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The Liquid Eye: A Deleuzian Poetics of Water in Film

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by

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DEDICATION

For Mom and Dad,

The waters

from which I emerged

and to which

I often return.

I cannot thank you enough for your love, support, and above all, *encouragement*.

With gratitude, A*

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Liquid Eye: A Deleuzian Poetics of Water in Film

by

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This dissertation explores the poetics of water and liquidity in the works of some filmmakers, poets, and writers. With the help of Gilles Deleuze's philosophy and cinema theory, I suggest that, at times, the image of water—on screen or on the page—becomes a sort of trace of the writer's or filmmaker's generativity. Furthermore, I propose that this "special use" of water both points to, and shapes, what I name "liquid visuality": the actualization of a fluid and generative, if not "visionary," mode of seeing.

In Chapter 1, I chart the course of the eye's, as well as the cinema's, relationship with water, and I show how certain poets, writers, and filmmakers, in line with Deleuze's theory, allude to and engage a liquid mode of seeing. I suggest that liquid visuality dismantles reliance on what Deleuze calls solid perception, which often has violent undercurrents.

In Chapter 2, I argue that the sea acts as the *forza generatrice*, or generative force, of Italian director Federico Fellini's cinema. Reimagining Millicent Marcus's notion of Fellini's "hyperfilm" as a Deleuzian-Guattarian "assemblage," I suggest that the image of the sea within this liquid and metamorphosing intertext materializes the director's creativity, while also calling upon and shaping the film-viewer's liquid and generative vision.

Chapter 3 examines the prolific presence of water in Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky's films. I argue that "Tarkovsky's wash," or what could be considered the director's painting with water on screen, renders material his unique aesthetic of time. Furthermore, I show how this liquid materiality implicates the director's spiritual "truth" as creative immanence.

In Chapter 4, I argue that the real protagonist of the Disney film *Moana* is liquid eco-intersubjectivity. Making use of, in addition to Deleuze's theory, an array of Oceanian scholarship, Èdouard Glissant's "poetics of Relation," and deep ecology, I show how the film works at dismantling the Western viewer's solid perception with more liquid, relational modes of perceiving.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1…….. 1

The Word on Seeing and Perceiving……. 8

The Waters of the Eye……... 10

Liquid Modernity, or *Wet* Modernity? .....…….. 12

The Materiality of Water……... 16

Make It New, Make It Liquid: The Modernist Aesthetics of Water …. 19

Cinema and Emergent Visualities……. 29

Water's Material Echo in Cinema……..... 31

The Liquid Perception-Image…… 36

The Liquidity of the Crystal…….. 38

Chapter 2……. 43

The Hyperfilm as Assemblage……. 46

Rhizomatic Cinema…….. 49

The *forza generatrice*……... 54

Fellini's Creative Unconscious and the Sea as Screen……. 56

The Plastic Sea and Cinema as Hyper-Genre…… 65

Chapter 3……. 74

The Rhizomatics of Childhood……. 76

The Sensuous Materiality of Water…….. 82

"Tarkovsky's Wash": A Painterly Materiality……. 86

The "Liquid Crystal": A Materiality of Time…….. 96

The Permeability of Matter and Spirit……. 101

Water and Creative Immanence…….. 105

Chapter 4……... 115

Inclusive Disney: Hard to Swallow? ……. 117

Moana, the "Anti-Princess"? ……. 119

Intersubjectivity and Liquid Perception…….. 123

The Ocean as Subject, The Subject as Liquid……. 129

Liquid Moana…….. 132

Liquid Eco-Intersubjectivity……... 140

Works Cited……... 145

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Figure 1.1: *L'Atalante*, Beloved's Face in the Water……... 34

Figure 1.2: *L'Atalante*, Liquidly Superimposed……... 35

Figure 1.3: *L'Atalante*, Blended Faces……. 35

Figure 1.4: *L'Atalante*, Jean Sees Through Juliette's Eyes…….. 35

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1: *La strada*, Zampanò on the Sand……... 44

Figure 2.2: *La dolce vita*, Marcello on the Sand…….. 44

Figure 2.3: *Amarcord*, Volpina on the Beach…….. 45

Figure 2.4: *8 ½*, Saraghina Against the Sea……. 45

Figure 2.5: *Amarcord*, Titta Staring out to Sea…… 45

Figure 2.6: *I vitelloni*, Staring out to Sea……. 46

Figure 2.7: *La dolce vita*, Incomplete Structure……... 51

Figure 2.8: *8 ½*, Scaffolded Set…… 51

Figure 2.9: *Amarcord*, Scaffolds…….. 52

Figure 2.10: *I vitelloni*, Mangled Fence……... 52

Figure 2.11: *Intervista*, Lighting Structures……. 53

Figure 2.12: *La dolce vita*, Sea Creature…….. 58

Figure 2.13: *Giulietta degli spiriti*, Sea-Screen…… 63

Figure 2.14: *Giulietta degli spiriti*, Boxy Ship……. 65

Figure 2.15: *Fellini – Satyricon*, Squarish Ship…… 65

Figure 2.16: *Fellini – Satyricon*, Sail as Screen…… 66

Figure 2.17: *Fellini – Satyricon*, Encroaching Smooth Space…….. 67

Figure 2.18: *Fellini – Satyricon*, Encolpio as Painting……. 67

Figure 2.19: *Amarcord*, Overtly Plastic Sea……. 69

Figure 2.20: *Intervista*, Elephants in the Surf……... 71

Figure 2.21: *La voce della luna*, Aural Incomplete Structures……. 72

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1: *Ivan's Childhood*, Ivan and Tree…… 81

