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Game - Falling - JCRT 1.3
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'I'm rather alarmed at the idea that thinking might end up being like the destructive seizure that had St Paul falling off his horse. In the same way that a sudden gust of wind and the pitching of a boat can send us sprawling across the deck. A slap in the face, a sharp, heavy blow, exactly applied, which makes the body unsettled, makes it lose its balance, and draws our attention to the proximity of death.'

'And at that point something other begins.' (Serres 1995: 33)

St Paul's fall is such a shocking experience that we use the expression 'road to Damascus experience' to identify those unanticipated life-changing events which, in drawing our attention to death, reawaken us to life. It is not something that we anticipate in the everyday. Catherine Cl'ment opens her book of falls, *Syncope: The Philosophy of Rapture*, with the example of epilepsy, a fall as dramatic as St Paul's, but one, in its fearfulness, possibly closer to home. Epilepsy is a fainting and falling that, long ago, was regarded as a divine experience: one fell, the prey of a god or spirits, and emerged, a new person (Cl'ment 1994: 1-11). And the sacred associations still attach to this experience, despite the rationalist repressions of a secular order. Living from day to day without knowing when the next fit will take them, epileptics must daily experience a frightening passivity that intimates the awesome and dreadful workings of the divine in our lives.

Vertigo

By Caravaggio - Self-scanned, Public Domain, Link

Magical Falling

Involuntary Memory

3. The fallings of saints and epileptics, mystics and shamans are extraordinary religious occurrences. But perhaps what is most shocking about them is the recognition of the extraordinary in the ordinary they can summons in us. For there are elements of *these* falls in everyday experiences. Falling is, in fact, ubiquitous. We fall in love, and out of love; lovers fall for each other, fall into each other's arms; life has its ups and downs, highs and lows; we fall from grace; we fall out of favour; we get a sinking feeling; we have fallings out; we fall to sleep; we fall apart; in depression or breakdown, we hit rock bottom; we have dreams of falling in which the ground is anticipated but never hit; like Alice, we fall down rabbit-holes. 'We'll go riding on the horses' Way up in the sky ' And if you fall, I'll pick you up, I'll pick you up' goes the popular song; banalities of falling are so pervasive that they become invisible, and we no longer experience the sacred trace. By focussing on dramatic falls - the stories of some rapturous, vertiginous, spell-binding falls - I hope to bring to life the spiritual and creative significance ('at that point something other begins') of apparently ordinary fallings. And, most importantly, I want to draw out the ways in which experiences of falling allow us to experience *life in-between*.

4. Without denying the specificity of different experiences of falling, I want to suggest that falling has a distinctive potential for in-betweenness. In the most obvious sense, falling implies movement and process for it is a liminal or pre-positional state: we fall from, for, into, out of, to, towards; we fall free of positions, but under the sway of relations between positions. Think about gravity in this regard. Gravity's physical effects are felt in moral and emotional falls, as they are in the dropping into heaviness of sleep. We *do* fall, even when we're only falling from our pedestals: we lose our stomach, our head spins, our heart skips a beat, our breath is taken away. To gravitate: 'to move or be attracted to some source of influence'. Gravitation: 'a force of attraction between any particle of matter in the universe and any other'. Gravity: 'the force that attracts a body to the centre of the earth or other celestial body' (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Drawing us into the relation between all particles, gravity is a universal force bigger than us, which highlights both the passivity of falling, a key characteristic of in-betweenness, and the experience of universal interconnectedness.
5. But of course we don't just fall, for what we loosely call gravity is always a balance of forces working in all directions. We usually hit earth when we fall only because its force is greater than that which would have us fall to the moon. In the universe of modern physics every fall is a rise, and every rise, a fall. Likewise, we fall to sleep and we wake up. The sun sets and rises; day becomes night, night becomes day, and the setting in one place is the rising in another. Tides rise and fall. Our chest rises and falls. Flocks of birds sweep up and down. The seasons turn around, spring and fall, and the new shoots make their way through the fallen autumn leaves of the chestnut trees. Life's rhythms are marked by risings and fallings, ups and downs, or, as Virginia Woolf says, 'the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again' (1977: 200).

