

# **The Logic of Imagination in Architecture**

by

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Author's Declaration:

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## ABSTRACT

Spaces are determined not only by their physical qualities, but also by the narratives created during their occupation. These persistent yet ephemeral stories infuse our experience of space with meaning and can be the vehicle through which we consciously express our world view and explore our evolving identity. In architecture, the immaterial is explained as a 'genius loci', a spirit tied to a physical space that gives it a specific character and allows for deep connection and identification to occur. Through an exploration of metaphors that have traditionally conveyed the presence of immaterial forces, this thesis reveals how the relationship between psyche and space is embedded in a logic of the imagination; interpreting the experience of space in a language of light and shadow.

Additionally this thesis examines how spaces are transformed through the psychological process of mental projection and explores how associations that are deeply rooted in the collective unconscious affect the inner world of the individual. Architecture is therefore seen not as a practice that is psychologically neutral but one that is filled with rich emotional content. To build, constitutes a way to bring order, to set boundaries, to transform the apparent chaos of the world into a comprehensible form. This thesis investigates how the experience of inhabiting can be a catalyst for the imagination to project layers of memory, myth and symbolism onto a location, thereby facilitating the translation of space into place. For Architects the conscious incorporation and evocation of the immaterial is seen as a vital and necessary process that can uniquely contribute to the ensouling of architecture, and the creation of meaningful places.



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Fig. 0.01 Auklet Flock

*They didn't seem like individual birds, or even individual dots of black against the blue; it was the flock itself that was the individual. It was like a single piece of cloth, cut in a very complicated way that let it swing through itself and double over and stretch and fold in three dimensions without ever tangling, turning itself inside out and elegantly waving and crossing through and falling and rising and falling again.*

*"If it was saying something..." said Lyra.*

*{Pantalaimon} "Like signaling."*

*"No one would know, though. No one could ever understand what it meant."*

*"Maybe it means nothing. It just is."*

*"Everything means something." Lyra said severely. "We just have to find out how to read it."*

*-Phillip Pullman, Lyra's Oxford<sup>1</sup>*



*Fig. 0.02 Greig Lake*



## PREFACE

It began with a house. I rediscovered the house upon finding a story I had written when I was eight years old. The house was alluded to on the black and white aerial photo of the lake that hung in my family's cabin. I remember questioning the absence of trees; the forest was represented in the old photo as an assortment of black and grey pixels in a pattern that was regular in its variety. Such voids usually indicated a fish-spawning pond, logging road or hydro corridor; But this gap was too straight and the shadows contained within its field of light grey would arrange themselves into objects if you glanced at them peripherally.

The thing about gaps is that once you notice one you start seeing them everywhere, and all of the empty spaces add up and start to overshadow the filled in parts. The absence of the known is easily filled with an overwhelming anxiety, for the known has a finite boundary whereas gaps contain only possibilities and questions. Gaps invite the imagination to invent stories, find patterns and assign symbols and meanings to make sense of their presence. I would stare at the spot many times over the years, tracing its edges during lulls in conversation, when I was thinking of something to say or deciding what card to play, my eye would go to that spot - the unexplained gap in the trees, in which I could find forms in the shadows in the same way I would see shapes in clouds.

The story, which I discovered in fragments, documented my explorations into the forest as I searched for the house of shadows. It was a record of experiences I had long forgotten; the mystery, disorientation and fear of being lost, and the magic of finding a space that seemed to belong to me alone. I started to suspect that all subsequent spaces I would make or inhabit would in some way be rooted in these first experiences. I began to explore a process of excavating and studying them, thinking I could discover a pattern, or a point of origin. This thesis records my explorations into these fragments, the ambivalent potential of absence and the imaginary spaces that take up residence in the shadows.



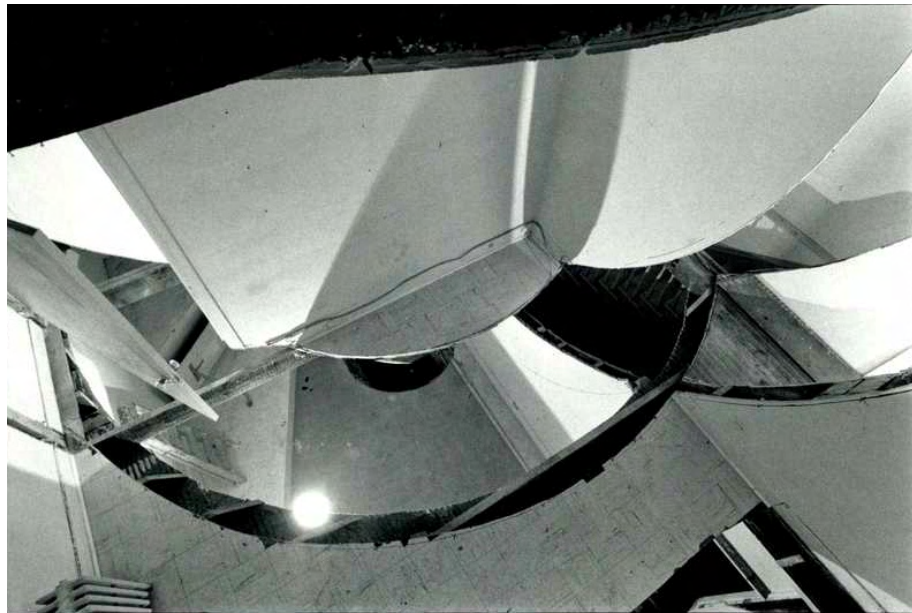


Fig. 0.03 *Circus or The Caribbean Orange*, Gordon Matta-Clark, 1978

*Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the survey. A house that has been experienced is not an inert box, inhabited space transcends geometric space.*

-Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*<sup>1</sup>



## INTRODUCTION

Space is rarely experienced as static. Space transforms in response to our emotions and is altered by our psychic state. Just as boredom and love can stretch and compress time, fear and wonder can shrink and expand space. Spaces are transformed through processes of mental projection and associations that are deeply rooted in the symbols of the collective unconscious, and the catalogue of experiences and memories residing in the mind of the individual.<sup>2</sup> The natural and built environments are invested with psychological connotations that are not intrinsic to them but have a profound effect on us. We can be deeply attached to space. Many theories attempt to define the relationship between psyche and space, but this relationship is subjective, and associations are highly personal and open to interpretation.

Inhabitation is a process in which the emotional experience of space is combined with a narrative, ritual or mythology to create a parallel structure that in concert with the built world creates our sense of place. The immaterial inflects the material world but is mysterious, elusive and ethereal.<sup>3</sup> The evolution of our understanding of psyche, traditionally thought of as soul and now associated with the complex structures of the mind have provided greater insight into our relationship with place. Through an exploration of metaphors that have traditionally conveyed the presence of immaterial forces, this thesis reveals how the relationship between psyche and space is embedded in a logic of the imagination; interpreting the experience of space in a language of light and shadow.

In architecture, the immaterial is embodied by a ‘genius loci’, a spirit tied to a physical space that gives it a specific character and allows for deep connection and identification to occur. In his book, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, Christian Norberg-Schulz, defines Genius loci as a roman concept which attributed to every independent being a guardian spirit. The genius is associated with the soul and influences their fundamental nature throughout their lifetime. Versions of such a guardian can be found in various cultures throughout history. Such genius’ were characteristic of places as well, giving a specific character to particular places. A positive relationship between man and the genius inhabiting the place he lived was fundamental to

his survival in both a physical and psychic sense. Place arises out of a correspondence between outer and inner world and between body and psyche. The genius loci is not a phenomena but has a structure and embodies meanings. These structures and meanings have given rise to mythologies which underlie our inhabitation of places.<sup>4</sup>

The unseen bonds between people and space that underlie our experience of place have been studied under various disciplines and fall more or less under the umbrella of Place Theory. These investigations have evolved from Cartesian notions of space as absolute, grounded solely in the material and physical environment to a theory that recognizes the immaterial aspects that in concert with the built world constitute our experience of place. The conception of place as a locus of meaning resulting from a subjective experience of the material world<sup>5</sup> is the common theme throughout the varied inquires into the representation, interpretation, narrative construction and cultural encoding of space.<sup>6</sup>

A review of the literature reveals there is no one systematic 'Theory of Place', instead the various research methods of different disciplines result in an extensive body of literature that explores the nature and nuances of people's emotional relationships to place. Several concepts are common throughout the diverse literature, particularly 'sense of place',<sup>7</sup> 'place attachment'<sup>8</sup> and 'place identity'.<sup>9</sup> Sense of place is described as '*endowing a place with meaning and value through experience*'; this experience can be direct and intimate or it can be indirect and conceptual, mediated by symbols.<sup>10</sup> Place attachment refers to '*the experience of a long-term affective bond to a particular geographic area and the meaning attributed to that bond.*'<sup>11</sup> Finally, place identity has been defined as '*dimensions of the self that develop in relation to the physical environment*'.<sup>12</sup> Scientific studies attempting to identify the mechanisms through which we associate ourselves with space have found that they are predominantly cognitive structures established through the developmental processes of childhood.<sup>13</sup> These structures are a composite of compelling spaces and experiences of place that have been converted into an unconscious internal working model.<sup>14</sup> Such subjective spatial structures are employed by individuals to orient and identify with environment.

In *Space and Place; The Perspective of Experience*, Yi-Fu Tuan considers the ways in which people understand space and form attachments to place. For Tuan, emotion underlies the relationship between people and place. Emotion can't be quantified, so measurements and mappings of space do not sufficiently convey the meanings people attach to place, and need to be complimented by experiential data. Tuan, defines 'experience' as the various modes through which a person understands or constructs a reality.<sup>15</sup> These modes include the senses of touch, smell, and touch as well as the perceptions of these stimuli – visualization, imagination and symbolization.

The body positions and identifies itself spatially and is the primary means of orienting oneself within space.<sup>17</sup> Environments speak to us physically: "constriction" and "release", "prospect" and "refuge" have meaning because they evoke a particular common experience of our bodies in space. Standing upright the body differentiates space, one can speak of "in front", "behind", "above", and "below". Subjective bodies inscribe surroundings with a specific set of co-ordinates.<sup>18</sup> We not only extrapolate the dimensions and positions of the body onto space but our perceptions of it as well. Standing upright, verticality becomes associated with a broadened perspective and connection to the divine. "Up" carries a very different connotation than "down", "front" from "back", "inside" from "outside", and "vertical" from "horizontal".

Spaces are determined not only by their physical spatiality, but also by the permanent or ephemeral narrative structures created by their occupation. History, personal experiences and everyday rituals of space merge with fictional representations to build a composite perception of a place. Because people inscribe it with meaning, possess and occupy it, derive social status and identity from it, space is understood as having symbolic value. The subjective nature of this relationship allows for an easy transition to autobiography, an ongoing story emerging from the physical and mental traces inscribed onto familiar spaces. The narrative process by which individuals locate themselves becomes a form of self-creation in which individual relationships with space are incorporated in a self-narrative.

Due to the autobiographical nature of place, inquiries are largely oriented around the home.\* Home is the origin of spatial exploration, the archetype of secure and stable environments, a vessel for personal identity, a container for dreaming, and mirror of the self. The home is often portrayed as a locus for positive experience; this viewpoint was formalized in the 18th ce. with the Romantic conception as home as paradise.<sup>19</sup> Home became a haven, a nurturing shelter, a private and hidden place from which one ventured forth into the light of public life. Home provides an anchor for self, since social norms and personal identity are constantly evolving and unstable.

\*The house is the first universe for young children and is often the framework through which they understand subsequent spaces. While often remembered through veils of nostalgia the childhood home is generally characterized as warm and inviting, but within the childhood home lies a dark space. The Greek and Latin words for the interior of the house, *megaron* and *atrium*, both carry a strong connotation of darkness.<sup>23</sup> Most children at one point or another exhibit a fear of the dark. Fear of the dark is not a fear of the absence of light but a fear of possible or imagined dangers concealed by the darkness. While unknown mysterious dimensions of space within a home can be an opportunity for play and wonder, the possibility can also be unsettling.

\*\*Implicit memories do not require conscious attention for their formation, and normally lie outside of conscious awareness. They are fixed in childhood, and are characterized by the absence of subjective sense of remembrance. Explicit autobiographical memory, the memory of self across time, is characterized by a subjective sense of recollection and narrative structuring. Each act of explicit remembering involves the reorganization of existing memory traces into new, unpredictable associative linkages. Shaping both the content and narrative structuring of autobiographical memory. Themes reflecting internal working models bring coherence and continuity to explicit memory.<sup>24</sup>

Due to the tremendous significance of ‘home’ as a positive metaphor for experiences of joy, protection, comfort, and belonging, the darkness that lies at the centre of home is not largely represented in the research literature. While the residence can be a haven in many instances, this is not always the case. In ‘Childhood Place Attachments’, Chawla, argues that space is ambivalent, containing nightmares alongside dreams. Places are comprised of a range of experiences, good and bad, and within any exploration of space is an encounter that disturbs or frightens. These experiences, acknowledged or not, form a negatively associated bond - the “shadow side” of our relationships with places.<sup>20</sup>

The mythology of home has underpinned much exploration of our relationships to places but without recognition of the negative and ambivalent feelings related to places, we risk exploring only eulogized space.<sup>21</sup> Memories of childhood experience are often coloured by nostalgia in adulthood and are subject to a degree of reconstruction and reinterpretation.\*\* *‘Our places of origin shape us and this backward glance is an important dimension of {place} attachment’*<sup>22</sup> For many individuals, childhood place experience plays an important role in adult identity.<sup>25</sup> However the nature and intensity of place attachment varies from individual to individual, with some adults experiencing either no or negative feelings about their place of origin. The memory of childhood place is central to adult identity for some, but for others, place has little bearing on their sense of self.<sup>26</sup>



From this literature the following generalizations of place theory can be extracted: First, emotion is a crucial part of the relationship between person and environment and links all human experiences so that place can acquire deep meaning through ‘the steady accretion of sentiment’.<sup>27</sup> Second, people’s relationships to places are an ongoing personal narrative, a reciprocal, dynamic phenomenon, evolving as people and places change. Finally, relationships to space are ambivalent and incorporate both positive and negative attitudes towards the spaces we inhabit.

There is a duality inherent in architecture between the role of imagination and the built artifact. Imagination transforms caves into cathedrals, shells into cosmos, house into home. It is the means by which we overlay time, space and narrative into a personal experience of our environment and understanding of our physical relationship to the world. In architecture, to build constitutes a way to bring order, to set boundaries, to transform the apparent chaos of the world that we live in into a comprehensible place. Not only does the construction process imply measuring in a practical sense {a quantifiable relationship between one’s body and surroundings}, but is like all human making a way to hint at the intangible, a manner of defining our condition as human beings in the world. The inhabitation of architecture is a process, which through experience reveals the mythic dimension, just beyond the surface of any environment; buildings are a catalyst for the imagination to project layers of memory, myth and symbolism onto a location, translating space into place.

In his paper ‘Building the Drawing’, Jonathan Hill claims that although traditionally architecture is associated with the material, there is an immaterial aspect of architecture less recognized. Immaterial architecture is this mental aspect, a creative perception of space in which the imagination combines with sensory images. Hill traces the history of ‘immaterial architecture’ to its origin in the Italian renaissance, when the architectural drawing removed the practice from a strictly physical endeavor to an intellectual exercise – an image that could be created, dismantled and manipulated in the mind.<sup>28</sup> Once in the mind, matter is released from form and exists as an individual entity in the virtual dimension of the imagination, where a dream, a thought, or a hallucination can affect the experience of reality.

This imaging of architectural spaces is fundamental to Bachelard's Theory of Imagination. This theory is formulated around poetic reverie - a metaphorical evocation and imaging; a creative interpretation of the environment by the imagination, through a framework of a personal narrative. Poetic reverie is a method of reconciling the dialectic between real and imaginary realms, simultaneously co-creating dreamed world and subject.

Chapter one investigates Bachelard's Theory of Imagination to develop an alternate theory of place grounded in poetics, one which explores the significance and the subjective, emotional quality of people's relationship to place. This chapter explores the development of the imagination's capacity for poetics through play in childhood, and its effect on our spatial perceptions as adults. A poetic experience of space occurs when emotion is evoked through narrative, ritual or mythology and explored through mimesis and mythos. This chapter discusses imagination and cognition, exploring scientific models for the mysteries of the psyche, and the underlying mechanisms through which architecture incorporates the invisible and embodies the spirit of a place.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard superimposes his theory of imagination onto the intimate spaces we inhabit. "*Inhabiting is the imaginary response to the process of building.*"<sup>29</sup> In chapter two the relationship between psyche and space is explored at its origin - the home - the site and mirror of one's interior life. The house is the site of the first explorations of space and experiences of the world around us. These primary experiences of space within the home provide a rich trove of spatial symbols and are the foundation for our adult relationship to space. Through topoanalysis, childhood spaces are recreated and remembered through the backwards glance to outline a spatial autobiography. 'Archetypes' explores the ways that the past makes itself felt in the present, the spatial tropisms that are residual.

Chapter three explores the emotional distortion of space in the Gothic novel. For the last 250 years, Gothic literature has employed architecture as a literary device, used to externalize these internal psychic states and to deliberately disturb the conventional notions of space as an indication of the distorted perceptions of the characters own disorientation. The

haunted house is a space within which psychic projection and interjection move freely and without fixed boundaries. This chapter explores how the evolution of psyche over time illuminates changing ideas about the relationship between self and space.

The analogies and connections that constitute the logic of the imaginary have their origins in a lexicon of collective and personal symbols. The Poetics and Haunted chapters tell the story of the ambivalent relationship between psyche and space through the collective metaphors of light and shadow, whereas the Archetypes are a more personal investigation into remembered childhood spaces.

The imagination can both liberate space from the physical realm to become something that lives on in the imagination and invert the process and project endless possibilities onto the spaces that surround us. Inherent to the places we inhabit lies an unseen dimension composed of narrative, reverie, symbols, mythology, and history that we interact with when we experience and inhabit a space. An exploration of the emotional entwining of imagination and architecture, the following investigates the work of the imagination that deepens the experience of space and incorporates the immaterial into our understanding of place.



PART I: POETICS  
Theory of Imagination





Fig 1.01 The Lascaux Cave

*The animal envoys of the Unseen Power no longer serve, as in primeval times, to teach and to guide mankind. Neither in body, nor in mind do we inhabit the world of those hunting races of the Paleolithic millennia, to whose lives and life ways we nevertheless owe the very forms of our bodies and structures of our minds. Memories of their animal envoys still must sleep, somehow within us; for they wake a little and stir when we venture into wilderness. They wake in terror to thunder. And again they wake, with a sense of recognition, when we enter any one of those great painted caves. Whatever the inward darkness may have been to which the shamans of those caves descended in their trances, the same must lie within ourselves, nightly visited in sleep.*

-Joseph Campbell, *The Way of the Animal Powers*<sup>1</sup>

## The Lascaux Cave

Ever since the Lascaux Cave was ‘discovered’ in 1940<sup>2</sup> the modern mind has tried to understand and interpret the images concealed within. The interpretation of cave paintings is inherently problematic as we seek to explain in the mentality of the twentieth century what is well beyond our realm of experience. But although a conclusive logical explanation is beyond reach there is an innate and deep understanding that comes to us when we confront the cave and the figures inscribed on its surface. Although we cannot definitively decipher the symbols we are aware of the feelings they evoke. One can imagine the deep shadows cast along cave walls by small light sources futilely attempting to keep the darkness at bay. Just as the darkness is intimately inscribed within us, so too is the silence.

The cave images are largely oriented around hunting. These figures are not totems of animal gods to be revered, but beasts in the midst of being conquered by a hail of arrows.<sup>3</sup> A solitary artist would not have been capable of creating the images alone. The shaman must have been fed and protected by the rest of the tribe; raw materials, light and scaffolding would need to have been provided. One theory is that the tribe and its survival had a vested interest in the practice, and were willing to direct valuable resources to their creation.<sup>4</sup>

Fertility rites and death rites – these are the two poles around which the pictures in the mysterious depths of the cave are ordered. Upon the images depended abundance or hunger. The images are thought to be designed for rites of sympathetic magic.<sup>5</sup> Magic of this sort is founded on a link between a living being and its image. Through the ritual the image becomes the creature; and through rites performed on the image the creature itself is affected.<sup>6</sup>



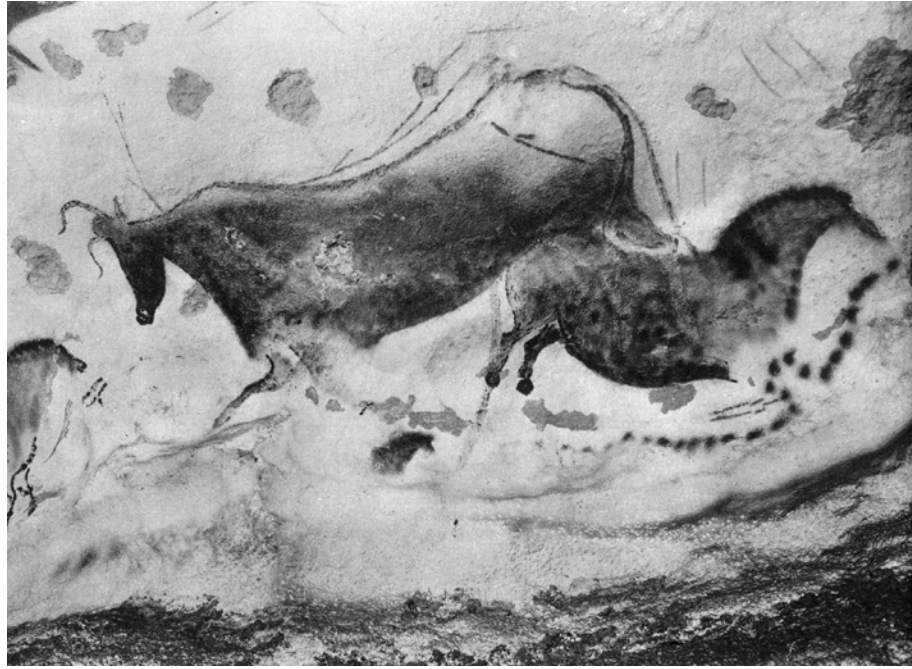


Fig 1.02 'Cow', Axial passage of the Lascaux Cave

The multitude of animals without wounds are thought to illustrate another aspect of sympathetic magic – that the image shares the essence of its living original. By multiplying the images one causes the living things themselves to multiply. This would explain the abundance of certain species, horses and deer especially, which are often superimposed on one another even when they are evidently drawn by the same hand or date from the same period.<sup>7</sup> There are many instances in the cave where different depictions of the same animal are painted over one another while large spaces remain void around them. Thus successive re-paintings are visible through each other, giving the paintings a greater depth. Just as we give old symbols and myths new meaning by remaking them, the redrawing of these images speaks to an ongoing ritual, where the image needed to be continually remade, to maintain its power.<sup>8</sup>



Fig 1.03 'unicorn', at entrance of the Lascaux Cave

## BACHELARD'S THEORY OF IMAGINATION

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The cognitive capacity known as imagination\* emerged approximately 40 000 years ago in the Upper Paleolithic era.<sup>3</sup> The appearance of this new mental ability is evident in the traces left behind; the blade reveals the making and application of tools to everyday life, ivory rings and stone beads allude to emergent ritual burial practices and body ornamentation, and cave paintings illustrate the emergence of symbol. The art within the Paleolithic caves indicates that the power of the imagination quickly went beyond the necessities of everyday survival to an expanded understanding of life, perception of space and relationship to the environment. Created in thick darkness far away from the point of origin, images traveled with their creators across wide plains and down into deep crevasses to be manifested on cave walls. There is a magic inherent in early images, the symbols have a narrative quality and whether used for ritual, magic or teaching they embody a need for communication, for record, a witness to what was, what is, and what could be.

The earliest records of cave paintings known today are the ancient paintings at Lascaux Chauvet. In addition to depicting the familiar animals of the hunt that predominate in Paleolithic cave art, the walls of the Chauvet Cave are covered with primitive self projections: red ochre handprints and hand stencils made by spitting pigment over hands pressed against the cave surface. In addition to what can be seen and experienced by the body, researchers have identified a 'unicorn' {Fig 1.04} at the cave's entrance. The unicorn is a consciously created monster - not a composite creature like the griffin or the winged bull- but a monster in which every semblance of reality is deliberately violated.<sup>4</sup> The 'unicorn' illustrates the imagination's ability not only to creatively represent what is but also to create something not yet seen.

The cave at Lascaux Chauvet illustrates what Bachelard calls the Synthetic and Creative functions of the imagination. Creative imagination is the faculty of forming in the mind new images or concepts, which have not been directly experienced.<sup>5</sup> Synthetic Imagination provides the ability to construct personal realms within the mind by imparting emotional value onto elements derived from

\*The root of the word imagination is the Latin word *imago*, meaning "image"; the imagination is the image-forming faculty in the mind. The imagination generates the symbols the unconscious uses to express itself.<sup>1</sup> Our English word fantasy derives from the Greek word *phantasia*. The original meaning of this word is instructive: it meant "a making-visible". It derived from a verb that means "to make visible, to reveal" and denotes the imaginations capacity to make visible the contents of the inner world by giving them form. <sup>2</sup>

sense perceptions of the shared world.<sup>6</sup> For Bachelard the imagination is not merely the faculty in the mind that converts what we see into mental images, the imagination allows us to creatively perceive our environment “*the faculty of deforming images provided by perception – liberating us from first images.*”<sup>7</sup> The imagination is both a means by which we can distort and summarize what we perceive and a function of the unreal – the ability to transcend what we perceive in the creation of new images.

Just as the dark interior of the great caves gave shelter to early displays of human imagination, the unconscious within ourselves is the origin of all creative endeavors.<sup>8</sup> The faculties of the imagination: fantasy, reverie, reflection and recollection can convert the invisible forms of the unconscious into images that are perceptible to the conscious mind. The images they summon characteristically appear clothed in metaphors that communicate according to axioms embedded in religious iconography, in familiar mythological and visual narratives.<sup>9</sup> Imagination, an organ of coherent communication, employs a highly refined complex language of symbols\*\* to express the contents of the unconscious through energy and meaningful imagery.<sup>11</sup> The imagination possesses its own logic and there exists a language of forms inherent in the universe, archetypes: the grid of basic analogies and hidden connections which constitute the ‘logic of the imaginary.’<sup>12</sup> These archetypes constitute the deepest psychic structures of the imagination, “*a symbolic force which exists before images.*”<sup>13</sup> In Bachelard’s Theory of Imagination, the relationship between archetype and environment are explored through poetic reverie.

