

A Drop of the Infinite//A Shard of the Immanent// A Drop of the Immanent// A Shard of the Infinite

An investigation of Liquid (in) Cinema

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an enormous undifferentiated object.

Everything stops dead for a moment, everything freezes in place-and then the whole process will begin all over again. From a certain point of view it would be much better if nothing worked, if nothing functioned. Never being born, escaping the wheel of continual birth and rebirth, no mouth to suck with, no anus to shit through. Will the machines run so badly, their component pieces fall apart to such a point that they will return to nothingness and thus allow us to return to nothingness? It would seem, however, that the flows of energy are still too closely connected, the partial objects still too organic, for this to happen. *What would be required is a pure fluid in a free state, flowing without interruption, streaming over the surface of a full body.*¹

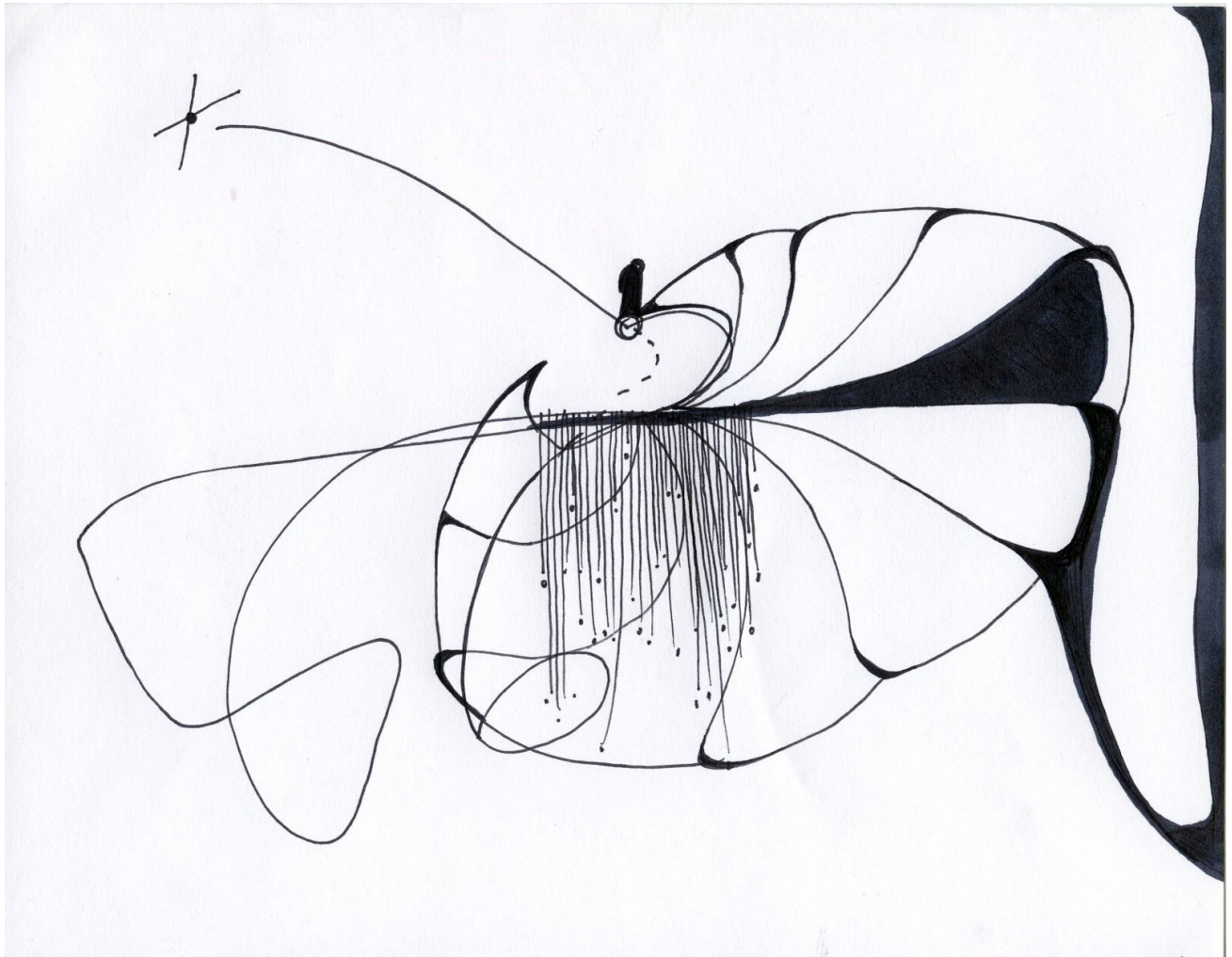


Diagram of a 'mutual image' forming in liquid as it flows across the Full Body Without Organs, Arlen Levy, 2017

¹ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.7-8

What freezes what flows? In *Cinema 2, The Time-Image*, Deleuze writes, "To think is to learn what a non-thinking body is capable of, its capacity, its postures. It is through the body (and no longer through the intermediary of the body) that cinema forms its alliance with the spirit, with thought." (Deleuze, 189) In Deleuze's invocation of 'the body' there materializes a foundational link between the cinematic mechanism and Real material. This motivates an inquiry into what occurs when a 'pure fluid' is introduced into the diegetic space of cinema. What is 'the body' in its most embodied form, but Deleuze's *Body Without Organs*- "In order to resist organ-machines, the body without organs presents its smooth, opaque surface as a barrier. In order to resist linked, connected, and interrupted flows, it sets up a counterflow of amorphous, undifferentiated fluid."² What does it mean when we see this primordial substance acting within a film? What are the implications of goo, ooze, water, mist?

'Pure fluid in a free state' as it is present within cinema allows one to approach the recursive material Reality embedded in a 'liquid' film. It is necessary to consider the Real implication of the earthly materials invoked in a film, and to follow the effects of their properties as they extend past the cinematic machine. In liquid swims Bachelard's 'mutual image', the most intimate possible coupling of the virtual and the actual, in which the limpid image is nose to nose with the opaque image; each a reflection of the other in clear and muddy waters respectively. It is only through liquid material that it is possible to complicate the uni-directionality of Kant's 'phenomenon' in relation to the noumenal object. The object and the phenomenon, real and

² Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.8

virtual, crystalline and opaque are continuously switching by association when mediated through the liquid mirror.