In love everything changes, and continues changing all the time. There is no 'stopped clock of the heart in which the moment of happiness holds forever, but only the constant whirring forward motion of desire and need, rising and falling, falling and rising (Williams 1997: 152)

6. Falling and rising are implicated in each other, in a betweenness at the very heart of life, of death-and-life. For an everyday example of this, consider what happens when we fall to sleep: aware of our sinking weight, do we not also feel a lightness in our body, a rising sensation as we let go into heaviness? St Paul's fall, too, is a falling and rising. A rapturous fall into connection with or towards God, it is thus a fall in which he rises.
7. St Teresa, one of the most famous subjects of rapturous falls, lays the emphasis on elevation and flight, but it is possible to feel the rising-falling, falling-rising of rapture in her descriptions of the experience: 'Rapture is, as a rule, irresistible. Before you can be warned by a thought or help yourself in any way, it comes as a quick and violent shock; you see and feel this cloud, or this powerful eagle rising and bearing you up on its wings' (Teresa of Avila 1989: 136). Like Michel Serres describing St Paul's 'seizure', Teresa highlights the falling quality in the involuntary 'irresistible' shock of her experience. But this rapturous fall involves a rising, a 'bearing up on wings' and, in turn, the experience of being carried up has a falling *feel* to it. You can feel this too in the movement in Bernini's statue of St Teresa: elevated on a cloud, between heaven and earth, St Teresa is falling-rising into God's arms. (In all falls do we fall into God's arms, called, like Christian saints?)
8. Rising and falling not only work in cyclical patterns, one following the other, but also, come together simultaneously, in the moment, in a single movement that, we could say, is doubled.

What do I mean when I say that I have my head in the clouds? ' As I begin to feel lighter than air, I also abandon myself to gravity. The further up my reverie takes me, the closer I am to making a connection '. The quieter it gets, up there where only the birds and the wind can perform their acrobatics, the stronger the pull towards my inner depths becomes. (Leontini 1998: 23-4)

9. One of my central concerns is then with the reversibilities of falling and rising, and the ways in which these give an in-between quality to experiences of falling.
10. *Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'* (The Bible, Acts 9)
11. When St Paul falls, he falls off his horse, and falling off a horse is a terrifying experience. Thrown, upside down, the world swims in that moment before you hit the ground, fortunate to have avoided a trampling. This is brought home in Caravaggio's 'The conversion of St Paul': the blinded vulnerable body, prostrate, under the horse, close to being trampled, with arms upstretched and hands and fingers that we can almost feel; the foreboding play of light and dark, light on an unseeing face, watched by the horse's dark eye; the viscosity in the mixing of human and horse limbs and the raised white fore-leg of the horse. What we feel in this painting is the terror of vertigo in the falling *and* hitting the ground.
12. Gaston Bachelard remarks that 'only a few rare individuals have had pleasant experiences with vertigo' (1988: 106). The experience of epilepsy that Clément describes in the opening of *Syncope* is not pleasant: 'First, the head spins, overcome with a slight vertigo' the spinning goes wild ' the earth gives way ' a "cerebral eclipse" so similar to death " (1994: 1). In this experience the earth gives way, in the moment before hitting the ground: part of the terror is of the earth both being there and not (being on a bolting horse once, I both wished I could fall to the ground and dreaded it). However, we can be drawn to terrifying experiences because of the possibilities of thrill or bliss they hold out. Looking again at Caravaggio's Paul, I see that he is sexually ecstatic: receptive, open, with outstretched arms and legs, head slightly tilted back and eyes closed. Much like Bernini's statues of St Teresa and the Blessed Ludovica with their shafts of light on eyes closing in bliss. St Teresa's own descriptions are of an experience simultaneously shocking and blissful, and Bernini's Ludovica is at the point of death in *her* ecstasy. As Serres puts it 'Death, which is certain, is what renders life' ecstatic. The peaks of mountains are sometimes very narrow, and make it hard to stand upright for long.' (1995: 224).
13. There are, then, intimations of death in rapturous experiences. But these moments of death are also moments of life, of transformation. St Paul's story is, after all, one of conversion, and some sources entitle the Caravaggio painting 'The fall and conversion of St Paul'. 'And at that point something other begins', Saul becomes Paul. Falls are not one-sided, for the quality of any particular fall depends on how the element of rising up again, being reborn, is lived. In 'pleasant' experiences of vertigo, 'a kind of unconditioned ascent and an awareness of a heretofore unknown sense of lightness begins' (Bachelard 1988: 106). Teresa describes it like this:

Very often they seemed to leave my body as light as if it had lost all its weight, and sometimes so light that I hardly knew whether my feet were touching the ground. But during the rapture itself, the body is very often like a corpse (1989: 142)

14. On the other hand, the possibility of falling is essential to any ecstatic experience of ascent, as, for example, the rider knows when living with an awareness of the possibility of a mortal fall. It is there also in more everyday and prosaic risk taking activities: drug-taking, gambling, motor-bike riding, skiing, shop-lifting or making a pass at someone.