Central to Bachelard’s theory of imagination is Reverie, the creative daydream. Similar to Jung’s practice of active imagination<sup>14</sup>, reverie is a conscious engagement with the imagination and is communicated and explored through writing. Reverie is a state of consciousness in which unconscious forces are explored, confronted and interpreted. Essential to the practice of reverie is poetics - a creative impulse which instigates an unceasing re-imagining of the world. Reverie is a function of the imagination and engages the creative memory; in reveries of childhood, past perceptions can be poeticized as well, continually

\*The French art historian Henri Focillon, in *The Life of Forms in Art* proposed that forms have a life of their own, and forms in art both derive from and generate other forms, autonomously, according to their own internal principles. Such an approach frees signs and symbols from the stasis imposed on them by the permanence of the collective unconscious and the relativism of historicism that denies any intrinsic properties to materials or places or forms. The cultural object in Focillon’s perspective possesses a dynamic autonomy that interacts with experience and modifies it. Motifs are simultaneously subject to continuous metamorphoses and yet preserve a certain integrity: they are not altogether empty signifiers waiting to be filled but attract a host of meanings which may not define them but interplay with them to generate new forms and evolve new meanings.<sup>10</sup>

\*\*Carl Jung differentiated symbols from signs, explaining that signs always less than the concept it represents, whereas the symbol always implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning: “*Because there are innumerable things beyond the range of human understanding, we constantly use symbolic terms to represent concepts that we cannot define or fully comprehend.*”<sup>10a</sup>

remade, renewing our sense of wonder. In *The Poetics of Reverie*, Bachelard states, “*we have microfilms in our memory which can be read only by the living light of imagination.*”<sup>15</sup>

A second trait of reverie is imaginative reciprocity, which depends on the relation of the imagination to the objective world in the psychological process of projection. The imagination can both liberate space from the physical realm to become something that lives on in the imagination and invert the process and project endless possibilities onto the spaces that surround us. Projection is the subject conveyed into things, a valorization\* of objective reality. The intertwining of subject and object is the essence of imaginative reciprocity, the subject that gazes upon the object is as rich and diverse as the object, and the object is intimately bound up with the subject in the generation of meaning.<sup>17</sup>

Our cognitive structures are designed to project poetic layers of mythology, history and personal experience onto the spaces we inhabit in order to provide a level of comfort and connection – an axis mundi, between individual and cosmos. In line with the “archetypal” nature of these imaginative “elements,” the third major attribute Bachelard ascribes to reverie is its ability to create a “cosmic image”<sup>18</sup> This transcendental image sculpts the world and the dreaming object into a stable, unified universal being – a primal archetype. “*Reverie unifies cosmos and substance.*”<sup>19</sup> Commanding a complete interpenetration of subject and object in a poetic synthesis, reverie simultaneously co-creates both the dreamed world and the dreaming subject.<sup>20</sup>

How thought processes happen, where they take place in the mind, how the faculties are arranged, and what the character of mental images might be remain some of the most crucial puzzles about consciousness. Inherent to the concept of subjective perception lies the hypothesis that the imagination is an active agent with autonomous and ungovernable powers to not only create images in the mind's eye that are interpretations of the objects perceived but also to form one's own perception of self. That vision can sometimes deceive us was the motivation for the French philosopher René Descartes, in his study of optics to declare that ‘*it*

\*Bachelard defines valorization as ascribing a subjective value to phenomena and objects beyond their objective reality. An aspect of the observer is projected onto the subject, therefore transforming it.<sup>16</sup>

 Ink Blots

*As nature abhors a vacuum so does the mind resist meaninglessness, invent stories to explain haphazard incidents, provide reasons and origins; the formless have beckoned irresistibly to the shaping powers of thought and imagination. Humans are creatures of language and signs attract meanings, symbols stick to forms, verbal and visual. Pattern, design, system, significations – meanings have accrued to every sort of natural phenomena.*

- Maria Warner, *Phantasmagoria* <sup>21</sup>

The mind looks for patterns, unraveling nature's riddles to find reassuring order in what appears to be chaos. The nature and character of projections are thought to give insight into the particular attributes of the individual who imagined their presence. The Rorschach test entails precisely finding meanings where there is nothing represented, only abstract and random symmetries, and applying the results to the diagnosis of character. Inspired by the children's game of gazing at clouds, the Rorschach test uses patients' subjective interpretations of inkblots as a diagnostic test of personality.<sup>22</sup> Fundamental to this theory is an appreciation of creative imagination; differences in perception, the particular symbols and metaphors applied to a phenomenon by an individual were akin to a signature. Developed in the 1920's in Zurich, the test illuminates the changes that were occurring around the idea of identity: a shift from external attributes to internal perceptions as indicative of a person's uniqueness.



*Fig 1.04* Ink blot

*is the soul that sees not the eye. This is why maniacs and men asleep often see or think they see, objects that are not before their eyes.*<sup>23</sup>

Exploration into the relationship between functions of the visualizing faculty: experience, memory, and imagination, continue to generate varying speculative models of the mind.

Freud introduced a dual thinking structure\* {Primary and Secondary thinking} into his model of the psyche in order to explain the imagination's role in the mind. Primary processes are dreamlike, image based, non-verbal and irrational. The absence of language in the image dominated primary mode of thinking has an ancient quality and according to Freud, it is the first mode of thinking in human development; realistic thinking is secondary in the sense that it emerges later in development. Secondary process thinking is guided by the Reality principle and is characterized by a capacity for logical thinking and reasoning. In Freud's view, Primary thought is a stage, which, is outgrown and replaced by a strong ego and the capacity for Secondary thinking in healthy adults.<sup>24</sup>

Modern dual thinking structures identify Paradigmatic and Narrative thinking as the two modes of thought. Paradigmatic thinking is the logical, sequential, rational mode, formulated mentally as language forms the basis for scientific inquiry. The mind also operates in what could be called a narrative mode, the visual, auditory, kinesthetic expressed as non-sequential symbols, fantasies or daydreams. This is a mythic mode of thinking in which the gaps of logic are opportunities for creative interpretation.<sup>25</sup>

\*While studying schizophrenia, Bleuler also developed a dual thought process model: rational and autistic thinking.<sup>26</sup> Whereas rational thinking is structured and logical, autistic thinking can be characterized as fantasy driven by free association. It is the mode of thinking apparent in dreams, the pretend play of young children, and in reveries of normal adults. For Bleuler, autistic thinking is not a primitive mode of thought to be outgrown but a complex capacity to envision alternate realities. Autistic thinking becomes a creative process requiring an understanding of the world beyond the means of an infant. Consequently Bleuler suggests that rational thinking is the primary mode of thinking in human development, and that eventually the autistic function is added to the reality function and from that point on they develop in tandem.

Imagination is the ability to absorb the world around us into our mind where it exists as an image, the ability to manipulate that image or create new images, and the ability to infuse new images with old ones, providing a framework through which we encounter everything. Much debate revolves around the opposition and intersection between real and unreal worlds. The imaginary is often seen as other, a less valid or artificial construction, with "reality" as the privileged datum, a more authentic state.





*Fig 1.05 Girl swimming in her bedroom*

The act of imagining is often seen as a temporary escape from the real world that one must ultimately return to. The function of creative perception undermines this dialectic between real and unreal – that these two extremes do not exist in a pure state – the imagination is constantly mediating between the two to create a more meaningful experience of space. The poetics of space is an ongoing reciprocal relationship, a creative dialogue shaping individuals and spaces simultaneously.

The development of the imagination's capacity for poetics through play in childhood has a direct correlation to the perception of space in adulthood. A poetic experience of space occurs when emotion is evoked through narrative, ritual or mythology and explored through mimesis and mythos. Fantasy play emerges as a dramatic mimesis of human behavior; a mimesis in the sense that it is not a bland reproduction but something transformed. The work of the imagination is openly displayed in childhood play, studies of which reveal how the imagination constructs immaterial structures, which form the patterns and connections between the literal and the figurative, between the actual and the symbolic.

## Optics

Curiosity and wonder bring into being many devices that reveal worlds hidden from human eyes. Devices designed to expand the faculty of sight such as microscopes and telescopes opened up unimaginable universes. The early devices designed to amplify the faculty of sight were modeled on pre-existing notions of the inner theatre of the mind and as an unintended consequence were intrinsically bound to the imagery and symbolism of the inner eye. So after the telescope and the microscope, bold optical technologies turned to communicating the inner workings of the mind, not retinal pictures or observations of the world. The magic lantern, dark chamber or camera obscura mirrored the eidetic images\* of the mind and its early adepts used it to project imagined interior processes and their characteristic products. The magic lantern, reveals by its very name the lack of distinction between revelation and illusion; this device and other early cinematic machines actually brought into being models of interior thought which reproduces the mind's capacity to form images with eyes closed or with eyes open in the absence of empirical data of any kind. Optical devices did not concentrate solely on extending the faculty of sight as an organ of sense but developed concurrently as instruments of imagination, projecting the mind's phantasms into the external world.

\*eidetic images are images seen within the mind that although seen with a hallucinatory vividness, are produced by imagination alone.<sup>27</sup>

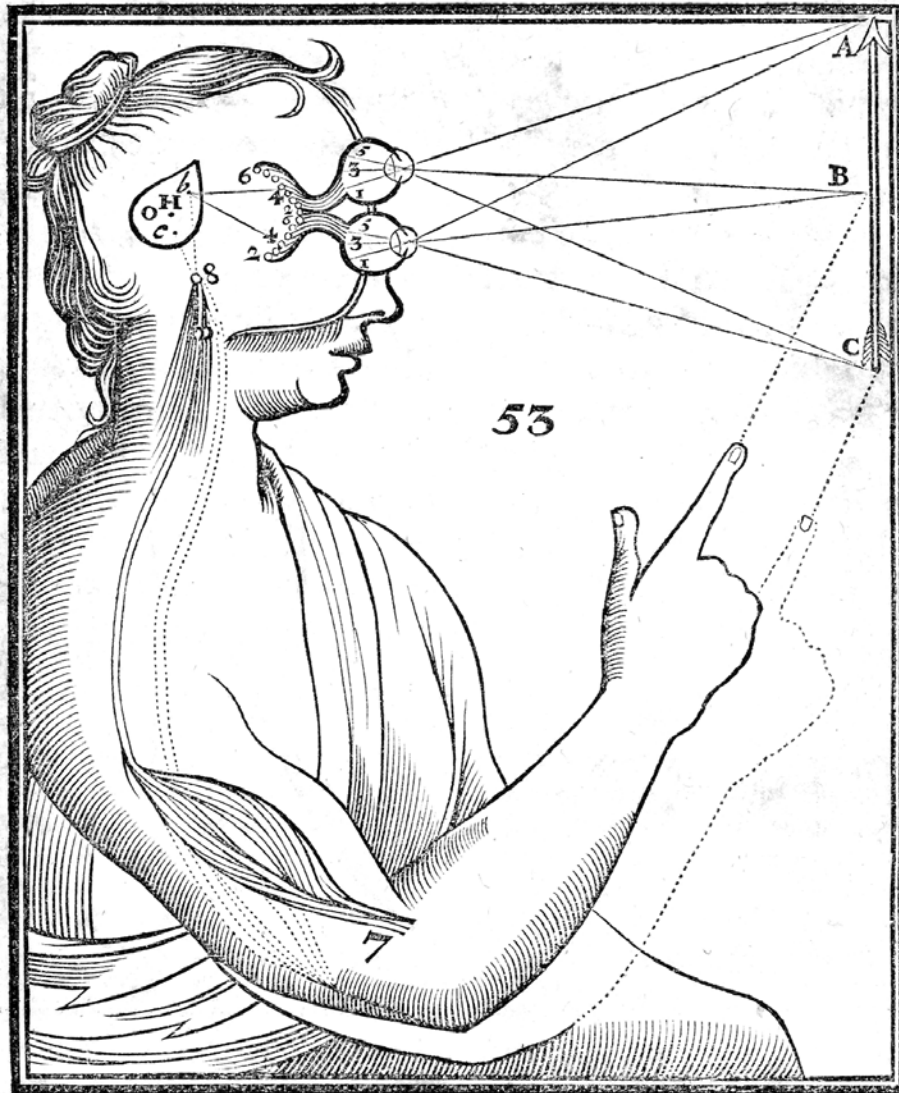


Fig 1.06 Figure 63 Optics diagram, Rene Descartes, De Homine, 1662.

Visual information is taken to the brain by hollow optic nerves. From there, it reaches the Pineal body (H), which regulates the flowing of animal spirits into the nerves. The spirits will go to the muscles of the arm, to produce motion.

## TRADITIONAL THEORIES OF IMAGINATION

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Within the fields of psychology and sociology the imagination is accessed initially in childhood through varying forms of childhood play. Children's pretend play is often seen as an important window into their unconscious emotional life, much as dreams are thought to provide a window into the adult unconscious. Curiosity drives the development of thinking, an innate desire to understand the world of people, things, and ideas.<sup>28</sup>

In his book, *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood*, Piaget laid the foundation for his Theory of Cognitive Development, so influential that many of the theories of pretence today are developments of or challenges to his model. Founded on Freud's belief that primary thinking dominates the human psyche from infancy, Piaget perceives childhood development as the gradual suppression of the primary function by the development of the rational mind, a "*process of forming relationships between a universe constantly becoming more external to the self.*"<sup>29</sup>

This theory posits that the initial state of primary thinking is an egocentric position in which children are unable to comprehend a perspective outside themselves. The development of intelligent thinking is a transition from an egocentric state, where the self is the centre of all things; to a condition of understanding one's place within the world, which exists independent of the self, and to act rationally within it. Piaget claims this original mode of thinking distorts reality and adapts it to the desires of the child. Thus childhood pretence in itself is not the adaptation of the child to its environment, but the environment to the child.

*Symbolic play represents in thought the role of assimilation, and freely assimilates reality to the ego... thought but why is there a simulation of reality to the ego instead of immediate assimilation of the universe to experimental and logical thought? It is simply because in early childhood this thought has not yet been constructed.*<sup>30</sup>



Fig 1.07

Thus concepts must come first before play or speech can be mapped upon them to attain meaning. Piaget organizes his theory around the emergence and construction of four developmental stages\*, each phase correlating to a more sophisticated understanding of reality. Piaget's model begins with primary thought and develops through two transitional phases until primary thinking is suppressed, and the child becomes more rational and objective.

Like play, speech is another portal through which to observe cognitive growth. This Pre-operational period employs the mode of Syncristic thought, which is similar to primary thought however there is egocentric speech to represent it. Piaget concluded that egocentric speech\*\* is systematically replaced by social speech during this phase. Piaget's theory of egocentric speech is congruent to his theory of pretence, that egocentricity is a rudimentary phase of development that will be outgrown.

Freud and Piaget largely influenced traditional theories of the development of the imagination. Consequently, pretence was thought to be a primitive activity that would be outgrown as cognitive development progressed. Traditionally children engaged in pretend play were assumed to get carried away by their imagination and blur the distinction between fantasy and reality, assimilate and distort reality to their own cognitive schemata\*\*\* and withdraw from genuine social engagement into a world of their own.<sup>28</sup>

\*Piaget's 4 stages of development:

- + Sensorimotor period (years 0–2)  
autistic thinking, kinesthetic & sensory exploration
- + Pre-operational period (years 2–7)  
language is developed
- + Concrete operational period (years 7–11) logic is developed
- + Formal operational period (years 12 and up)  
intelligent thinking

\*\*egocentric speech- the child thinks that what is said can be understood no matter how it is said. differentiated from social speech, echolalia (pleasure of sounds) monologue (running discourse- can be used to mirror the motor activity of the child), and Social monologue two children are talking together but not unifying the context.

\*\*\*schemata: general cognitive structure that shapes how one perceives the world.

## THE WORK OF THE IMAGINATION

\*In his book, *The Work of the Imagination*, Paul L. Harris, uses Piaget's theory of pretence as a starting point, but echoing Bleuler claims that imagination is not a primitive mode of thinking, as supported by the following:

Pretend play is not something that we observe in very young infants. It is more or less entirely absent in the first year of life, its starts to emerge in the second year and it becomes increasingly elaborate thereafter.

Pretending appears to be a widespread feature of early human childhood. From a biological point of view it is reasonable to ask what function this early human capacity might serve rather than to assume that it is a maladaptive tendency that will disappear with the advent of maturity.

The study of early pathology shows that it is the absence of early imagination and not its presence that is pathological.<sup>32</sup>



*Fig 1.08 Child surrounded by bubbles*

In his book, *The Work of the Imagination*, Harris examines the ways in which the imagination develops through play into a variety of functions employed in adulthood. Harris claims that the work of the imagination: pretence, fantasy and wishful thinking does not get suppressed as the mind develops but is instead internalized into the cognitive capacity to construct an empathetic situation model through which we make meaningful connections to our surroundings.\*

In addition to claiming that the imagination is not a primary mode of thinking, Harris proposes that similar to Vygotsky's\* theory of the internalization of egocentric speech into inner thought dialogue, the imagination typically manifested as pretence in childhood is not a function that gets suppressed through the course of development, but internalized and developed into cognitive function, the effects of which are evident in adults as decision making, the appreciation of fiction, emotional maturity and the ability to engage in social relationships.

Harris claims that children use their imagination for three major functions:

**Pretence and the representation of reality:**

Pretend play allows children to become absorbed in a make-believe world of their own creation, one that often retains many of the causal principles of the real world. Switching between a literal and fantasy mode, pretence alerts children to the potential gap between a representation of reality and reality itself.

**Fantasy and Theory of Mind:**

When simulating roles and actions, we are able to view the world from another person's perspective, forcing us to consider that reality may have many viewpoints. When absorbed in a character our emotions are unable to distinguish between a pretend and real situation. This empathy develops in conjunction with our decision making function, allowing for comparisons between actual and possible outcomes.

**Wishful Thinking - The infusion of the imagination into everyday reality:**

A method by which to explore the impossible and the magical. Although children can distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary, and understand there are physical rules which govern event in this world, that does not prevent them from speculating and even hoping that it might be otherwise.

Where as Piaget sees social speech as indicative of mental maturity, Vygotsky claims that social speech comes first, as coos and other infantile communications are meant to get attention and results.<sup>30</sup> Vygotsky developed a contrasting theory of egocentric speech that distinguishes primary thought as being non-verbal and primary speech as being motor exploration - the two combine in verbalized thought, what is typically called language. Vygotsky asserts that monologues present in egocentric speech reveal the process of problem solving or planning as one where the child thinks out loud in words. The fate of such speech, is not to be suppressed by the advent of a more socialized intelligence as Piaget implied but to be internalized as inner dialogue. Once the child makes a clean separation between speech for communication and speech in the service of thinking speech becomes the interface for the thought process.<sup>33</sup>

## PRETENCE AND PARACOSM

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*make-believe play is the most important manifestation  
of symbolic thought in the child...*

-Jean Piaget, *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood*<sup>34</sup>

Pretence is the exploration and participation in alternate situations superimposed onto the familiar. Thus pretend play has the power to transform everyday places and objects into a laboratory for exploration. In addition to physical contexts children bring social knowledge into pretend episodes; the roles, identities and social conventions of their particular culture as well as local customs and conventions surrounding play.<sup>35</sup>

In *The House of Make-Believe*, Singer and Singer define pretence as follows:<sup>36</sup>

1. Familiar activities may be performed in the absence of the necessary material or social context
2. Activities may not be carried out to their logical outcome
3. A child may treat an inanimate object as animate
4. One object or gesture may be substituted for another
5. A child may carry out an activity usually performed by someone else i.e.: pretending to be a doctor.

It is important to note that children are able to distinguish between what is real and what is imagined, and are able to operate in both a literal and make-believe mode. In the course of study Harris extracted four features of the pretence mode; pretend stipulations, causal powers, the suspension of objective truth and an unfolding causal chain. Recognizing features of the imaginary mode in children as young as two years old, the findings show that in pretence children engage in the same cognitive work as adults when interpreting make-believe scenarios.

Harris summarizes this cognitive process as the ability of imagination to fill in the gaps of a pretend episode that are invisible but implied. As well, once immersed in a make-believe world, children are able to differentiate between real and make-believe and can consciously decide to play according to a make-believe or real set of rules.<sup>37</sup>





*Fig 1.09 Two boys fighting with swords on rock, Iceland*

The creation of imaginary worlds in childhood play is a means by which children actively explore and investigate their environment. Robert Silvey and Stephen MacKeith, who pioneered the research into this form of imaginary activity, introduced the term ‘Paracosm’\* to describe such worlds. Some children visit their world for years, during which time they evolve from basic places to more complex societies. Silvey and MacKeith identified 5 categories of paracosm which take into account variations in inspiration, scale, level of complexity and realism of the worlds created.

The first and most common among the earliest respondents were worlds that had their origin in objects and toys. Paracosms like these use a favorite stuffed animal or cartoon character as the framework for a new world. Many children saw this as limiting as they developed an appetite for realism as they grew older and either adapted the world, or abandoned it all together. {ages 3-6}

\* In addition to the feeling of pride in its devising resulting in a desire to maintain consistency, paracosms are characterized by a strong emotional attachment. Whereas a large portion of childhood make-believe is ephemeral in nature, paracosms are a different animal; they are meant to be returned to. <sup>38</sup>

The second type of paracosm was based on a real place familiar to the child; a forest, a stream, a lake, or a specific institution such as the farm, a boarding school, or a theatre. In most of these personal relationships tend to be important and may even be shared with siblings or friends. {ages 7-9}

Whereas the last paracosms were very local and specific, the third category involves the creation of a whole new world: an island, country or people. These often involve not only the making of the country but also organizing it. Although children are playing, fantasizing, imagining; the fantasy is very logical, often imposing rules, laws and societal norms and keeping extensive documentation. In their book *The House of Make-Believe*, Singer and Singer, believe that paracosms with strong social components are a sophisticated way in which children and adolescents confront the tension between agency and community. As is the case with imaginary friends, the invention or close study of these relationships, intrigues, and social norms is an exploration of their individuality and the many roles they may play as citizens within society. {ages 7-11}

As children get older, they elaborate their imaginary world with details to approximate the complexity of the real world. Paracosms become vehicles for very specific interest such as the creation of special languages or louder political systems as well as in depth written records: stories of adventures and landscapes, records of historical events, maps of the topography. ages 12+}

Unstructured, shifting, and idyllic worlds do not fit into above categories and typically have psychological underpinnings. Throughout their book Silvey and MacKeith, attempt to avoid the simple conclusion that unhappy children create worlds they are in control of to escape unfortunate circumstances. In addition to battling boredom and providing a fun distraction, paracosms can also generate a sense of joy, inquisitiveness, empathy and personal control. The imaginary world becomes a place to play, based on ideas and objects they were interested in. Often curiosity and exploratory tendencies are all greater factors in encouraging this imaginative activity than a desire for escape.



Fig 1.10 Children in fantasy costumes in forest

*When Joy was about seven and she began imagining that a specific part of a wood by her home was Fairyland. “I never saw the characters of my mind because, being very tiny they were too shy to come out.” She inherited Fairyland from her sister who was five years older. Joy enjoyed being there alone, only taking people who would respect her world. Part of the allure of the world was that it was a secret from the adults in her life. She imagined the fairies lived in tree stumps, and would make homes for them by tidying up leaves and making doorways out of the holes in the stumps. The centre of this world was a magic tree, in which she could climb up and interact with her world on a different scale. She felt like more of a steward of the world than a creator, “all I had to do was to sustain my belief in it and keep it as entirely natural and secret as possible, so that the fairies wouldn’t mind and might someday appear.”<sup>39</sup>*

Joy's story illustrates what Edith Cobb would describe as a cosmic sense.\* In her book, the Ecology of Imagination in Childhood, Cobb accredits the childhood sense of wonder to a cosmic sense, an awareness of the forces of nature that inspire their later creative endeavors. The world making play has a biological and social evolutionary role, self-transcendence is a process in human compassion- a compassionate intelligence {cosmic empathy}. The child develops a continually wider ability to create ever greater complexity of the worlds in play, thoughts, and word, the shape and meaning of his own perceptual world emerges, and the continual interplay of perceptual relations with environment sharpens the contours of his own image and deepens the reflections of the effects of his own identity on others.<sup>40</sup>

Cobb depicts the child's reality as the interplay between outer and inner worlds, with imagination operating in conjunction with forces of the environment. The ecology of imagination is this reciprocal relationship between the body, mind and environment to adapt to nature, culture and society.<sup>41</sup> Nature is a catalyst of creative transformation, which allows for an empathetic re-interpretation of the world. Cobb presents the process of world making as a common activity of childhood, with each child as the creator of worlds within worlds. The child's openness to the world and wonder at what exists outside the self instigate creative action.

Thus, make-believe play is a process in which children apply their knowledge of the world, often shifting between what was, what is and what could be. In addition, since the child is able to distinguish between what is real and what is imagined pretence is only partially parasitic on reality; it occurs in the realm of fiction. Like adult authors the child may incorporate characters and settings from their experience into their play but they understand that they may not occur in the real world.<sup>42</sup> Children's pretend play is not an early distortion of the real world but in initial exploration of possible worlds, a cognitive ability that forms the foundation of inhabiting as an adult.

\* It is intriguing to see how adults interpret their childhood paracosm through the lens of an older, more sophisticated understanding of their own world. As an adult Joy interprets "Fairyland" as an "unconscious kind of communion with nature." Joy says that Nature and natural things were then and always have been her greatest delight. Fairyland was for her an exercise of interacting with the changing seasons and being at times very moved by the actual physical presence of landscape.

\* \* \*

## FANTASY AND THEORY OF MIND

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“The Secrets of Storytelling”, by Jeremy Hsu, explores the human predilection for storytelling. Hsu posits that narrative engages through psychological realism, that a story engages a reader when it is composed of recognizable emotions and believable interactions among characters.<sup>38</sup> When approaching a situation from the perspective of an invented protagonist, a child draws upon their own past experiences and re-interprets them to consider responses, plans and actions appropriate to their adapted role.<sup>43</sup>

It is believed that the different viewpoints offered in role-play contribute to developing Theory of Mind (ToM). ToM is the ability to view a situation from another person’s point of view. Inherent to ToM is the notion that one persons relationship to and understanding of a common situation may be different than your own.

*ToM is the ability to attribute mental states—beliefs, intents, desires, pretending, knowledge, etc.—to oneself and others. As originally defined, it enables one to understand that mental states can be the cause of—and thus be used to explain and predict—others’ behavior.<sup>44</sup>*

ToM is the understanding that another person is an independent agent with her own objective. To “walk a mile in another’s shoes” requires the ability to maintain two different perceptions of the world simultaneously. When engaged in fantasy, children are able to project themselves into another time and place, sometimes this alternate perspective leads to a state of absorption. Absorption is a disassociation from ones own state that occurs when one becomes more engaged in a fictional perspective. While captivated in fiction current reality is temporarily held at bay, allowing for the experience of alternate worlds. From the protagonist as origin, a dynamic state of projection and interpolation occurs in attempt to uncover the motives that connect the characters actions to the situation at hand. This captivation is called Absorption or Narrative Transport and is characterized by a suspension of the readers position in time and space, and by the personal connection and emotional reactions the reader feels when putting themselves in the role of the protagonist.



