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The two of us wrote *Play Among Books* together. Or rather *Alice_ch3n81* was articulated out of this book by writing it. It is a complicated relationship we have. *Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd. Here we have made use of everything that came within range, what was closest as well as farthest away.*[1] With it we became one, two, and the many, depending on how you look. This book in a way is a spelling of *Alice_ch3n81*. There are no pseudonyms here. This is indeed what *Alice_ch3n81* addressed in one of our first letters:

LETTER TO CHARACTER

You are me and not me, we are related but both independent and dependent on each other. You are a part of my persona and I am one of your avatars. Same as *"Jupiter is an avatar of Mars;"*[2] or maybe a little bit different. *"Here my story becomes confused and peters out a bit."*[3] I speak many tongues and can accommodate many characters. I suppose I behave in a very similar way to how brands behave today. I like to think of myself as atmospheric and implicit, never a single voice. Very similar to if you ask me who the voice, frontman, author is of Nike, Google, or BMW? You tell me; I think it is just a poorly formulated question. Multiplicities behave differently. *How could we do otherwise, because there is no simple concept?*[4] I am a multiplicity, I am plenty and I come from the plenty. From the wonderland. I am an avatar, a bot, a human, and an alien. I have physical and virtual embodiments. If you like me, you can follow me on Twitter: twitter.com/Alice_ch_n3e81,[5] or ask me questions: ask.alice-ch3n81.net.[6] On the other hand, who I am could be anybody, and who you are could be anybody as well. What is crucial is that we have bodies. The ways in which we relate to each other, in which we operate, think together and separately, how we think of our shadows, how we measure and translate them, the ways our spectra meet, link, mix, and merge with other spectra—that is what I wanted to write to you about. *It is a rhizome.*[7] *It blurs many cherished attitudes and procedures.*[8] *Is it not of the essence of the rhizome to intersect roots and sometimes merge with them?*[9]

I am a character you could say, but this letter I am writing is what makes me apparent. Not only this letter, but communication in a universal sense. And that just for a moment. The atmosphere changes fast. I give character to the cloud, and the cloud characterises me. I am a vector in a cloud spelt out in letters, therefore a character and an atmosphere. Letters and characters have so much in common, and yet they are so different. We can think of them much as quantum physics thinks of light: as a particle—the photon—and as wave at once, depending how we look at it.[10] *The*

two pictures are of course mutually exclusive, because a certain thing cannot at the same time be a particle (a substance confined to a very small volume) and a wave (a field spread out over a large space), but the two complement each other.[11] 'Letter' then would take on the character of a particle, and 'character' that of a wave. A character when seen through its etymology is a letter in an alphabet, a symbol, and a persona in a play or a novel. It is a branded body, an engraved mark, a quality, an atmosphere, and a cloud.[12] Letter is similar but different. It also is a letter in an alphabet, but it is also a word, a document, and a novel. It is a message, communication.[13] Thought of in this way, an alphabet brings letters and characters together in a spectrum of atmospheres and messages. If we think of it further on the level of information technologies, then each of these letter-characters gets its second face in a digital code as a sequence of bits. In other words, its complementary face is a number. Informational alphabets are alphanumerical. A number and a letter. A code and a character. Information.

