheniesium* III, pp. 346–47). Plato (428–348 BCE), considers painter and poet kin, masters in the art of mimesis, representation, and illusion. (Op. cit., Plato, Republic, p. 358). In *Poetics*, Aristotle (384–322 BCE), like Plato, considers poetry and painting arts of imitation, mimetic by nature. In contrast to Plato’s idealism, Aristotle’s conception of truth is based on an understanding of the natural world, determined by scientific method, by mathematical proofs. This division is epitomised in Raphael’s painting, *School of Athens*, (1510) where Plato is represented pointing to the heavens [Platonic Idealism] Aristotle, by contrast appears to reach out to the world at his feet – the natural world. Aristotle’s view of the natural world is more complex than Raphael’s painting suggests, Aristotle writes:

The poet being an imitator, like a painter or any other artist, must of necessity imitate one of three objects, — things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be. (Aristotle, *Poetics*, Translation by S. H. Butcher, The Project Gutenberg, EBook, 2008, XXV)

Aristotle’s ‘ought to be’, suggests an ideal, or ‘higher reality’, beyond nature, better than nature. In *Poetics* Aristotle suggests that Homer achieves this ideal, writing that ‘Homer is pre-eminent among poets, for he alone combined dramatic form with excellence of imitation’. (Ibid., IV). Aristotle’s *Poetics*, is a treatise towards an ideal form, achieved through selection, through an understanding of the structure of the plot, and the relation of its parts to the whole; to this end Aristotle unravels the complexity of the imitative arts, achieving his own denouement.

In *Ars poetica*, the Roman lyric poet Horace (65–8 BCE) writes: ‘As is painting so is poetry.’ (*Ut Pictora Poesis*) Horace’s aphorism is based on the principle that poetry and painting, that is reading and viewing, give aesthetic pleasure, recalling Aristotle’s earlier comment: ‘Universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature’ (Op. cit., Aristotle, IV) Horace writes:

just as painting can be enjoyed with a close viewing while the other necessitate greater distance, so too should one approach a poem with a close reading or with a broader eye to the piece as a whole. (Horace, ‘Combine Instruction with Pleasure’. *Ars Poetica*, 333–365.)

Horace’s comparative aesthetics implicates the reader in an active process of negotiation. Movement is implied and seeing is equated with reading and, with the relation of the part to the whole, recalling the relation of Mallarmé’s fragment [*Un coup de Dés*] to the whole

[*Le Livre*]. Importantly, Horace suggests a process of reading [viewing] poetry and painting, experienced in both temporal and spatial terms.

Analogies between painting and poetry during the Renaissance, owe something to Aristotle's scientific method. Rensselaer W. Lee makes the point: 'The realistic development of painting during the Quattrocento, was in how the painter might represent in its completeness the three-dimensional world on a two-dimensional surface.' (Rensselaer W. Lee, 'Ut Pictura Poesis: The humanistic Theory of Painting', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 22, No. 4., December., 1940, 197–269, p. 200). Leonardo acknowledges the shared endeavour of painting and poetry in representing nature, but distinguishes between eye and ear, between vision and hearing. According to Leonardo, the eye is scientific by nature; able to discern light and shade, it 'serves a nobler sense and remakes the forms and figures of nature with greater truth than the poet'. (See, Leonardo Da Vinci, 'The Works of the Eye and Ear Compared', *Leonardo: On Painting*, p. 20. More recently, W. J. T. Mitchell considers the historic implications of the 'purging of literary/linguistic values in painting', he writes:

Despite the official ideology of the "sister arts" and ut pictura poesis, the actual relations of the verbal and visual arts since the Renaissance might be more aptly described as a battle or contest, what Leonardo da Vinci called paragone. (W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Ut Pictura Theoria: Abstract Painting and Language', *Picture Theory*, Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1974, pp. 213–39, 227)

