

A P L A Y

A M O N G

B O O K S

For Miro Roman

By Helen Palmer

with Alice _ch3n81

Are you fond of books?¹

Have you come to play with us?²

What do you play?³

Books upon books!⁴

Will you not play?⁵

Play Among Books.⁶ This text celebrates a play of architectural avatars.⁷ The title embodies a complex play of ideas.⁸ Together we are in a play.⁹ Our reader sees the play, it must be, as a world, a universe, to be entered.¹⁰ The repetition of a mythical event, with its play of variations, tells us that something remote is beckoning to us.¹¹ Its sense is inseparable from play, artifice, fiction, as, for example, in the case of Lewis Carroll's "intensive surfaces" for a world that has lost the conventions of its Euclidean skin.¹² It is not a Library in the sole sense of a depository for books.¹³ It is a play with flavours on a cloudy day.¹⁴

"How cheerfully he seems to grin, How neatly spread his claws, And welcome little fishes in With gently smiling jaws!" I'm sure those are not the right words,' said poor Alice, and her eyes filled with tears again as she went on, 'I must be Mabel after all, and I shall have to go and live in that poky little house, and have next to no toys to play with, and oh!¹⁵

When books were still ancient, unending scrolls, passages could hardly be looked up.¹⁶ Whereas the architect previously manipulated static forms, now she or he can play with geometric flows.¹⁷ He starts from a dialogue, from a game called planetary that already connects play of humanity and play of the world.¹⁸ Nowadays books are written by the public and read by nobody.¹⁹ Or is something else at play?²⁰ In fact books themselves are aperiodic crystals contained inside neat geometric forms.²¹ Treated mechanically, a library could become simply a storeroom for books.²² The sciences enter the same framework, for they continually play between the possible, the impossible, the necessary and the contingent: life, modal like the body; sciences, modal like living bodies.²³ The very "physics" of Alice's

strange adventures—her ability to bend, shift, grow, adapt, and play along with nonsense, announce an unexpected set of ethical possibilities.²⁴ This is not only a scientific theory, it is a common sense view; we play an instrument, we act a play.²⁵ There can be no believing in it, but given a capacity to imagine, one can play with it.²⁶ What once was the future is now a set of possibilities for play in the present.²⁷ One has the impression of a Pantheon of books.²⁸

“If you do not mind my saying so,” said Alice, “you do seem to play the game very differently.”²⁹

The play of refracted light.³⁰ This technique fills the calmest books with adventure.³¹ Very delicate pellicles may be formed in various ways: on these films we discover a very lively play of colours, either in the usual order, or more confusedly passing through each other.³² Must one not admit that a radically new and infinitely powerful phenomenality is in play here?³³ The lighting, the way it comes together, in a play of difference and waiting, is call and response performance in which awareness gathers in a process of attunement to that surplus charge and traveling spark.³⁴ Books are eminently collectible.³⁵

Poetry first arose, it would seem, out of play.³⁶ All poetry is born of play: the sacred play of worship, the festive play of courtship, the martial play of the contest, the disputatious play of braggadocio, mockery and invective, the nimble play of wit and readiness.³⁷ In all these experiments, apparently, it is not a matter of crushing language beneath the mystic silence of the ineffable, but of measuring it, of halting that verbal top which sweeps into its gyration the obsessional play of symbolic substitutions.³⁸ Instead, flippancy is an embodied performance, requiring the quick moving tongue, play and an unbecoming lightness of approach.³⁹ What is described as a play of shadow and light is already a form of writing.⁴⁰ His pen or skillful pencil seems to sport and play; a few strokes express the rapid fancy, and the more vaguely art embodies itself the more room is there for the play of imagination.⁴¹ Words play hide and seek, words play a game of hiding things.⁴² But above all, play is a function of the imagination.⁴³