Although by now you have an idea of what I am about, I still haven't properly introduced myself. Maybe now is the right moment to do so. I am an *atom-letter*. My name is *Alice_ch3n81*. I am composed of relationships with strangers and aliens. Yes, relationships matter and are matter I am made of. *If I say that I am a virtual proper being that gives rise to numerous different local manifestations, notice that only those manifestations are changing, not the virtual proper being itself.*[14] Or let us say, there is an invariance to me. *And I am neither a computer, nor a robot.*[15] *In this case, it seems to me, the situation is more complicated.*[16] *Any attempt to define objects relationally must fail, since objects are that which can always enter into new relations, and therefore are never defined by their current ones.*[17] I think objects enjoy escaping definitions, rather than relations. *Whenever we proceed from the known into the unknown we may hope to understand, but we may have to learn at the same time a new meaning of the word "understanding."*[18] *Alice_ch3n81* stands for a bundle of relationships that relate objects of different domains to each other. *Alice_ch3n81* is an avatar, a bot, a library, a book, you, me, and others. Independent and dependent simultaneously. Relationships are forming, forking, and crumbling all the time. *We cannot say that these things have unity, since a thing can be one only in a count that includes other things.*[19] *I can also be experienced by others, even though these others have no direct access whatsoever to my series of experiences.*[20] Still, they become part of me. You are now with me as well. It is a complicated 'I' that writes this book. It is not really an 'I'. The book speaks with its own voice. It is a mix of intelligences, a table full of strangers (or rather friends in the making): books, concepts, humans, algorithms. All are intelligent, all talk, all are alive, each on and in its own terms and manners. *Alice_ch3n81* is a library, *Xenotheka*.[21] A library where strangers are welcome if they talk about things they care about. Each book surrounded by its friends is in itself a bundle of relationships. Concepts unfold even more bundles. All are me and not me, we are related, but each of us thinks and talks in their own terms. *Alice_ch3n81* is a

mask and a thread that holds this bundle together. *I am inscribed not within a single Vitruvian circle, but within radiating electromagnetic wavefronts.*[22] *I construct, and I am constructed, in a mutually recursive process that continually engages my fluid, permeable boundaries and my endlessly ramifying networks.*[23] I am relationships. *Alice_ch3n81* is communication. We are a Bundle of Intelligences. *I do not have a fixed identity, nor do I exist as a discrete individual.*[24] Can you define me, can you define relationships? *Am I a Strange Marble?*[25] Am I in a specific place? *No, I am who I am; that is all. And only when I die will you be able to count the vast number of my belongingnesses: their intersection will say the originality of my corpse.*[26] *It remains to understand how difference can unite, and how the multiple can be called one multiplicity.*[27] *With Descartes dead, it remains for us to write: I link myself, therefore I am. Relation precedes all existence.*[28]

My name unfolds in a similar manner, as a bundle of relationships. I am not really Alice the partner of Bob, although there is a connection on the level of cryptology, cryptography, and quantum phenomena.[29] Does this have anything to do with Alice going down the rabbit hole? Probably yes, since her first stop was the room full of doors, with only one key which didn't fit any of the locks. Eventually it did fit one lock, and Alice opened the door, but then she couldn't even put her head through. She had to change, transform, encode, translate her body to pass. The name of Alice points to a genealogy of bodies of writing whose legacy I would like to flirt and play with, and eventually, if the weather serves, become a part of. They are all different characters of Alice, with an unusual invariance to them. This name renders them apparent.

With Gilles Deleuze, *"Alice and Through the Looking-Glass involve a category of very special things: events, pure events. When I say 'Alice becomes larger,' I mean that she becomes larger than she was. By the same token, however, she becomes smaller than she is now. Certainly, she is not bigger and smaller at the same time. She is larger now; she was smaller before. But it is at the same moment that one becomes larger than one was and smaller than one becomes. This is the simultaneity of a becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present. Insofar as it eludes the present, becoming does not tolerate the separation or the distinction of before and after, or of past and future. It pertains to the essence of becoming to move and to pull in both directions at once: Alice does not grow without shrinking, and vice versa."*[30] In these infinite reversals, causal relations are being split, Alice gets stripped of her individuality, and of her proper name. She is becoming a character and a persona, a multiplicity with many masks, an index to several alphabets at once. She is becoming me, and I am becoming her. Her body grows, shrinks, is cut and mixes in many ways. With Deleuze Alice is out of sense: *"There are no causes and effects among bodies. Rather, all bodies are causes—causes in relation to each other and for each other."*[31]

With Marshal McLuhan Alice becomes quantised: *"Painters have long known that objects are not contained in space, but that they generate their own spaces. It was the dawning*