Figure 3.2: *Ivan's Childhood*, Rhizomatic Roots……. 81

Figure 3.3: *Ivan's Childhood*, Ivan Aesthetic Frame…… 81

Figure 3.4: *Ivan's Childhood*, Dead Tree Imposes on Ivan…….. 82

Figure 3.5: *Ivan's Childhood*, Detached Roots……. 83

Figure 3.6: *Ivan's Childhood*, *Earth*, Apples…… 84

Figure 3.7: *Ivan's Childhood*, Ivan's Dripping Fingers…… 86

Figure 3.8: *Solaris*, Haptic Water……. 87

Figure 3.9: *Solaris*, the Ocean…….. 87

Figure 3.10: *The Sacrifice*, Coins……. 89

Figure 3.11: *Steamroller*, Aesthetic Dribbles……... 91

Figure 3.12: *Steamroller*, Abstract Composition…….. 91

Figure 3.13: *Steamroller*, Puddle and Paint…….. 93

Figure 3.14: *Steamroller*, Water Faucet…… 93

Figure 3.15: *Steamroller*, Water Abstraction…… 94

Figure 3.16: *Steamroller*, Puddle's Inverted Image……. 94

Figure 3.17: *Steamroller*, Steamroller Through the Wash…… 95

Figure 3.18: *Stalker*, Ink Wash…… 100

Figure 3.19: *Stalker*, Filmy Trace of Time……. 100

Figure 3.20: *The Mirror*, Liquid Mother…… 103

Figure 3.21: *The Mirror*, Water Paint…….. 104

Figure 3.22: *Nostalghia*, Bathroom as Fluid Portal……..... 105

Figure 3.23: *Nostalghia*, Interior Landscape…….. 107

Figure 3.24: *Nostalghia*, Interior River Close-Up……... 107

Figure 3.25: *Nostalghia*, The Mirror……..... 108

Figure 3.26: *Nostalghia*, People as Mere Numbers……. 109

Figure 3.27: *Nostalghia*, *Dacha* and Cathedral……... 111

Figure 3.28: *The Sacrifice*, Rhizome-Tree…….. 114

Chapter 4

Figure 4.1: *Moana*, Finger Touch…….. 123

Figure 4.2: *Moana*, Phosphorescent Gramma……. 138

Figure 4.3: *Moana*, Phosphorescent Ancestor…… 140

Figure 4.4: *Moana*, Te Fiti……..… 142

Figure 4.5: *Moana*, Hongi……..…. 143

Figure 4.6: *Moana*, Liquid Maui……. 143

Figure 4.7: *Moana*, Shell on Stone…….. 144

CHAPTER 1

The Liquid Eye: Toward a Liquid Visuality

> Should the world be designated a genre, its main stylistic device would no doubt be water.
>
> —Joseph Brodksy, *Watermark*

> My first vision of the earth was of water veiled. I am of the race of men and women who see all things through this curtain of the sea….
>
> —Anaïs Nin, *The House of Incest*

In our determination to see and understand the world clearly, it is easy to forget or dismiss the relationship that water, or more generally, the liquid, has with the eyes. Usually, we view liquids as a hindrance to or distortion of our vision. We rapidly wipe away our tears as they spill, and we make use of goggles and masks to protect our eyes beneath the surface of a pool, river, lake or sea. The sun's glare on the water's surface, we claim, "blinds" us, and the figure that stares back at us in the pond's reflection we consider to be misshapen compared to what looks back at us from the mirror. The ways in which we have come to know, understand, and engage our sense of sight favors dryness, solidity, and distance over wetness, liquidity, and closeness.

There is, almost certainly, a practical reason for this. As terrestrial beings, human eyes have evolved to perceive on and above land. With feet instead of fins, humans have

a real biological need to orient themselves on top of the ground and through the air. By definition,[1] land, more often than not the foundation, backdrop and/or object of human vision, is dry and solid (or at least much more so than water), qualities that then shape and characterize how we see. But philosopher Gilles Deleuze has an even more primal explanation. In his book *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, Deleuze reminds us about the liquid, or molten, rock of our planet's beginnings and posits that the Earth's cooling and solidifying enabled not only life (i.e. the "primordial soup"), but also perception as we know it:[2]

> the first opacities [appeared], … the first screens obstructing the diffusion of light. It is here that the first outlines of solids or rigid and geometric bodies would be formed. … As Bergson was to say, the same evolution which organizes matter into solids will organize the image in more and more elaborate perception, which has solids as its objects. (63)

According to Deleuze, who adapts the work of philosopher Henri Bergson for his cinema theory, the desiccation and solidification of the Earth, the emergence of shapes and forms and bodies, led the eye along the same path of evolution in its calibration and shaping of human vision. "The eye identifies itself not with the body it belongs to but with the object of attention" (110), concurs the poet Joseph Brodsky in *Watermark*. Still, the solid object of the eye's attention shapes an equally solid seeing. Our eyes, it would appear, although

[1] The word "land," in many dictionaries, is defined by what it is *not*. That is, it is described as the portion of the Earth's surface that is not covered by water.

[2] For Deleuze, "the thing and the perception of the thing are one and the same thing, one and the same image" (*Cinema 1* 63). Therefore, in pairing "life" and "perception," I am not distinguishing between two separate entities that coincidentally arise from the cooling of the earth. Rather, via Deleuze's thought, I am articulating the same thing in two different senses.

themselves composed of liquid, have evolved to distinguish and differentiate, drawing outlines and borders around and in between things in order to categorize and understand them.