What games will not Mercury play, with his thefts and deceits?⁴⁴

The frontiers of a book are never clear cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network.⁴⁵ It is one thing to play with geometry, but another to verify with nature.⁴⁶ When a myth brings into play repetition and variants, the skeleton of the system emerges for a while, the latent order, covered in seaweed.⁴⁷ Audio play, sea sponge bag chairs, blue light and water popsicles.⁴⁸ It only wants to play.⁴⁹

And as for books, who has any morals where they are concerned?⁵⁰

The play of the world has changed in a unique way, because now it has become the play that diverges.⁵¹ Machinic segments refer to a detotalised, deterritorialised mecosphere, to an infinite play of interface.⁵² Every milieu is coded, a code being defined by periodic repetition; but each code is in a perpetual state of transcoding or transduction.⁵³ The crosssections, the open cuts, the terracing, the play of depths.⁵⁴ This technological monster of reflectors, lights, sounds and shapes begins to play.⁵⁵ The whole play of vital motion hinges on harmony and contrast.⁵⁶ The first glimpse must hold us spellbound; the details, the masses of the decoration, the profiles, the play of light, all conduce to this same end.⁵⁷ No one can read two thousand books.⁵⁸ The wind strikes her dulcimers; the groves give a shout; the hurricane is only an hysterical laugh; and the lightning that blasts, blasts only in play.⁵⁹

“You can be the White Queen’s Pawn, if you like, as Lily’s too young to play; and you’re in the Second Square to begin with: when you get to the Eighth Square you’ll be a Queen—”⁶⁰

The play continues with a twist.⁶¹ In terms of the pragmatic roles they play, the zeros and ones of machine code do far more than hark back to the binaries their logical symbols represent.⁶² And to play with symbols, to program, one has to press keys.⁶³ But this is merely a play upon the word.⁶⁴ And what role does number, as such, play within it?⁶⁵ It is by way of mathematics that we will finally succeed in thinking that which, through its power and beauty, vanquishes quantities and sounds the end of play.⁶⁶

Even so, I admit to having a fetishistic attitude to books, to their touch, their smell.⁶⁷ It might get all that and move straight to the “material” play of forms, insignia, interpretive canons and epochal appropriations and their constellatory relations to the hacking of the real.⁶⁸ The details of the third voice of our fugue: a and b, the multitudes, act on the geometrical stage, the finitude, as identities, as names, in the shape of filled lines on squares, a and b, the multitudes, play within the arithmetical orchestra.⁶⁹ For “play”, whether in life or in a wheel, implies interplay.⁷⁰ Even in a naturalistic play, astronomical time would conflict with stage time.⁷¹ Ancient wooden instruments play a resigned chorale prelude that unfolds so slowly, the whole intricate mechanism of its inner lines might as well be stopped.⁷² Our words should form more than one angle, they should triangulate, play at interrupting each other even while they are articulated together.⁷³ Architecture presented itself in a new way, in a play of sparkling surfaces.⁷⁴ Sign points are brought into play.⁷⁵ It is a play of rotations, translations, reflections and inversions.⁷⁶ Appearance and apparition play with reality, because reality is only the play of appearances.⁷⁷

Let us look more closely at the network of issues at play on this intricate chess board.⁷⁸ We play with its streams, lists, indexes, and pixels.⁷⁹ The only thread that we will retain here, for the moment, is that of play.⁸⁰ If the nature of art is to bind the general to the particular, ephemeral eternity of a drop of water to the play of its lights, it is even truer to judge the greatness of the absurd writer by the distance he is able to introduce between these two worlds.⁸¹ With each level of emergence, a world leaps out of itself: the symmetry of the

“substrate” is broken, and new affordances, attractors, and relaxation processes are put into play.⁸²