*The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo*

*This high and incomparable placing not only performs the office of conserving for us the things, words, and arts which we confide to it, so that we may find them at once whenever we need them, but also gives us true wisdom from whose founts we come to the knowledge of things from their causes and not from their effects. This may be more clearly expressed from the following illustration. If we were to find ourselves in a vast forest and desired to see its whole extent we should not be able to do this from our position within it for our view would be limited to only a small part of it by the immediately surrounding trees which would prevent us from seeing the distant view. But if, near to this forest, there were a slope leading up to a high hill, on coming out of the forest and ascending up the slope we should begin to see a large part of the form of the forest, and from the top of the hill we should see the whole of it. The wood is our inferior world; the slope is the heavens; the hill is the supercelestial world. And in order to understand the things of the lower world it is necessary to ascend to superior things, from whence, looking down from on high, we may have a more certain knowledge of the inferior things.*

*-Giulio Camillo, L'idea del Theatro<sup>45</sup>*

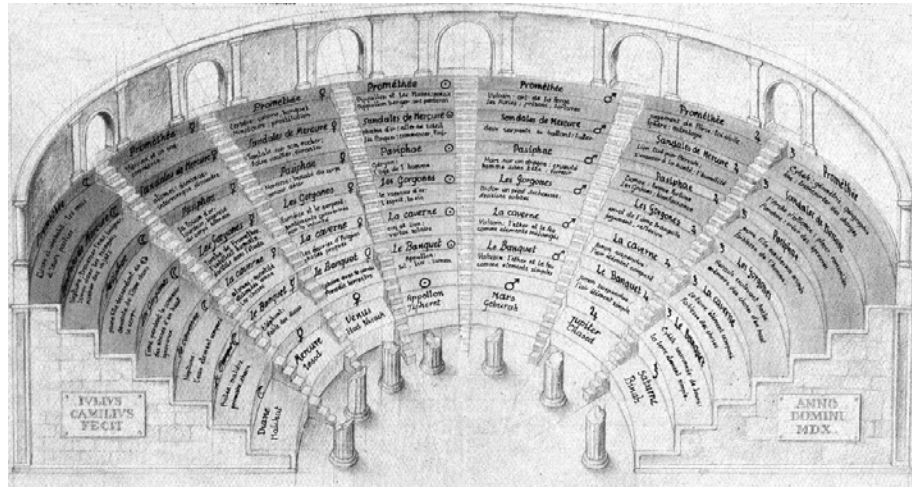


Fig 1.11 The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo

*He calls this theatre of his by many names, saying now that it is a built or constructed mind and soul, and now that it is a windowed one. He pretends that all things that the human mind can conceive and which we cannot see with the corporeal eye, after being collected together by diligent meditation may be expressed by certain corporeal signs in such a way that the beholder may at once perceive with his eyes everything that is otherwise hidden in the depths of the human mind. And it is because of this corporeal looking that he calls it a theatre.*

-Erasmus, *Epistolae*<sup>46</sup>

When in a state of absorption or narrative transport, fictional characters and events have a mysterious capacity to generate emotional responses, despite our mental ability to classify them as imaginary. As when children are absorbed in role-play, emotional engagement in imaginary scenarios, as evident in Narrative Transport, is characteristic evident throughout our lifetime. Although this reaction can be regulated with more proficiency as children age, and despite the knowledge that the situation is imaginary, both children and adults have the capacity to respond to imagined stimuli with the same cognitive and emotional processes as would occur in response to a real situation.<sup>47</sup> Thus we spend much of our time emotionally responding to stimuli that has never occurred outside of our imagination.

This empathy, or emotional connection to another's perspective is a sophisticated development of initial ToM abilities. Harris claims the ability to entertain hypothetical situations and to assess what emotional reactions they might evoke is useful when we have to choose between two alternative courses of action. Thus, our decision-making processes are founded not only in a rational evaluation but an emotional appraisal as well.<sup>48</sup>

*“One might have expected natural selection to have weeded out any inclination to engage in imaginary worlds rather than the real one,”*<sup>49</sup> writes Steven Pinker, a Harvard University evolutionary psychologist, in a review of J. Gottschall & D. Sloan Wilson's, “The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative”. Pinker goes on to argue against this claim, citing fiction as the training ground for learning the customs and rules of society. Narrative has the unique power to persuade and motivate because it appeals to our emotions and capacity for empathy. One hypothesis speculates that as our ancestors evolved to live in groups they had to make sense of increasingly complex social relationships. Communication, interaction and human relationships all depend quite heavily on empathy and ToM. Role-play could be interpreted as training for our responsibilities as social animals. Thus our capacity for narrative must extend past cognitive abilities to relationships and society as a whole.

*“Each fairy tale is a magic mirror which reflects some aspects of our innerworld, and of the steps required by our evolution from immaturity to maturity. For those who immerse themselves in what the fairy tale has to communicate, it becomes a deep, quiet pool which at first seems to reflect only our own image; but behind it we soon discover the inner turmoil of our soul – its depth, and ways to gain peace within ourselves and with the world, which is the reward of our struggles.”*

-Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The meaning and importance of Fairy tales.*<sup>50</sup>





*Fig 1.12 Young girl and boy building tower from wooden bricks*

Our cognitive structures are designed to project narrative layers of mythology, history and personal experience onto the spaces we inhabit in order to provide a level of comfort and connection – an axis mundi, between individual and cosmos. Storytelling is one of the primary methods in which children absorb culture, societal norms and roles as well as explore their relationship to these systems.

## WISHFUL THINKING

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During cognitive development, a child will construct a model of the world as they know it, and each experience they have will slowly fill in the gaps of what is unknown, and punch holes in premises that were too limited. Eventually this initial model is proven false and the quest for a better, more complete understanding replaces this view with another closer, less flawed approximation of reality. As a child's ability to understand the constraints of reality grow so does the capacity to explore the impossible and the magical. Children do not apply the term magic to any unexplained incident or unfamiliar outcome. It is only when the unexplained phenomena occurs in a familiar context and defies previously assigned and understood limitations that it may be deemed magical. Young children understand several fundamental constraints: that matter cannot be created out of nothing; that inanimate objects do not change their shape or identity; and that complicated processes such as growth or aging are irreversible. Children use these principles to assess what is ordinarily possible, but they also use them to classify certain violations as magical.<sup>51</sup>

Each successive model encompasses events and phenomena that had previously violated their model so that fewer and fewer of the phenomenon the children encounter can sustain their initial promise of being genuinely magical. Under normal circumstances, occurrences thought to be magical in nature will be impossible to observe or reproduce, and when children do encounter such a phenomenon, they are likely to regard it as a trick or illusion.<sup>52</sup> Although children develop a level of skepticism about magic occurring in the real world, they continue exploring such phenomena in their imaginative excursions. Indeed they are supported in doing so by many cultural forms, including fairy tales, rituals and religion.

The prevalence of magical thinking mostly occurs within the realm of the imagination and cultural practices. Margaret Mead concluded that a system that belief in the power of magic is something that the child might eventually ascertain from the surrounding adult culture, but is not a mode of thought that comes early or naturally.<sup>53</sup> Fiction, religion and mythology actively invite children to consider obvious and striking violations of the basic physical biological and psychological constraints.



*Fig 1.13 Boy and girl looking inside illuminated large box*

Children construct a semi permeable boundary between the worlds of the imagination and the world of actual possibilities. Captured by their imagination, they start to wonder if transformations that are normally impossible might nevertheless occur. Children mostly live in the ordinary world and expect mundane causal principles to hold sway, but, like adults, that does not prevent them from speculating and even hoping that it might be otherwise.\*



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## EXPERIMENT 4: MONSTER IN A BOX (HARRIS, BROWN, MARRIOTT, WHITTALL AND HARMER, 1991)

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**SUBJECTS:** children 4-6

**EXPERIMENTAL AREA:** a room or separate space in their school, containing two black boxes.\*

**HYPOTHESIS:** How do children regulate the boundary between pretense and reality? The following experiment attempted to assess 4 to 6 year-old's belief in the reality status of imagined entities. The very act of imagining a creature in the box infuses children's appraisal of reality, or more precisely their assessment of what the box might contain despite its having been visibly empty when first examined. This possibility becomes sufficiently plausible for some children that they begin to wonder if the same creature might be in the box.

The experiment begins when the children establish both boxes are empty, and are encouraged to go up and look inside to satisfy themselves on this point. After it has been established that the boxes are empty, children are asked to pretend that there was a creature inside one of them. Half are told to pretend there is a nice and friendly rabbit inside the box, and half to pretend that there was a mean and horrible monster that wanted to chase the child. Half of the children were asked to imagine a rabbit, the other half a monster.

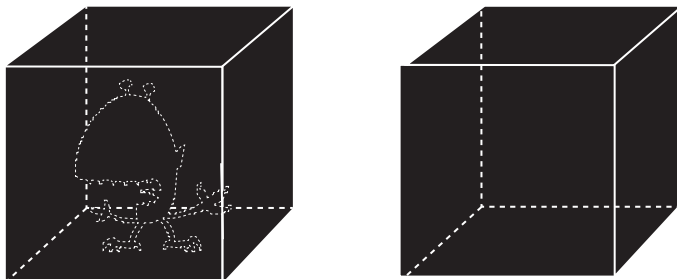
Afterwards the interviewer would enquire about the color, friendliness, location and intention {wants to be stroked or wants to chase child} of the creature they imagined. During the question period the interviewer confirms whether or not the child believes there is really a rabbit or a monster in the box or if they are only pretending.

Pretending to have forgotten a treat for the child the interviewer would leave the room. Once alone subjects are observed remotely by video camera to see if once alone they would open the box containing the creature or the neutral box not containing creature. And if applicable the time required alone before box would be opened. After a period of two minutes the experimenter would return and once again confirm if the child thought there was a bunny {or monster} inside.

\* boxes were made deliberately large  
– approximately 1m<sup>2</sup>. 1m<sup>2</sup> is large  
enough to contain various make-  
believe creatures: puppies, rabbits,  
and more disturbing creatures such  
as monsters.

**RESULTS:** After pretending that there was a monster or a bunny in one of two boxes, 45% of the children, when left alone, were inclined either to touch or to open the pretense box regardless of the identity of its pretend creature, although only a minority (20%) opened a box. When questioned about their behavior, many children in the latter study admitted that they wondered whether there was a creature in the box as opposed to thinking there was nothing inside. From these findings, the researchers concluded that whereas young children under some conditions appear to have a good understanding of the distinction between fantasy and reality, they cannot always maintain a firm barrier between these two realms.

**CONCLUSION:** Although children, through experience, come to comprehend the system of restrictions and rules that compose the real world they are able to entertain violations of these rules. Although they may not be able to observe such violations in the course of their everyday life, they can contemplate them in their imagination. A semi-permeable boundary is constructed between the world of the imagination and the world they inhabit. Within this capacity to imagine potentials, in particular there are some occasions when possibilities that they have contemplated in their imagination infuse their conception of what could happen in the real world. The infusion of imagination into reality occurs in three successive phases: **imagining**, **likelihood appraisal** and **action**. Captured by their imagination, they start to wonder if transformations that are normally impossible might nevertheless occur. Children mostly live in the ordinary world and expect mundane causal principles to hold sway, but, like adults, that does not prevent them from speculating and even hoping that it might be otherwise.



\*Note: In their article, “Make Believe and Reality: Explorations of the Imaginary Realm”, Claire Golomb and Lisa Galasso challenge the conclusions found by Harris et al.: “It is unclear whether the children’s behavior toward the boxes was (a) a sign of continued engagement in the pretense, (b) due to a lack of alternative play activities, (c) due to suspicions of trickery at the experimenter’s departure, or (d) due to a belief in the existence of a creature they imagined (i.e., a confusion between reality and fantasy).” It is of note here that Harris et al. do not claim that the child is confused or is unable to distinguish between what is real and imaginary only that the children are willing to entertain the possibility that the laws of the universe could be subverted. Golomb and Galasso’s results from their re-creation of this experiment were skewed as they were forced to alter the experiment after they were not able to get clearance to leave 4-6 year old children alone in an unfamiliar room after having them imagine a scary monster who wished to chase them.



Fig 1.14 *Hemisphaerium Boreale*

Myth has a cosmological function, connecting the present moment with the eternal and timeless. Myths tend to fill in the gaps of the known with the possible. Attempting to answer the question of man's place in nature, myth constitutes a new relationship with space, not with any narrow purpose in mind,\* but to gain a sense of security in the universe.<sup>54</sup> The ways in which play contributes to society was explored by Dutch historian Johan Huizinga and became "Play Theory", a study of playful aspects of culture.<sup>55</sup> Our culture is permeated with play, from language, to myth to ritual. Each of these involves negotiating between that which is imaginary to that which is real. Language is a system of reference, and words are only signifiers of their referents. Thus by naming man creates a parallel poetic world alongside the world of nature.<sup>56</sup> This poetic world is evoked in myth and ritual. Magical thinking can connect social and cultural practices to the divine, connecting man to the universe in a holistic, symbolic manner not always available in the factual world. Ritual connects meaning and activity with symbolic practices; Huizinga categorizes these as systems of play.

\* Joseph Campbell defined myths as having four basic functions: the Mystical Function--experiencing the awe of the universe; the Cosmological Function--explaining the shape of the universe; the Sociological Function--supporting and validating a certain social order; and the Pedagogical Function--how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances.<sup>57</sup>

Mythology often provides both the structure and content for imaginary play. L.R. Goldman employed a framework of narrative, ritual and myth through which to study the geography of the play world in relation to its social and cultural context. While observing the Huli tribe in New Guinea, Goldman found that make-believe play offers a unique and ethnographically grounded tangent along which anthropology could explore the human imagination.<sup>58</sup>

Goldman's study of Huli children's social play is based largely on the methods of communication between the children he observes, thus in addition to physical manifestations of play, he observes the narrative structures underlying the language of play. Consequently fantasy is a symbolic, referential and communicative behavior. In pretend play, narrative forms both the basis and by-product, created through communication and interaction with others. This interpretation culturally situates pretense within a broader picture of how narrative forges links between the exceptional and the ordinary.

While observing the play of Huli children Goldman noticed that in addition to traditional roles and contexts, the children's personas often cycled back to re-interpretations of the ogre and the trickster – two common figures in Huli mythology. Mythology often provided both the structure and content for imaginary play. In pretense play Huli children move between mimesis – part reproduction and part re-creation– and muthoi– the oral and poetic products of these emulative processes.<sup>59</sup> Mimesis depends on language of signs that is rooted in the work of the imagination with analogy, metaphor and associations. Play as pretense thus emerges as an imaginatively constructed and linguistically realized pathway between simulation and mythologisation. In this interpretation child's play is a practice that infuses everyday activities and spaces with symbolism and magic, a continual re-interpretation and re-enactment of myth. Goldman's research indicates that this process of narrative transformation begins early in social interactions and occupies the interstitial space between mimesis and mythos. This creative power, which Bachelard also calls "the poetic": "*the poetic function is to give a new form to the world which poetically exists only if it is unceasingly re-imagined.*"<sup>61</sup>

*"The telling of a tale links you with everyone who has told it before. There are no new tales, only new tellers, telling in their own way, and if you listen closely you can hear the voice of everyone who ever told the tale."*

-William J. Brooke, *A telling of the tales: Five Stories*<sup>60</sup>

Simultaneously participant and creator, role-playing, game play, fantasy and mimesis are manifestations of the developing imagination; translating into adulthood as ritual, narrative transport, and place making. Studies of play reveal the imagination projects alternatives onto everyday familiar spaces, allowing for the development of an increasingly sophisticated perception of space and understanding of what it means to inhabit place.

By re-creating or reinterpreting familiar spaces a child can better understand space and their role within it. The ongoing re-enactment, Huizinga argues, is the inner structure of play.<sup>62</sup> Through repetition and many iterations recognizable patterns emerge. Living and learning can be understood as finding patterns and making connections in one's life or, conversely, knowing when one 'finds oneself' outside of those patterns. The poetic function in this argument is an ongoing attempt to find patterns and make connections between the inner world of the psyche and the environment.

Poetics is the evocation of emotional associations through personal and collective narratives coalesced within the catalogue of experiences and memories residing in the mind of the individual. Underlying the mental structures that constitute an immaterial architecture is a proposition that nothing that we perceive is purely observation but all is a hybrid construction between sense and imagination. Thus the poetic in architecture is dependent on the perception of the user, creatively engaging her environment. The poetic function is constructive, combining the immaterial with experience to create an emotional entwining of imagination and architecture. The constant evolution of our personal narrative ensures the poetics of space is an ongoing reciprocal relationship; a creative dialogue, shaping both the individuals and spaces simultaneously.



PART II: ARCHETYPE  
Primary Experiences of Space





Fig 2.01 Child in field looking at imaginary house

*If the house is the first universe for its young children, the first cosmos, how does that space shape all subsequent knowledge of any other spaces, any other cosmos? Is that house a group of organic habits or something deeper, the shelter of the imagination itself?*

-Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*<sup>1</sup>



## HOUSE AS COSMOS

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The following chapter will explore the spatial archetypes we explore in childhood, which form the foundation of our relationship to place. The home is the first universe for its young inhabitants and as such is the first laboratory for exploring the potential realms that lie within. This playful exploration of environment leaves one open to possibilities, connections and ways of seeing that years of experience have weeded out - sometimes erroneously- in an attempt to clarify, classify and simplify. For a child, empty spaces become a canvas for the imagination. In childhood the imagination begins to project alternatives onto everyday familiar spaces, allowing for the development of an increasingly sophisticated perception of space and understanding of what it means to inhabit place. Layers of memory, experience, narrative and reverie superimpose to generate the house as a cosmic image - an intimate geography imposed on the interior, simultaneously personal history, mythology and origin.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard superimposes his theory of imagination onto the intimate spaces we inhabit. From an early age, the imagination creates the attachment that underlies the act of inhabiting. The childhood home is often the datum against which subsequent spaces are measured, it houses one's earliest memories within its rooms, corridors and stairwells and is the primary refuge. The body imprints itself onto the house as much as our imagination. Our understanding of the scale of our bodies originates with the relationship of our body to the house; the height of the stair, playing under the table and playing hide and go seek in the nooks and crannies.<sup>2</sup> The house makes us in its image as much as we construct our mental model of home. The house is primarily a geometric form, with fixed dimensions, bounded by tangible walls and dominated by straight lines, however the house we encounter in dreams, reverie and play rarely conforms to these set boundaries.

To a child the home is not an inert shell, but a container for potentials; concealing alternate narrative and parallel spaces within its walls. These spaces, created in reverie, crafted of pieces of stories remembered, fascinating places, and things unseen all accumulate until the house takes on a fictional life all of its own. These spaces leave clues, start to infringe on the everyday in unexpected places: a bump out in the wall, a corner in the basement where the darkness extends the space a bit too far, or a closet whose space on the inside and its appearance from the outside just don't seem to align.

The ongoing creation of a personal myth composed of experiences and memories is irrevocably rooted in and projected on the spaces that surround us, This relationship is studied here at its origin, the home\*, the site and reflection of ones interior life, in which ones experience of the past in the present is simultaneously nostalgic and haunting. During the course of his investigation, Bachelard introduces the notion of Topoanalysis<sup>3</sup>, a systematic psychological study of the localized sites of memory, the places in which we live our intimate lives. Thus Topoanalysis is a dynamic investigation into the immaterial, the foundations of our spatial biography through an interpretation of imagery encountered during reverie.

The following is a collection of impressions; a collage of oneric and remembered places, The spaces explored in this following section have been organized around five archetypal experiences of space: below, above, centre, boundary and hidden. As a result each archetype is a composite of varied memories, stories, and rituals of inhabiting onto the physical environment we occupy; a result of the engagement of an unconscious mind and feeling body. Not intended to be prescriptive, or conclusive they are intended to evoke particular senses of place, light or texture, to remind what a particular kind of place felt like and to posit what unseen spaces may lie in wait. The archetypes are not a study or interpretation of architectural conventions, instead they are intended to evoke the immediate, poetic responses to place that Bachelard chronicled in *The Poetics of Space*.

\* The house as a psychological metaphor is widely recognized as a symbol of the self, in which specific rooms represent different aspects of the psyche. Jung has presented the following example to illustrate the complexity inherent within the unconscious mental structure:

*“We have to describe and to explain of building the upper story of which had been directed in the 19th century; the ground floor dates from the 16th century, and a careful examination of the masonry discloses the fact that it was reconstructed from a drawing tower of the 11th century. In the cellar rediscover Roman foundation walls, and under the seller of building came, and the four of which stone tools and frowned and remnants of glacial, in the layers below. That would be a sort of picture of our mental structure”<sup>4</sup>*

Above and below, centre and boundary illustrate two principle tropisms within *The Poetics of Space*, verticality and centrality, which Bachelard uses to orient oneself within the multitude of experiences and realities which constitute ones image of inhabiting a house. The cave and tower illustrate verticality which is ensured by the polarity of up and down, cellar and attic. The notions of this verticality are rooted so deeply in our psyche that they automatically engage the imagination.

*Verticality is ensured by polarity of the cellar and attic. The marks of which are so deep that in a way they open up two very different perspectives of the imagination. The rationality of the roof is opposed to the irrationality of the cellar. A roof tells its reason d’être right away: it gives mankind shelter from the rain and sun he fears.*

*As for the cellar, we shall no doubt find uses for it, will be rationalized and its conveniences enumerated. But it is first and foremost the dark entity of the house, the one that partakes a subterranean forces. When we dream there, we are in harmony with the irrationality of the depths.*

- Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*<sup>5</sup>

While the cave connects to the primal unconscious and the tower evokes that which compels us to seek the power and rationality of the aerial view, the fort combines centrality as explored in Bachelard and shelter evoked by the primitive hut. Drawing upon Frye's study of the garrison<sup>6</sup>, a reaction to the Canadian wilderness resulting in an enclosure which can be perceived as both solid artifice and reclaimed void with respect to the chaotic landscape surrounding it. The duality inherent in the Garrison mentality encompasses both the desire to shield from and open up to nature and the complex relationship between inside and outside. The fort strongly embodies the spatial conditions of centre and boundary, the void of inhabitable space and the fortifications that enclose and define it.

The collection of private spaces and secret architectures evoke the mystery and illusion that surround the unknown aspects of others and ourselves. The spaces between walls, service spaces and secret corridors are the adult's own attempt to create an interior within an interior - a wonderland between the walls. Through play, children discover and construct a personal, child-sized space within the larger adult world. This foreshadows the adult's creation of the interior: a personal space carved out of a larger public realm, the house, city or country. Both types of spaces are used to develop the self, either through introverted imaginary means such as imagination and daydreaming, or extroverted methods such as design and collecting, which leave traces on the space itself.

Primary experiences of space are accessed through the remembrances of them in adulthood; echoes which form the foundation for adult relationships to space. Acknowledging and incorporating the expanded realm of possibility that exists within a child's experience of space in our built environment could expand the adult concept of space and broaden the possibilities and richness of experience of our environment.







Fig 2.02 *Alice in the White Rabbit's House*, Jan Švankmajer, Alice, 1988

*When revisiting places we once frequented as children, it is not unusual to observe how much smaller everything seems. This experience has too often been attributed to the physical differences between a child and an adult. In fact it has more to do with epistemological dimensions than with the bodily dimensions: knowledge is hot water on wool. It shrinks time and space.*

-Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* <sup>7</sup>

## CHILDHOOD SPATIAL ARCHETYPES

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*By this limiting my inquiry to the poetic image at its origin, proceeding from pure imagination, I leave aside the problem of the composition of the poem as a grouping together of numerous images. Into this composition enter psychologically complex elements that associate earlier cultures with actual literary ideals ...It is therefore on the level of detached images that I shall succeed in “reverberating” phenomenologically:*

- Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space* <sup>8</sup>

The analogies and connections that constitute the logic of the imaginary have their origins in a lexicon of collective and personal symbols. The previous sections have outlined a process whereby one can gain a deeper understanding of the poetic structures underlying the way we inhabit and create our environment. In order to test the theory of poetics architecturally, I have explored some of the strongest spatial memories from my childhood home. In the following assemblage, childhood spaces are recreated, reflected upon and remembered; the resulting poetic fragments are not ordered in a chronological or linear manner, but as a whole begin to outline a personal spatial autobiography.

### LEGEND

- |                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 01. cave             | 13. tower             |
| 02. cellar           | 14. fort              |
| 03. under the bridge | 15. tent              |
| 04. under the stairs | 16. cardboard box     |
| 05. roots            | 17. under the table   |
| 06. under the bed    | 18. horizon           |
| 07. ravine           | 19. surface           |
| 08. foundation       | 20. wardrobe          |
| 09. attic            | 21. hidden            |
| 10. roof             | 22. hiding place      |
| 11. top bunk         | 23. hidden staircase  |
| 12. tree house       | 24. mystery apartment |

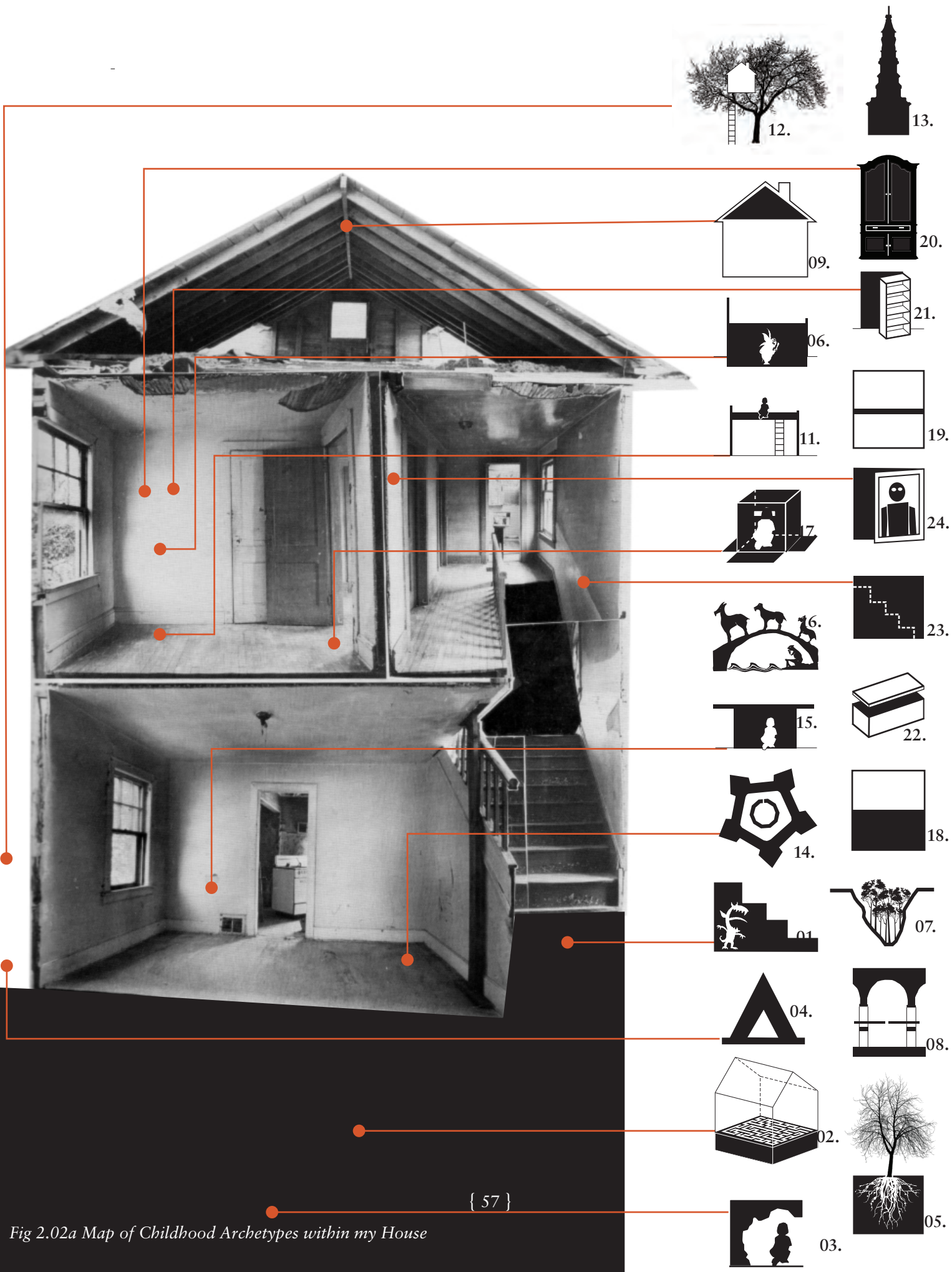


Fig 2.02a Map of Childhood Archetypes within my House

*The unconscious is a marvelous universe of unseen energies, forces, forms of intelligence – even distinct personalities—that live within us. It is a much larger realm than most of us realize, one that has a complete life of its own running parallel to the ordinary life we live day to day.*

- Robert A. Johnson, *Inner Work* <sup>9</sup>

The idea of the unconscious was explored in the Vedas as early as 2500 and 600 B.C. In modern western culture it was Freud that popularized the term as the basis for psychoanalysis and Jung who expanded the term to include a collective unconscious reminiscent of the “unified field of consciousness” discussed in the Hindu texts. The unconscious is the source of all our human consciousness. It is the source of thought reasoning, awareness and feeling. Everything is first contained in the unconscious and migrates to the conscious mind. There is a constant flow of energy and information between the two levels, in which the unconscious manifests itself in a language of symbols.<sup>10</sup>

Consciousness is a creative force at work in nature and each individual is a microcosm in which the universal process actualizes itself. The unconscious communicates to the conscious mind through imagination, play, dreams and ritual<sup>11</sup> – although not always manifested in built form they create a new relationship of the participant to space – a transformation of the surroundings that while less tangible than the conventional definition of architecture is no less real.