The dominance of solid perception has real implications for, and effects on, how we move and interact in and upon the world. Seeing solid enables us to see "diversity"—the multitude of colors, shapes, textures, and other visual qualities that exist in the world—and underwrites our tendency to create categories of colors, textures, and shapes, and also of nations, genders, sexualities, races, ethnicities, and classes. While these categories can be, for some at least, beneficial, there is also real harm done when people are forced into categories that don't entirely, or don't at all, represent them. The way we see, look at, view, and perceive of ourselves and others impacts our and their wellbeing and experience in the world.

The English language betrays the violent undercurrent of the eye's dependence on solidity. We speak of "acute" and "sharp" vision as the most optimum and refined; however, these words simultaneously carry connotations of "cutting" and "piercing" and point to the harm that this type of seeing can cause.[3] Biologists, furthermore, have noted the concurrence of eye improvement and predation in the explosive growth of the Cambrian era (Fernald 444).[4] The sense of sight, therefore, appears to have a primary relationship not only with differentiating but also with cruelty and dominance. Why do we "take" or "capture" an image rather than "make" one? *Veni vidi vici:* "I came, I saw, I

[3] "Acute" is related to the Latin *acus*, which means "needle" (*Online Etymology Dictionary*).

[4] Scientist Russell D. Fernald researches the visual system. He tells us: "Although the causes are unknown, explosive speciation or the 'Big Bang' of animal evolution happened during the Cambrian. Existing eye types improved radically, coincident with the appearance of carnivory and predation."

conquered."[5] Julius Caesar, the ultimate conqueror, identifies vision as the occasion for his assault. Language admits, and thereby warns of, the violence in solid vision.

In order to exert control over things and people in our environment, we call upon solid perception, which dramatizes differences and severs connections. With the solid-oriented eye, *molar* densities, as well as the "empty" spaces between them, come into relief, while the *molecular* and relational dynamics of existence remain blurred or out-of-focus. Deleuze and Guattari use the words "molar" and "molecular" in their book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* in order to articulate two different modes, or "segmentations," of organization. Linstead and Thanem summarize:

> Molar segmentation, which may be circular or linear, operates through large groupings, the sort that are often statistically manipulated, such as binary sex distinction… Molecular segmentation operates through the interaction and contiguity of adjacent self-organizing systems that catalyze, interact, and act relatively…. (1490-1491).

Solid perception corresponds to molar segmentation with its "large groupings" and "linear" divisions. Solid perception is aided by what is known as central, or *foveal* vision, which is the eye's high color and detail sensitivity at its center (Gould, Arfvidsson, Kaehler, et. Al). Within this regime of central vision and solid perception, however, the eye's capacity to "see between," to recognize and appreciate the dynamics of relation, "interaction," and change, is greatly compromised.

[5] *Veni vidi vici* is a quote from Julius Caesar's *Gallic War*, supposedly spoken when he triumphed over Pontus in 46 B.C. As Ida Östenberg points out in her paper "*Veni Vidi Vici* and Caesar's Triumph," the phrase is "a strong announcement of self" (813) exemplary of extreme solid vision.

Deleuze and Guattari discuss "two kinds of outlooks" in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Of the molar, solid perceiver they write:[6]

> [They] have a simple spyglass… They see branches, chains, rows, columns, dominoes, striae. Once in a while along the edges they discover a misshapen figure or a shaky contour. Then they bring out the terrible Ray Telescope. It is used not to see with but to cut with, to cut out shapes. This geometrical instrument… assures the dominion of the great signifying break everywhere and restores the momentarily threatened molar order. (200)

Deleuze and Guattari underscore the fact that the solid perceiver remains content as long as everything conforms to "molar order." When something escapes the boundaries of that order, however, the solid perceiver ceases really to "see" and instead merely enforces expected "shapes."

However, there are those few, according to Deleuze and Guattari, who are able to resist the violent tendencies of solid perception. Of more molecular, fluid perceivers they write:

> Their telescopes are complex and refined… And what they see is entirely different from what the others see. They see a whole microsegmentarity, details of details, "a roller coaster of possibilities," tiny movements that have not reached the edge, lines or vibrations that start to form long before there are outlined

[6] Deleuze and Guattari use the word "near-seer" for what I call here "solid perceiver." I refrain from using their word to avoid confusion, because "near" would appear to match better with "molecular." However, it is clear from an in-depth look at their writings that the "near-seer" does indeed correlate to my "solid perceiver."

> shapes… They can divine the future, but always in the form of a becoming of something that has already happened in a molecular matter. (201)

Fluid seers, according to Deleuze and Guattari, have a more "complex and refined" vision, to the point where they can even often tell what the future will bring because of their understanding of the mechanics of becoming. We call these people "visionaries," as if they possess magical powers, and they are often philosophers, inventors, artists, or poets. It is possible that, rather than magical, these visionaries have dismantled their reliance on solidity and have discovered a more fluid mode of perception.

This chapter sets out to articulate— via critical theory, poetry, creative nonfiction, a short story, and an art installation—the ways perceiving near, in, through, and with water shapes liquid perception. Making use of Deleuze's flow-oriented philosophy of cinema, as well as his other equally fluid-aligned collaborations with Félix Guattari, I examine a largely unexplored correlation between water and the eye and propose that the liquid offers the possibility of a "creative evolution" of human perception.[7] In relation to their notion of the "Body without Organs," which pertains to what they call the "virtual body" and its potentialities, Deleuze and Guattari ask:

> Is it really so sad and dangerous to be fed up with seeing with your eyes, breathing with your lungs, swallowing with your mouth, talking with your tongue, thinking with your brain, having an anus and larynx, head and legs? Why not

[7] I use the term "creative evolution" because Deleuze's philosophy is indebted to Henri Bergson, whose book *Creative Evolution* informed much of the former's philosophy of "becoming."

> walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, see through
> your skin, breathe with your belly…? (150-151)

Deleuze and Guattari advocate the deterritorialization of the organized body; they propose that we "find the body without organs. Find out how to make it" (151). In other words, they provoke us to think creatively about the emergent possibilities of our organism and to *make* new sensory assemblages.[8] Why not see with water? Why not imagine and explore the potentialities of a liquid eye? It is in this spirit of emergence that I aim to experiment toward an understanding of liquid visuality, and to show how some "visionaries"—writers, artists, and filmmakers immersed in the notion of creative becoming—have already discovered this potential.

The unfortunate dominant reality of the intellect and of academia is that, in order to call something into being as unique, we rely on solid and differentiating modes of thinking. While I hope to avoid dichotomizing the solid and the liquid as two binary and completely independent modes, I recognize that I run this risk as I endeavor to render liquid visuality clearly. My intent, however, is to suggest that vision, like matter, can transition into and out of various phases. "The thing and the perception of the thing are one and the same thing, one and the same image" (63), says Deleuze in *Cinema 1*. If the "thing" exists in phases of matter, and the thing and its perception are the same, then perception has phases, too. The liquid mode of perception, rather than opposite or opposed to the solid, "draw[s] along and effac[es]" it (Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 80). The relationship is not necessarily one of *this* versus *that*, but this *as it is becoming* that.

[8] *Assemblage* is a term Deleuze and Guattari introduce in *A Thousand Plateaus*. An assemblage is essentially a multiplicity, an arrangement of heterogenous, molecular elements that is open and subject to change.

Finally, I want to clarify that an entirely "pure" liquid perception, and for that matter an entirely solid one as well, is an unattainable, and likely undesirable, horizon. As Deleuze and Guattari explain of the Body without Organs, "You never reach [it], you can't reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit" (150). The eye can be liquescent but never entirely liquid; thus "a tear is the anticipation of the eye's future" (Brodksy 110). Liquid visuality, I will argue, implicates time as spilling toward an open and creative future.

While I acknowledge the necessity of the solid and its benefits for our health and wellbeing,[9] I'll admit this dissertation enacts a certain bias toward the liquid. Just as Deleuze and Guattari admit their bias toward the rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus*, saying, "we're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They've made us suffer too much (15)," my intention is to suggest that we cultivate and create the liquid as an alternative to what I have described above as the domination and violence of the solid. This does not mean "dismantle[ing] the [solid] by destroying it all of a sudden. You have to diminish it, shrink it" (Deleuze and Guattari 162). Rather than eradicate solid perception, we can aim to dissolve its stronghold by adding more liquid to our images.

The Word on Seeing and Perceiving

At this point, I feel somewhat obliged to clarify my use, and inter-use, of the words "seeing" and "perceiving," and their respective variants. There is, of course, an

[9] As Laura U. Marks points out in her book *The Skin of the Film*, we need multiple types of vision in order to navigate our lives. Referring to optical and haptic vision, she admits that "we need both kinds of visuality: it is hard to look closely at a lover's skin with optical vision; it is hard to drive a car with haptic vision" (163).

intellectual distinction between the two. According Robert Stufflebeam, who writes for the *Consortium on Cognitive Science Instruction*, the difference between sight and perception is "the difference between 'seeing' and 'seeing as'" (1). In other words, perceiving takes seeing a step further in that it is the recognition and/or cognitive processing of what is seen. Stufflebeam claims that "without the awareness of what you are seeing, you are only visually sensing your environment, not perceiving it" (1). However rational this explanation seems, I find it disputable for several reasons. First of all, I question whether it is really possible *only* to sense the environment visually. The brain appears to be as instrumental as the eye in the processing of light as image. And even if it were possible, we certainly do not use the word "see" with this understanding in mind (hence even the author uses the phrase "visually sense" instead of "see"). There are copious examples in colloquial English that reveal the meaning of the word "see" to include "understanding": "to see the light" "to see the glass as half-empty," "to see through someone," "to see the point," and many, many more. Even "Ah, I see" means "I understand." Seeing, as we perform it, is already seeing as.

Therefore, "seeing" and "perceiving" are interchangeable: we generally engage in, or understand, seeing as "seeing as." However, the liquid visuality that I explore gravitates away from over-coded, molar "seeing as" and toward "visual sensing" that is both more open and "refined." Rather than remain positioned at the "top" of the hierarchy,[10] then, the sense of sight takes on a more democratic role as a mediator of the senses.

[10] Vision has long been considered the most noble sense. In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle claims that "sight best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions" (980a.21).

The Waters of the Eye

Due to our visual orientation toward the solid, we often forget, neglect, or dismiss the fact that the eye has a profound biological, historical, and cultural relationship with the liquid. The eye is, like the rest of the human body, made up primarily of water. The mechanics of sight depend on two liquid humors: the aqueous humor and the vitreous humor, which, respectively, nourish the eye and help it maintain its shape. In addition, lacrimal glands located between the eyeball and the lids produce the watery substance that we know as tears. Crying, as I will discuss below, is a uniquely human function and has enduring cultural and artistic resonances (Lutz). While we commonly conceive of the eye as a receiver of light and a producer of image, we less often bring to the forefront of our thoughts the fact that the eye is both composed of and composing water. The conjunction of vision and the liquid in the eye might appear to be happenstance and inconsequential; their coexistence in the same organ, however, establishes a relationship. Just as "what goes out of the mouth and what goes in are inextricably mingled because there is only one orifice for feeding and speaking" (Fussell 440), so water's presence in and around the eye affects, and/or offers the possibility of affecting, the ways in which we perceive.