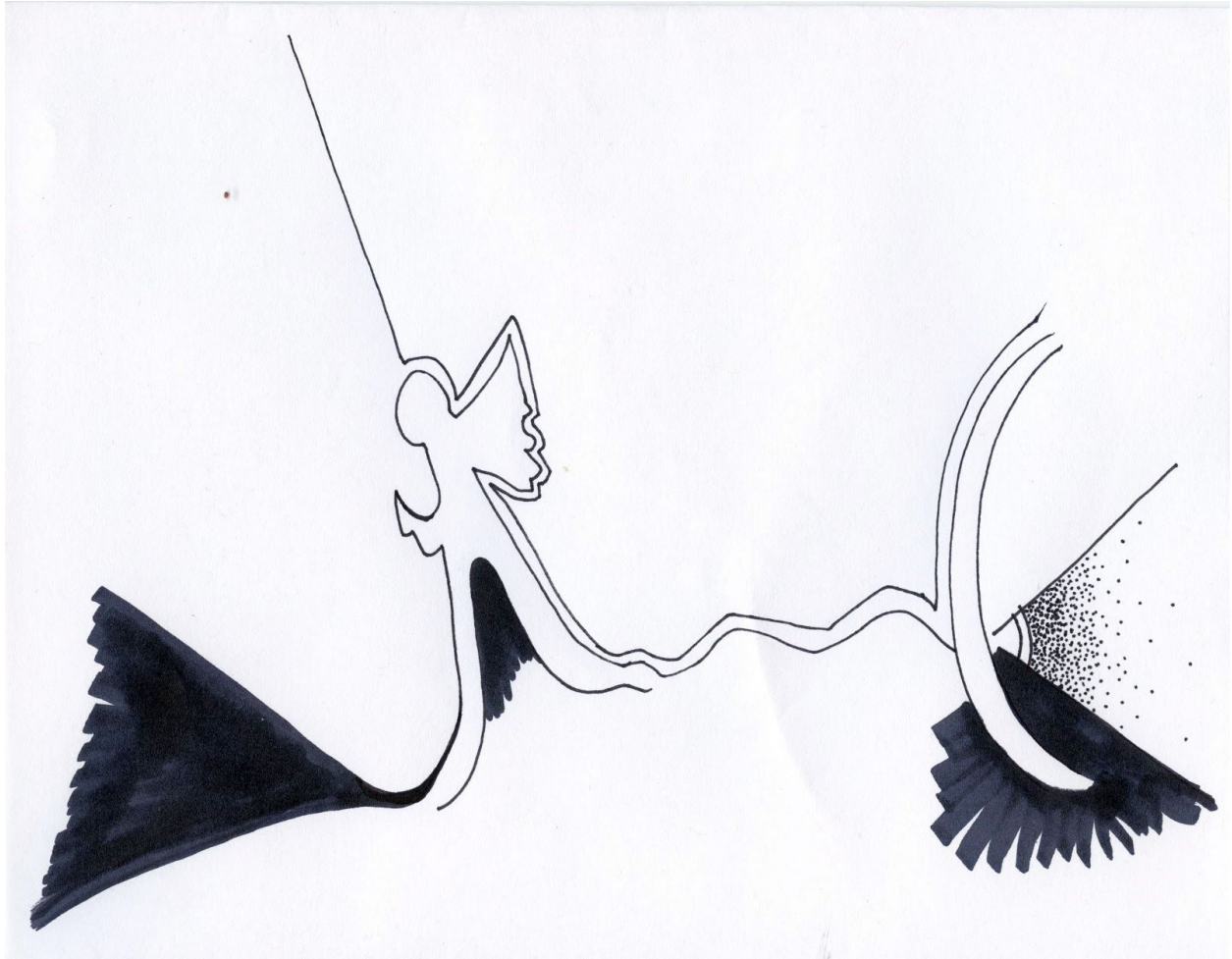


Diagram of ‘miraculation’ as it functions through a ‘falling back upon’ the Body Without Organs, Arlen Levy, 2017

“Heaven above, heaven below, stars above, stars below, know this and rejoice.”³

³ Jung, C. G., Hinkle, B. M., & Jung, C. G. (1931). *Psychology of the unconscious: A study of the transformations and symbolisms of the libido : a contribution to the history of the evolution of thought*. New York: Dodd, Mead. 50

In Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, we are always surrounded by the mysteriously, "plasmatic" sentient ocean of the planet Solaris. Anywhere that we are confronted with an ocean, of any kind, an image of the infinite is approached; the ocean *causes* the horizon; it causes the horizon-forever, offering the potential of 'seeing forever'. The ocean presents the eye with a vector towards the immanent infinite, that which animates objects, that which allows a shadowed glimpse of the noumenal object.

Solaris pivots around a problem of 'visitors'; revenants who appear to those who have repressed their memories. Kelvin, the the psychologist who we follow on his journey from earth to the planet Solaris is visited by his deceased wife, Hari. Terrified by this simulacra, Kelvin lures the Hari-Thing into a rocket capsule and launches her into space. However, Hari soon materializes at his side, the visitors cannot be avoided, cannot be killed. It is Solaris itself, which animates the visitors-- flowing into the space typically occupied by the unconscious, it replaces it in the assembly line of desiring production, and produces the Real.

The ocean; the place where one can see forever, perceive the edge of immanence, God. At this intensive space of bleeding between sea and skyline we may imagine we see the animate and inanimate transfused into one another, this is where Hari emerges, at the point where the ocean of Solaris touches sky, flickering...

It is at this seam, this place of exchange between plasmatic ocean and sky, that we may begin to unfold the true spirituality of *Solaris*, what type of God it proposes, what vector its God runs along.