Saul arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. ...

And ... something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. (Acts 9)

15. How does the duality of falling and rising work in St Paul's fall? A rising element precedes and precipitates the fall: 'suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him' (Acts 9). St Paul falls-rises towards that light as he falls into a state of heaviness, darkness. He rises blind, and three days later scales *fall* from his eyes. Caravaggio's St Paul highlights the simultaneity in this rising and falling: Paul is grounded, heavy, *and* his arms, hands, outstretch, reach up, open towards heaven. He embodies the double destinies of height and depth, lightness and heaviness, even in this moment on the ground, a doubling which accounts perhaps for the ecstasy of such falls. The at-onceness of this is further accentuated by the chiaroscuro: Paul, blinded, in the dark, on the ground, is in relief, in light, against a dark ground, the sky. Even the horse is black and white, overlain then with shadings of light and dark. So, at what point would we say that Paul 'saw the light'? With the falling scales, the flash of light, when blinded in the dark-light, when he arose and his eyes were opened and could see nothing, on hearing a voice calling him? What this image points to then is a state of suspension.
16. Anthropologist, Roger Caillois says that 'The tightrope walker only succeeds if he is hypnotized by the rope, the acrobat only if he is sure enough of himself to rely upon vertigo instead of trying to resist it' (1962: 138). This notion of being in-relation with vertigo helps temper any tendency to privilege a rising element in the dialectics of falls, or to grasp at resurrection rather than having the capacity to hold a falling, to will oneself to rise again, out of a depression for example. Caillois would seem to be proposing a rapturous relation with vertigo itself, 'controlling it' by 'obeying it'. Taking up the spirit of vertigo, or falling for falling. If you attempt to cling on and resist vertigo, you fall: by allowing yourself to fall you avoid falling and retain the suspension of a rising and falling. In other words, to surrender, as Caravaggio's Paul does, is to maintain and live the tension of dark and light, rising and falling. Falling, in this fullest sense of surrender, is an in-betweenness.
17. Michel Tournier's 'The Fetishist' can be read as a story of falling. If, that is, we understand falling to be the effect of forces of attraction, or as a matter of being called by a god or spirits. For this is precisely what fetishism involves.
18. 'The Fetishist' is a story about the magic of clothes and the transformations effected by fetishistic representations of the self - 'the image affecting what it is an image of' (Taussig 1993: 1-8). And fetishistic they are, these banal everyday objects that are clothes and shoes, fetishistic not only in the familiar and Freudian sense of 'a thing stimulating sexual desire', but also in the religious sense of 'an inanimate object worshipped by primitive peoples for its supposed inherent magical powers or as being inhabited by a spirit' (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Clothing and shoes are parts that represent the whole, but more than just represent, they are constitutive, they are parts that *make* the whole - 'the whole man is in his shoes' (Tournier 1984:

200). Clothes call and enliven us, effecting transformative summonses; we fall for clothes, the prey of a spirit.

19. If fetishism is a quickening or inspiriting, importantly, this involves a two-way process. Bodies don't have a primary liveliness that is subsequently borrowed by clothes: they each get their life from their relation with the other. The story describes clothes as 'things that have had life promised to them and that are demanding to be given life. Little souls that need a body before they can really exist.' I have the impression that these little souls are calling to me. They're shouting out: I want to live, me too, me too, take *me!*' (Tournier 1984: 205). But this is not simply a matter of animation understood as human projection. For the body, before it is clothed, is 'a tree without leaves' just wood 'a thing to display clothes on, a clothes peg, that's all' (Tournier 1984: 204). The body, as much as clothes, is calling out for life, to be taken, called, and its movement, its fetishisation or inspiriting, is made possible by clothes. 'Clothes are the human soul' (Tournier 1984: 199). Clothes and body are animated in their mutual attraction, by the soul located between them. They fall towards each other. Callings, summonses work in both directions, relationally.
20. The magical falling of fetishism is dramatised in this story by a fall in the narrower sense. The protagonist is out riding (on a horse he is fond of dressing) with some fellow cavalrymen. 'Suddenly round a bend in the road, what do I see? Antoinette! In a ray of sunlight she was white, and all alone, like an apparition.' (Tournier 1984: 198).
21. Antoinette's appearance has, at the outset, the connotations of a religious, annunciatory moment, but it soon gets more complex and disturbing in its spiritual implications. The story is taken up from Antoinette's perspective. As the soldiers were passing, she 'heard a faint popping sound coming from her clothes' and then felt 'something light falling onto her feet'. (Antoinette is in a ray of light; a lightness falls). 'She had just lost her panties! She stopped, paralysed, her head swimming, and she kept saying to herself, I'm going to faint, I'm going to faint, I'm going to faint, I'm going to fall on to the ground' ' (Tournier 194: 198). The panties have worked magically - they fall to the ground and, mimetically, Antoinette is about to fall. (With echoes perhaps of yet another fall: 'Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked' (Genesis 3:7).)