Furthermore, the eyes are attracted to water. There is a biological reason for this, of course, as we need to detect water in our environment in order to survive. Yet water also seems to attract us for reasons beyond sustaining physical life. In some religions, baptism offers the promise of eternal *spiritual* life. Water shimmers, glimmers, glistens, and sparkles, catching the eye without fixing an image; importantly, however, it also reflects. Even before the invention of various types of stone and metal mirrors thousands

of years ago, the first looking glasses were, most likely, pools of calm water. It is possibly through water that people were first able to see images of themselves. Water enables our eyes to discover fluidity, to unfix themselves from the body and invert the gaze. The myth of Narcissus, pictured by countless painters, writers, and other artists, takes up this subject matter and, in part, cautions us against fixing upon water a solid gaze, lest we be "stricken by the sight [of our] image in the pool" (Ovid 93-94).

Tom Lutz discusses the inward turn of the eyes in his book *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears*, arguing that

> crying allows us to turn away from the cause of our anguish and turn inward, away from the world and toward our own bodily sensations, our own feelings. Our feelings overwhelm the world, or at least our ability to process any new information from our world. (23)

Tears blur vision and disarm the solid, grasping gaze, allowing the crying subject to attend to the less visual realm of feelings and emotions. Rather than completely shut down the sense of sight, however, it's possible the becoming-liquid that crying enacts brings the "invisible" and the "emotional" to the attention of the eyes in a way that dry, solid vision cannot. Seeing through and with tears and other liquids calls upon a less figurative visuality, one that is reflected in artistic movements such as abstract art and expressionism. But tears do not "reveal" the contents of an "inside." Rather, liquids have the potential to open or alter vision in a way that frees us from binary constructs. Emotions, feelings, ideas, time, and other complex subtleties can and should also be brought to the attention and realm of the eyes.

Deleuze recognizes water's capacity to expand and reorient vision, claiming that "a clairvoyant function is developed in water, in opposition to earthly vision: it is in the water that … perception enjoy[s] a scope and interaction, a truth which it did not have on land" (*Cinema 1* 79). Clairvoyance is the ability to perceive beyond the ordinary range of perception (*Merriam-Webster*), whether it be "divin[ing] the future, "seeing thoughts," or perceiving at the more molecular level. Water, according to Deleuze, alters not only the "scope" of vision (for example, to the level of the emotions) but also highlights its "interaction." For Deleuze, water brings movement, connection, and relation (hence, *inter-action*) to the attention of the eyes. Rather than fixate on solids, objects, and masses, seeing through, with, and in water brings movement, shift, and flow to the forefront of vision. This is one reason why water became such a privileged image in the modern and postmodern visual, as well as non-visual, arts. Due to its affiliation with motion, water might call more upon peripheral, as opposed to central, vision. Peripheral vision, though weak in humans, is useful for detecting motion and seeing in the dark, and remains largely under-researched in its potentialities. As an awareness of the edges, peripheral vision might offer insight into more inclusive and generative modes of seeing.

Liquid Modernity, or *Wet* Modernity?

For sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, "liquid modernity," his preferred term for what others might call postmodernity, is the current phase of modernity that is lighter and more fluid than the "solid modernity" which characterized the first half of the 20th century. Brought about by neo-liberal markets, digital technology, and the ever-increasing freedom of the individual, liquid modernity is, according to

Bauman, “a sequence of incessant new beginnings” in which “time flows, but no longer marches on” (“Liquid Arts,” 122, 121). Within this more temporal and fluid phase of culture, “life is a daily rehearsal of universal transience” (123), and even our understanding and practice of consumerism shifts:

> Consumerism is assumed to mean greed for acquisition; the wish to accumulate things, to have more and more. Is this still true? It now seems that it is the rapidity, the promptness of disposing of things, which is the secret of contemporary consumerism: not accumulation, not acquisition, but change. (123)

Our collective cultural desire for lightness and fluidity has, according to Bauman, led to our coveting of the *act* of change, of novelty, rather than the new objects themselves. Since our focus has re-centered on the process rather than the object, the act of discarding becomes as fetishized as the act of acquiring.

For the arts in particular, according to Bauman, liquid modernity means the disappearance or destruction of the work of art. In its place, “aesthetics permeat[e] every nook and cranny of our world” (“Liquid Arts” 122). Art is no longer an object but an event, dependent more than ever on the circumstances of time, place, and audience. The end of the aesthetic event, or the art object’s disposal, is “built in, as part of the original design of the work,” and therefore what we see is “a convergence into a single act of destructive creation or creative destruction” (121, 122). Bauman’s choice of the words “creation” and “destruction,” however, betrays what I believe to be conceptual roots that go all the way back to the Tree of Knowledge, whose fruits, when consumed, created the binary distinctions of good and evil. Bauman, therefore, applies solid perception to a liquid phenomenon, which, I believe, curbs his understanding. A more fluid, Deleuzian

approach would consider what Bauman calls "convergence" as the awareness of "emergence" within the open whole.

Bauman finds examples of his liquid modern art in the work of several early 21st century Parisian artists, and it seems to me that, if he were still living, he would have found a consummate example in the recent, news-making event surrounding the auction of street-artist Banksy's *Girl with Balloon* (2006). On October 5, 2018, the painted copy of his infamous street stencil self-shredded in its frame immediately after having been sold for $1.4 million dollars. Tellingly, Banksy renamed the painting-event *Love is in the Bin*, and labeled his Instagram video of the event "The urge to destroy is also a creative urge," a quote often attributed to Pablo Picasso (Reyburn). The event's performance of the object's destruction, the new title's emphasis on and privileging of the receptacle of disposal, and Banksy's citing of Picasso's reference to the "convergence" of creation and destruction make *Love is in the Bin* a quintessential example of Bauman's notion of liquid aesthetics. What's more, the monetary value of what remains of the piece is expected to have dramatically increased, revealing that, in the liquid modern era, the creative destruction/destructive creation model of art production is inextricable from the flows of capital.