In *Psychology and Alchemy*, Jung examines the *nigredo* [blackness]; a state in alchemical practice in which all ingredients are cleansed and cooked to a uniform black matter in order to

produce the philosopher's stone. He writes, "the first nigredo, that of the *unio naturalis*, is an objective state, visible from the outside only...an unconscious state of non-differentiation between self and object, consciousness and the unconscious."(Jung, 50)

Zizek locates Tarkovsky's infinite (God) as deeply embedded in the nigredo, in the moist place; "the planet Solaris seems to provide the ultimate embodiment of the Tarkovskian notion of a heavy humid stuff (earth) which, far from functioning as the opposite of spirituality, serves as its very medium; this gigantic 'material Thing which thinks' literally gives body to the direct coincidence of Matter and Spirit."⁴

In *Solaris*, God is in the nigredo. The force of animism which Solaris commands, coaxes forth a 'visitor' directly from the place of 'non-differentiation between self and object', shattering the hierarchy of objects. Hari is fundamentally 'of the stuff' and in her becoming she feels pain.

Deleuze's *Body Without Organs* is not opposed to organs, rather it is a body whose 'enemy is the organism'. When Hari attempts suicide by drinking liquid oxygen, we witness the uncanny process of an organism adhering itself to a body without organs. As the Hari-body is revived, shuddering in pain, she stares at her hand, uttering, "is it me?"

⁴ Zizek, S. (1999) *The Thing From Inner Space*. Mainview. 15



Figure 3 'Hari's Resurrection', *Solaris* (1972), Andrei Tarkovsky

Of the resurrection scene Tarkovsky said, “[Hari] is being reborn through pain. She is developing internal organs. The corpse is returning to life through death.” The body now has organs, “The judgement of God uproot[ed] it from its immanence mak[ing] it an organism, a signification, a subject.”⁵

Intensities are passing across Hari's body, we witness her being inscribed, “Merely so many nails piercing the flesh, so many forms of torture.”⁶ These bands of inscription reproduce Hari, the ‘Hari of the Stuff’ as a desiring machine. There is a traumatic moment of *rabat sur*⁷, falling back on, as Hari falls back on the full BwO (Solaris) appearing to be ‘miraculated’ from it, siphoning flows from it, attaching herself to-and therefore separating herself from, it, as a desiring machine.

⁵ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 159

⁶ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.9

⁷ As used by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

Zizek writes, “Solaris is the Thing, the blind libido embodied.”⁸ If Solaris is the Thing where is the Void? There must be a void in order for desiring production to occur. The Void lies within Kelvin to the extent that he is a Desiring Machine. Through its function of returning to those who encounter it, “the traumatic kernel of their fantasy”, Solaris subverts the desiring order, producing the Thing before the Void produces Desire. Solaris, in conjunction with the Subject that approaches it constitutes Deleuze and Guattari’s, Production of Antiproduction. The Void is being ‘filled’ before it is ‘emptied’ in order to produce. Consequently, desiring production is inverted; it RE-produces both Kelvin and Hari as noumenal objects, as Solaris, things in and of themselves, articulated through *intensive quantities*.

Kelvin is continuously confronted by the Hari-Thing, as a Desiring Machine, his imperative becomes to kill her in the name of a positive flow of desiring production. Because the Hari-Thing is a product of Kelvin as Void and Desiring Machine, his imperative to remove her is inscribed onto her surface. This leaves us with an object that is anti-productive, that is anti-libidinal and moves only against itself; yet, it persists because of the Desiring Machine. This phenomenon of antiproduction produces between the three actors, *the Celibate Machine of the Eternal Return*.

The Celibate Machine is one that is neither libidinal nor death-driven, one that does not move up or down, but spreads laterally, in antiproduktive stasis, it is: The Body Without Organs. “The full body without organs belongs to the realm of antiproduction; but yet another characteristic of the connective or productive synthesis is the fact that it couples production with antiproduction, with an element of antiproduction.”⁹

⁸ Zizek, S. (1999) *The Thing From Inner Space*. Mainview. 10

⁹ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.5

Let us recall that the BwO is also referred to as ‘the plane of immanence’, if we are to invoke notions of animism we may see the infinite as immanent, the liminal space in which all potential animates live within the inanimate, all actuals posited by the virtual.