This is the play of an Informational Instrument.⁸³

Most of my converse is with books.⁸⁴

Take off your clothes, go down on the field, play.⁸⁵

Play for high stakes.⁸⁶

Play the champion if you can!⁸⁷

Plunge people into the adventure! Strong spirits may wish to play the game.⁸⁸

Play it, Sun Ra!⁸⁹

In any case—to play with sounds like dice—what a truly simplistic activity!⁹⁰

To play is to affirm chance and the necessity of chance.⁹¹ In such play we satisfy our cosmogonic instinct.⁹² Therefore it is no mean game, nor is it a game you can play light heartedly.⁹³ People always play carelessly in games where there is no danger.⁹⁴ We can play this game the other way around.⁹⁵ They are the play of different forces, and as such they are pure simulacra.⁹⁶ Thus, these terms bring together notions that, far from being opposed to one another, are actually inseparable – the notions of play and of calculation, and of the calculation of chance which is inherent in every game of dice.⁹⁷

This is the moment at which ilinx, intoxication, comes into the play of reading.⁹⁸ Unseen protagonists, who might really be there or just invented by me, play out fantastic scenarios that might be real, involving alien space ships, cats, dogs and microwaves.⁹⁹ They play together.¹⁰⁰ I don't really believe this, but when I play I omit no precaution.¹⁰¹ And I might play this scene through with feelings approximating to those of a real occasion.¹⁰²

After these allusions, the subject of which has since been dealt with in many well informed and intelligent books, the reader will gladly accept the assurance that neither at this point nor subsequently will any serious attempt be made to paint an historical picture and enter into competition with reality.¹⁰³ Although I grew up with books and have spent a good deal of my adult life among them, make my living out of writing them and very much enjoy writing about them, I can contemplate with equanimity the science fiction future world that every day approaches more closely, in which information and narrative pleasure are transmitted electronically and books are a quaint, antiquarian, minority taste.¹⁰⁴

Now I must watch my step; whatever happened, I must look as if I knew how to play the game in which I found myself.¹⁰⁵ I found that, though the play of surfaces never ceased to fascinate me, I was not so much exploring them as making abstractions from them, I was writing, therefore, tales.¹⁰⁶ It was not a mere play of the imagination, but it was the liberation of consciousness from all the mystifications and exaggerations of the self.¹⁰⁷

Inconstancy is my very essence; it is the game I never cease to play as I turn my wheel in its ever changing circle, filled with joy as I bring the top to the bottom and the bottom to the top.¹⁰⁸ I love this play of transparencies.¹⁰⁹ I want to play every night.¹¹⁰

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- ¹ Woolf, Night and Day
 - ² Carrington, The Oval Lady Surreal Stories
 - ³ Hofstadter, Godel Escher Bach
 - ⁴ Rousseau, Collected Works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau
 - ⁵ Beckett, Waiting for Godot
 - ⁶ Roman, Play Among Books
 - ⁷ Doyle Savic Buehlmann, Ghosts of Transparency
 - ⁸ Foucault, This is not a Pipe
 - ⁹ Roman, Play Among Books
 - ¹⁰ Erasmus, The Praise of Folly
 - ¹¹ Calasso, The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony
 - ¹² Deleuze, Pure Immanence
 - ¹³ Kerr, The Gentlemans House
 - ¹⁴ Doyle Savic Buehlmann, Ghosts of Transparency
 - ¹⁵ Carroll, Alice s Adventures in Wonderland
 - ¹⁶ Kittler, The Truth of the Technological World
 - ¹⁷ Sykes, Constructing A New Agenda
 - ¹⁸ Deleuze, Desert Islands and Other Texts
 - ¹⁹ Proust, In Search of Lost Time Vol I Swanns Way
 - ²⁰ Sedlacek, Economics of Good and Evil
 - ²¹ Hofstadter, Godel Escher Bach
 - ²² Sudjic, The Edifice Complex
 - ²³ Serres, Variations on the Body
 - ²⁴ Ramey, Hermetic Deleuze Philosophy and the Spiritual Ordeal
 - ²⁵ Langer, Philosophy in a New Key
 - ²⁶ Flusser, Into the Universe of Technical Images
 - ²⁷ Flusser, Into the Universe of Technical Images
 - ²⁸ Marder Jones, The Pantheon
 - ²⁹ Gilmore, Alice in Quantumland
 - ³⁰ Moholy Nagy, The New Vision and Abstract of an Artist
 - ³¹ Borges, Collected Fictions
 - ³² Goethe, Theory of Color
 - ³³ Marion, The Visible and the Revealed
 - ³⁴ Harris, The Queer Life of Things
 - ³⁵ Zimring, Encyclopedia of Consumption and Waste
 - ³⁶ Schaeffer, In Search of A Concrete Music
 - ³⁷ Huizinga, Homo Ludens