*The inner unconscious model of the individual is like the plan for a cathedral: The true depth and grandeur of an individual human being is never totally manifested until the main elements of the personality are moved from the level of potential in the unconscious and actualized at the level of conscious functioning.*

- Robert A. Johnson, *Inner Work* <sup>13</sup>

The analogies and connections that constitute the logic of the imaginary have their origins in the collective and personal unconscious. Through inhabiting, we engage with the imagination in an ongoing reciprocal relationship; evolving and enriching the catalogue of symbols and narratives employed to deepen our experience of place.



Fig 2.03 Actun Chen, Quintana Roo, Mexico. An archeologist lights a Maya carving in a cave.

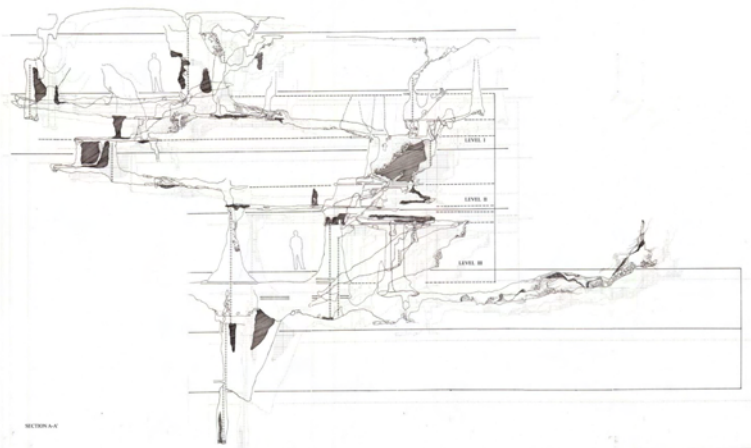


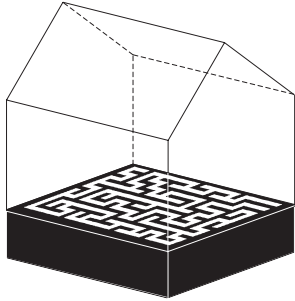
Fig 2.04 Cave Section

In the course of their play, young children like to seek out tiny, cave like places to get into and under.

When children are playing in such a “cave” each child takes up about 5 square feet; furthermore, children like to do this in groups, so the spaces should be large enough to accommodate this: these sorts of groups range in size from three to five - so 15 to 25 square feet, plus about 15 square feet for games and circulation, gives a rough maximum size for caves. The ceiling heights should be low - 2’-6” to 4’-0” and the entrances should be tiny.<sup>12</sup>

## CELLAR

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*In our civilization, which has the same light everywhere, and puts electricity in its cellars, we no longer go to the cellar carrying a candle. But the unconscious cannot be civilized. It takes a candle when it goes to the cellar.<sup>14</sup>*

*The cellar dreamer knows that the walls of the cellar are buried walls, and that they are walls with a single casing, walls that have the entire earth behind them. And so the situation grows more dramatic, and fear becomes more exaggerated. This fear is no longer human fear; this is cosmic fear, an anthropo-cosmic fear that echoes the great legend of man cast back into primitive situations. From the cavern carved in the rock to the underground, we have moved from a constructed to a dreamed world. The house, the cellar, the deep earth, achieve totality through depth.*

*-Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*<sup>15</sup>*



*Fig 2.05 Alice in the Cellar*



*Fig 2.06 Bed, Joshua Hoffine, 2004*

What I remember most vividly about the monster under my bed were the claws. The rest of the monster remains foggy because all I could concentrate on was the claws, where they would take me and what I would encounter below. The more I imagined the flick of a claw against my ankle as I would try to fall asleep, the deeper I would dive into the covers, carefully ensuring my feet were tightly secured within my comforter which acted as an impenetrable shield, as long as I was completely enclosed. During the night, if I awakened with a hand draped over the side of the bed or a foot dangling, a shiver of terror would pass through me, and I would rebuild my defenses as if under attack. Standing guard around the perimeter was an assortment of stuffed animals, facing outward so that they were able to protect me all night while I slept.



## UNDER THE STAIRS

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I hated being sent to the basement on an errand, for an adult that had forgotten the dangers of such places. As I would descend the stairs it struck me that the space beneath them was beneath my feet and behind me - all at the same time. The stairs form the borderland between the public floor of the house and the underworld of the basement. The basement is the realm of others; of monsters and creatures not permitted upstairs. If they caught me could they keep me there to be a part of their world? If I could go down could they come up? The thought of a burnt out bulb would haunt me. That dreaded moment when I would turn on the switch but no light would greet me -- the darkness celebrating its victory as it began to expand, consuming what little light made its way from upstairs. The darkness would blur the boundary between up-and-down, light and dark, hiding the stairs so that I would have to travel down them from memory.

Once at the bottom I knew I only had seconds to get what I came for. I would picture its location in my mind and hurry there as fast as I could, hoping the size of the monsters waiting to capture me would slow them down. As I travelled the route I had practiced in my mind only moments before, I would place an obstacle behind me, just in case. Once the object was in my hands I would turn around to see the expanse of darkness before me. Just as I would be ready to surrender, in the distance, just visible around the edges some light would creep in - as if fighting back - lightening the heavy darkness by degrees. It was usually at this point that I would begin to run, objects and forms consumed by the darkness as I ran past, leaving nothing but darkness behind me.



As I ran towards the stairs I could sense that something was pursuing me. Sounds would begin to emerge from the edges, and I could see shadows moving out of the corner of my eye. There was such relief when I turned the corner and was greeted by a bright doorway casting light down the dark stairs. Scrambling up the stairs, I would concentrate on nothing but getting back to the safety of the hallway above, but as I reached the top step with my hand I swear I felt something brushing my ankle. I jumped up and the final stairs and slammed the door behind me, trapping the darkness and monsters behind the basement door- a magical door that always seemed to keep them at bay.

*Fig 2.07 Cellar steps*

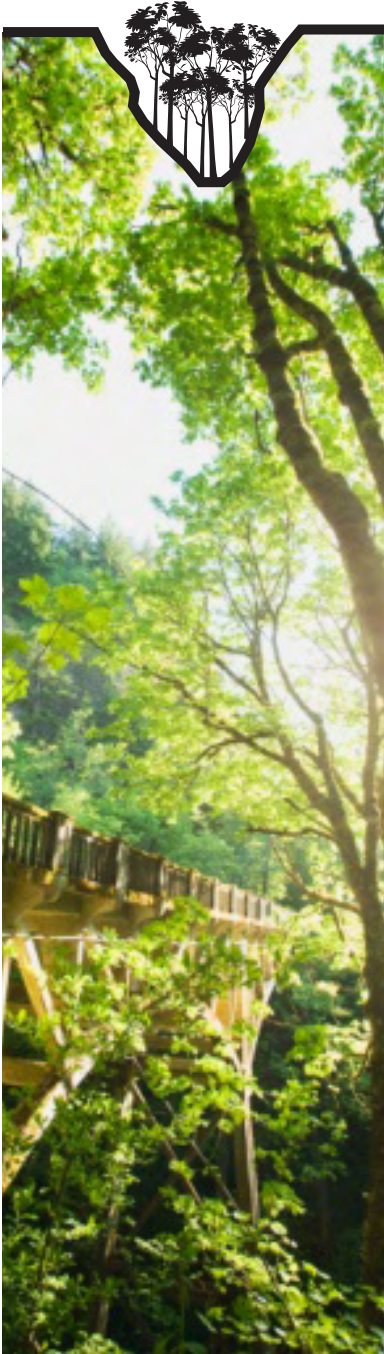




*Fig 2.08 Basement, Joshua Hoffine 2006*

## RAVINE

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*Fig 2.09 Bridge through woods*

The Ravine is a fissure in the city. Here the crust of building, infrastructure and paving is torn open revealing the wildness that lies beneath. The inhabitable membrane which contains it is revealed to be fragile and tenuous; ready to be ruptured at any moment. The ravine is a reminder of this possibility, the ease with which our structures collapse, our vulnerability to unknown forces, within and without.

Descending down into the ravine is like regressing into memory, a time before you, before the city, before man. The silence engulfs you, makes you forget the city's sounds. The body relaxes as the hard simple geometries of the city unravel into the complex forms of nature, something closer to the origin.

The space has a magical quality. From within this strange landscape network different assemblages emerge, collages through the trees of a fragmented city. The perception of the ravine as a hazardous obstacle that must be bridged, buried or barricaded results in its isolation and disconnects the city of which it is a part. These wild spaces are unlike other forms in the city, hidden below the horizon, they do not provide an easily accessible and understood nature as parks do, they speak to something unknowable within us.

Its edges are frayed, the order of the city unraveling into disorder. This boundary, a hybrid wilderness between the regularized city fabric and the untamed vegetation, is a constantly evolving, malleable space which is open to interpretation by its users. This boundary is the spatial metaphor for the creative process - an experience of mediating between the known and unknown, the ordered and spontaneous, light and shadow.

Once upon a time there were three billy goats, who were to go up to the hillside to make themselves fat, and the name of all three was "Gruff." On the way up was a bridge over a cascading stream they had to cross; and under the bridge lived a great ugly troll, with eyes as big as saucers, and a nose as long as a poker.

So first of all came the youngest Billy Goat Gruff to cross the bridge.

"Trip, trap, trip, trap!" went the bridge.

"Who's that tripping over my bridge?" roared the troll.

"Oh, it is only I, the tiniest Billy Goat Gruff, and I'm going up to the hillside to make myself fat," said the billy goat, in a small voice.

"Now, I'm coming to gobble you up," said the troll.

"Oh, no! pray don't take me. I'm too little, that I am," said the billy goat. "Wait a bit till the second Billy Goat Gruff comes. He's much bigger."

"Well, be off with you," said the troll. A little while after came the second Billy Goat Gruff to cross the bridge.

Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap, went the bridge.

"Who's that tripping over my bridge?" roared the troll.

"Oh, it's the second Billy Goat Gruff, and I'm going up to the hillside to make myself fat," said the billy goat, who hadn't such a small voice.

"Now I'm coming to gobble you up," said the troll.

"Oh, no! Don't take me. Wait a little till the big Billy Goat Gruff comes. He's much bigger."

"Very well! Be off with you," said the troll.

But just then up came the big Billy Goat Gruff.

Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap! went the bridge, for the billy goat was so heavy that the bridge creaked and groaned under him.

"Who's that tramping over my bridge?" roared the troll.

"It's I! The big Billy Goat Gruff," said the billy goat, who had an ugly hoarse voice of his own.

"Now I'm coming to gobble you up," roared the troll.

Well, come along! I've got two spears,  
And I'll poke your eyeballs out at your ears;  
I've got besides two curling-stones,  
And I'll crush you to bits, body and bones.

And then the big billy goat flew at the troll, and poked his eyes out with his horns, and crushed him to bits, body and bones, and tossed him out into the cascade, and after that he went up to the hillside. There the billy goats got so fat they were scarcely able to walk home again. <sup>16</sup>

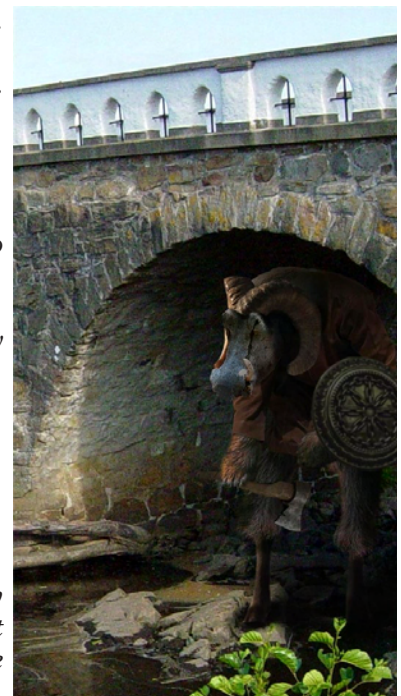


Fig 2.10 River Troll

## ROOTS

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*'That which is above is the same as that which is below'.* This phrase from the Emerald tablet is believed to hold the key to all mysteries. Hidden below the surface, the roots are the mirror of the branches above, and symbolic of the unseen within ourselves. The root is a network of voids, gaps, and fissures, it is defined by absence. The root is nature unseen and untamed composed of caves, crevices and deep dark wells. Roots are associated with origins, past memories and experiences that influence the present and future.

*When things grow, we concern ourselves with their visible evidence. This built work points to what is not visible, not easily reached, not straightforward, to what lies below in the firm, wet and and difficult darkness. We are in the world of roots, at the bottom of our story. This table is striking in its willingness to bear witness to what lies below. The darkness isn't eliminated, it's included. It brings an altogether different kind of beauty, a beauty that includes the kind of energy that darkens, that shatters. It is the power of this beauty that causes individuals to experience both breakdowns and breakthroughs. Its energy undoes traditions and opinions under the burning light that comes not from above but from within. The root is a dark, flickering tongue and even when you remove it from ground, it stays surrounded by the luminous, dense gown of the earth. It speaks of secret ways of working with our darkest material.*

-Andrew Levitt, *The Inner Studio* <sup>17</sup>

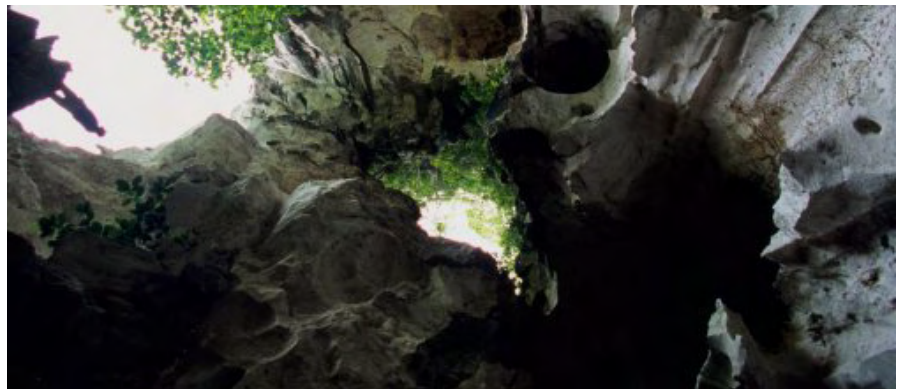


Fig 2.11 East Kalimantan,  
Borneo, Indonesia.



*Fig 2.12 Young girl leaning on old tree roots*

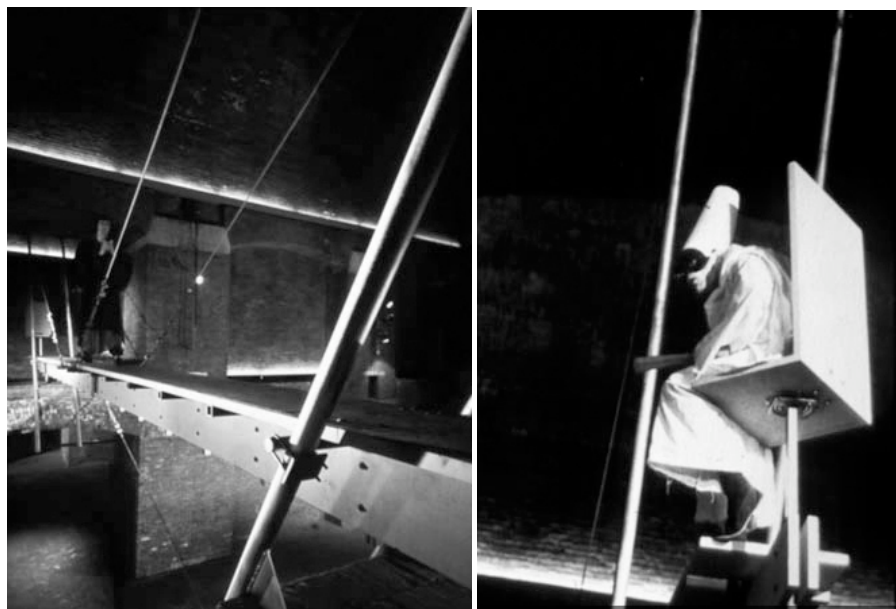


THE MEMORY THEATRE OF GIULIO CAMILLO  
 BROOKLYN BRIDGE ANCHORAGE, NEW YORK, NY.  
 DILLER SCOFIDIO ARCHITECTS {1986}

Giulio Camillo was a 16<sup>th</sup> century architect / philosopher whose explorations of human memory led him to construct a “memory theatre” that possessed magical powers: those who entered it would emerge with a memory of all of the knowledge in the world. Situated within the Brooklyn Bridge, “The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo,” was an imaginative spatial exploration of memory. During their performance, a commedia dell’arte troupe, directed by Matthew Maguire, guided the audience through the labyrinth of high vaulted brick corridors in the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage vaults. Each vault was emphasized to evoke the mystery of the space, the bridge above them and the water below. The installation employed two suspended platforms to dramatically link three successive chambers of the Anchorage. The two discrete structural units cantilevered towards one another but left a gap between them. The installation employed this gap to explore the aesthetics of danger and to produce a theatrical moment: a synapse that could only be bridged tentatively.

*Fig 2.13 Gap, The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo*

*Fig 2.14 Performer, The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo*





*Fig 2.15 Platform & Gap, The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo*

## HORIZON

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Growing up in Alberta, the Horizon was the most dominant feature of the environment. At one time my home was on the edge of the city, and on the other side of the ravine behind my house was farmers fields as far as the eye can see. The Greek origin of the word ‘horizo’ means ‘to define a boundary’. The horizon defines the limits of human vision and, metaphorically, the limits of knowledge. But a boundary is also that from which something begins to emerge. The horizon is home to the in-between; in psychology the boundary is transversed by the transcendent function, its “between-ness” serves an invaluable psychological purpose: to transition psyche from a conflicted set of circumstances to one that allows us to resolve or tolerate the conflict.

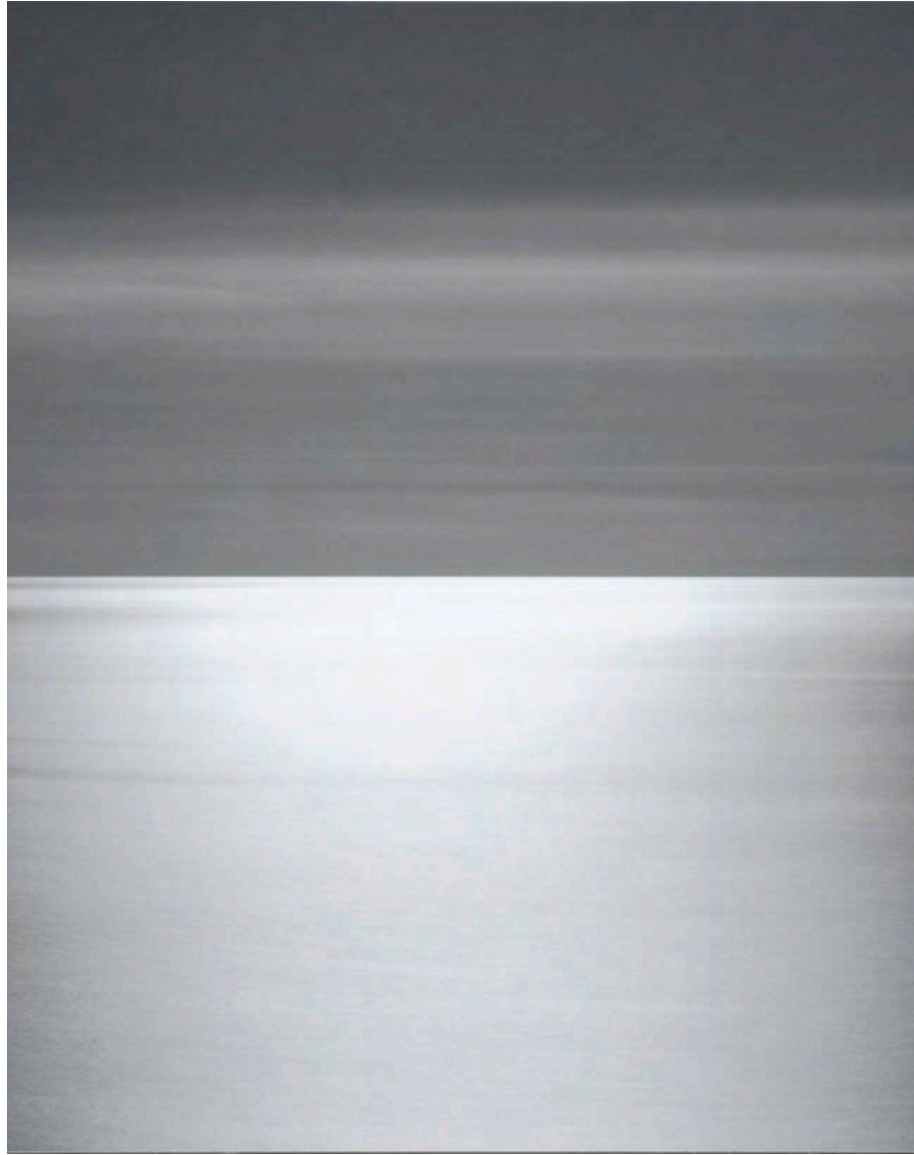
The transcendent function falls into an archetypal pattern that implicates liminality and initiation.\* It serves as psyche’s ever present mechanism constantly leading us deeper through a series of mini-initiations requiring us to slip between seemingly irreconcilable states. Liminality and initiation are archetypal processes that represent a movement between seemingly inviolable borders. The transcendent function is a psychological expression of these archetypal processes.<sup>18</sup>

\*There are three stages in initiation ceremonies: Seperation, liminality (transition), and incorporation (or aggregation). The initiate is separated from one status in a culture, placed in an intermediate state of liminality, “inbetween” and, after an initiation process is returned to the social structure in a new status or role.<sup>19</sup> When inbetween, the initiate belongs neither to the old status or the new, likening the experience to going through death and rebirth.



*Fig 2.16 Prairie Horizon*

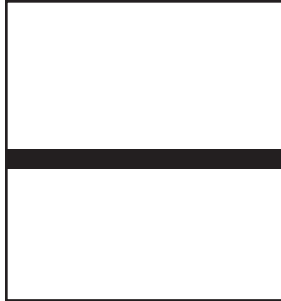




*Fig 2.17 North Atlantic Ocean, Cape Breton Island, Hiroshi Sugimoto, 1996*

## SURFACE

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*Fig 2.18 One Big Snake, Sally Mann, 1991*

As a child I spent a lot of my time in an interstitial space between air and water. Inhabiting the surface – diving beneath and propelling above. Floating, the body mediates up and down, air and water. Looking through the water, the light is different, the sound is different, though it is all a matter of perception – of orientation. Looking up through the surface the world above takes on an ethereal quality, Looking down the surface distorts light into a beautiful play of shadows on the bottom. The surface of water is meant to be deceptive, giving no hint as to its contents; in stillness it becomes a mirror.



*Fig 2.19 A woman floating in the water, Toni Frissell, Weeki Wachee Spring, Florida. 1947.*

## ATTIC



*Fig 2.20 Attic, Joshua Hoffine*

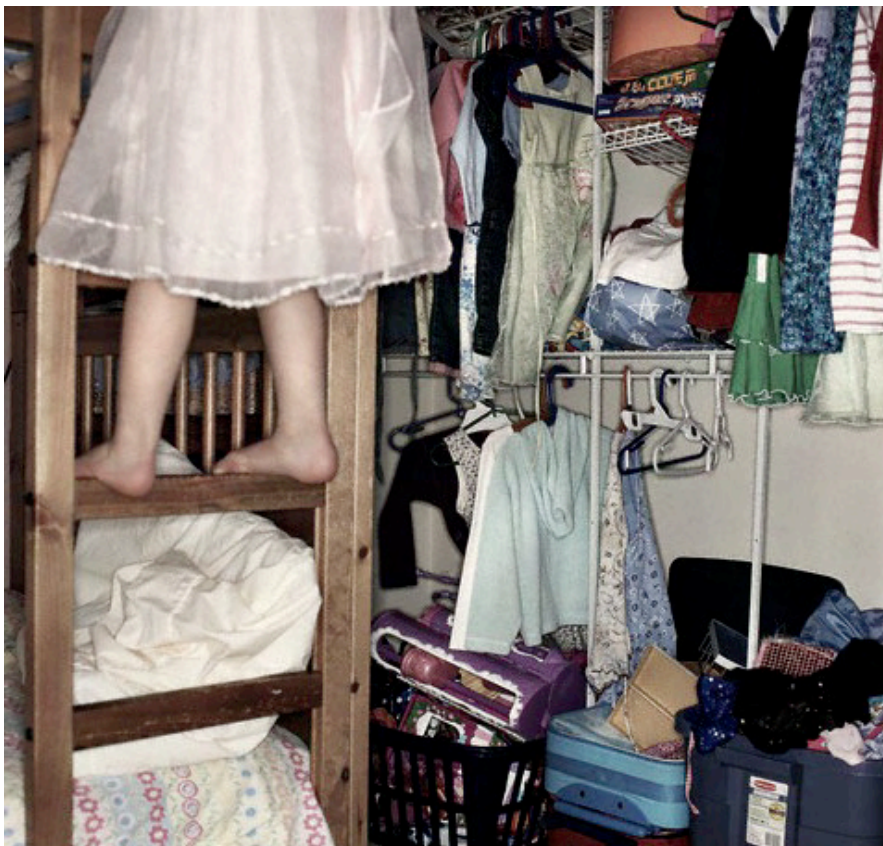
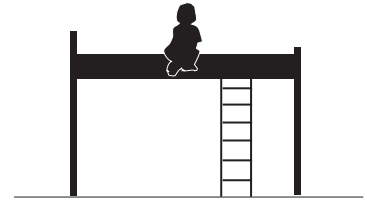
**SURVEY:** To inspect, or take a view of; to view with attention, as from a high place; to overlook; as, to stand on a hill, and survey the surrounding country.

To view with a scrutinizing eye; to examine.

To examine with reference to condition, situation, value, etc.; to examine and ascertain the state of; as, to survey a building in order to determine its value and exposure to loss by fire.<sup>21</sup>

The desire to climb up to some high place, from which you can look down and survey your world, seems to be a fundamental human instinct. The attic belongs to the house but reaches to the heavens. As a result the attic possesses qualities of both worlds; although composed of the same materials found throughout the house, the light illuminates the space as if through a veil, as if a sacred threshold has been crossed. When gazing down upon the yard from the attic you are welcomed by a new understanding of familiar places. The attic provides a spectacular, comprehensive view, new perspective from which to reassess the scale, shape and scope of everyday surroundings.<sup>20</sup>

Racing to the bedroom we shared in the cabin, climbing to the top of the ladder and claiming the top bunk was a ritual that my sister and I would re-enact every summer we arrived at the lake. We did not share a room or have bunk beds at home, so the idea of sleeping on the top bunk was very appealing: the view from the lower bunk was familiar, and could not compete with the fun {and danger} of sleeping in the sky. Even getting to the bed was more fun, climbing the ladder you felt like you were climbing up to your own personal tower, which allowed for a privacy and prospect within the larger room. The 5' that separated the top from the bottom bunk stretched and compressed over the years. When we were younger, the top bunk seemed to be its own world, as we got older and fought less the 5' shrunk to allow for lots of late night whispered conversations.