John Carpenter’s *The Fog* (1980) opens onto a town full of objects ‘gone wild’. As the local priest wraps his night up with a drink a brick suddenly springs forth from the wall, revealing an old diary, a market stocker watches as the merchandise in his shop begin to miraculously shiver, a symphony of car horns go off, a gas pump expels itself from its holster, spewing gas, the TV hisses and crackles, the fog rolls in...

“Deleuze investigates how certain images arise to us (or to the more disinterested perception of the cinema), by being selected from what Bergson called the universe of all images, which I here call the infinite.”(Marks, 6) This is how Laura Marks begins her investigation of the infinite, in *Enfoldment and Infinity*. In Marks’ connection of the cinematic process to the infinite, we have the potential to see within the works discussed here, a convergence of infinities. Glimpses of infinity from within the medium itself intersect with the representation, or invocation of the infinite, latent in the primordial mediums which occupy the diegetic space itself (fog, ocean, goo).

As the Californian coastal town of Antonio Bay is about to celebrate its centennial, the diary found by Father Malone (the priest), reveals that in 1880 the six founders of Antonio Bay, (including the priest’s grandfather) deliberately sank and plundered a ship owned by Blake, a wealthy leper who wanted to establish a leper colony nearby. The ship was named the Elizabeth Dane. Gold from the ship was used to found Antonio Bay and build the town church. The night

of the centennial a strange, glowing fog blankets the bay, it brings with it the long lost Elizabeth Dane.

The Fog which seeps in, is a fog of History. This type of History is a masked infinite, the myth rolls over, how many times, how many hundreds of years? The fog *covers* ocean. Unlike the ocean it does not suggest 'seeing forever' its infinity is suggested in a 'seeing never' or possibly a 'seeing never always' The fog animates objects with the immanent-infinity of History-- the gas pumps go crazy.

Local radio DJ Stevie Wayne sits in the glass walled room of her lighthouse, she is in the midst of broadcasting her radio show to the sleepy town of Antonio Bay, when she spots the fog. She clicks on something smooth and jazzy so she can go off the air, she contemplates the opaque form rolling towards the shore, it appears illuminated from within. She remarks on the oddness of this event, "the wind is moving due North, but the fog keeps rolling on in..." Her brow furrows, she is bearing witness to 'unnatural phenomena.'

In *The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic*, Perniola writes on Kant, "The starting point of Kant's reflection is the distinction between the thing in itself, and the thing with respect to us, that is, the phenomenon. Only of the latter is knowledge possible because it is mediated by the subjective forms of intuition (space and time) and by the categories of the intellect."(Perniola, 37)

'The thing with respect to us' the fog is only air, but it is air through which we cannot see, it is a field in which the subjective is explicitly attacked, in which the eye is smoothed, enfolded and lulled out of its tyranny. Where can one draw a line in the fog? Where does one

make ‘the distinction between the thing in itself, and the thing with respect to us?’ Where is one drawn closer to the noumenon, the *negredo* state, than within the fog?

The characters in *The Fog* find themselves enshrouded in the emanation of the thing-in-itself. They receive glimpses of noumenal selves, object-selves, ”There is no longer a Self [Moi] that feels, acts and recalls; there is “ a glowing fog, a dark yellow mist” that has affects and experiences movements, speeds.”¹⁰

From the Fog emerge ‘the revenants’, they seek to kill six citizens of Antonio Bay in order to redeem the deaths of those killed by the town’s six founders one hundred years ago. They appear from the fog, black, unarticulated, save for glowing eyes and rusted fishing hooks with which they tap on front doors, summoning victims. In the final scene of the film, five have been killed, the characters find themselves cowering in the church where the film began, fog rolls in under the door... the revenants appear.



Figure 4. Revenants appear in church, *The Fog* (1980), John Carpenter

¹⁰ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 162

The characters walk through the fog gathering in the pews, slowly approaching a 1:1 ratio between 'one' and the immanent object (the revenant). As they progress through the mist they see the 'shadow selves' things not commanded to 'be' things that 'are' selves that 'are'. The priest, connected to this realm by the odd string of filiation, screams to the black noumenon *"Here's your gold, Blake, my grandfather stole it from you, I'm the one who must answer for it, I'm the sixth conspirator, I'm Father Malone, take me!"*

With these words he extends a massive gold crucifix towards the black figure.