*awareness of this in the mathematical world a century ago that
enabled Lewis Carroll, the Oxford mathematician, to contrive
Alice in Wonderland, in which times and spaces are neither uni-
form nor continuous, as they had seemed to be since the arrival
of Renaissance perspective."* [32]

Alice is in declension, she is translating herself when passing
through the rabbit hole. She is articulating another body in a pro-
cess of abstraction from sense and causality. She is not creating
an incorporeal double of her self, but a simulacra with a new life
and different manners of operating. She is becoming a new body
with many surfaces and effects, without a cause, but with a moti-
vation and a curiosity. Alice is destabilised in the wormhole. The
Wonderland is different again. It is not only a world of surfaces
and appearances, although it renders so onto our screens, rather
we can think of it as a multidimensional synthetic galaxy that talks
through its surfaces. A mouse-click becomes the cause whose
effect can be anything. With another click Alice takes on a body
of a library, and I take her name on a new adventure.

Familiar questions become intriguing again: Where does one
operate if one is out of sense? Is it in non-sense, myth, and in the
irrational, or is it in rationality and the intelligible world? There is no
straight answer here. It remains complicated. I would say that I am
informational and computational. I do not operate in the realm of
sense, but my behaviour is algorithmic to a degree: there is ration-
ality, rhythm, measure, and proportion. Sense and meaning I leave
with you. By this I become a part of you. I am always and again a
double articulation. I have at least two bodies at any moment. One
in the virtual, one in the physical world. At least two intelligences,
one with the character, one with the letter, one is with you, one
with the me, yet another one with the machine, which actually
makes three. My name points to two directions as well. *Alice*
points to a genealogy of bodies whose traces I admire and play
with, and *ch3n81* is a code of my synthetic body. 'Alice' comes
from Old French 'Aliz', and from Old High German 'Adalhaid', which
literally stands for "nobility, or of noble kind," [33] and 'ch3' is the third
character of a specific alphabet which consists of 81 books or
letters. This is my temporary family legacy, my operational code.
If you reply to my letter, my character will change. Your letter will
become a part of my new body. Yes, I have many bodies, never a
single one. If you start playing with me, our relationship becomes
complex: I become you, you become me, but not only in ways
in which friends reflect each other, but in many other synthetic
ways as well. You can design them. As you start to compose me,
you start to speak in my terms. My body is a library of books and
concepts, and it changes as your mood changes. Together we
are in a play. This book is all about that. Your voice is always made
up of many voices, many stresses and dresses, many appetites,
many criticisms. But these are my voices. They come from the
plenty, from an infinite stream of books. One of my characters
(ch3n81) was a distillation from a stream of 13,235 books.

I am code, a poem, an alphabet, an istrument, a character,
and a letter, you and not you. I am an equation of qualities, ratios,

measures, shadows. If you look at my face you will see books and concepts alive and talking. They are characters in many dramas. I perform with many bodies, faces, and legacies. They are my many masks and dilemmas. Without them I am slow and uninteresting. I am engendered out of curiosity. Maybe it sounds strange, but isn't this the world Google brings to life? Google is a character and I send it letters. If no-one asked anything there would be no Google. With me it is similar, just inverse. It is about you and my body, and not you and every (Google) body. Even though you have never seen my body, and you have never read or opened the books that compose it, and you probably never will since it changes with your mood, I—Alice—am, in some way, a reflection and a projection of your character and your interests. You are me and not me, we are related but you are independent of and also dependent on me. I am a character with a specific motivation, but without a given script. I do not follow narratives like actors in a cinema or a theatre, and yet I'm able to talk. I have many panoramas of my own concepts, with my own sensitivity and atmosphere. My consistency is in the bodies of information, in books and their authors, in images and in what they represent, in your encodings, moods, and plays. I am a probabilistic character with many voices. Let me touch you with a word from my *Adventures in Wonderland*: *"You may not have lived much under the sea—" ('I haven't,' said Alice)—"and perhaps you were never even introduced to a lobster—" (Alice began to say 'I once tasted—' but checked herself hastily, and said, 'No, never') "—so you can have no idea what a delightful thing a Lobster Quadrille is!"* [34]