*Fig 2.21 Girl climbing to top bunk*

## TREE HOUSE

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*Shelter is a concept that nothing could underline as emphatically as a hail of well thrown rocks. When I read Beowulf in college, all those vivid scenes of the mead hall under siege from Grendel made me think of those first thrilling nights my friends and I spent sleeping out in the new tree house, withstanding the predawn assaults of our enemies. Our local Grendel was an older boy named Jeff Grabel, who took it upon himself to terrorize us for reasons that were never articulated, but which we spent hours speculating about. The prevailing theory held that the dispute was territorial, since the tree house had been built in the middle of the half-acre wood that separated his family's house from mine. For more than a year he dedicated his every effort to erasing our presence from the woods while we, with a matching tenacity, dedicated ours to preserving a toehold.*

*Every child begins the world again, Thoreau wrote in Walden, and it is certainly true that the games of boys can be almost cartoonishly atavistic, dredging up from who-knows-where the primordial struggles of the race. Between Grabel and me the cause was nothing less than that of chaos against civilization, Grendel against the mead hall, the Sioux against the Settler. The symbol of civilization we'd set out to defend was my little stilt house in the woods, four walls and a gable roof, its archetypal form signifying home, settlement, and in the context of that forest, defiance. The hearth around which we gathered after dark was a flashlight, whose beam reflecting down off the ceiling held us in a warm circle of light. For mead we had cans of Hawaiian Punch. And outside all around us chaos raged.*

Fig 2.22 Tree House



*The tree house was always at its best under siege, creaking in the wind, its posts bending slightly, the better to withstand the blows. Bachelard says that this is a property of houses in general, that they only come into their own in bad weather, when the poetry of shelter receives its fullest expression. A house under siege from the elements becomes "an instrument with which to confront the cosmos."*

- Michael Pollan, *A Place of my Own* <sup>22</sup>



*Fig 2.23 Children playing in treehouse, Gretton, United Kingdom*



Of all of the towers I encountered in childhood, the one that stands out most strongly is the Ivory Tower in *The Neverending Story* by Michael Ende. The Ivory tower is the home of the Childlike Empress, in the fantasy world of Fantastica which is being threatened by a force called "The Nothing," a void of darkness that consumes everything. The fate of Fantastica lies with the Childlike Empress, who has fallen deathly ill due to the Nothing {or vice versa}.

The main character Bastian encounters Fantastica in a book called *The Neverending Story*, which he steals from a bookstore and reads from his hiding place in the school attic. Through reading Bastian embarks on a quest with the child warrior Atreyu, whom the Empress has charged to find a cure for the Nothing and restore balance to Fantasia. In the course of his quest, Atreyu learns about the true nature of Fantastica and the Nothing: Fantastica is a representation of the dreams and fantasies of the real world; the Nothing and the sickness of the Childlike Empress are the effects of negation, the denial of dreams and fantasy which is destroying Fantastica.

To save Fantastica, a human child must give the empress a new name to start again the cycle of imagination. Bastian realizes the book is talking specifically about him, but hesitates to take the step into Fantastica. The Childlike Empress confronts him with the fact that whatever he may think, he has already become part of the Neverending Story, and he must carry out his part in it. And Bastian does so by crying out the name he has chosen for the Empress: 'Moon Child', and restoring Fantastica through his wishes and imagination.

The story goes on to follow Bastian's adventures in re-building Fantastica. Bastian befriends Atreyu and has many adventures in Fantastica before returning to the real world, barely making it out with his 'own true self'. The ivory tower is a beacon of the power of imagination in the midst of its negation. The story of Fantastica is never ending as each child makes it new again.





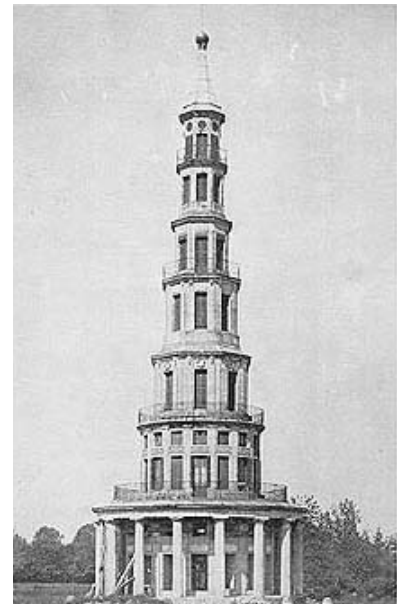
Fig 2.24, *Starfish*, Judi Bailey

*Excerpt from a letter of Sept. 16, 1942:*

*\*\*\* Last Thursday night I was invited to drive out to a secluded part of the north shore of Long Island after a sultry day spent in the city. Finishing dinner I wandered alone towards the water in hope of finding an interesting piece of flotsam before the light failed. Intent upon my mission, I almost collided with a child of about six years bent over the sands for the same purpose. In three or four minutes we were life-long friends, and there was just enough time before the darkness completely enveloped us for me to become impressed by the deep earnestness and sweetness expressed in her features. I was soon the recipient of the startling information that she was in the habit of getting up at dawn and picking up real stars on the beach before anyone was awake to discover her secret and that indians from across the water had fashioned a shining white birch canoe solely for her use, which was carefully kept hidden in the woods. I might see it if I came back again sometime. Other revelations were forthcoming when a voice from the direction of her cottage shattered the twilight calm ordering her to bed quickly and no fooling about it. Quite impossible to convey to you the effect her words had in the dark, especially as they died out wistfully in the distance as she kept up her earnest chatter. Right away for some reason I thought of the little girl and her glass tower that you told me about.*

*P.S. I am saving a seashell for you that looks just like a star.<sup>23</sup>*

Fig 2.25, *Pagode de Chanteloup, Portrait of Berenice*, Joseph Cornell, 1943



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THE CRYSTAL CAGE: PORTRAIT OF BERENICE  
VARIOUS ITEMS IN LEATHER VALAISE  
JOSEPH CORNELL {1943}



Fig 2.26 Cassiopeia-in-stellarium

*The recent unearthing (1934-1942) of a wealth of paraphernalia, charts, photographs, manuscript notes, etc., a welter of “varia” of formidable proportions, finally establishes beyond any possibility of doubt the existence of the legendary PAGODE DECHANTELOUP, that curious relic of scientific research in the nineteenth century.*

*PAGODE DECHANTELOUP – The reader will search in vain in the literature of the past for briefest mention of this neglected phenomenon, and the conclusion may be drawn that it was pigeonholed with the countless hoaxes that abounded in the scientific field during the past century, of which E. A. Poe’s “Balloon Hoax” is a classic example.*

*From newspaper clippings dated 1871 and printed as curiosa we learn of an American child becoming so attached to an abandoned chinoiserie while visiting France that her parents arranged for its removal and establishment in her native New England meadows. In the glistening sphere the little proprietress, reared in a severe atmosphere of scientific research, became enamoured of the rarefied realms of constellations, balloons, and distant panoramas bathed in light, and drew upon her background to perform her own experiments, miracles of ingenuity and poetry.<sup>24</sup>*



Fig 2.27, *Leather Valaise, Portrait of Berenice*, Joseph Cornell, 1943



Fig 2.28 Girl reading in fort

In, *The bush garden: essays on the Canadian imagination*, Northrop Frye evokes the metaphor of the garrison to describe the relationship of man to wilderness in the Canadian imagination. Calling to mind the vastness of the Canadian wilderness evokes the terror of the sublime. The Garrison is the physical and psychological resistance of culture against chaos; the impenetrable barrier that fortifies and segregates the interior from the surrounding wilderness. Man has found it necessary to seek refuge behind the constructed walls of the fort - sealed tight by a fortified perimeter - resulting in an enclosure which can be perceived as both solid artifice and reclaimed void with respect to the chaotic landscape surrounding it. The duality inherent in the Garrison mentality encompasses both the desire to shield from wilderness and the complex relationship between inside and outside. The fort strongly embodies the spatial conditions of centre and boundary, the void of inhabitable space and the fortifications that enclose and define it.

The Garrison's fortified perimeter acts as both a physical and psychological boundary that separates the ordered space of man from the chaotic condition of wilderness. The ramparts are a source of security, shielding man against the void of both sky and the distant horizon. The oculus created by the enclosure of the fort walls becomes the sole link between interior and external world, relating the constant and predictable cycling of time onto the daily routines occurring within the barracks. All movement within the fort centripetally crystallizes around a focal point; an axis mundi at its core. The axis mundi is a vertical axis that extends from the ground plane to the heavens, connecting man to the divine. The fort can be interpreted as a microcosm, one which situates Man at its centre with wilderness at the periphery.<sup>25</sup>



*Fig 2.29 Boy in hut made of Tree branches*

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FORT  
INSTALLATION, 3815-47<sup>TH</sup> STREET, EDMONTON, AB.  
AMANDA REED {1984-1988}



*Fig 2.30 FORT*

Play in childhood is an important element in the cognitive development of how we relate to the world around us. Children's games are often used to explore not only roles and daily activities but also space itself. FORT illustrates how children begin to define a child size territory within the larger space of the house. Such play influences the experience of space, specifically in terms of scale.

FORT, is an exploration into the child's ability to transform a blanket into a garrison within the wilderness, a refuge at the scale of a child. FORT is the result of hours of assembly and rearranging of furniture preformed by my sister and I when we were children, in which we would construct a series of rooms within the larger living room. The interior of FORT was off limits to adults and the setting for many adventures and daydreams. The configuration between the sofa, cushions, wall, end table and coffee tables were very labyrinth like, providing varying spaces for different activities. The perforated afghan created a canopy like effect, filtering the light coming into the fort creating an atmosphere of elsewhere.

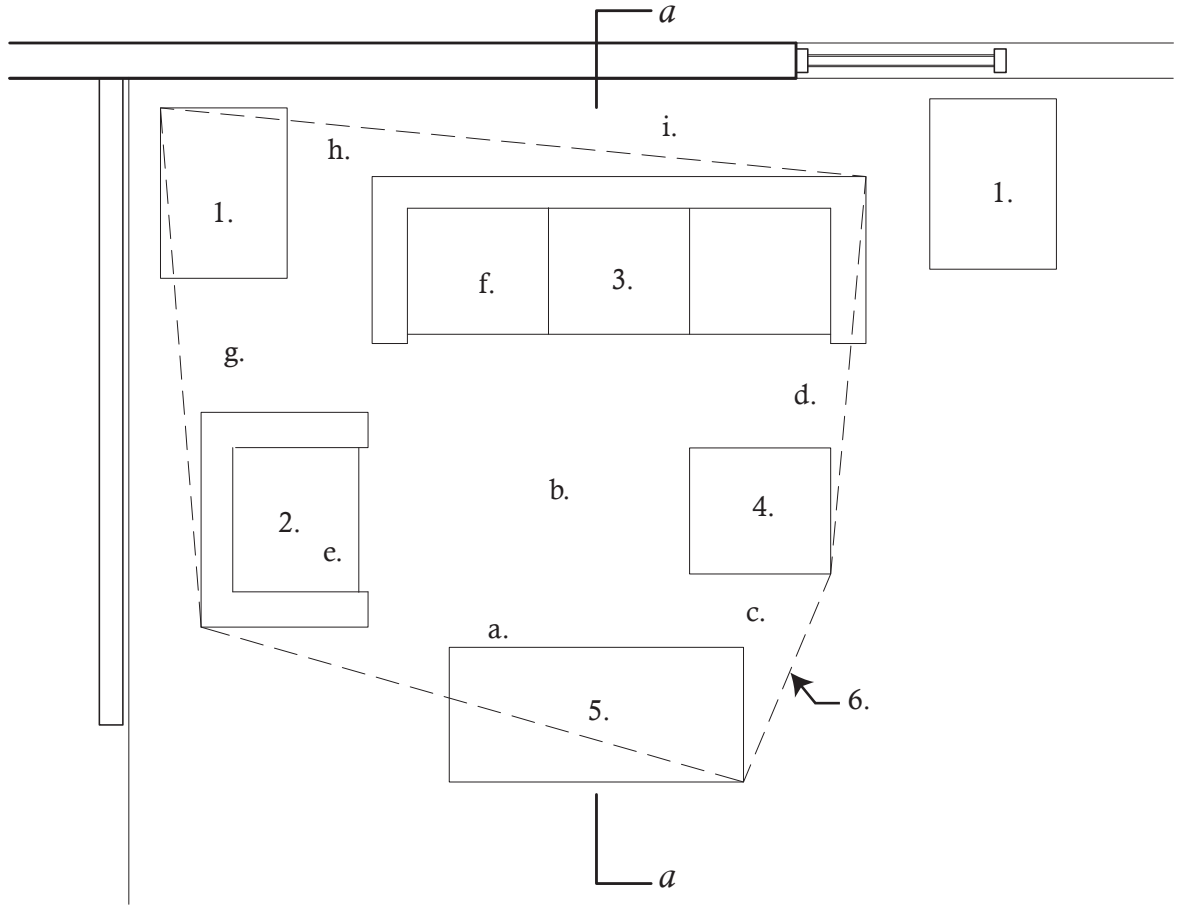


Fig 2.31 FORT PLAN: 3/8"=1'-0"

- |              |                  |                   |                    |                 |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. end table | 4. sofa cushions | a. fortifications | d. front entry     | g. library      |
| 2. armchair  | 5. coffee table  | b. ballroom       | e. amber's "room"  | h. back entry   |
| 3. sofa      | 6. afghan        | c. kitchen        | f. amanda's "room" | i. hanging wall |

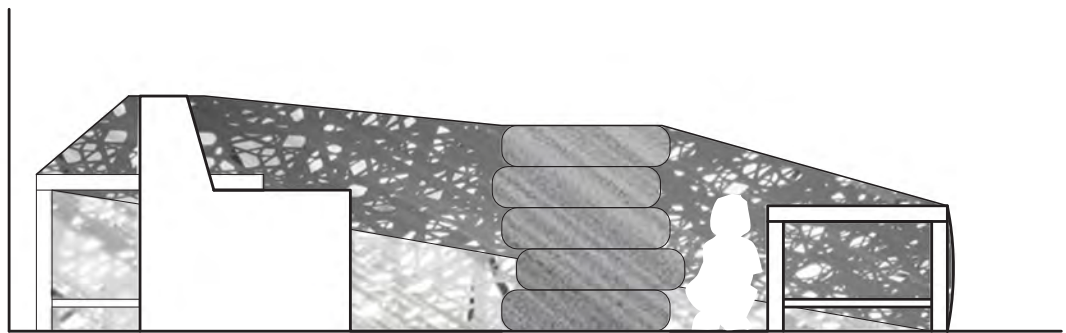
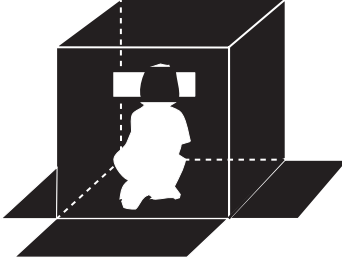


Fig 2.32 FORT SECTION a-a: 1/2"=1'-0"

## CARDBOARD BOX

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The cardboard box is the ultimate blank canvas, it comes as a ready made space and you can personalize it to suit your mood. What can you make out of this cardboard box that is bigger than you are? While spaceships and cars are easily made with a box, the most common application for these containers is a play house. My favorite cardboard box adaptation was a “castle” I made when I was 5.

I began by painting it white with yellow trim and pink flowers, then I taped the flaps together to make a pitched roof, which I also painted pink. My favorite part of the castle was a drawbridge I cut out of one of the sides, complete with a shoelace to raise and drop the bridge. After cutting windows and doors I moved some of my favorite toys inside. It took me a whole afternoon to make and it remained one of my favorite places to play for the whole winter.



*Fig 2.33 boy looking out from cardboard box window*





*Fig 2.34 Two girls hiding under table at party*

Climbing under the table is one of the simplest ways to bring the adult sized world down to the scale of a child. A ready-made territory, the space under a table once discovered, is easily transformed into a house, secret lair or hiding place. I preferred the old table in the dining room to the more modern one in the kitchen. While the kitchen table left you exposed, the dining table was almost twice the size, and was always covered with an elaborate table cloth. It was a place where only I could fit, where grown ups could not because of the unfortunate inconvenience of their large bodies. Adults would come and go, distinguishable only by their shoes, their walk, or their voice as they would call out my name unaware of my presence below.

## TENT

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Camping in the backyard was saved for special occasions. My friends and I would set up tents on the trampoline, and tell stories by flashlight. The tent is childhood's equivalent to the primitive hut. The primitive hut is a myth, a story of the origins of architecture as a relationship between built form and the environment in which it is situated. Underlying the myth of the primitive hut is a hope that building can be renewed and refreshed by closer contact with nature. As my early camping adventures revealed, sometimes closer contact with nature is not always the answer. Sleeping under the stars is an exciting idea until you realize they don't provide as much light as you would like, and unfamiliar noises begin to emerge out of the darkness. Until I was older many of my backyard camping trips would make their way into the living room, where my friends and I would end the night roasting marshmallows in the fireplace.

*Fig 2.35 Young boys in costumes playing*





*Fig 2.36 Kids play in a makeshift fort in the woods.*

## WARDROBE

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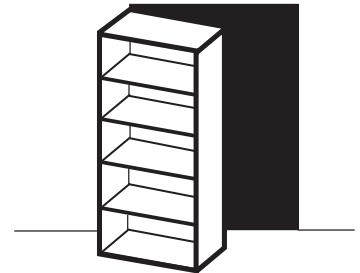
The wardrobe of C. S. Lewis' (1950) *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, serves as a threshold, into the imaginary space of the story. Within children's literature the separation and joining of two narrative spaces through a portal like the wardrobe, is what in his book, *Playing and Reality*, Winnicott calls a transit metaphor.<sup>26</sup>

In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, entry into the realm of fantasy is the result of a game of hide and seek. The transition from the real world of the manor to the magical world of Narnia is not instantaneous, instead the landscape alters by degrees as they move through the wardrobe motivated by curiosity. Within Narnia, the adventures are not undertaken by a single protagonist but a group of siblings and though they have periods of separation, the fantasy is validated by the collective experience of all.<sup>27</sup> The wardrobe provides a gateway to a mysterious world where one is not a child but a hero, where one isn't powerless within the sphere of distracted adults, but had the power to act - change the course of a kingdom, and to be extraordinary.



top: Fig 2.37 Lucy, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*  
right: Fig. 2.38 Girl sitting inside wardrobe with door closed



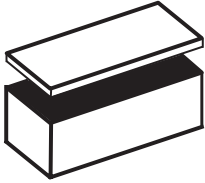


*Fig 2.39 rotating bookcase*

Think of all the rooms you have ever been in, now imagine all of those walls having a life of their own. Concealing imaginary realms, alternate realities, and infinite possibilities. Perhaps these realms touch, through a moving bookcase, hidden staircase or through the eyes of a portrait. Maybe they are hidden for the sake of secrecy and mystery as a device in a detective story to explain how people could carry out intrigues and murders amid societies surveillance – as if invisible. Perhaps they can be dimensional paradoxes like the back of the wardrobe or the rabbit hole in Alice. Maybe they are more interesting left unseen, like the endless space of the dark, unseen we can imagine them to be anything. To contain anything.

## HIDING PLACE

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*Fig 2.40 A hiding child's feet sticking out from under a hanging sheet*

A list of favorite hiding places:

- in the clothes hamper
- under the covers
- behind the couch
- in the back of the closet
- behind the winter jackets
- in the basement behind the christmas decorations
- under the bed
- in the garage behind the car
- under the desk in the office
- behind the potted plants
- in the cupboard under the kitchen sink
- in the toy box covered by stuffed animals



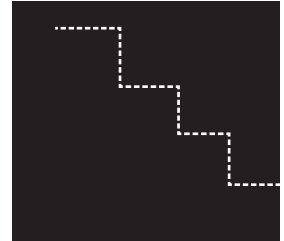


Fig 2.41

*“...the architect, modern sculptor, invented the fiction of a “reserved space hermetically closed . . . a secret chamber . . . hid in darkness,” the narrator refused to search. Not because he disbelieved in its existence, but rather the opposite: he believed too much in mysteries. What the chimney concealed, its and his nether world, should remain concealed. “Infinite and sad mischief,” he held, “has resulted from the profane bursting open of secret recesses,”*

*-Anthony Vidler, *The Architecture of the Uncanny: The Unhomely Houses of the Romantic Sublime*<sup>28</sup>*

## MYSTERY APARTMENT



top: Fig 2.42 Hidden Cupboard  
bottom: Fig 2.43 Guidebook



*We've taken liberties with Yeats  
to lead you through a tale  
that tells of most inspired fates  
in hopes to lift the veil<sup>30</sup>*

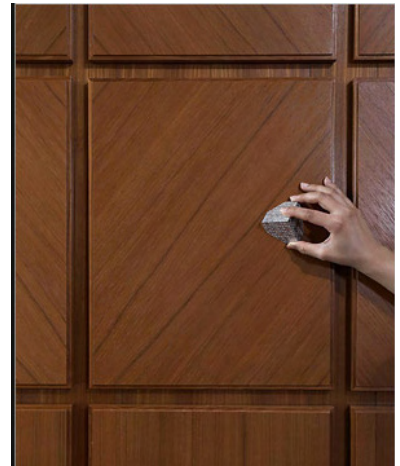
21<sup>ST</sup> AVENUE MYSTERY APARTMENT  
KLINSKY - SHERRY RESIDENCE, NEW YORK, NY  
2 I 2 BOX ARCHITECTS

This poem arrived in the mail one year after the Klinsky-Sherry family had moved into their 4500 sf. home on the 14th floor of an apartment building on upper 5th avenue. The letter directed the family to a hidden panel in the front hall that contained a beautifully bound and printed book, containing a narrative that led them on a scavenger hunt through their own apartment.

The idea for the scavenger hunt began when Mr. Klinsky requested that a poem he had written for and about his family be lodged in a wall somewhere, Ms. Sherry suggested that it be “put in a bottle and hidden away as if it were a time capsule.” A sequence of 18 clues, riddles, games and ciphers were incorporated within the apartment’s millwork, architecture and artwork to lead the family to the poem’s secret hiding place. The poem is revealed only after a rectangular panel in the den and guest room is opened to reveal acrylic slices that fit together to form a cube. When the chamfered magnetic cube is passed over 24 panels incorporated within the millwork on a nearby wall, they open. Behind the panels, large white letters laser-cut into the teal blue acrylic spell out the poem Mr Klinsky, wrote for his wife and their children.<sup>29</sup>

Stories are used in every culture as a means of entertainment, and to instill knowledge, values and morals. The architects mimic literary devices from the way that storytellers employ linguistic codes to formulate and transmit metaphor - unseen lessons and connections to the world at large. In the place of words, architects employ form and materials to evoke primal spatial experiences to tell their story. Storytelling provides another way of approaching design - this architecture envisions buildings as complete stories that are woven together as collections of distinct narrative events in which the act of habitation is a creative process, an ongoing tale evolving through continual discovery and participation and interaction with these coded environments on a daily basis.





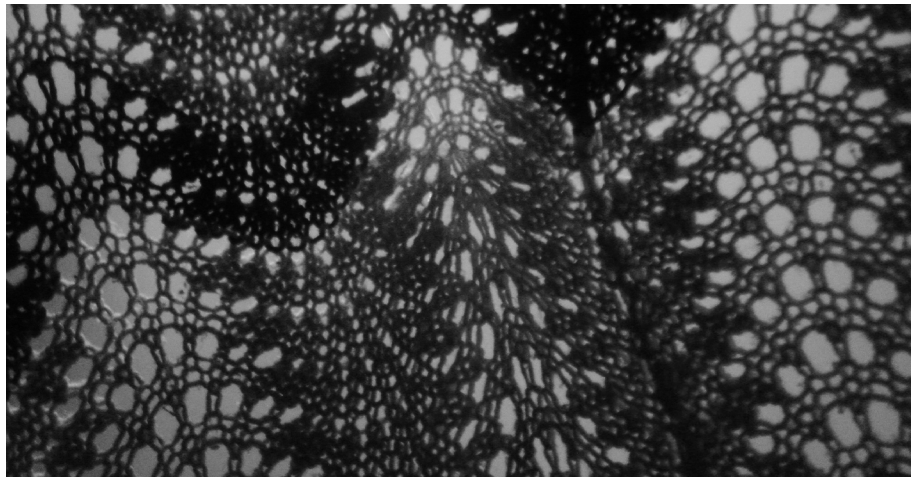
top left: Fig 2.44 Closed Panels  
top right: Fig 2.45 Crystal  
lower left: Fig 2.46 Open panels

## CHILDHOOD HOME

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Histories, legends and myths can elevate space from a location to an experience that elevates a building to something more. Curiosity about these places, these parallel worlds and imaginary structures that co-exist with the sites of our lives, that transform buildings into places and houses into homes, took me on a journey that began in childhood.

The following series of drawings are an attempt to reveal imagined spaces within my childhood home. The reverse side of the drawing contains the interconnected narratives within expanded sections of wall. These spaces, created in reverie, crafted of pieces of stories remembered, fascinating places, and things unseen all accumulate until the house takes on a fictional life all of its own. These spaces leave clues, start to infringe on the everyday in unexpected places: a bump out in the wall, a corner in the basement where the darkness extends the space a bit too far, or a closet whose space on the inside and its appearance from the outside just don't seem to align. All the different spaces are interlinked in some round about way, they have to go far out of the way to avoid the rooms that lie between the walls. The world is both epic and intimate, There lie a series of landscapes within its walls yet they are all familiar, mine alone. On occasion I would lead people to the threshold to see if they could detect anything beyond. People rarely did. The imaginary structure that inhabited and expanded the space within the walls transformed over the years, became less present, however the presence of potential space - the gaps - continue to resonate.