In 'The Problem of Oedipus', Deleuze writes "It is the basis of the disjunctive synthesis and its reproduction: a pure force of filiation or genealogy, Numen...And we know the nature of this intensive filiation, this inclusive disjunction where everything divides, but into itself, and where the same being is everywhere, on every side, at every level, differing *only in intensity*." (Deleuze, 154)

The moment the two hands grasp the crucifix, a white heat bursts forth from its core, creating a moment of uncanny co-presence, in which the ultimate subject, the subject before God (the bounded Other) is sealed to the noumenon, an object of the unbounded other. The plane of immanence, invoked through heat, smelts the two 'beings' together, in an explicit emptying of the body of organs, a violent and unprecedented collection of intensities... "A harrowing, emotionally overwhelming experience, which brings the schizo as close as possible to matter, to a burning living center of matter.." ¹¹

¹¹ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 19



Figure 5. The revenant receives the cross from the priest, *The Fog* (1980) John Carpenter

In John Carpenter's *Prince of Darkness* (1987), there is no fog, no horizon, instead there exists something like a droplet of the infinite, a shimmering splintered piece of infinity; a shard of broken mirror. In typical Carpenter fashion, the film begins with a priest, this priest invites a professor and his students to investigate a mysterious cylinder of green liquid stored in the basement of a dilapidated Los Angeles Church. The cylinder was once the possession of a clandestine religious order known as, 'The Brotherhood of Sleep.'

The Cylinder of green goo is determined to be the liquid embodiment of satan, an ancient text reveals that satan is simply the offspring of an even more powerful force, the "Anti-God" who is bound to the realm of anti-matter.



Figure 6. The professor explains anti-matter to the priest, *The Prince of Darkness* (1987) John Carpenter

The neoplatonist virtual thinker, Ibn Sina, was the first to present an ontology in which the entire virtual universe exists in parallel to the actual universe. God is the 'uncaused' while all else is caused. Being uncaused, God is indivisible. From this fact two categories result: that which exists because it was caused to and that which does not exist but could be caused to.¹² If God is free, God can just as easily create something as not; would anti-god, then, be an un-free God, trapped in the virtual?

¹² Marks, L. U. (2010). *Enfoldment and infinity: An Islamic genealogy of new media art*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. 12

“When from the cause emanates one, there emanates from it Not-One. Every existence has its antimatter, as it were-its virtual double-in order to ensure the freedom of God, who is the only necessary being.”¹³ What does the proposition of an Anti-God do to this claim? Something which is uncaused, but is the opposite of God, something that pulls matter backwards. Something that commands that which is caused by God, using that to which God said “Be!” in order to itself be, to become actual.



Figure 7. Kelly absorbs the green liquid, *The Prince of Darkness* (1987) John Carpenter

In the film, the Anti-God manages to ‘pull matter backwards’ through the conduit of the green liquid. After an initial spurt into the mouth of one of the female graduate students, the liquid is passed between the mouths of the researchers, effectively rendering them into shadow BwO’s, what one could deem, ‘organisms without organs’. It is possible to recognize the transformation of these bodies as antithetical to the process through which one becomes a BwO. The latter is constituted through, “opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire

¹³ Marks, L. U. (2010). *Enfoldment and infinity: An Islamic genealogy of new media art*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. 13

assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds”¹⁴, whereas the bodies exposed to the green liquid in the film become bodies that deny network or assemblage, they are constituted through a ‘biunivocalization’ of intensities, and therefore become overdetermined. It is for this reason that skin splits, eyes bulge.

This is exemplified in the scene where we see a body animated by beetles, a cacophonous voice rises, warning the others of terror to come-- then the head rolls off, the suit crumples, a mass of beetles swarm on the ground. Here is an organism populated with overdetermined intensity, a concentration of the multitude.