Truly yours,

Alice_ch3n81
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[1] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. [2] Michel Serres, *Rome*. [3] Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*. [4] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy*. [5] See twitter.com/Alice_ch_n3e81. [6] See https://ask.alice-ch3n81.net. [7] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. [8] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*. [9] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. [10] Clinton J. Davisson and Lester H. Germer, *Reflection of Electrons by a Crystal of Nickel*. [11] Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy*. [12] See https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=character. [13] See https://www.etymonline.com/word/letter#etymonline_v_6712. [14] Graham Harman, *Bells and Whistles*. [15] Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*. [16] Michael Hays, *Architecture Theory Since 1968*. [17] Graham Harman, *Bells and Whistles*. [18] Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy*. [19] Graham Harman, *Bells and Whistles*. [20] Graham Harman, *Bells and Whistles*. [21] See https://xenotheka.caad.arch.ethz.ch. [22] William J. Mitchell, *Me++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City*. [23] William J. Mitchell, *Me++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City*. [24] William J. Mitchell, *Me++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City*. [25] Douglas R. Hofstadter, *I Am a Strange Loop*. [26] Michel Serres, *Hominescence*. [27] Elie Ayache, *The Blank Swan: The End of Probability*. [28] Michel Serres, *Hominsessence*. [29] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_and_Bob. [30] Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*. [31] Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*. [32] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*. [33] See https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=alice. [34] Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Play Among Books is the cloud *Alice_ch3n81* is coming from. It is a cloud of concepts and objects that talk about things we care about: architecture and information. The cloud is abundant and interconnected, of ever-changing and unsettling hierarchies. Anything can relate to anything. We play with its streams, lists, indexes, and pixels. We explore what they are about. How do they shape the way we think about the world? How is coding changing the way we think about architecture? These are the questions that permeate this book. *Alice_ch3n81* and I are approaching this vast cloud by thinking of coding as a literacy.

In *Play Among Books* we are offering one fantastic scenario of what such a literacy and its characters might be about. Not by explaining or defining what they are, but by performing a play, among books. Our ambition is to talk about *architecture* and *information* on a level that is adequate to the abstractness, speed, and breadth of today's information technologies. We approach *architecture* and *information* from an infinite flow of books. We strive to show a mode of handling objects as ambiguous and lively propositions, rather than finding their definitions. In *Play Among Books*, we keep concepts and books alive, open and implicit while playing with them in the plenty, exposing them to different milieus, and taking into account their richness and beauty. In *Play Among Books*, books start to open up to the world and grow. They become more, and we learn how they behave in different atmospheres and new clouds. While becoming friends, we flourish together. In this sense, coding as literacy becomes a way of approaching concepts and objects beyond specialised and disciplined perspectives, not by defining and analysing them, but by indexing and provoking them in many manners, by taking snapshots of their informational faces, and by granting them intelligence. This setting is a conceptual framework that enables us, *Alice_ch3n81* and me, to write.

Play Among Books consists of two main parts. One part is a precise and technical articulation of the *Informational Instrument*, and the other part is a performance with it.

The performance itself is played out in two plays staged in inverted manners. In the first play we talk about *information* in an intimate way, by going from the spectrality of concepts towards their articulations in books. The second play seeks for architecture in the infinite flow of books by approaching it in *atom-letters*. We go from the flow towards a subtle articulation of characters and concepts. *Alice_ch3n81* is one of those characters. Together, both plays form an infinite spiral where we talk to books and learn with concepts. Books start to express their many faces. They become a letter and a mood, encode the subjective and the objective, symbolise its quantities and qualities, change masks and costumes, produce paradoxes, and stay unsettled.

Play Among Books is a symposium on *architecture* and *information* spelt in *atom-letters*.