*Fig 2.47 Crochet Canopy*

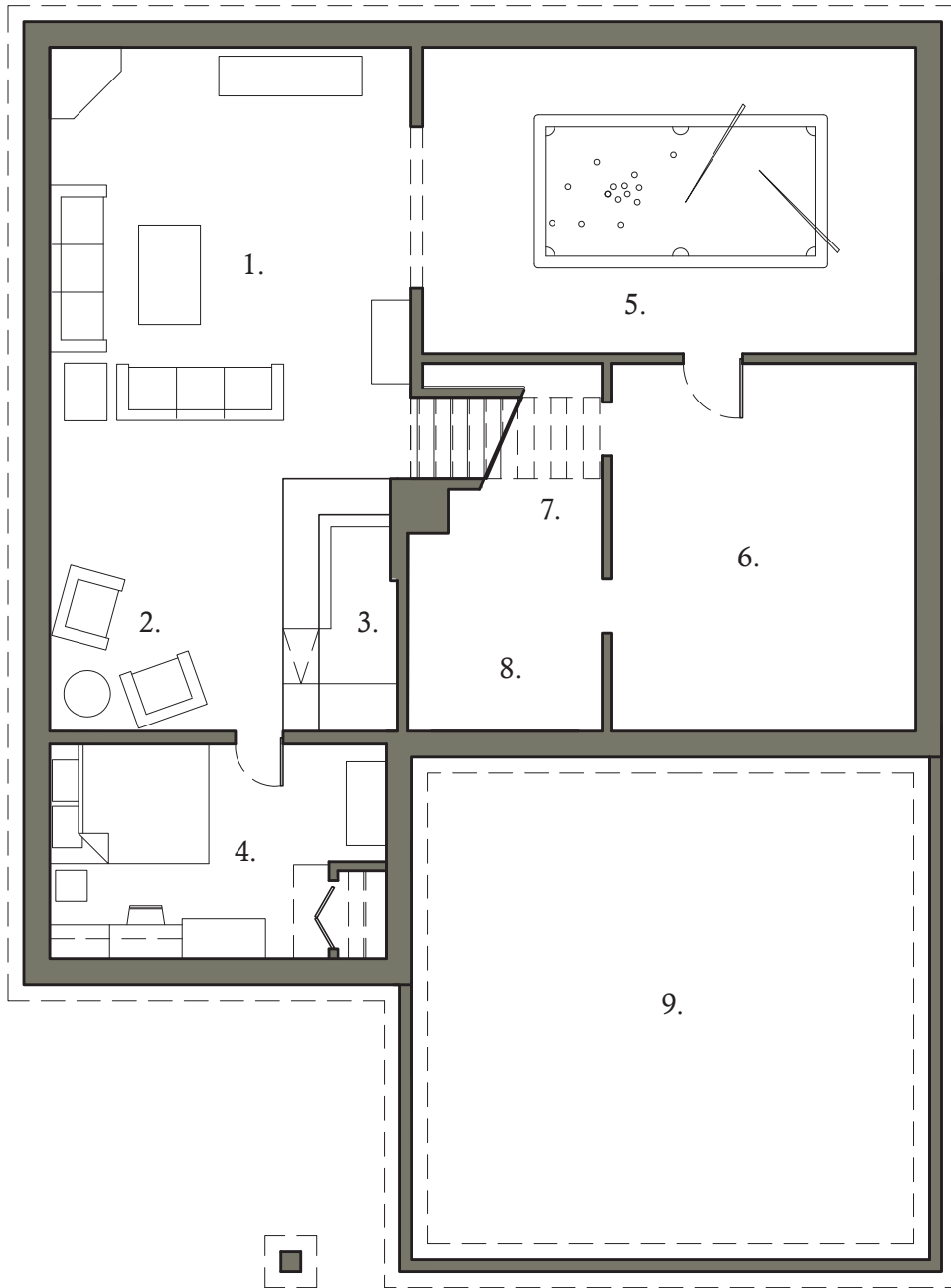


Fig 2.48 Basement Plan: 1/8"=1'-0"

- |                 |              |                |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. media room   | 4. bedroom   | 7. storage     |
| 2. sitting area | 5. game room | 8. mechanical  |
| 3. bar          | 6. workshop  | 9. unexcavated |

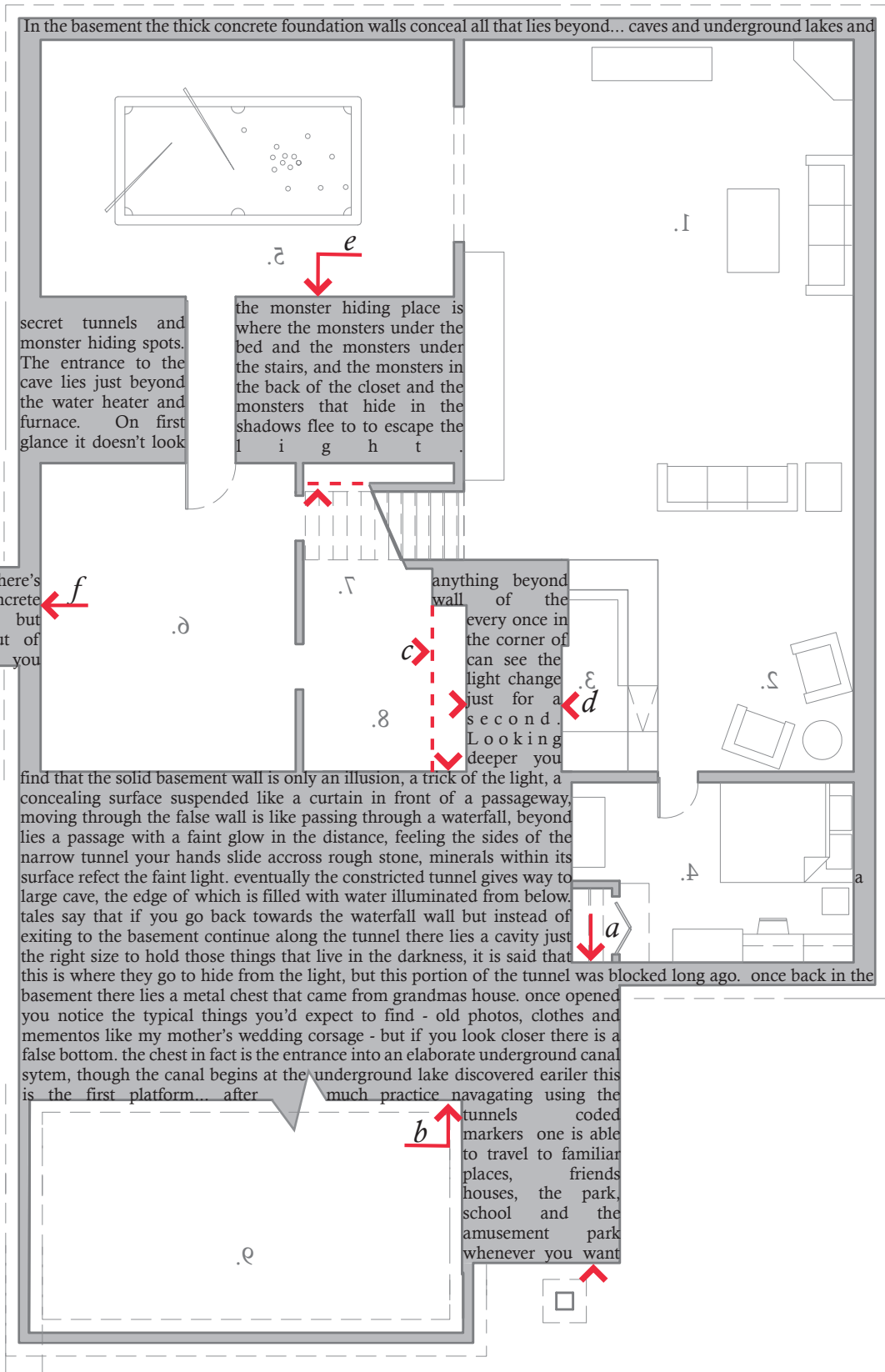


Fig 2.21 Basement Plan: NT2

- |                       |                         |                |              |                 |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| a. grotto             | d. waterfall passage    | 7. storage     | 4. bedroom   | 1. media room   |
| b. waterfall passage  | e. monster holding cell | 8. mechanical  | 5. game room | 2. sitting area |
| c. false wall to cave | f. passageway to tunnel | 9. unexcavated | 6. workshop  | 3. bar          |

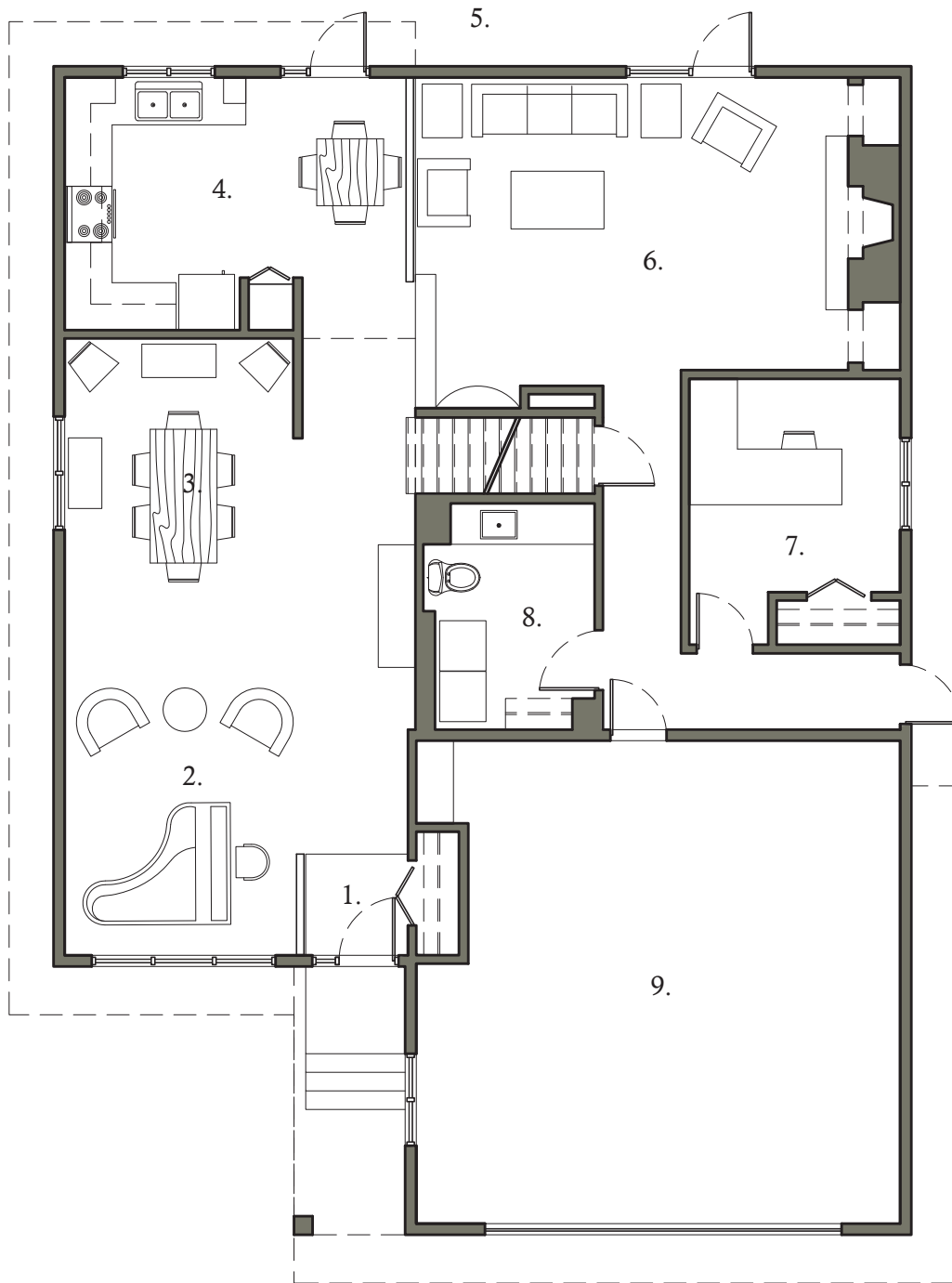


Fig 2.49 Main Floor Plan: 1/8"=1'-0"

- |                |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. entry       | 4. kitchen     | 7. office      |
| 2. piano room  | 5. deck        | 8. laundry /wc |
| 3. dining room | 6. living room | 9. garage      |



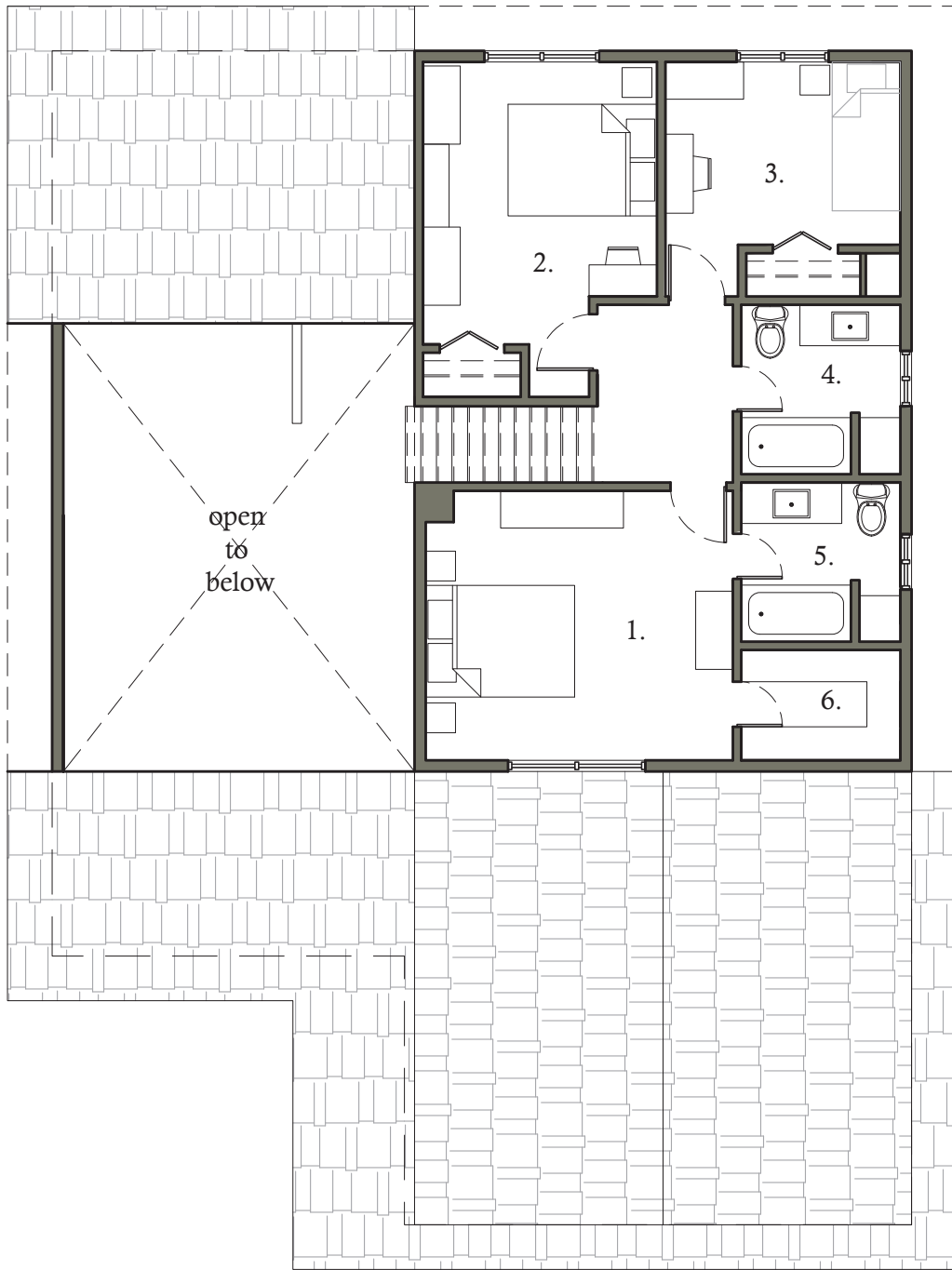


Fig 2.50 Second Floor Plan: 1/8"=1'-0"

- |                     |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| 1. master bedroom   | 4. washroom |
| 2. amanda's bedroom | 5. washroom |
| 3. amber's bedroom  | 6. closet   |

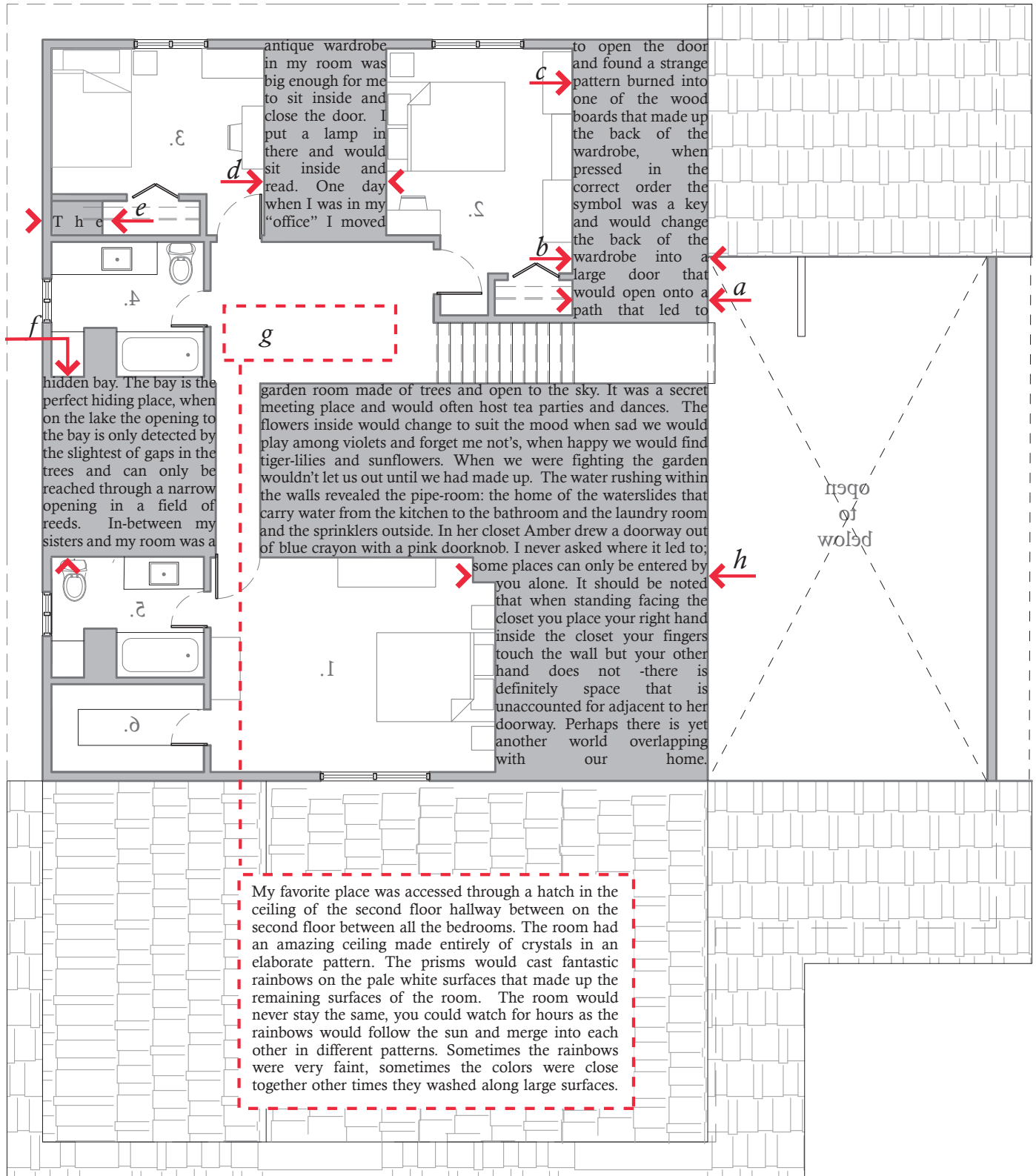


Fig. 2.20 Second Floor Plan: NT2

- a. ladder to library
- b. balcony to garden
- c. wardrobe to H.B.
- d. greenhouse gazebo
- e. ambers secret door
- f. pipe room
- g. rainbow room hatch
- h. hatch to observatory
- 1. master bedroom
- 2. ambers bedroom
- 3. ambers bedroom
- 4. washroom
- 5. washroom
- 6. closet



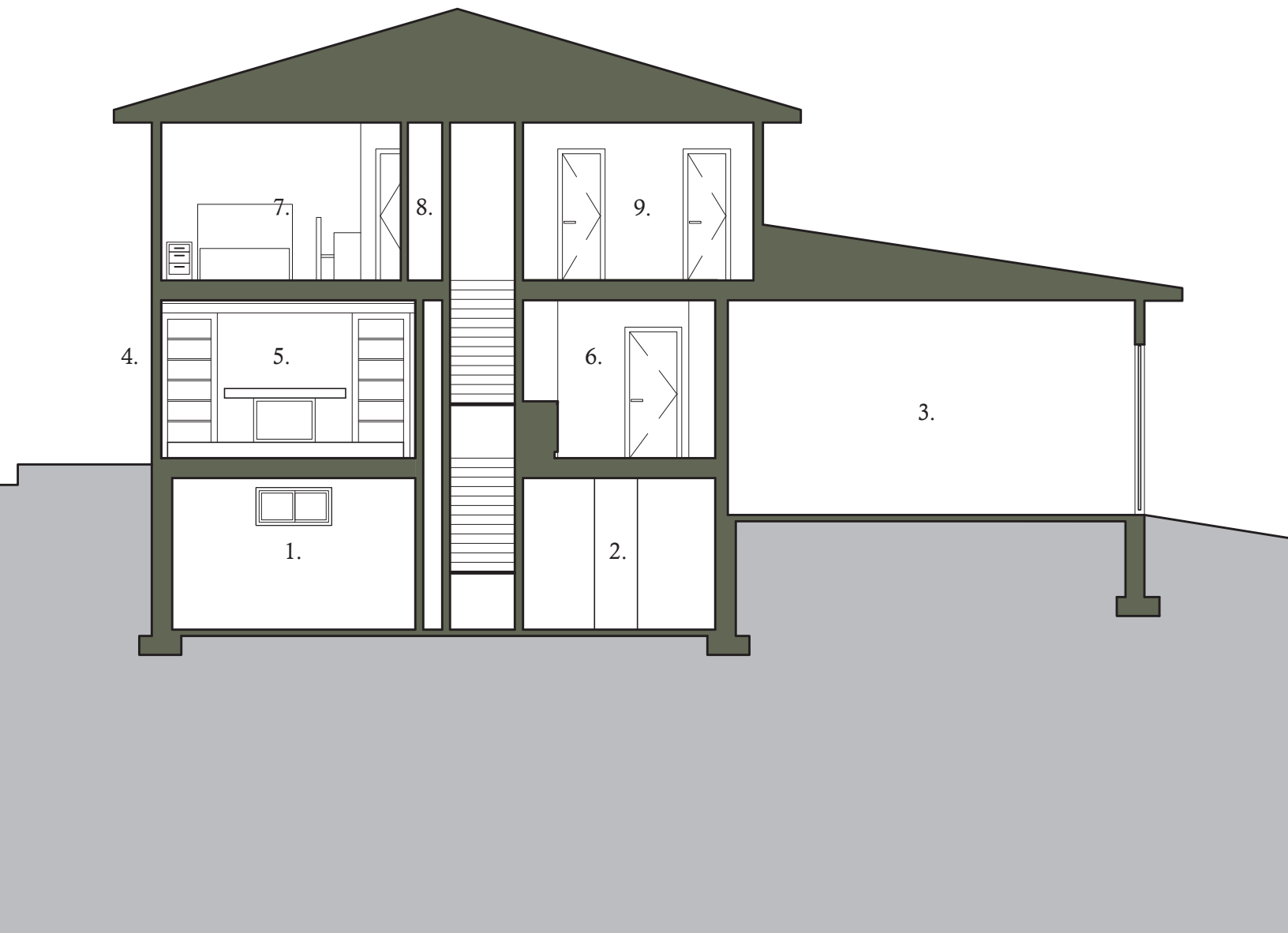


Fig 2.51 Section: 1/8"=1'-0"

- |              |                |                   |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. game room | 4. deck        | 7. amanda's room  |
| 2. storage   | 5. living room | 8. closet         |
| 3. garage    | 6. washroom    | 9. master bedroom |



Fig. 2.21 Section: INT2

All the different spaces are interlinked in some round about way, they have to go far out of the way to avoid the rooms that lie between the walls. The world is both epic and intimate, There lie a series of landscapes within its walls yet they are all familiar, mine alone. On occasion I would lead people to the threshold to see if they could detect anything beyond. People rarely did.

- 1. game room
- 2. storage
- 3. garage
- 4. deck
- 5. living room
- 6. washroom
- 7. Amanda's room
- 8. closet
- 9. master bedroom



Fig 2.52 *Alice looking through small door*, Jan Švankmajer, *Alice*, 1988

*“Now you have to close your eyes, or you won’t see anything!”*

*-Alice*<sup>31</sup>

## HOUSE AS WONDERLAND

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Wonderland, like childhood, is a liminal space of transition. It tests the imaginations ability to engage with spaces beyond reason, where everyday spaces and objects conflict with established patterns of the familiar, and thus may seem absurd. When encountering this new space we need to find novel tools to relate to the environment, to orient and define ourselves. Often, an expanded understanding of self and our relationship to space emerges out of encounters with the new, the unfamiliar, the forgotten, and the unexplored. Wonderland is a metaphor for the absurd and illogical within our selves. The opening line of Jan Švankmajer's *Alice* {*Neco z Alenky*}, instructs the audience "to close their eyes, or you won't see anything!" The notion that we need to close our eyes to truly see alludes to dimensions of space that are not revealed to the conscious mind. The dream provides access to the lessons of the unconscious; the transcendent capability of dreams and imagination provides access to the lessons of the unconscious and reveals hidden compartments in the psyche.

*Irrationality must once again be granted the 'official' space that would respect the position it occupies in the human psyche." "In our civilization, the dream, that natural wellspring of the imagination, is constantly blocked, and in its place we find absurdity which grants precedence to our 'scientific, rational system.'*<sup>32</sup>

What makes Švankmajer's work so provocative is that although he is inspired by childhood, he dismantles the myth of a 'golden age of childhood' to reveal the darkness and disorientation nostalgia tends to veil.\* Placing Wonderland in a generic (although dark) domestic environment illustrates the difficulty in distinguishing imagination from memory inherent in spaces that house both our everyday life and daydreams.

*The positivity of psychological history and geography cannot serve as a touchstone for determining the real bearing of our childhood, for childhood is certainly greater than reality. It is on the plane of the daydream and not on that of facts that childhood remains alive and poetically useful within us.*<sup>33</sup>

\*Švankmajer has consistently returned to the theme of childhood, especially in *Jabberwocky*, *Down to the Cellar* and *Alice*. His obsession with marionettes, puppets and primitive folk tales also relates to childhood and its forms of representation – tales of the imagination which often use fear, horror and anxiety. He has remarked, "I have never viewed my childhood as something I have left behind me." For Švankmajer his exploration of childhood is part of a type of paranoiocritical method, whereby his own highly personal associations stemming from childhood and what he sees as it's natural ally – dream life- actively construct the films in which such projections are given shape.<sup>34</sup>



Fig 2.53 *Alice & the March Hare's house*, Jan Švankmajer, Alice, 1988

*The Old House, for those who know how to listen, is a sort of geometry of echoes.*

-Gaston Bachelard, *the Poetics of Space*<sup>35</sup>

The film begins when the playroom, filled with familiar domestic objects and childish clutter becomes unfamiliar as we enter the dreamscape of Wonderland. The cramped interior spaces of the table drawer through which Alice follows the white rabbit opens into the dark, gloomy cellars and corridors of the domestic space in which Wonderland is contained. The journey down to Wonderland is more like a curated tour through a museum of natural history, venturing into the collective archetypes residing in the primordial architectures of the mind: the traces of our biological journey that reason cannot eradicate. It is these symbols that will mediate Alice's experience of the house as wonderland. Although she has gone to a place beyond reason and must employ tools which lie out of her everyday experience, she discovers that they reside somewhere within her.

As Alice wanders in and out of basements and cellars, up and down stairs and corridors, any hope of an ordered understanding of space is lost. Space itself becomes distorted. There is a door within a door, a stream running through a field within a room, a stage set within the field, a house within the stage, and yet another house behind the facade of a house made from children's wooden building blocks. In her wanderings she encounters the same room, slightly different, dressed to serve the encounter that is to take place there. The house becomes a Mobius loop, with all paths overlapping and converging at a point that appears to be the same but when viewed from a different perspective has shifted slightly.