Mitchell understands Leonardo's paragone as a defining moment in which painting would assert its authority as: 'a scientific, religious, and ethical-political reformation'. (Ibid., p. 227) Rensselaer W. Lee discusses a change in emphasis during the Renaissance, from scientific [Leonardo], to Mannerist [High Renaissance in Florence and Rome], and the rise of the academics and 'the codifying of technical and scientific knowledge'. (Ibid., p. 200). Comparisons between painting and poetry during the sixteenth and seventeenth century anticipate Lessing's differentiation between 'temporal' and 'spatial arts'. Rensselaer W. Lee comments on the painter-poet, poet-painter relation dominating Western art before Lessing drew attention to the limits of each:

Critics for two centuries believed that it was in pictorial vividness of representation, or, more accurately, of description—in the power to paint clear images of the external world in the mind's eye as a painter would record them on canvas—that the poet chiefly resembled the painter. (Ibid., Rensselaer W. Lee, p. 198)

James Malek's compares John Dryden's essay: 'Parallel Betwixt Poetry and Painting', (1695) with Charles Lamotte's essay; 'An Essay upon Poetry and Painting, With Relation to the Sacred and Profane History' (1730). (See James Malek, 'Charles Lamotte's An Essay upon Poetry and Painting and Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 1971, 467–473, Wiley, American Society for Aesthetics, accessed: 28-12-2015 02:14). Dryden's essay, written to accompany his translation of Charles Alphonse Dufresnoy's poem, *De arte graphica* (1668), emphasises the similarity between poetry and painting, that is a shared desire to produce pleasure through effects in pursuit of truth, and in accordance with nature. 'If poetry can be shown to be similar to painting in the way it achieves effects then parallel rules for poetry might be expected to serve the same function.' (Ibid., Malek, p. 468).

Lamotte, like Dryden, is concerned with the effects produced by painting and poetry, but by contrast Lamotte focusses on their differences, rather than their similarities. For Lamotte, as Malek points out 'The truth of an imitative work is to be judged ultimately not in terms of an ideal nature, as in the "Parallel", but with reference to particulars in nature and in historical accuracy.' (Ibid., Malek, p. 468). It is through differentiation that Lamotte is able to account for painting's simultaneous effect, and, poetry's progressive effect, observations which are echoed by Lessing who writes: 'The rule is this, that succession in time is in the province of the poet, co-existence in space that of the artist'. (Ibid., Lessing, *Laocoön*, p. 109)

Malek is critical of Lamotte's thesis, which, as he points out, 'establishes a pictorial standard for an essentially visual and spatial art, and for a temporal art which is not essentially visual'. (Ibid., Malek, p. 470) In Malek's comparative study of Dryden and Lamotte, Jean-Baptiste Dubos' book: *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1719), reinforces the distinction between painting and poetry. Malek writes:

Dubos (the 'ingenious Reflectionist') argues that painting produces greater effects than poetry because it operates by the sense of seeing and employs natural rather than artificial signs. The sight has greater influence on the soul than the other senses; words, as artificial signs, depend on education, whereas the signs of painting elicit their own force directly from the natural relation between the organs of sight and external objects. Poems can only effect by degrees, by first exciting ideas of which they are signs, and these ideas must in turn be digested by the imagination, which forms a visual image in the mind. Only then do words affect us. The natural signs in painting operate directly in forming such images; hence their effects are produced more quickly and are stronger. (Ibid., Malek, p. 471)

See Jean-Baptiste Dubos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting, and Music*, translated by Thomas Nugent, London, Vol II, 1748, [Jean-Baptiste Dubos's *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, 1719] Digitised by Internet Archive, 2007, The library of the University of California, Los Angeles, <https://archive.org/details/criticalreflecti02duboiala/page/n1>. In Dubos's analysis sight, which is natural, is considered closer to the soul, and therefore to truth. Dubos, like Plato, recognises the power of immediacy, that is presence; granted Plato's concept of presence is bound to speech, to dialogue. Dubos, like Plato, understands poetry [written] to be an artificial system of signs, and as such diminished, that is losing force in the process of transforming 'signs of poetry into effecting images', (Ibid., Malek, p. 471), recalling Plato's copy. The real challenge to 'Ut Pictura Poesis', is raised by the philosopher, Anthony Ashley Cooper [Third Earl of Shaftesbury, 1671–1713] a challenge which predates Dubos reflections, Lamotte's observations, and Lessing's *Laocoön*. In his essay, *Plastics*, (1712), Cooper writes: 'Comparisons and Parallels between painting and poetry are almost ever absurd and at best constrained, lame and defective.' (Anthony Ashley Cooper, *Plastics*)

In *Three Treatises* (1744), James Harris, like Dubos, points to the immediacy of painting, 'Poetry is forced to pass through the medium of compact while painting applies immediately through the medium of nature' James Harris, *Three Treatises*, 1744 (pub details).