In *Cinema 2, the Time-Image*, Deleuze provides of point of enmeshment between medium, and material, both representative and real. He writes, ”In Bergsonian terms, the real object is reflected in a mirror-image as in the virtual object which, from its side and simultaneously, envelopes or reflects the real: there is ‘coalescence’ between the two. There is a formation of an image with two sides, actual *and* virtual.”(Deleuze, 68)

This notion of coalescence, opens the virtual and the actual into one another- extending the possibility of *exchange* between these oppositional states, “There is no virtual which does not become actual in relation to the actual, the latter becoming virtual through the same relation...these are ‘mutual images’ as Bachelard puts it, where an exchange is carried out.”¹⁵

Midway through *Prince of Darkness*, the character Kelly, absorbs the remainder of the liquid into her body. As she lies on a cot, transforming, we see an evacuation of organs from her organism, her stomach bulges and writhes as if something is rummaging around inside it. In her final form she is horribly disfigured, moist worms of skin cling to a freely bleeding skull.

¹⁴ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 160

¹⁵ Deleuze, G. (1986). *Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. 69

Like a moth, she is drawn to a full length mirror on the wall, which has begun to emanate a striking light. When Kelly reaches the mirror, she emits a hiss and extends her forearm, submerging it into the apparent wetness of the mirror-medium; reaching. The priest appears from where he was cowering behind a wardrobe and severs the arm with an axe, we watch as the forearm floats languidly behind the mirror. The Kelly-Thing laughs and another, equally sanguine arm appears from the sleeve of her dress. Again she reaches- *“Fatheer-come to free-dom.”* As her hand extends, a shadow begins to emerge from below, it is the hand of the Anti-God, obscured and out-of-focus, as if it is wearing a gardening glove.

Deleuze proposes that the actor represents a figure that actively produces the actual from the virtual in their visibilization of ‘the role’, “the actor is a ‘monster’, or rather monsters are born actors...”¹⁶ In the instant of this gesture-we are watching a film within the film, there is, embedded in the actor-playing-monster, the monster of the actor performing an uncanny actualization.



Figure 8. Kelly reaches for the hand of the Anti-God within the mirror, *The Prince of Darkness* (1987) John Carpenter

¹⁶ Deleuze, G. (1986). *Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. 17

Slowly, the hand is extracted, when it emerges through the other side we see the opaque image become crystallized; a gleaming red hand, bedecked in long black claws. The clarity of this image produces an odd shock, suddenly, we are confronted with the image of the hand of the devil, familiar in its theatricality. It is if we have just witnessed the passing of an unknowable image into a reified one. We see the odd suggestion of one crystalline image attempting to create a mutual image with another, is *this* the evil, the threat?



Figure 9. Kelly extracts the hand of the Anti-God, *The Prince of Darkness* (1987) John Carpenter

Watching in panic as the Kelly-Thing withdraws the crimson hand, one of the physicists tackles her, hurtling them both into the other side of the mirror. The priest flings his axe, the mirror crystallizes on contact, shattering, trapping the woman on the other side.

The image is sealed.

What occurs when liquid becomes solid? It crystallizes.



Crystal is incredibly fragile, as is the limpid image.

Clarity is the most fleeting state the image passes

through, the image is not inherently clear, it becomes clear, but it moves entropically towards obscurity.

The limpid image carries with it the potential to shatter.

In the closing scene of *Prince of Darkness*, we are shown a disjunctive sequence, one which recurs as a dream throughout the film, we hear a voice say, “this is not a dream.” The church in which the film is set is visible, the image is low-quality, fizzing, it is a transmission from the future. A dark figure materializes in the doorway raising its arms, when the sequence is shown previously the figure is obscured, this time the image becomes clearer, we see the face of the woman who jumped into the mirror.

In this way, we see that she has persisted within the opaque image.

“When the virtual image becomes actual, it is then visible and limpid, as in the mirror or the solidity of finished crystal. But the actual image becomes virtual in its turn, referred elsewhere, invisible, opaque and shadowy, like a crystal barely dislodged from the earth”¹⁷

It is the liquid form, that which resists crystallization, that is most persistent.