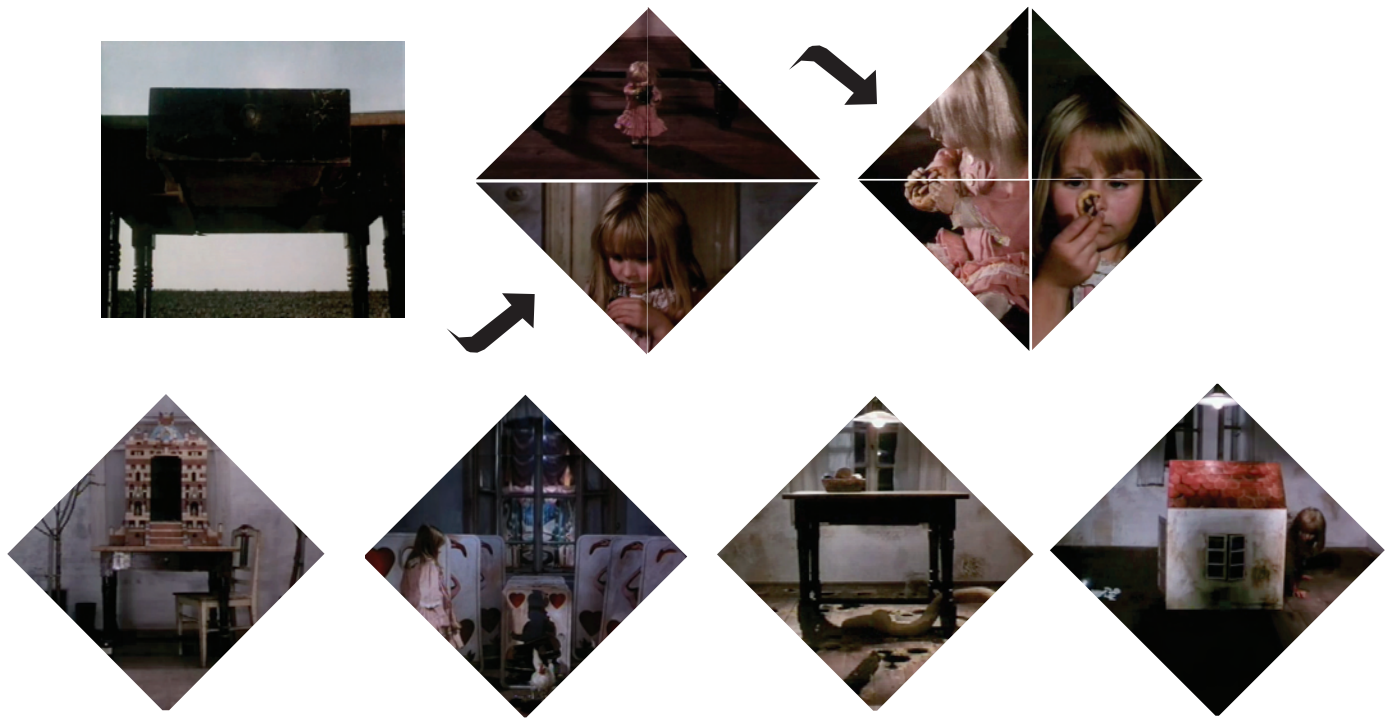
Space is not the only aspect of experience that is distorted in wonderland, time replays. Actions and scenes are re-enacted, the opening with Alice throwing pebbles into the river recreated with dolls in the playroom, the Mad Hatter's tea party replayed until it is exhausted and then replayed again. The onwards flow of time is both marked by the ticking of the White Rabbit's watch and stopped by the March Hare's jamming of the clockwork with an overzealous application of the best butter.

Tarts and ink-the items associated with the writing desk in the opening shots of the film. She can never access the drawer using the usual means, the knob always falls off and she must find alternate ways of prying it open. Are the tools to navigate space, whereas the desk provides wormholes to transport her to each room, the ink and tarts allow her to warp her relationship to space directly, the desk folds space, the ink shrinks it and the tarts expand it.

In the domestic wonderland, time and movement are put in relation to a space that is unstable and whose boundaries are mobile. The house takes part in a common desire to reveal, to order and to access a deeper understanding of space.



top: Fig 2.54 *Alice on the riverbed {dream}*, Jan Svankmajer, *Alice*, 1988  
bottom: Fig 2.55 *Alice in the playroom*, Jan Švankmajer, *Alice*, 1988



### Unfolding Spaces : The Fortune Teller:

In order to convey the experience of space in the house as Wonderland as constantly unfolding and cycling, I employed a game from childhood - the fortune teller. The diagram as play actively engages the reader in the unfolding and discovering of rooms within the wonderland house.

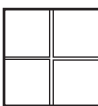
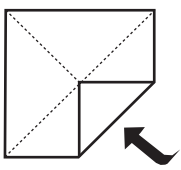
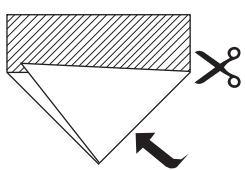
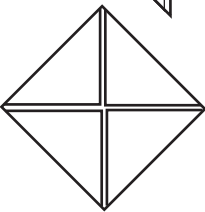
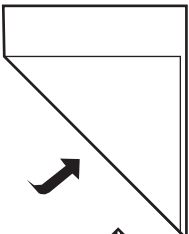
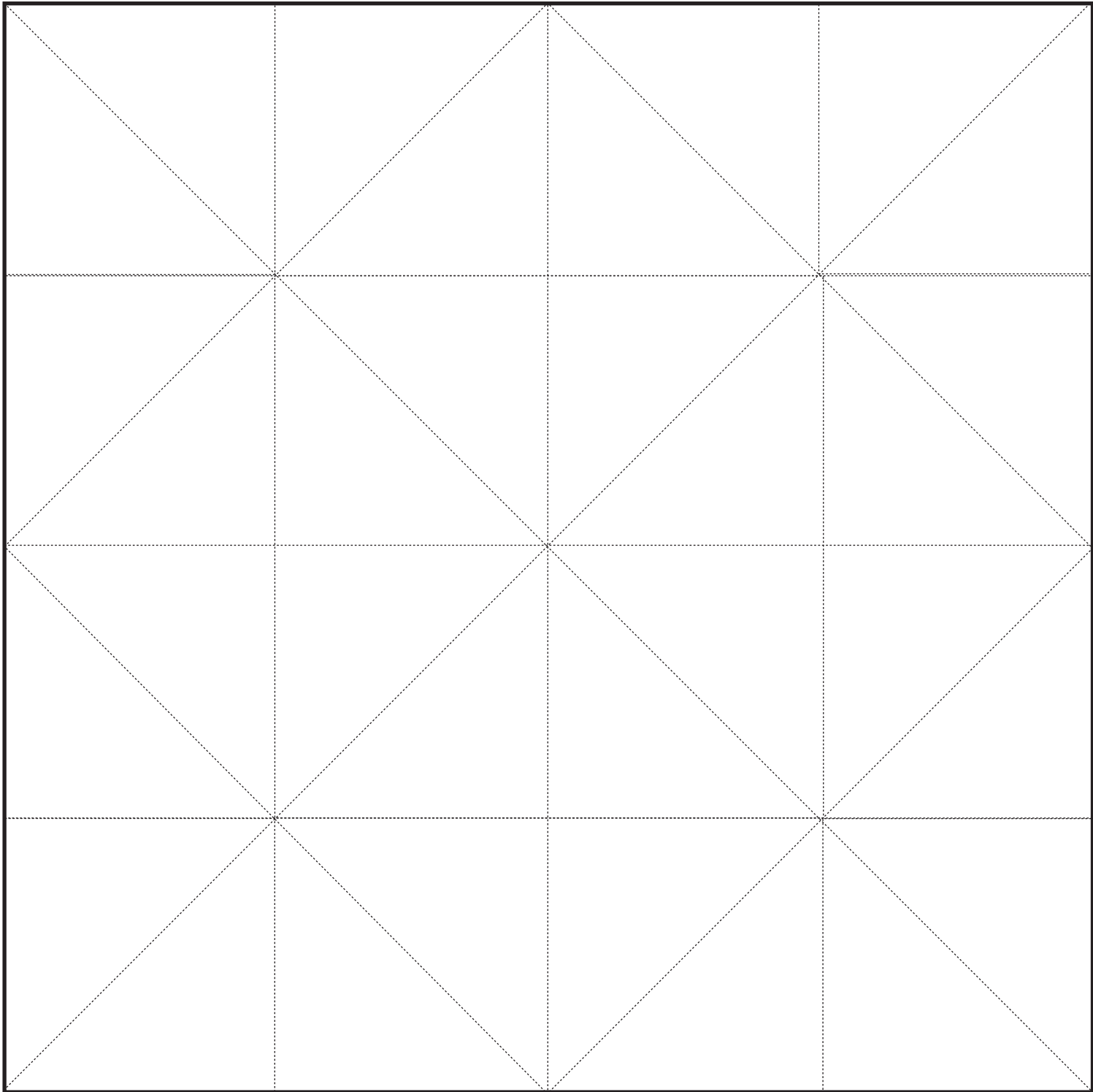
The 'fortune teller' is used as follows: entering through the desk drawer you then need to decide on ink to grow small or tarts to grow large, once that has been spelled out while flipping between ink and tarts, the player then needs to decide between large Alice and small Alice, the flap depicting the Alice of choice is then unfolded to reveal one of the spaces in wonderland.

*above: Fig 2.56 Unfolding spaces*

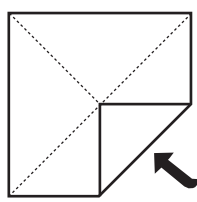
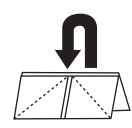
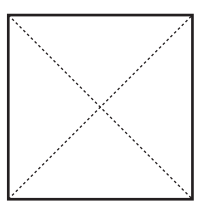
*opposite: Fig 2.57 Fortune Teller / unfolding spaces diagram*







{ 112 }





Inherent in the process of becoming adults is the discovery of one's own identity. In the film, Alice's size is manipulated not by having her shrink and grow large but by making her appear as girl, doll and effigy, which only adds to the strong sense of the uncanny in the film. Alice is usually too small or too big for many of the experiences she encounters; she is too small to fit to the tiny door in the great Hall but too big to enter the march hare's house. It is not long before Alice becomes aware of her circumstance, and concludes that in Wonderland she must combine space, scale, and time, in order for certain actions to take place. Alice is often searching for the tool that will make her grow or shrink. Her scale as well as the scale of the world around her, is never fixed. Often, Alice is able to determine her own scale relative to objects and animals.



*top: Fig 2.58 Alice Big*

*bottom: Fig 2.59 Alice Small*



Fig 2.60 Caterpillar

**Caterpillar:** *Who are you?*

**Alice:** *And who are you?*

**Caterpillar:** *Why? Come back, I have something very important to tell you. Keep your temper.*

**Alice:** *Is that all?*

**Caterpillar:** *No. One side will make you grow, the other side will make you shrink.*

**Alice:** *Of what?*

**Caterpillar:** *Of the mushroom.*

**Alice:** *{I think it worked quite well, though not entirely as I expected.}*<sup>36</sup>



*top: Fig 2.61 Alice big, the trees appear small  
center: Fig 2.62 Alice holding the two sides of the mushroom  
bottom: Fig 2.63 Alice small, the trees appear big*

The treatment of objects within wonderland corresponds to the fantastical procedures of dream-work, codified by Freud in terms of condensation, contamination, and symbolization. The process of stop-motion animation which combines live action and real objects employed in Švankmajer's Alice, is used at its core to manipulate familiar spaces and objects into the unfamiliar: "*one has the unsettling sense of watching an old and well-remembered dream in a new and disturbing state of hallucination.*"<sup>37</sup>

*{My fascination with animation originates} partly from my belief that places, rooms and objects have their own passive lives which they have soaked up, as it were, from the situations they have been in and from the people who made, touched, and lived with them. I have always tried in my films to 'excavate' this content from objects, to listen to them and then illustrate their story I coerce their inner life out of them—and for that animation is a great aid which I consider to be a sort of magical rite or ritual*<sup>38</sup>

Stop motion animation depends on the mind to fill in the gaps of what is excluded to make a movement flow. Rocks become biscuits, eggs contain dry bones, slabs of meat take flight, socks burrow through the floorboards like worms, pincushions turn into hedgehogs, bread rolls grow nails, and jars of jam hide drawing pins. Švankmajer employs animation as an intermediary between the estranged modern man and the secret or lost dimensions of the real world.

Children are not allowed to play with scissors and as such belong to the world of adults. Many of the objects encountered in wonderland, the sewing basket, laundry and preserves are all tools supporting domestic duties that would be associated with her idea of being an adult. Domestic space transforms from play to work, with her identity always tied to the home. People have a personal relationship with objects, our relations often ignored or marginalized by the automatism of everyday life – animation bestows the object with magic functions, through imagination and dreamlike images. Animation is a metaphor for our interaction with symbols in our everyday lives, although seen as static, our ongoing interaction with them brings them to life not mechanically, but magically, drawing out their 'latent capacities' and hidden meanings.



*left: Fig 2.64 socks in darning basket*

*right: Fig 2.65 socks as worms crawling through floorboards*



*left: Fig 2.66 skulls and insects on wall of playroom*

*right: Fig 2.67 grotesque animated characters*



*left: Fig 2.68 cup of tea on playroom floor*

*right: Fig 2.69 Mad hatter's tea party*

An early sequence from Alice inventories the contents of Alice's room. They include: a button box, a wooden darning mushroom, a row of jam jars, a magic lantern, a sun hat, a bottle of ink, some tarts, a pair of scissors, two apple cores, a set of rodent skulls, a pair of white gloves, a mouse-trap, butterflies pinned beneath glass, a clutch of dolls or puppets, a picture of a rabbit and a fox by a stream, paper boats, a house of playing cards... During Alice's subsequent adventures within wonderland, we shall meet nearly all of these items again, reappearing in "curiouser and curiouser" ways.



*Fig 2.70 Alice at the March Hare's House*

Neco z Alenky is often described as a “*nightmarish journey undertaken by a small girl through a maze of subterranean vaults alive with the menace of the unforeseen and the abnormal.*”<sup>39</sup> Indeed in its distortion of space and time, wonderland is a dreamscape, or more accurately a dream within a dream within a house. In *Alice*, the dreamscape is not set up in opposition to the domestic realm; the two are interwoven and engage in a reciprocal relationship. Thus reality does not dominate fiction or vice versa, but rather, the two co-exist within the same space to enrich the experience of the other. In transforming Carroll’s rural dream world into a domestic nightmare, Švankmajer invites the audience to decipher both the memory of the story and their childhood home using an alternate spatial metaphor.



PART III: HAUNTED  
The Evolution of Psyche





Fig 3.01 Nazarenos, Semana Santa de Seville, Spain

*There is no change in the history of the last 300 years more striking, or suggestive of more curious enquiries than that which has taken place in the estimate of the miraculous. A miraculous account was then universally accepted as perfectly credible, probable and ordinary. There was scarcely a village or church that had not, at some time, been the scene of supernatural interposition. The powers of light and the powers of darkness were regarded as visibly struggling for the mastery. Saintry miracles, supernatural cures, startling judgments, visions, prophecies and prodigies of every order, attested the activity of the one, while witchcraft and magic, with all their attendant horrors, were the visible manifestations of the latter.*

<sup>1</sup> W.E.H. Lecky, *History of the rise and influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*



Fig 3.02 *Deconsecrated church*. Ruequeville-en-Bessin, Calvedos.

## THE GOTHIC NOVEL



Fig 3.03

The enlightenment displaced magic. The systematic rationalization of things unseen was an attempt to de-mystify systems of belief based in the possibility of the impossible. During the enlightenment, rationalism supplanted religion as the authoritative mode of explaining the universe, unraveling traditional conceptions of the relations between individuals and natural, supernatural and social worlds. Man was no longer at the centre of an ordered system with a clearly delineated relationship to the divine. The realization of this displacement and the anxieties that accompanied the subsequent attempt to situate oneself in an unstable new territory was explored in the Gothic\* stories that emerged during this period.

The evolution of the Gothic from its inception in the terror of the sublime to its eventual home in the unconscious workings of psychology traces

\*'Gothic' in this sense was a derogatory term for the time before the enlightenment, and evoked images of barbaric customs and practices, of superstition and natural wildness. Manifestations of the 'Gothic' - buildings, ruins, songs and romances - were treated as the products of childish, uncultivated minds. The Enlightenment, dominated by writings from Greek and Roman culture privileged forms of cultural and artistic production that attended to classical rules. Buildings, art, gardens, landscapes and written texts had to conform to precepts of uniformity, proportion and order.<sup>2</sup>

an attempt to find a language – a new collection of symbols and metaphors to explain what the Enlightenment left unexplained; to reconcile divine mysteries that reason had begun to dismantle, and to recuperate pasts and histories that offered a permanence and unity within a modern world of constant change. Overlooked in the destruction of the old orders was the role that these systems of belief played in the irrational emotional lives of people. The underestimation of the necessity of the magic – and its subsequent negation - resulted in the shadow side of the age of reason.

Gothic stories employ shadows to imply what cannot be seen directly, to define an idea by its absence. Darkness, metaphorically, threatened the light of reason with what it did not know; its uncertainty generated both a sense of mystery and passions and emotions alien to reason. Associated with the night that housed the imaginations' unnatural and marvelous creatures, in Gothic stories imagination and emotional effects exceed reason. Drawing on the myths, legends, and folklore of medieval romances, Gothic conjured up magical worlds and tales of nights, monsters, ghosts and extravagant adventures and terrors.

For the last 250 years, Gothic literature has employed architecture as a literary device, used to externalize these internal psychic states and to deliberately disturb the conventional notions of space {and time} as an indication of the distorted perceptions of the characters own disorientation. The haunted house is an architecture that has been transformed into an extension of the human psyche by the emotion of its inhabitants. Evolving from the haunted castle and graveyard, the haunted house has provided an intriguing setting in which to explore the tenuous relationship between self and space.

The haunted house illuminates the ability of inhabitants to distort familiar spaces and embed the house with their own emotions, memories, and psychosis to create a space of unease and terror. The haunted house was a favored structure as the locus of uncanny and unexplainable phenomena because of its familiarity - both a container for secrets and the site of our intimate lives. As the backdrop to our daily routine, the house is easily corruptible - haunted by traces of one's family, history, and that we wish to remain unseen.

## THE SUBLIME



Fig 3.04  
*Die Gescheiterte Hoffnung*,  
Caspar David Freidrich

*Death of light gives birth to a creature-darkness few can accept as pure[.]absence. Thus despite rational object[.]ons, technology's failure is over[.]un by the onslaught of myth.<sup>3</sup>*

The 'felt sense' of terror was fundamental to early Gothic, an aesthetics\* based on feeling and emotion and associated primarily with the sublime.\*\* The sublime described a particular shift in perception that began to occur during the 18th ce. In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Burke claims an encounter with the vastness of rugged, mountainous landscapes revealed a natural and divine power; the sublime came to be associated with the range of intense and uplifting emotions the mountainous scenery invoked in the viewer: wonder, awe, horror and joy elevated the soul and the imagination with a sense of power and Infinity. <sup>6</sup>

*a strange and unexpected event awakens the mind, and keeps it on the stretch; and where the agency of invisible beings is introduced, of 'forms unseen, and mightier far than we,' our imagination, darting forth, explored with rapture the new world which is laid open to its view, and rejoices in the expansion of its powers<sup>7</sup>*

\* Aesthetics: <sup>4</sup>

1.the branch of philosophy dealing with such notions as the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime, the comic, etc., as applicable to the fine arts, with a view to establishing the meaning and validity of critical judgments concerning works of art, and the principles underlying or justifying such judgments.

2.the study of the mind and emotions in relation to the sense of beauty.

\*\* Sublime:<sup>5</sup> Rising from beneath a threshold.

For Burke, the beautiful and sublime differed in their effects on the observer. Beautiful objects were characterized by their smallness, smoothness, delicacy and gradual variation; beauty could be appreciated and contained within the individual's gaze while the sublime overwhelmed the viewer and could not be processed by a rational mind.<sup>8</sup> The sublime, a glimpse of the infinite, implies a breaking down of boundaries between spirit and solid, real and imaginary. Overcome, the individual can no longer situate itself relative to a world that is boundless and thus unknowable. Unable to exist indefinitely within this state, the mind begins to fill the void with potentials. Self-possession is lost then regained on another, imaginative, level.

The theory of the sublime declared imaginative transport of this kind not only as pleasurable but as a necessity, an exercise to keep the mind from succumbing to indifference - a mental lethargy resulting from immersion in the familiar. Although the sublime expands the mind and infuses experience with the sacred, its energy comes from a baser, bodily source:

*A sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror; which as it belongs to self-preservation is one of the strongest of all the passions.<sup>9</sup>*

In the expansive domain opened up by the sublime all sorts of imaginative objects and fears situated in or beyond nature could take up residence in the magical and the nightmarish. The Sublime evoked a terror of the void, of loss of self, loss of order, but when kept at a safe mental distance when induced through the supernatural, it facilitated a cathartic release of emotions and facilitated the expulsion of the object of fear. Gothic employed the fantastic and the absurd to symbolize and disguise in exaggerated form the deep fears and longings that arose from the great advancements and changes in the period.

*The fear that possesses the Gothic and motivates its tone is the fear that in destroying the old {authorities} opened a way for the irruption of darkness: for [cultural and individual] insanity and the [consequent] disintegration of the self.<sup>10</sup>*





*Fig 3.05* Abbey of Hambue, Manche.

## THE CONTESTED CASTLE



*Fig 3.06* Bran Castle, Brasov, Romania

The major locus of gothic plots, the forbidding Castle, in an eternal state of dilapidation, was the symbolic home for many fears in Gothic fiction. The castle was linked to other sinister edifices - churches and graveyards, decaying convents, a dark forest or labyrinthine underground spaces – that in their generally ruinous states, harked back to a feudal past associated with barbarity, superstition and fear; structures of power that had been replaced by the enlightened era in which the stories were written. Architecture, particularly medieval in form, signaled the spatial and temporal separation of the past and its values from those of the present.

The castle is an exemplary Gothic site because it retains a constant state of supernaturalism. The haunted castle has a life of its own: it traps and conceals. Within its walls lie hidden passageways, secret haunted chambers, and forgotten dungeons. The heavy-built wooden doors on

creaking hinges that close without human aid; the high, arched or leaded windows that cast imprisoning shadows, were all employed to create an atmosphere of mystery, foreboding and suspense.

The popularity of the haunted castle in 18th century English Gothic fiction corresponded to revolutions in the domestic sphere, symbolizing the uneasy balance of an enlightened social sphere with the development of individual identity. This was a period of dialogue about the relationship between a public and private life - in which the home was being redefined as the site for the exploration of self and the cultivation of identity, the basis for a moral society and participatory government structure. The domestic interior housed newly articulated and increasingly widespread desires for privacy and comfort, for the consolidation of specific gendered and familial roles and for practices of self-representation in the context of domestic life.<sup>11</sup> Accompanying this new spatial paradigm was a separation of social spheres, the home as the domain of women, and the public realm the dominion of men.

The modern notion of a single-family home was a product of this separation, the result of a period of mass urbanization. As more families moved into the cities, roles shifted from the agricultural small-business



Fig 3.07 *The Haunted Castle*, Chateau de Miranda, Belgium

model in which both partners worked and contributed, to the urban middle class in which the man worked outside the home while the ‘new woman’ maintained the domestic sphere, society and the children.

In charge of maintaining and perpetuating the ideals and morals of the society, the ‘new woman’ was a passionless figure, with hearth, home and motherhood as her particular responsibilities. She was a redeemed Eve, a symbol of virtue and innocence at the centre of home as a paradise regained on Earth.<sup>12</sup> The ‘*New woman*’, is not only entombed with the home, her sphere, her only space of action but in the new restrictive definition of woman, to which she is supposed to aspire. This is not to say that domestic habits and roles did not exist before this time, but the new domestic mythology served to conceptualize a particular emerging and developing consciousness of domesticity as a symbol for the stability of the middle class, which saw itself bringing morality to a society that had become decadent and was heading towards destruction. However, as the gothic novel reveals, the idealization of the home crystallized in this emergence could also become transformed and destabilized through it.

In *The Contested Castle*, Kate Ferguson Ellis, explores subversion of the domestic realm in the image of the haunted castle in early {18th century} Gothic fiction. The majority of gothic stories that filled the shelves of the circulating libraries during the late 18th century followed a formula, which began in 1764, with Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, and didn’t undergo much evolution until Ann Radcliffe expanded the formula 25 years later.\* Omens, prophecies and visions provide clues to the mystery, such as unknown parentage, a disappearance, or some other inexplicable event.

Within a combination of foreboding, sinister spaces, are hidden some secrets from the past that emerge in supernatural or exaggerated form to haunt the characters. The story concludes when the imprisoned heroine escapes from the demonic yet compelling villain, depicting a movement from an enclosed, prison-like structure dominated by an evil aristocrat to an open space where the lovers can be united and the crimes of their oppressors revealed.

\*This formula was elevated by Ann Radcliffe who is credited for elevating the formula outlined by Walpole, and infusing it with a romantic quality of descriptive landscapes. Although her first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), draws heavily on Walpole’s formula, featuring a usurped castle, an evil villain, a ghost, and plenty of terror and suspense. She altered the formula in two ways, the first being that to situate herself within the context of realist writings of the day she introduced the “explained” supernatural. Her stories would include supernatural elements; however there would always be a logical explanation for their presence. Another alteration to Walpole’s formula was an expansion of the heroine’s escape and flight, a device that allowed her to track her heroines’ progress through the picturesque and sublime scenery of southern Europe.<sup>13</sup>

Domestic life cannot occur within a haunted castle. In order to reassert the primacy of home and its values and to marry the man of her choice, secrets must be revealed and sometimes the castle destroyed.<sup>14</sup> The castle, like home is a fallen world waiting to be redeemed by the heroine, not as a passive, passionless victim but embodying emotion.

*Departing from this model of female virtue, the gothic heroine transgresses the boundaries that divide the spheres in order to carry out the mission her culture has assigned to her. Often she must actively challenge the prejudice against female inheritance in order to gain what is rightfully hers. She invariably disobeys a parent and chooses knowledge over innocence, without being banished from the garden of marital bliss.<sup>15</sup>*

The haunted castle reveals a paradox inherent in the home as Eden myth. Eden is a walled space where the terrors of the outside world cannot penetrate - but walls that cannot be penetrated become a prison. The redemption of a castle that has been corrupted and converted into a prison by a heroine is an underlying structure of the classic gothic.<sup>16</sup> In order to reclaim the fallen domestic sphere the heroine must often transgress boundaries and break from the narrow confines of her role of 'new woman' to take her new place as the keeper of the domestic sphere. The linkage of the home and 'new Eve' in the domestic Eden mythology made explicit the underlying interdependence between the identity of the individual and the space they occupied. Eden's subversion in the haunted castle divulged the social and political anxieties underlying this spatial and social revolution.

The classic gothic story, placed emphasis on expelling and objectifying threatening figures of darkness and evil, casting them out and restoring proper limits: the villains are punished; heroines well married. Eventually the architectural and feudal background, the wild landscapes, the aristocratic villain and sentimental heroines, already made clichéd and formulaic by popular imitation, were no longer objects of terror. The capacity of Gothic castles, villains and ghosts to embody and externalize fears and anxieties was in decline. If they remained, they continued more as signs of internal states and conflicts than of external threats.

## THE UNCANNY

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Whereas the haunted castle represented a site of public contests of power, the intimacy and familiarity of the haunted house represents the emerging internal conflict of an individual. The uncanny<sup>17</sup> is not a transcendent terror, not an emotional response to the vastness without but a terror that originates into the void within. The sublime ceded to the uncanny, disturbing the familiar, homely<sup>18</sup> and secure sense of reality and normality.