And then she noticed a certain confusion among the cavalrymen. One of them had somersaulted over his horse's neck and fallen to the ground. The other horses stopped or stepped aside, so as not to trample him. It was me! I was the only one who had seen Antoinette's little panties landing on her shoes and it had taken my breath away, it had made my heart stop, and I had passed out! (Tournier 1984: 198)

22. Antoinette is an apparition, she falls to the ground, the protagonist falls to the ground at the sight of her and/or her panties falling. (Are her panties an apparition?) He mimicks her/her panties. If the panties signal a complexity in Antoinette's and the horseman's states of being, this is further compounded by the shifts in point of view: 'One of them had' fallen to the ground', 'It was me'. The protagonist is beside himself in this moment of rapture, swept away by the magical power of the panties. Only he had seen the panties falling or, we might say, the panties saw only him, they were for him - he was hailed by, moved by the fetish object. He fell. Animated, the panties animated him. And in this transformative moment, he is doubled, here and there at once, or in-between. (This recalls the sensuous tactility of the folds of clothes in Bernini's statues: the clothes are integral to the movement of ecstasy.)

23. *Reflecting on her ecstatic relation with the light, Mrs Ramsay, in To The Lighthouse_, thinks 'It was odd' how 'one leant to things: trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at that long steady light) as for oneself.'* (Woolf 1992: 59). Leant to things (flirted with falling?), fell for them, towards them, into them. Fell into the light. As it falls into us. (Thus disturbing distinctions between inner and outer and human and non-human.) And this brings to mind an ecstatic image in Georges Bataille:_

I remembered vividly having known a similar sort of felicity in a car while it rained and while hedges and trees, barely covered with tenuous foliage, emerged from the spring mist and came slowly towards me' I had abandoned myself, I was absent, sweetly elated; I was gentle, I gently absorbed things. (1988: 112-113)

24. *What an evocative description of that experience of being drawn to, attracted to, moved by an otherness, surrendering to that otherness, absorbing it, losing oneself, in a mutual falling into, towards. Rising - elated - and falling.*
25. When Antoinette realized that it was her neighbour 'lying there on the cobblestones', she 'took pity on me' and 'wiped my face with her handkerchief' Well what she thought was her handkerchief! When later the horseman comes to at the barracks' infirmary, he finds the little panties, soaked in brandy, round his neck. And himself, intoxicated. Thus, 'it became my fetish, that little pair of panties' (Tournier 1984: 198). 'Antoinette's little panties had made me faint with joy when I fell on to the cobblestones.' (1984: 201).
26. In this chain of fallings - Antoinette, panties, horseman - there is something more complex at work than representation (of, for example, the panties for Antoinette) or identification (of horseman with Antoinette or the panties). We are not dealing with a series of separate, distinct terms, with the panties simply mediating a relation between identities, Antoinette and horseman. Rather, as a fetish, the panties are alive, and they are the condition of possibility of Antoinette's and horseman's self-other relations. This implies, of course, the presence of non-human otherness in our being, in human relationships. We are spiritually connected.
27. The uncanny in this sociality emerges more fully if we read 'The Fetishist' alongside George Steiner's account of art's communication with otherness. He says that art, music, literature, are about our 'meeting with the other'.

It is a commonplace of ethnography that early, 'primitive' art forms were meant to tempt towards domesticity, towards familiarity, the animal presences in the great dark of the outside world. Cave paintings are talismanic and propitiatory rites performed to make of the encounter with the teeming strangeness and menace of organic presences a source of mutual recognition and of benefit. The marvels of penetrative mimesis on the bison-walls at Lascaux are solicitations: they would draw the opaque and brute force of the 'thereness' of the non-human into the luminous ambush of representation and understanding. (1989: 138-9).