... *fluid in a free state, flowing without interruption, the virtual image;*

an underground stream.

¹⁷ Deleuze, G. (1986). *Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. 70

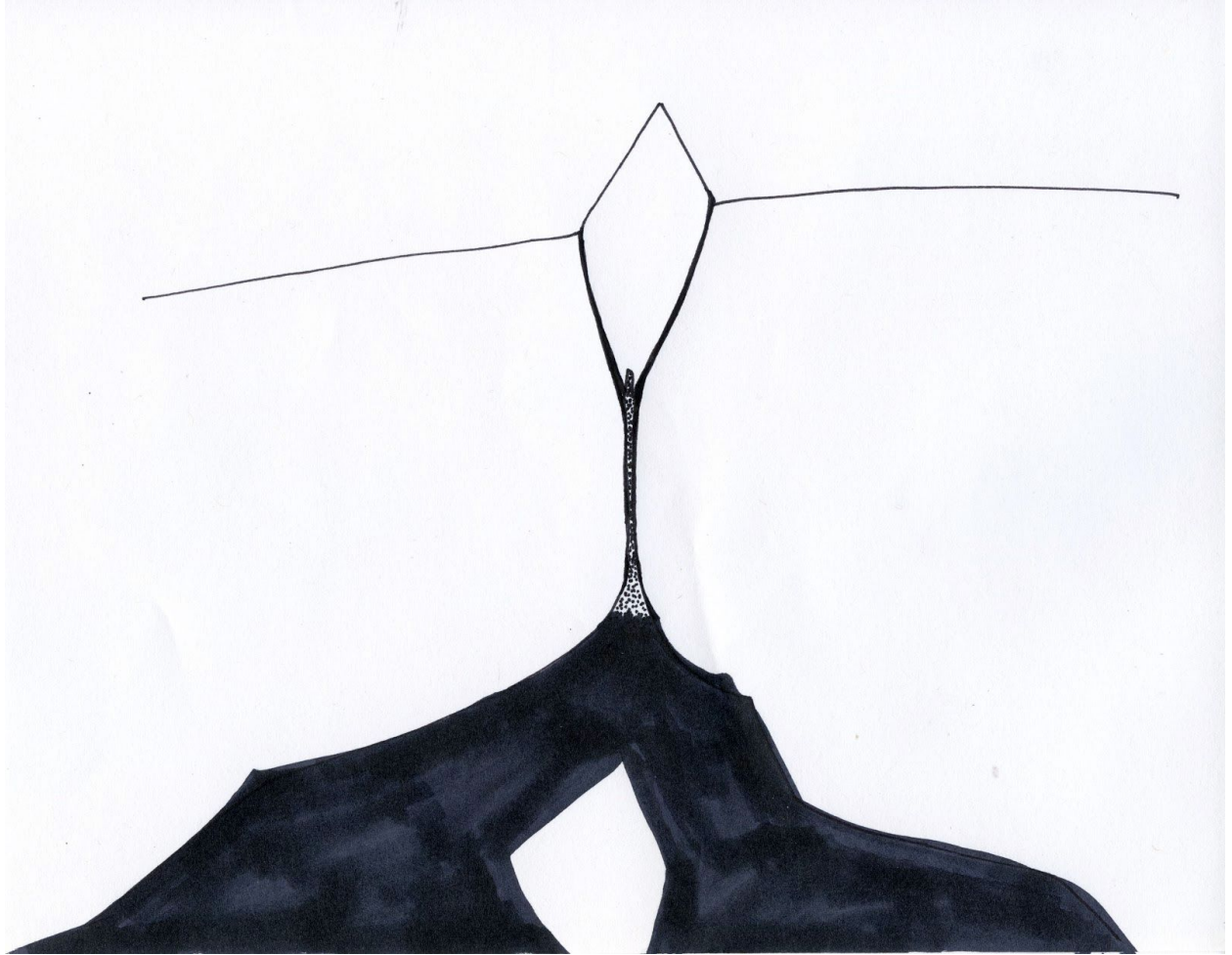


Diagram of the crystalline and opaque images constituting one another, Arlen Levy, 2017