In *The Female Thermometer, 18th Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*, Terry Castle explores the origins of the Uncanny during the age of reason. She posits that the uncanny is a function of enlightenment: it is that which confronts us, paradoxically, after a certain light has been cast.<sup>19</sup>

*The very psychic and cultural transformations that led to the age of reason and enlightenment – the aggressively rationalist imperatives of the epoch- also produced, like a toxic side effect, a new human experience of strangeness, anxiety, bafflement and intellectual impasse. The distinctively eighteenth century impulse to systematize and regulate, to bureaucratize the world of knowledge by identifying what Locke called the “horizon which sets the bounds between the enlightened and dark parts of things”, was itself responsible for the estrangement of the real, and the sensation of impinging uncanniness which is so integral to the experience of modernity.*<sup>20</sup>

As the above quote articulates, the fear of the dark and subsequent attempt at illumination had unintentional consequences. The enlightened age of creating a world based on scientific concepts of light and infinity inadvertently invented the spatial phenomenology of darkness.<sup>21</sup> The literary devices the Gothic tales of this time employed to evoke the uncanny were in themselves metaphors of the ‘light’ of reason, subverting and manipulating light in their shadows, projections and mirrors - exploiting this tension between light and dark.

Less identifiable as a separate genre in the 19th century, Gothic devices were incorporated into broader genres. Gothic forms emerged as the



Fig 3.08 Oracle at Delphi

*Greece had a Homer precisely because it had mysteries, that is, because it succeeded in completely subduing that principle of the past, which was still dominant and outwardly manifest in the Oriental systems, and in pushing it back into the interior, that is, into secrecy, into the Mystery (out of which it had, after all, originally emerged). That clear sky which hovers above the Homeric poems, that ether which arches over Homer's world, could not have spread itself over Greece until the dark and obscure power of that uncanny principle which dominated earlier religions had been reduced to the Mysteries (all things are called uncanny which should have remained secret, hidden, latent, but which have come to light); the Homeric age could not contemplate fashioning that purely poetic mythology until the genuine religious principle had been secured in the interior, thereby granting the mind complete outward freedom.*

-Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling<sup>22</sup>

## Phantasmagoria

The metaphors present within Gothic literature often evoke reflection, refraction, projection, shadow and other subversions of light. Light and shadow, mirrors and fog, all employed at one time or another to convey the presence of immaterial forces, combine as the physical media for an 18th century cinematic experience known as the phantasmagoria. Just as early optical devices quickly went from enhancing the visual experience of the world to expressing the imagination; the magic lantern transformed into a device of the uncanny- making visible the repressed fears of its audience through a display of the supernatural.

Some phantasmagorias' claimed their shows to be an expose into the mechanisms behind the phantoms of the mind, a rationalization of the paranormal. The symbols employed in these shows were drawn from a collective history that had been rendered archaic by recent scientific developments. However it was through these scientific advancements that displays like the phantasmagoria could re-introduce the symbols of the magical back into the collective consciousness, providing metaphors for the immaterial: mystery and darkness, suggestiveness and fear, evanescence and smoke that have their origins in Neo-Platonism and its play with the metaphor of shadows.<sup>23</sup>





*Fig 3.09* Robertson's Phantasmagoria Show, 1799



Fig 3.10 *Vieux Saint-Malo*, Victor Hugo, June 1866

darker side to romantic ideals of individuality, imaginative consciousness and creation. Gothic became the medium of internalized guilt, anxiety, and despair; reflecting wider anxieties which, centering on the individual, questioned the uncertain bounds of imaginative freedom and human knowledge. External forms showed signs of psychological disturbance, of increasingly uncertain subjective states dominated by fantasy, hallucination and madness.

## THE HAUNTED HOUSE

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The Enlightenment had an ambivalent attitude towards privacy. Privacy was composed of darkened spaces, unseen irrationalities, veils obscuring truth and the intentions of man. The interior is a relationship, a personal and cultural construction and its definition is not static but evolves with the dynamic explorations of ways in which society and the individual can mediate specific places over time.<sup>23</sup> Thus the space became a laboratory of sorts, a mirror reflecting an individual's narrative, reflecting back how they saw themselves. Our relationship to the domestic interior emerged with the concept of the self, simultaneously a physical space to be inhabited and a mental state.

In *The Emergence of the Interior*, Charles Rice explores the emergence of the domestic interior\* as both a concept and a material manifestation of the nineteenth century.” The stable spatial domestic realm is undermined by the mental space concealed in its interior.<sup>25</sup>

*Its spatial sense is dominant, and the image is supposed to provide a transparent window onto the spatial. The doubleness of the interior implies, however that the image-based and spatial senses of the interior are equally important. [...] interiors as images have a life independent of supposed spatial referents, and the nature of relations between image-based and spatial interiors is often far from transparent.*<sup>26</sup>

The imagining of the interior that accompanied the interiors' spatiality allowed it to *'be imagined and dreamed, and inhabited as such'*<sup>27</sup>, made it open to distortion. Indeed, such relations have historically made the interior the site of uncanny qualities precisely through a play between identity and discrepancy at the heart of the interiors' doubleness.<sup>28</sup>

The uncanny is a sensation best experienced in the privacy of the interior. In the stories of Edgar Allan Poe, the spatial and psychological interior are warped and interchangeable, nightmare and reality become entwined. Poe employs architectural spaces as a symbolic mirror for characters afflicted with impossible desires that can only be attained

\*The Oxford English Dictionary records that 'interior' had come into use from the late fifteenth century to mean inside as divided from outside, and to describe the spiritual and inner nature of the soul. From the early eighteenth century, 'interiority' was used to designate inner character and a sense of individual subjectivity, and from the middle of the eighteenth century the interior came to designate the domestic affairs of a state, as well as the sense of territory that belongs to a country or region. It was only from the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, that the interior came to mean 'The inside of a building or room, esp in reference to the artistic effect; also, a picture or representation of the inside of a building or room.'<sup>24</sup>

through the macabre and monstrous. Questioning as well as promoting dark powers of the imagination, Poe's fiction left raw the products of the breakdown of boundaries between reality, reason and madness rather than rationalizing mysteries. The various devices, styles and structures Poe employed in his writing had great influence on all of subsequent evocations of the uncanny within Gothic writing: the doubles, mirrors, the play of internal and external narrations, and the parallel depictions of spatial warping have become staples of the genre. Signifying the alienation of the human subject from the culture and language in which she was located, these devices increasingly destabilized the boundaries between the psyche and reality. Such literary devices are employed to represent the various ways in which we project our unconscious onto our environment, blurring the line between imagined and perceived.

As Kenneth Silverman, a recent Poe biographer, observes, *at a time when James Fenimore Cooper, Ralph Waldo Emerson [and others] were creating a feeling of space and self-reliant freedom, he was creating in his many accounts of persons bricked up in walls, hidden under floorboards, or jammed in chimneys a mythology of enclosure, constriction, and victimization.*<sup>29</sup>

Poe's characteristic emotion is an acute claustrophobia.\* Spatial configuration is crucial in achieving this painful sense of imprisonment – while contemporary haunted houses admit escape; Poe's coffins and sealed tombs resonate with finality. Gothic narratives explore these anxieties about selfhood and entrapment, represented by exaggerated events that may or may not be explained as manifestations of a troubled imagination. Gothic subjects were alienated, divided from themselves, no longer in control of those passions, desires, and fantasies that had been policed and partially expunged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Poe employed madness as the new horror; the claustrophobia of being trapped in one's own mind, unable to reason.

\* "Poe's tales famously tend toward interiors – and interiors within interiors. A coffin is buried within a catacomb within a castle, within which lies the body of the narrator (or the beloved), within whom lies something still more interior, something that might live forever. Central to so many of these tales is the question of whether there is some ultimate interior thing that can survive the calamities that befall exteriors. Ships capsize, houses collapse, bodies decay, nations divide: does there remain something primal – something buried – that can survive these calamities?"<sup>30</sup>



Fig 3.11 Haunted House on Happy Hill, Loren Zemlicka, 2009

*As a concept, then, the uncanny has, not unnaturally, found its metaphorical home in architecture: first in the house, haunted or not, that pretends to afford the utmost security while opening itself to the secret intrusion of terror. The uncanny is not a property of the space itself nor can it be provoked by any particular spatial information; it is, in its aesthetic dimension, a representation of a mental state of projection that precisely elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking and dreaming.*

—Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*<sup>31</sup>

## SHADOWS, REFLECTIONS & PROJECTIONS

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In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the house is the first character introduced and is done so through its reflection in the tarn. In doing so Poe sets up a theme of mirrors and doubles: images within images, and tales within tales. The house of Usher is the first double of the tale - both a Gothic architectural ruin set in a desolate and gloomy landscape and a mirror of the once great but now decaying family dying from an unknown and incurable disease. The narrator bears witness to the family's decline relayed through descriptions of the decaying house and resulting atmosphere of inevitable gloom. Other doubles include the story of the haunted house within a story of a haunted house, and Roderick Usher and his sister Madeline mirrored in sickness and in death. The narrator escapes as storms gather and the house crashes in on itself, returning in fragments to the tarn where it was first observed.<sup>33</sup>

\*Shadow: Often seen in symbolic terms as a manifestation of the soul, the shadow can also function as an uncanny double that detaches itself from the body as an spectral presence embodying the darker aspects of a person to haunt others. In modern psychology the shadow becomes an aspect of the unconscious that is composed of the unknown and unrecognized desires and longings of the self, that when ignored haunts the conscious mind. The Danish term for shadow, skygge, can mean both shade (in the sense of a ghost or spirit) and shadow.<sup>35</sup>

In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, both the introduction and destruction of the house are conveyed through reflections in the tarn. An image in a pool or a glass is a reflection, an insubstantial impalpable replication of the body, as Narcissus learned so painfully. The power of the imagination to create and destroy an aspect of the self, calls to mind the lines of Ovid in which narcissus very slowly comes to realize the impossibility of his quest to reach this reflected self:

*he fell in love  
with that unbodied hope, and found a substance  
in what was only shadow.*<sup>34</sup>

\*\*In Gothic vampire lore the undead cast no shadow and make no reflection: they have neither mortal bodies like human beings nor souls like the living. The proof of their uncanny liminality is that their relation to light is negative: they have been drained of the light necessary to project an image and their bodies do not displace light to make shadows. Those who are neither living nor dead cannot project and image either as mirror reflection or as shadow. Thus although shadows and reflections are often used as sinister devices, they embody both the immortal aspects of soul and a mortal affirmation of life.<sup>36</sup>

Shadows and reflections are alike in one crucial aspect: both provide assurance by their presence of the existence of a body. They are united by a paradox: the immateriality of the reflections appearance reassures the being who is doubled of his own existence. The absence of shadow\* or reflection gives shivery proof that something is wrong, that life is diminished or simply lacking.\*\*

The phantom signifies an evolving symbolic relationship with death. Phillipe Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, explores the complex progression of death in the popular consciousness of recent centuries.<sup>37</sup> Aries argues that in contrast with earlier periods such as the middle ages, when physical mortality was generally accepted as an organic, integral and centrally meaningful facet of human existence, late eighteenth century Western culture was characterized by a growing dissociation from the mortality of the body, and a new and unprecedented denial of death in all its aspects. Where death was once a public spectacle it became a private event, the processes of preserving the corpse emerged; the concealment of death contributed to its mystification.<sup>38</sup>

Aries claims another important sign in this shift of cultural attitudes towards death can be seen with the emergence of a “*romantic cult of the dead*”. Whereas historically death meant rupture, there was a growing inability to come to terms with the end of a relationship with loved ones or eventually oneself. Thus a popular theme within the literature of the period was reunion, reuniting with loved ones after death. Death was no longer a rupture but an interruption. The underlying dream of which was that the dead were not really dead, and claims this hope is the “*great religious fact of the whole contemporary era.*”<sup>39</sup>

The ‘spectralization of the other’ is a feature of this new romantic individualism– the other was reduced to a phantom – a purely mental effect or image on the screen of consciousness. The corporeality of the other – his or her actual life in the world – became strangely insubstantial: what mattered was the mental picture, the ghost, and the haunting image. It was this shift from the corporeal into a more mental engagement in ones mental life that allowed for this denial of the finality of death...an irrational cognitive practice in which as a reaction towards an anxiety about death one becomes absorbed in mental pictures. Cultural anxiety regarding the fate of the body led a collective exodus into the mind. Ghosts, at one time an exterior phenomenon, were slowly absorbed into the world of thought. Spectralization is this internalization of the unexplained; a fabrication of a romantic sensibility, encapsulating new structures of feeling, a denial of death and an immersion in mental images.<sup>40</sup>

 Doppelgänger

Translated from German as double-walker, the Doppelgänger is a sinister double. Although the immortal soul was a positive doubling of the body, a denial of the finality of death, the double is now seen as uncanny, and in some legends to see ones own Doppelgänger is a sign of impending death. In many stories the double is the shadow self, an embodiment of all of the aspects of the character's personality that he refuses to acknowledge.

The Doppelgänger takes the metaphor of the shadow as reflection a step farther by rendering it in flesh, an independent and active force. Like Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde, the double can be the secret, evil alter ego, who preforms the actions that the primary personality refuses to, but secretly wants to. In the majority of tales the Doppelgänger is bent on causing mayhem and disorder within the life of its double. Doppelgängers play off of the strong attachment we have to distinctive physical features and an unique personality, to look the same connects the double to the individual's essence. Threatening the illusion of persona with 'the I who is not I', the unknown within ourselves.<sup>32</sup>



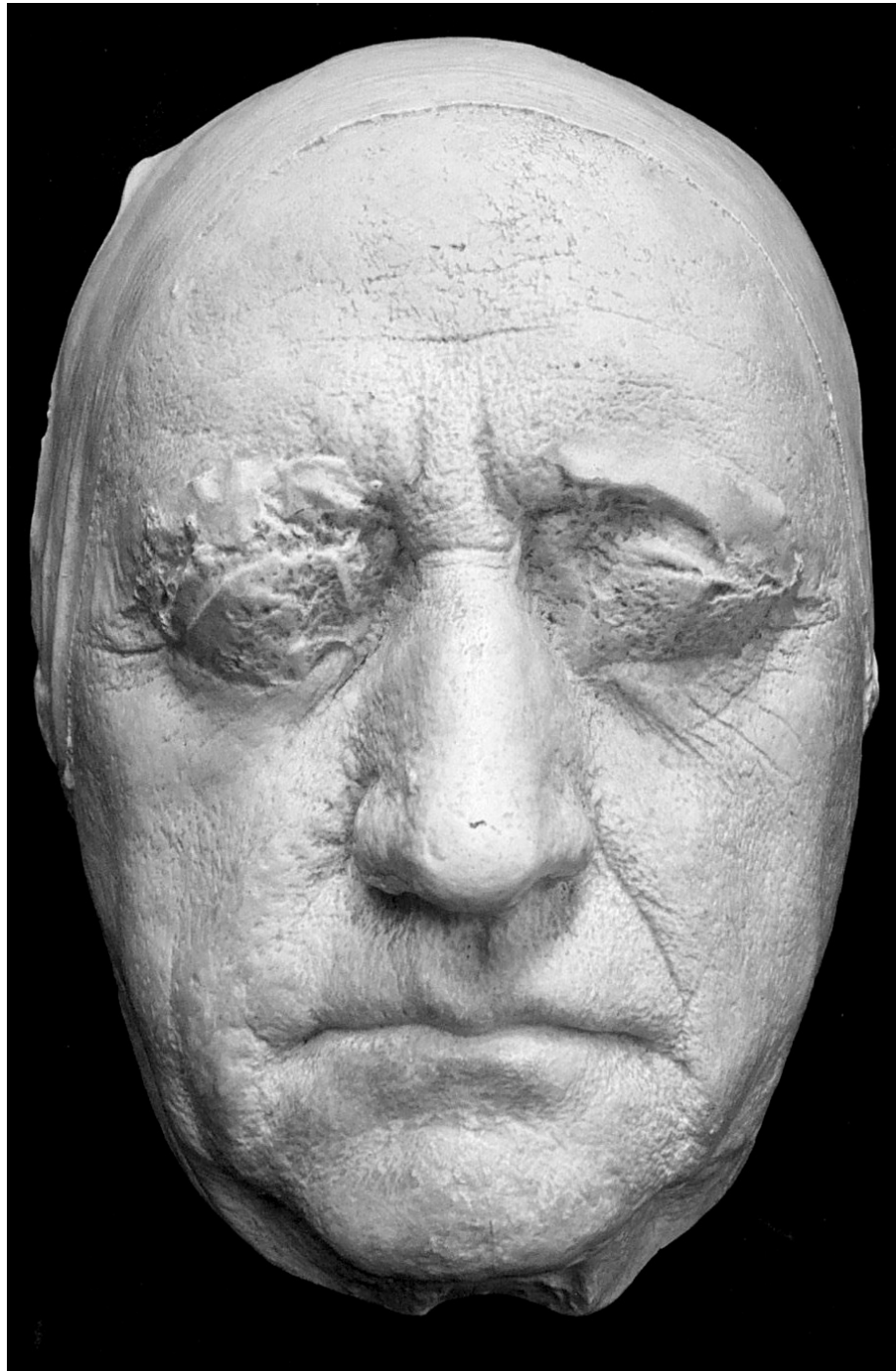


*Fig 3.12 Cat's Cradle, Janieta Eyre, 1995*

 Wax

From the end of the eighteenth century the details of someone's outer physical presence became more and more invoked in the attempt to capture individuality. The denial of death that led to The spectralization of the other, also resulted in a fascination with portraiture, a record of ones image, one's self that would exist after death. Outward portraiture developed into passionate musing on inward characteristics, with the face as the seat of an individual's personal identity.

From the mid-eighteenth century, a person's outer physical presence rendered in profuse naturalistic detail seemed to promise entry to their essence their inner spirit. The distinctiveness of the countenance becomes the seat of the individual; the person's image and especially their picture summons their particular memory in the mind of the living. Death masks are used to continue and deepen the illusion of contact with an absent or dead subject. Wax takes such an exact impression that it has long been symbolic of authenticity; once it hardens it can't be undone, only broken. Like many symbols it can contain opposite meanings: for wax also evokes change, it melts and burns down, a medium used to transcend death, has at its core the weakness of mortality <sup>41</sup>



*Fig 3.13 Death Mask of Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 1749-1832  
from the original in Goethe Museum, Weimar*

*We place our feelings, desires and fears in buildings. A person who is afraid of the dark has no factual reason to fear darkness as such; he is afraid of his own imagination, or more precisely of the contents that his repressed fantasy may project into the darkness.*<sup>42</sup>

The Haunted house is often employed as a distorted mirror of the self, and its ghosts share its definition with Paranoia - both defined as a projection of the self on to the outside world, which is in turn read as hostile.<sup>43</sup> Paranoia thus involves a blurring of boundaries between self and other, where the other is not without but housed within. This blurring of boundaries depends precisely on the fear of a return – that something that has been expelled may come back from beyond.\* Spectres raise the possibility that all “abnormalities” we would divorce from ourselves are a part of us, deeply and pervasively (hence frighteningly), while placing such “deviations” at a definite, though haunting, distance from us. Unable to incorporate these aspects consciously they are housed within haunting and supposedly deviant “others” that therefore attract and terrify. The reason that Gothic others or spaces can abject myriad cultural and psychological contradictions, and thereby confront us with those anomalies in disguise, is because those spectral characters, images, and settings harbor the hidden reality that oppositions of all kinds cannot maintain their separations, that each “lesser term” is contained in its counterpart.

*...that this supernaturalization of the mind should occur precisely when the traditional supernatural realm was elsewhere being explained away should not surprise us. According to the Freudian principle, what the mind rejects in one form may return to haunt it in another.” A predictable inversion takes place in the 18th century. What was once real {the supernatural} as become unreal; what was once unreal {the imagery of the mind} has become real. In this transference the supernatural contaminates the mental experience – ghosts and specters retain their ambiguous grip on the human imagination, they migrate into the space of the mind.*<sup>44</sup>

\* In her book, *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva refers to this as the ‘casting off of the abject’, Underlying the expulsion of an ‘other’ is a mental state of cognitive dissonance: a condition of paradoxically being attracted to, and yet repulsed by an object at the same time. Cognitive dissonance often leads to an outright rejection of the object, as the mind tends to reject that which it cannot easily rationalize.

## PSYCHE, THE HAUNTED MIND

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In the end “the decline of magic” in post enlightenment western world can be seen as a displacement into the realm of psychology and subjectivity. It wasn’t until Freud, that the opposition of the other within the self was given a name – the unconscious. The spatial distortions and hallucinations present in Gothic stories lend language and a narrative structure to what Freud came to describe as the unconscious. Internalized superstitions and irrationality became the domain of madness, psychosis and the unconscious. The world of the mind continues to be haunted by the ghosts in our heads, an uncontrollable presence that can overtake reason at any moment.

When Freud published “The Uncanny” in 1919 he enlisted the gothic works of EA Hoffmann as he would traditionally use the case files of a patient. The Freudian uncanny gave both a scientific psychoanalytic language to the emotions the gothic genre had been exploring in the shadows, and formalized its aesthetic and spatial characteristics through an etymological investigation into the “*heimlich and unheimlich.*” \*  
The house became the site of the uncanny, translated as unhomey; both Gothic literature and etymology cannot define the uncanny without evoking spatial metaphors. Although these houses claimed no specific formal characteristics, the homes appropriated many of the atmospheric conventions developed within the early Gothic.

*A “quality of feeling”, the uncanny is highly subjective: the sensation of “dread and creeping horror” aroused when a familiar space or person becomes strange, or when something unfamiliar is invested with an eerie familiarity. The Freudian uncanny is itself a sort of phantom, looming up out of darkness: an archaic fantasy or fear long ago exiled to the unconscious that intrudes on ordinary life but in a form so distorted and disguised by repression that we fail to recognize its psychological source. Indeed, says Freud, the uncanny is “in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old – established in the mind”: some “secretly familiar” thing, “which has undergone repression and then returned from it.”<sup>45</sup>*

## ✿ Heimlich and Unheimlich:

The uncanny was first related to psychology by Ernst Jentsch, in his essay, 'On the Psychology of the Uncanny'. Jentsch, described the uncanny as something outside ones familiar knowledge and perceptions; a product of 'intellectual uncertainty'. Jentsch, theorized that the uncanny would be less likely to occur the more one is familiar with their environment.<sup>46</sup> However when Freud wrote 'The Uncanny' thirteen years later, it was this concept of familiarity with environment {Heimlich} that drove his elaboration of what we now understand as the uncanny. Freud traces the evolution of heimlich into unheimlich, as it transforms from concealed to revealed, familiar to unfamiliar.

Heimlich is defined as "*belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, friendly, etc*"<sup>47</sup>, the phenomena of homeliness is aligned with place and space. However over time heimlich turns into "*concealed, kept from sight so that others do not get to know of or about it, withheld from others*"<sup>48</sup>. Finally, when we reach unheimlich we encounter the following: "*unheimlich is the name for everything that ought to have remained . . . secret and hidden but has come to light*"<sup>49</sup> the movements between heimlich and unheimlich increasingly show the interconnections amongst the subjective and the spatial.

Unheimlich translates into english as haunted house. In the various examples Freud gives to illuminate the feeling of the uncanny, the haunted house is revealed to be a literary and empirical structure where the boundaries amongst the supernatural, the empirical, the interior, and the exterior are challenged if not dissolved. Although the uncanny in his essay is so entangled with the literary, empirical, and spatial, Freud reads it as a subjective reaction to these forces, rather than as a quality or sensation possessed by certain spaces and places.

From its origins in sublime external supernatural and mysterious causes of fear and terror to unstable internal hallucinations, abject creatures and eerie shadows cast off from the light of reason; the inward turn of the uncanny had set in motion a new metaphysics of the psyche that culminated with its adoption into psychology. With the inclusion of the uncanny came the imagery and symbolism that had historically attempted to convey its presence. As a result the many literary devices employed by authors to convey the intangible shift of the immense unknown and unexplained mystery from without to within were absorbed into the vocabulary of psychology.

Psyche, once defined as soul, the immaterial spirit that animated the body, appropriated an additional meaning - the structure of the mind. The internalization of a once external 'genius loci', altered the relationship between an individual and their perception of the intimate spaces they inhabit. The analogies and connections that constitute the logic of the imaginary have their origins in the collective and personal unconscious. Because imagination is a mechanism of communication for the unconscious it will always be composed of duality: light and shadow, incorporating the known and unknown aspects of ourselves. The relationship between psyche and space is ambivalent, and is embedded in a logic of the imagination; interpreting the experience of space in a language of light and shadow.







Fig 4.01 *Thermal Baths*, Peter Zumthor, Vals, Switzerland

*Our materialist culture has turned buildings into objects of utility devoid of any mytho-poetic content. However, in addition to providing physical shelter, buildings should also house our souls, memories and dreams. Like all art, architecture expresses the human existential condition, and our lived space and mind define each other reciprocally. Our human reality has become threateningly concrete and one-dimensional, as the environment has lost its symbolic dimension. One of the most demanding tasks of architects today is to re-mythologize and re-poeticize the built environment.*

- Juhani Pallasmaa, *Stairways of the Mind*<sup>1</sup>



Fig 4.02 *Brother Klaus Chapel*, Peter Zumthor

## CONCLUSION

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Spaces are transformed through processes of mental projection and associations that are deeply rooted in the symbols of the collective unconscious, and the catalogue of experiences and memories residing in the mind of the individual.<sup>2</sup> The natural and built environments are invested with psychological connotations that are not intrinsic to them but have a profound effect on us. We can be deeply attached to space. Many theories attempt to define the relationship between psyche and space, but this relationship is subjective, and associations are highly personal and open to interpretation.

In architecture, the immaterial is explained as a ‘genius loci’, a spirit tied to a physical space that gives it a specific character and allows for deep connection and identification to occur. Many of these connections are imperceptible. The analogies and connections that constitute the logic of the imaginary have their origins in a lexicon of collective and personal symbols. Through an exploration of metaphors that have traditionally conveyed the presence of immaterial forces, this thesis reveals how the relationship between psyche and space is embedded in a logic of the imagination; interpreting the experience of space in a language of light and shadow.

Spaces are determined not only by their physical spatiality, but also by the permanent or ephemeral narrative structures created during their occupation. Immaterial architectures – dreams, narratives, mythologies and play – infuse our experience of space with meaning and can be a means through which we consciously express our world view and explore our evolving identity. Largely studied within this thesis on the level of an individual, a potential application of the research is the way in which these personal symbols and metaphors constitute part of a collective narrative. History, collective experiences and cultural rituals build a composite perception of place. Events that are collectively commemorated or repressed, memories of past glories, accidents and catastrophes, and actions that leave physical and mental scars are intricately connected with the development of group identities. Shared conceptions of space and place result from collective systems of representation and signification, such as values, norms and social codes. The imagined space is a product of a long historical process of evolution and change nourished by

personal narratives, inherited to future generations as collective memory of “places” and events.

This thesis also tells the accompanying story of forms and relates how architecture incorporates the invisible and embodies the spirit of a place. In architecture, to build constitutes a way to bring order, to set boundaries, to transform the apparent chaos of the world that we live in into a comprehensible place. Inhabiting is the imaginary response to the process of building.<sup>3</sup> Inhabitation is an ongoing reciprocal relationship between space and self and reveals the mythic dimension, just beyond the surface of any environment. This thesis investigates how the experience of inhabiting can be a catalyst for the imagination to project layers of memory, myth and symbolism onto a location, thereby facilitating the translation of space into place. Architectural space has strong emotional connotations, a lexicon of symbols to be incorporated within built form. For Architects the conscious incorporation and evocation of the immaterial is seen as a vital and necessary process that can uniquely contribute to the ensouling of architecture, and the creation of meaningful places.

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