28. Art enchants. Through magical mimesis, representational power is attained over the otherness of that which is portrayed - a sort of outspiriting the spirits (Taussig 1993: 13). A magical summons, as Steiner says. In other words, human art forms take on the very spiritual qualities that they would familiarise. Making non-human presences familiar, not only makes

strangeness stranger, but also involves an estrangement of the human condition. Good art, Steiner would say, reminds us, through a communion with otherness, that we are strangers to ourselves (1989: 139 -140).

29. In 'The Fetishist' the other represented by the panties is not a bison, but a human: the mimetic magic or spiritualisation of the panties makes possible the relation between Antoinette and horseman. This suggests that the relation between humans in this story is of the same order as that between humans and non-human presences in Steiner's account. And that is truly strange. Magical falls put us in touch with forces of attraction beyond our self and beyond the human.
30. Serres compared processes of thinking to St Paul's fall. Returning now to questions about knowledge and thinking, I want to consider the significance for these of rapturous experiences of memory, or what Proust called involuntary memories.

But it is sometimes just at the moment when we think that everything is lost that the intimation arrives which may save us; one has knocked at all the doors which lead nowhere, and then one stumbles without knowing it on the only door through which one can enter ' and it opens of its own accord.' I had entered the Guermantes mansion and in my absent-minded state I had failed to see a car which was coming towards me; the chauffeur gave a shout and I just had time to step out of the way, but as I moved sharply backward I tripped against the uneven paving-stones in front of the coach-house. And at that moment when, recovering my balance, I put my foot on a stone which was slightly lower than its neighbour, all my discouragement vanished and in its place was that same happiness which at various epochs of my life had been given to me by the sight of trees which I thought that I recognised in the course of a drive near Balbec, by the sight of the twin steeples of Martinville, by the flavour of a madeleine dipped in tea (Proust 1983: 898-9)

31. Proust draws our attention to the importance of stumbling, upon an idea, to the answer, just as I stumbled upon the Caravaggio, thus setting this piece in motion. 'Without knowing it', in a state of receptive passivity and primal non-knowing, one stumbles, stumbles on a door which 'opens of its own accord', in a rapturous opening to a world of possibilities. Ordinary experiences of intuition and inspiration are linked, here, to rapture.
32. Stumbling, upon a door, upon cobblestones: a moment of suspension, like that between breaths, in which we can feel the tension of rising and falling. 'And at that moment when recovering my balance, I put my foot on a stone which was slightly lower' all my discouragement vanished '. Where we expect a rise in this sentence we get a fall and where we expect a fall, a rise. Echoing the doubleness in the fall of Caravaggio's St Paul, here is another instance of an in-between state of falling.
33. The stumbling on the cobblestones is one of the most striking images of the rapturous passivity of involuntary memory ' the *involuntary* quality of this memory in contrast with the intellectual willing of voluntary memory. One is taken, fortuitously, by an other. And the elements of the physical world which prompt these fugitive moments of salvation might be described as fetishes.
34. The most famous of these fetishes is the first, the madeleine, and as Samuel Beckett puts it: 'the whole of Proust's world comes out of' the shallow well of a cup's inscrutable banality'.

Stumbling on the uneven cobbles comes at the end of the work; it is the first in a series of 'visitations' that follow each other in quick succession, forming 'a single annunciation' (Beckett 1965: 35-38). It is an experience that is quite explicitly about the reawakening-awakening of creativity. The narrator has had a crisis of inspiration:

The sun was shining on a row of trees that followed the railway line, flooding the upper halves of their trunks with light. 'Trees,' I thought, 'you no longer have anything to say to me. My heart has grown cold and no longer hears you' (Proust 1983: 886)