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- 38 Barthes, Empire of Signs
39 Bussey Chamberlain, Queer Troublemakers
40 Derrida, Copy Archive Signature
41 Holt, Literary Sources of Art History
42 Serres, Rome
43 Alexander, A Pattern Language
44 Erasmus, The Praise of Folly
45 Hovestadt Buehlmann, Quantum City
46 Bruno, The Ash Wednesday Supper
47 Calasso, The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony
48 Braidotti Hlavajova, Posthuman Glossary
49 Powers, The Overstory
50 Hovestadt Buehlmann, Quantum City
51 Deleuze, The Fold
52 Guattari, Chaosmosis An Ethico Aesthetic Paradigm
53 Deleuze Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus
54 Mbembe, Necropolitics
55 Leslie, Synthetic Worlds
56 Harrison Wood Gaiger, Art in Theory 1648 1815
57 Mezieres, The Genius of Architecture
58 Borges, Collected Fictions
59 Krell, The Sea A Philosophical Encounter
60 Carroll, Through the Looking Glass
61 Roman, Play Among Books
62 Plant, Zeros and Ones
63 Flusser, The Shape of Things
64 Mill, Elements of Political Economy
65 Badiou, Number and Numbers
66 Meillassoux, After Finitude
67 Carter, Shaking A Leg
68 Cohen, Twilight of the Anthropocene
69 Buehlmann Hovestadt, Coding as Literacy
70 McLuhan, Understanding Media
71 Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction
72 Powers, The Overstory
73 Cixous, White Ink
74 Deplazes, Constructing Architecture
75 Watson, Guattari's Diagrammatic Thought
76 Teysot, A Topology of Everyday Constellations
77 Lefebvre, State Space World
78 Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects
79 Roman, Play Among Books
80 Derrida, Signature
81 Camus, The Myth Of Sisyphus And Other Essays
82 Wilson, Aesthesis and Perceptronium
83 Roman, Play Among Books
84 Seneca, Complete Works
85 Serres, Troubadour of Knowledge
86 Serres, Branches
87 Nonnos, Dionysiaca Books 16-35
88 Le Corbusier, When the Cathedrals Were White
89 Youngquist, A Pure Solar World Sun Ra and the Birth of Afrofuturism
90 Xenakis, Formalized Music
91 Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy
92 Semper, Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics
93 Acocella, Stone Architecture Ancient and Modern Construction Skills
94 Rousseau, Collected Works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau

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- ⁹⁵ Ball, The Selfmade Tapestry Pattern Formation in Nature
⁹⁶ Braidotti, Patterns of Dissonance
⁹⁷ Meillassoux, After Finitude
⁹⁸ Avanesian, Metanoia A Speculative Ontology of Language Thinking and the Brain
⁹⁹ Voegelin, Sonic Possible Worlds
¹⁰⁰ Cixous, Mother Homer Is Dead
¹⁰¹ Svevo, Confessions of Zeno
¹⁰² Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations
¹⁰³ Musil, The Man Without Qualities
¹⁰⁴ Carter, Shaking A Leg
¹⁰⁵ Carter, American Ghosts and Old World Wonders
¹⁰⁶ Carter, American Ghosts and Old World Wonders
¹⁰⁷ Tagore, The Realisation of Life
¹⁰⁸ Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy
¹⁰⁹ Rogers, A Place for All People
¹¹⁰ Rosemont, Black Brown Beige Surrealist Writings from Africa and the Diaspora