Bauman's understanding of liquid aesthetics, however, while there is certainly overlap, does not fully accord with my own. Bauman's many essays and books that address the topic of liquid modernity are laced with anxiety, and sometimes with downright fear.[11] In his book *Liquid Modernity*, he warns of a "dystopia made to the measure of liquid modernity" (15). In his essay "Liquid Arts," which is the one I mostly

[11] One of Bauman's books is entitled *Liquid Fear*.

rely on in my analysis above, he appears to lament liquid modern art as not adhering to the notion of "timeless and universal" beauty, claiming that philosophers have always "agreed that beauty is something altogether distinct from ephemeral fads" (124). He insists on a prevailing notion of beauty as "harmony, proportion, symmetry, order and suchlike" (Bauman, "Liquid Arts" 124), and hints that the aesthetic events of liquid modernity lack meaning, or at the very least, lack the time necessary to sufficiently process or make meaning.

While Bauman, admittedly, characterizes his era of liquid modernity quite well, and exercises modest control of his judgment, I believe his anxiety betrays his preference for and reliance on solid perception. For one, Bauman fails fully to recognize that a transformed notion of art and aesthetics implicates a transformed notion of beauty. Indeed, art that privileges "order" and "symmetry" is not only increasingly unpopular, it is also often considered problematic in that it is hegemonic. Bauman also reveals his solid standards when he suggests that the postmodern arts lack meaning. Just because meaning isn't solid or enduring doesn't mean it isn't there. It is transformed— and transforming— subtle, molecular, heterogenous. The ability to perceive of meaning and meaning-making as fluid and ephemeral requires a liquid approach, a willingness to be somewhat swept up in the flow. Otherwise, like Bauman, one remains unable to engage postmodern art aesthetically, ideologically, conceptually. *Love is in the Bin* might be more fluidly conceptualized as "Love is in the Recycling Bin": that is, the meaning resides in that which is on its way to becoming something new. It is telling, I think, that works like *Love is in the Bin*, as well the works critiqued by Bauman in his essay "Liquid Arts," do not contain actual images of liquids.

In line with proposing somewhat molar arguments, Bauman fails to address certain qualities of liquids and liquidity that might make his reading of liquid modernity more nuanced. He spends a considerable amount of time in *Liquid Modernity* discussing the shapelessness, mobility, and temporality of liquids, yet he completely ignores the fact that liquids are material. If society is liquid rather than just *fluid*, then there must be a material, and therefore haptic, aspect to this liquidity, as well. How might a consideration of not just liquid, but of *wet*, modernity enrich our understanding of liquid aesthetics? Wetness, indeed, must be *felt*. It is a quality that solicits the sense of touch, and therefore if Bauman had considered wetness in his work, it might have undermined his claim that human beings are becoming less and less connected with one another. Wetness also inevitably implicates the female body and female sexuality, another very likely reason why the notion of "wet modernity" was left alone by Bauman.

However, wet modernity is evident, I would assert, in the emergence of a society much more supportive of women, and of gender and sexual fluidity, than ever before. Witness the success of the #MeToo movement, the legalization of same-sex marriage in 26 countries throughout the world, and the results of the recent midterm elections in the United States.[12] Even if we still have a lot to accomplish in terms of equity, there are potentials in the notion of "wet modernity" that Bauman left unexplored. However impossible, Bauman seems to paint a picture of *dry* liquidity.[13] This allows him, I believe, to stabilize, control, and ultimately judge the liquid as dangerous. Yet, as geographers

[12] According to *Time* magazine, in November 2018, "a record number of women were elected to the House [of Representatives] by a wide margin."

[13] I must admit that my examples of "wet modernity" refer to events that happened after Bauman wrote *Liquid Modernity*. Nonetheless, the wet, female trend of liquid society had been set in motion long before.

Peters and Steinberg remind us in their essay "Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces…," "water has a taken-for-granted" or "stubborn" materiality (252, 248). Thinking, seeing, and perceiving with water, the archetypal liquid, demands consideration of its material qualities.

Peters and Steinberg, in proposing a "wet ontology," call attention to the materiality of the sea and its potentials to enmist, rather than mystify, liquid culture. They write that their essay's purpose is

> not merely to endorse the perspective of a world of flows, connections, liquidities, and becomings, but also to propose a means by which the sea's material and phenomenological distinctiveness can facilitate the *reimagining and reenlivening* of a world ever on the move… With a wet ontology, [we] can *reinvigorate*, redirect, and reshape debates that are all too often restricted by terrestrial limits. (248, emphasis mine)

The authors propose thinking with and through the distinct materiality of (sea)water as a way in which to revitalize our liquid "world ever on the move." If the arts are one of the ways in which we attempt to revitalize or reconfigure the world, then exploring the image of water as it *materializes* in poetry, literature, film, and the other arts is one way to insist on meaning in the age of liquid culture.

In his book *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, Gaston Bachelard writes that "every poetics must accept components of material essence" (3). That is, he claims, every artist tends toward the materiality of a certain element— fire, earth, air, or water. Bachelard differentiates this *material imagination*, as he calls it, from *formal imagination* by explaining that the latter is concerned with "forms and colors,

variety and metamorphosis, or [with] what surfaces become," while the former engages "depth, volume, and the inner recesses of substance" (Bachelard 2). A material imagination, then, slips through and sinks to where the eye cannot see, making an "image" of "insides." However, for Bachelard, what lies at the "heart" (1) of the material imagination remains a substance that is "stable, dense, slow," the "lovely monotony of matter" (2). With regard to the materiality of water in particular, while he recognizes its qualities of "flux" and change, he ultimately lingers on its concreteness as heavy, dark, and deep (6, 20).