35. Since 'the famous work' was now not about to begin, he might as well be frivolous and go to the Guermantes afternoon party. Thus it is that, on approaching the Guermantes house, in an absent-minded state, he stumbles. And in a moment, anxiety and intellectual doubts vanish, and he is swept away with happiness, 'as if by magic' (1983: 887-899).
36. Trying to make sense of this experience, the narrator says: 'a profound azure intoxicated my eyes, impressions of coolness, of dazzling light, swirled around me'. (Fetishistic intoxication again.) He continues stumbling on the paving stones. But only when he forgets the Guermantes party can he recapture 'what I had felt when I first placed my feet on the ground in this way'. In this state of receptive passivity (when off-balance, de-centred, rising and falling in his falling) magical mimesis works: 'again the dazzling and indistinct vision fluttered near me, as if to say: "Seize me as I pass if you can, and try to solve the riddle of happiness which I set you." And almost at once I recognised the vision: it was Venice' (1983: 899). Venice is calling. The experience long ago of standing on uneven stones in the baptistery of St Mark's has been repeated, by chance. And through this magic, the sensations of Venice emerge, mimetically come alive, having been *forgotten* (1983: 900). Venice is simultaneously found and created in this moment of present and past. The narrator has come to life, Venice has come to life: creativity has been restored-created.
37. What is of particular interest here is the way time is experienced in inspirational involuntary memories. Proust's narrator reflects on this, as Balbec - 'the plumage of an ocean green and blue' - unfolds from a napkin with which he is wiping his mouth. The napkin has the same degree of stiffness as a towel with which he had wiped his face, standing at a window in Balbec. And thus, he finds himself again enjoying 'a whole instant of my life'. He says: 'the moment to which I was transported seemed to me to be the present moment' (1983: 901). In moments of rapture - 'brief as a flash of lightning' (Proust 1983: 905) - one is transported, beside oneself, spatially *and* temporally. The uncanniness of this doubling of the self is accentuated by the idea of being transported to 'the present' when what we anticipate hearing is 'the past'. The present itself is doubled over, folded: Balbec unfolds from the napkin, a present past.

Every moment is two moments. (Michaels 1997: 140)

38. With involuntary memory, one falls, but not backwards in a nostalgic return to a point of origin. One falls to the present moment - a moment that consists of present and past at once, a doubled moment:

A moment in the past, did I say? Was it not perhaps very much more: something that, common both to the past and to the present, is much more essential than either of them? (Proust 1983: 905)

39. Past and present and something *more*. Or, we might say, something in-between. A temporal falling that involves a simultaneous falling and rising, a suspended state, a moment of now and then. In moments of rapture we are not simply transported from here to there, then to now or now to then. We are transported to a now and then, a here and there. Beside ourselves, both spatially and temporally doubled, we are put into movement, re-animated and animated, in the time-space of aliveness, in-between.

On the Road

39. In each of these stories, the fall is set on the road, but, in both their involuntary nature and the betweenness of falling and rising, these falls also disturb the linearity and chronology of the road, 'the life'. Reminding us of contingency, these falls elude project, purpose and plans, and unsettle the very idea of travelling with sights set on a destination. Damascus has changed 'on the road'; it is not the end anticipated by Paul. Instead of reading the 'road to Damascus experience' in a narrative way, as a coming to a crossroads in life, or as an experience of hitting bottom and converting, as an absolute break and a new beginning, I have read it in a non-linear way, emphasising the dialectics of rising and falling, lightness and heaviness-darkness, and the betweenness in this experience. It is neither a matter of seeing the light once and for all, nor a matter of 'light at the end of the tunnel' (Hillman 1992: 98); we don't hit bottom and arise a thoroughly new person, 'waking to a brand new day'. A coming-to-life comes and goes.
40. More precisely, perhaps, these stories point to a paradox, one that can be discerned in Dante's opening line, 'Nel mezzo del camin di nostra vita', heralding as it does a rather dramatic rupture to the implied chronology of 'life's path'. 'I woke to find myself in a dark wood, for I had wandered from the straight path' (Dante). To live 'in the middle' (nel mezzo), we could say, is to live the paradox, narrative and rupture, simultaneously. It is to live the road as a transitional or in-between space and time. Holding paradox makes it possible, then, to live contingency and whatever it brings - love, grief, pain - rather than experiencing it as a catastrophic fall or disruption to an anticipated future.
41. In this sense, St Paul's transformative fall is not catastrophic. Indeed, we might think of him, particularly through Caravaggio's image, as a figure of being in the middle, for, in that moment of rupture on the road, Paul is connected spiritually, living in eternity. He is also grounded. Paul in a grounded, fallen state, a state of humility in which he is open to the Holy Spirit, provides an image of a way of being I am celebrating in this piece. In Paul's spiritual experience, we can feel gravity embodied and lived, we can get a sense of the groundedness (with lightness) of spirituality. In other words, the rising and falling of such experiences reminds us that spirit is both transcendent and immanent 'a formless substance that we live in everyday life, that we can experience even in the stones on our path.

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