Guildford and Lewis Carroll
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Guildford is not far from where I grew up in a rather uninteresting dormitory town called Orpington. The adults commuted to work in the city centre, there were lots of children and schools, and the most exciting addition during my teenage years was the construction of a multi-storey car park. We had never seen so much concrete and modern architecture!

As an annual treat we went up to London by train to see a Christmas show, and more often travelled by car in the other direction down to the seaside. So I never undertook the 50 kilometre journey to Guildford, even though Lewis Carroll, the author of *Alice in Wonderland*, is buried there. Our local hero was Charles Darwin, born in 1809, and we made regular pilgrimages to his house and gardens nearby to inspect the lawn where he observed earthworms pulling leaves into their holes to keep out the cold English weather. This culminated in his book in 1881 about the habits of worms. Lewis Carroll also grew up in rural England in the 19th century – he was younger than Darwin and born in 1832. He and his many sisters were based in the North of England. They were the Dodgson family – Lewis Carroll was Charles Dodgson's pen name. He is reputed to have spent his time in the garden also playing with earthworms, which he provided with small pieces of pipe to use in warfare, if they were so inclined. Later he moved to Oxford to study mathematics, where he remained for the rest of his life conducting research and teaching at the ancient college of Christ Church, while his sisters moved to Guildford.

So it is not surprising that when I became interested in Lewis Carroll and visited the library at Christ Church in Oxford to find out more about him, my first idea was to look for a relationship between Charles Darwin and his clever animals and Alice in Wonderland with its population of cheeky rabbits and talking mice. After all, not everyone has grown up with Darwin at the bottom of their garden. I looked around at the books about the Alice books reaching up to the ceiling all around the room and realised that I was not the only person who had been puzzled by Alice's adventures. Even Wittgenstein had written about them. However, there was not much about Darwin and human evolution in these interpretations. Lewis Carroll, who was also a brilliant photographer, had contacted Darwin in 1872 to offer him a photograph to include in a study of human expressions, but this did not seem of much relevance to the Alice books.

Instead, I came across all sorts of other figures from the 19th century and earlier periods of history, not just British ones but such memorable people as Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States as of 1861. His short presidency came to an abrupt end with his assassination in 1865, the same year that *Alice in Wonderland* was published. From my reading I learnt that the illustration of the Cheshire Cat grinning at Alice from the branches of a tree was probably based on a similar image of Abraham Lincoln as a raccoon – in German, ein Waschbär –up a tree, both drawn by the caricaturist Sir John Tenniel, one drawing for Wonderland and the other for a popular magazine devoted to political satire entitled "Punch". You can see my version of this image of Abraham Lincoln in my picture in this exhibition "Humpty Dumpty's Dream".

My drawings like the one in this show and in the catalogue *Wonderland.Wunderland* give expression to my own journey, following in the footsteps of Alice and Lewis Carroll. Connections are drawn between one topic, person or image and another, in an attempt to identify themes that were in the popular imagination at the time and which Lewis Carroll was known to be interested in. My pictures include my versions of illustrations from the Alice books, both *Wonderland* and the second book *Through the Looking-Glass* dating from 1871, but also images inspired by the paintings of the time, including the fairies that were all the rage, and newspaper cartoons.

My interest as an artist is in these labyrinthian pathways that I have wandered along in Wonderland and Mirrorland. Taken together as a whole composition, they amount to a kind of research landscape, or research-scape. Some interconnections are clearly marked as definite lines, while others are dotted and dashed to convey the difficulty of pinning down the discoveries. It is as if to say: unless Lewis Carroll rises from his grave in Guildford, we will never be quite sure what he was talking about.

The short film you are about to see is about one of these finds, in the person of John Dee and his mirror or looking-glass. There were caricatures of him raising people from the dead in the 19th century. However, the mathematician John Dee came from a past era of British history and is famous for advising Queen Elizabeth the First by making astrological predictions and for being the first to use the term “British Empire”.

I made this film for the *Through the Looking Glass Sesquicentenary Conference* that celebrated one hundred and fifty years since the publication of the second Alice book and was organized by the University of York. My contribution was just one of many new ideas about Lewis Carroll’s idea of a mirror in which Alice sees the room she is standing in, but in reverse, and then passes through the glass to a world in which everything is the wrong way around. One idea that caught my imagination was that this is also true of analogue photography such as the collodion process used by Lewis Carroll, which was invented in 1850. After Carroll had exposed a glass plate coated with collodium to a motif in the real world, he was able to develop it using appropriate chemicals in a dust-free environment and suddenly, a reverse image of the motif would appear, as if by magic. In an era when so many technological inventions were offering such new weird experiences, there was a renewed interest in esoteric magical effects. Anything seemed possible and the borderline between science and superstition was not as clearly demarcated as it is today.

The film makes use of the magical potential of a modern film-editing programme. I would like to thank Mike Schlömer for exploring with me these digital possibilities. I think that Lewis Carroll, who was always the first to experiment with the latest tricks, would have enjoyed the mysterious transitions made possible by the digital revolution. Indeed, the fact that you can all see me today in a digital looking-glass is remarkable. At the touch of a button I can vanish from the screen and make way for my film, Dee and Carroll’s Smoking Mirrors. So: goodbye!