I would argue, quite differently, that water is material *as* movement, *as* change. Water cannot be water without its continual shape-shifting, no matter how great or small; it would be something else altogether. Water, as that which gives the most visibility to movement and change (Deleuze *Cinema 1*, 77), brings before the eyes a world whose "heart," whose "truth," is creative becoming. Deleuze insists that "there is no other truth than the creation of the New: creativity, emergence" (*Cinema 2*, 146-147). He also says that "only the creative artist takes the power of the false to a degree which is realized, not in form, but transformation" (Deleuze *Cinema 2*, 146). Therefore, it is my view that certain "visionary artists," those whose "imagination dreams more specifically of creative acts" (Bachelard 20), make "special use" (Deleuze *Cinema 2*, 87) of water because they are in tune with the world and its liquid becomings. Images of water in their respective arts materialize their vision of the world as creative and emergent, thereby shaping the reader/viewer/participant's liquid visuality.

Make It New, Make It Liquid: The Modernist Aesthetics of Water

The brief poetic movement of Imagism (1912-1917) is often referred to by scholars as the starting point of literary modernism. The Imagist movement was, in large part, organized by American ex-patriot writer Ezra Pound, who had adapted the philosophy of British poet T.E. Hulme. Disenchanted with the "moaning and whining" of romantic poetry, Hulme advocated, ironically, "hard, dry, classical verse" (Hulme 126, 133). From Hulme's ideas and along with other writers, Pound drafted the tenets of Imagism and found good examples in the poetry of his friend and former lover Hilda Doolittle, known as H.D. While indeed direct and concrete, and with many references to classical Greek mythology and style, H.D.'s poetry is not particularly "dry." Rather, the writings of H.D. betray an intense attraction to the image and aesthetics of water.

In one of H.D.'s earliest and most famous poems, "Oread" (1914), the narrator's voice, presumed to be that of the eponymous mountain nymph from Greek mythology, commands:

> Whirl up, sea—
> whirl your pointed pines,
> splash your great pines
> on our rocks,
> hurl your green over us,
> cover us with your pools of fir. (*Poetry Foundation*)

This poem is intriguing because its concrete and "hard" images do not lead to a solid state of perception. While the narrator attempts to identify herself with the land and separate herself from the sea with repeated uses of the pronouns "our," "us" and "your," the image

that the reader inherits from this poem is one that confuses and/or blends the two environments. That is, the image created doesn't "make sense"; it does not reinforce over-coded, solid perception.

In her study of H.D., Susan Stanford Friedman suggests that "Oread" reveals a different kind of seeing. In *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.*, she writes:

> the rational eye of the conscious mind would not see pine-tree waves, splashing pines, or "pools of fir." Such vision belongs to [what Freud calls] the "Kingdom of the Illogical"…. the poem presents a distortion of reality that suggests a whole range of interrelated ideas and emotions encoded in a few images. Decoding these condensed distortions would have to begin with the recognition that they result from a picture-making mode of thought, rather than an analytic mode. The poem significantly does not rely upon similes, which by definition remind the reader that the images only make comparisons, not equivalences. The speaker does not say that a rough sea looks *like* pointed trees; she *sees* tree-waves. Just as the dream-work gives the dreamer a visual representation of unconscious impulses, so the poem conjures an illustration of non-rational reality (57).

"Oread" eliminates the simile-like distance between objects and instead "interrelate[s]" them as fresh image. This more generative vision, which "gives motion, fury, and a watery stillness to the land" (Friedman 57), works in a "picture-making mode" similar to dreaming. Significantly, these pictures are not just received by the eyes and recognized by the brain; they are made, created anew. "Non-rational reality" is brought to the realm of the eyes. Furthermore, with the figure of the sea in this poem, commanded to "whirl

up" and "cover us," H.D. both commands and enacts a liquid mode of vision that decenters tiresome solidity and spurs new relationships between and to things.

Seeing as if covered and subsumed by the sea was both a theme of H.D.'s poetry and her philosophical concern. Her first collection of poems, *Sea Garden* (1916), hints at this with its mere title. In her experimental work "Notes on Thought and Vision" (1982), written after the dangerous yet successful birth of her daughter, Perdita, in 1919, H.D. sets out to describe a creative state of consciousness, which she calls "over-mind" or "over-conscious mind," and its corresponding sense of vision:

> If I could visualize or describe [this] over-mind in my own case, I should say this: it seems to me that a cap is over my head, a cap of consciousness over my head, my forehead, *affecting a little my eyes*. Sometimes when I am in that state of consciousness, things about me appear slightly blurred *as if seen under water*" (18, emphasis mine).

For H.D., this creative consciousness, which she claims we can also witness by looking at Leonardo da Vinci's *Madonna of the Rocks*, literally liquefies her sense of vision. The quality and mode of seeing becomes aqueous, and "thoughts pass and are visible like fish swimming under clear water" (19). Borders between what is understood, under the regime of solid perception, as external to the self and what is internal break down; the "things about [her]" become abstracted while thoughts take visual shape.