Lessing, as Rensselaer W. Lee rightly points out is also anticipated by La Fontaine

Les motes et les couleurs ne sont choses pareilles

Ni les yeux ne sont les oreilles.

The words and the colours are not things

Neither are the eyes and ears

(La Fontaine, Conte du Tableau)

Lessing distinguishes between the so called temporal and spatial arts,

If it be true that painting employs wholly different signs or means of imitation from poetry,—the one using forms and colours in space, the other articulate sounds in time,—and if signs must unquestionably stand in convenient relation with the thing signified, then signs arranged side by side can represent only objects existing side by side, or whose part so exists, while consecutive signs can express only objects which succeed each other, or whose parts succeed each other, in time. (Op. cit., Lessing, Laocoön, p. 91)

Lessing cautions against exceeding the limitations of the medium,

Painting and poetry should be like two just and friendly neighbours, neither of whom indeed is allowed to take unseemly liberties in the heart of the other's domain, but who exercise mutual forbearance on the borders, and effect a peaceful settlement for all the petty encroachments which circumstances may compel either to make in haste on the rights of the other. (Op. cit., Lessing, Laocoön, p. 110)

In Clement Greenberg's address to Lessing: 'Towards a Newer Laocoön' (1940), Greenberg proposes Abstract Art as a reaction to confusion in the arts; for Greenberg, the value of art lies in emphasising the medium's specificity: 'Purity in art consists in the acceptance, willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art'. (Clement Greenberg, 'Towards a Newer Laocoön', 1940, VA, *The American Avant-Garde*, 56–68, p. 566). Greenberg's reply to Lessing is preceded by literary critic Irving Babbitt's essay, *The New Laocoon: An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts* (1910). More recently W. J. T. Mitchell argues that Lessing's distinction between the temporal and spatial arts, are reliant on the artificial 'laws of genre',

The tendency of artists to breach the supposed boundaries between spatial and temporal arts is not a marginal or exceptional practice, but a fundamental impulse in both the theory and practice of the arts, one which is not confined to any particular genre or period. (Op. cit., W. J. T. Mitchell, *The Politics of Genre: Space Time in Lessing's Laocoon*, pp. 98–115, p. 100).

Mitchell's challenge to Lessing supports my own findings. In this performative reading of *Un coup de Dés*, the temporal and spatial are bound to one another, like the bound and boundless ocean of Homer's *Odyssey*: 'A sea so vast and dread that not even in a twelve

month could a bird hope to wing its way out of it.' (Op. cit., Homer, *The Odyssey*, p. 37) Mitchell's analysis of Lessing suggests a way to unravel this contested field, one which coincides with my comparative reading of Manet's *Olympia* and Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*, signalling the emergence of a space beyond the 'purified space' of painting and poetry. Mitchell credits Lessing's *Laocoön* with establishing a principle of division or set of oppositions which can be used to support both sides of the argument. Mitchell asks two important questions, first, and critically: 'how adequate are Lessing's basic distinctions between temporal [poetry] and spatial arts [painting] as instruments of analysis. Second: What historical conditions prompted Lessing to make these distinctions? In this comparative reading of Manet's *Olympia*, and Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés*, the emergence of a female form at the centre of Manet's painting and Mallarmé's poem, returns me to the problem of Lessing's divisive act of separation, and to Mitchell's reading of the division which in Lessing becomes gendered,

Paintings, like women, are ideally silent, beautiful creatures designed for the gratification of the eye, in contrast to the sublime eloquence proper to the manly art of poetry. Paintings are confined to the narrow sphere of external display of their bodies and of the space which they ornament, while poems are free to range over an infinite realm of potential action and expression, the domain of time discourse and history. (Ibid., Mitchell, p. 109.)