H.D.'s liquid vision, while somewhat "blurred" and abstracted, is not less "real" or material. She describes the "cap" over her head as "like water, transparent, fluid yet with definite body" and as being "like a closed sea-plant, jelly-fish, or anemone" (18, 19). This liquid mode of seeing, significantly, adds marine or liquid "body" to consciousness

in addition to its "picture-making" function, and is itself described as and made into bizarre images of sea creatures enwrapping the poet's head. H.D. generates these three sea-vision figures, but then seems to adopt "jelly-fish consciousness" as the primary image of creative consciousness "in [her] personal language or vision" (20, 40). An extremely complex mode of visual and cognitive awareness that itself seems to fluxuate and take on new dimensions as the essay progresses, jelly-fish consciousness, for H.D., includes "a set of super-feelings" that "extend out and about us" like "floating tentacles" (19). Furthermore, this consciousness can be experienced both as "vision of the womb and vision of the brain" (20). Womb-vision, which she also calls "womb-brain," "love-brain" (22) and "love-vision" (20), becomes "inflamed and excited by [the] interchange of ideas"; it is a relational and interactive vision generated by intellectual and emotional exchange. According to H.D., jelly-fish vision can shift between the "two lenses" of womb and brain, but when they "are properly adjusted" they "make one picture" (23). While impossible to summarize such a fluid notion as "jelly-fish consciousness," it is helpful to recapitulate that, for H.D., this "abnormal consciousness" (19) is concurrently hyper-material, picture-making, generative, sensuous, relational, and plural. Similar to Deleuze's sense of a "clairvoyant function" in water, H.D.'s marine-situated consciousness expands the confines of normal vision to become visionary.

Virginia Woolf is often credited with being one of the most influential modernist writers. According to Woolf scholar Patrizia Muscogiuri, "Woolf's engagement with the sea pervades most of her novels and resurfaces recurrently in her short stories, diaries, and essays, letting emerge… a thalassic aesthetics" (101). This aesthetics of the sea and its fluidity is notorious in her well-known novels *Ms. Dalloway* (1925), *To the*

Lighthouse (1927), and *The Waves* (1931), which I will, unfortunately, not have the space to discuss in this chapter. However, as Muscogiuri acknowledges, the aesthetic also emerges in her shorter works, such as the ironically titled "Solid Objects" (1920), which according to Bill Brown, "is in fact not a story about solidity, but about the fluidity of objects" (3). Indeed, the solidity of objects and of perception seems to be posited and positioned in the story for the sole purpose of being resisted, effaced, and transformed.

The story begins with a narrator's description of their hyper-solidifying vision:[14] "The only thing that moved upon the vast semicircle of the beach was one small black spot" (Woolf 24). Rarely are beaches in the perfect shape of a semicircle; this is, I would argue, an over-identification and hyper-solidification of its form. Furthermore, as this "one small black spot" moves nearer to the narrator, "it [becomes] apparent… that this spot possesse[s] four legs… [and] it [is] composed of the persons of two young men" (Woolf 24). The small black spot breaks its form to become two men with "mouths, noses, chins, little moustaches, tweed caps, rough boots, shooting coats, and check stockings" (Woolf 24). While the "thing," the "black spot," proves to be, in fact, a collection of parts and people, the narrator's solidifying gaze betrays itself again as the two men appear to have exactly the same features and exactly the same clothes. In other words, they are treated, for all intents and purposes, like one unified, solid object. Indeed, the narrator claims that "nothing was so solid, so living, so hard… as these two bodies" (Woolf 24-25). This opening sequence establishes that a prominent theme of the story is the solidifying tendency of vision and perception.

[14] I will refer to the narrator with the pronouns "they" and "their" both because the narrator's gender is not made apparent and because the narrator's perspective is quite fluid, moving among and between that of the characters and that of an unspecified external presence.

At this point the two men "fl[i]ng themselves down" on the beach. Suddenly, they each have names, and Charles skims "flat pieces of slate over the water" (Woolf 25). While Charles hurls solid rock "over" the liquid element, John, quite differently, starts "burrowing his fingers down, down, into the sand" (Woolf 25). Sand is, in a sense, unsolidified rock, and this moment seems to signal a split in the narrator's perception of, as well as the perception experienced by, the two men. Intriguingly, the narrator then describes what happens to John's gaze:

> His eyes lost their intensity, or rather the background of thought and experience which gives an inscrutable depth to the eyes of grown people disappeared, leaving only the clear transparent surface, expressing nothing but wonder, which the eyes of young children display. No doubt the act of burrowing in the sand had something to do with it. (Woolf 25)

Here one mode of seeing (with) the eyes, one that requires "intensity" and "depth" and stems from age and experience, is transformed into another mode that is "transparent" and associated with "wonder" and youth. This more receptive and fluid quality of utilizing the eyes that John discovers continues to evolve in this paragraph but is, in line with the story title's proclamation, abandoned by the narrator as the rest of the story develops.

As he digs in the sand, John remembers how, as it did when he was a child, "the water oozes round [his] finger-tips; the hole then becomes a moat; a well; a spring; a secret channel to the sea" (Woolf 25). While Charles resorts to skimming the molar, flat rocks over the water, essentially making of the sea a hard, resistant surface and then filling it with solid objects, John engages through, in, and with the finer and more

molecular version of rock until his hands are directly submerged in the seawater. Their diverse modes of perception are thus reflected in the diverse composition of, as well as ways of engaging with, the substance of rock. Contemporaneous to the divergence of the two character's modes of perception, the narrator betrays their own tangled sense of perception when one of John's hands, exploring in the water, "curl[s] round something hard—a full drop of solid matter" (Woolf 25). The softness of the words "curled" and "round" are mismatched with the rigidity of "something hard," and the noun "drop," usually reserved for liquids, contrasts outright with the adjective "solid." The narrator, previously hyper-shaping and restricting the beach as a semicircle, now interrupts their own solid perception with a liquid term. Furthermore, the narrator's use of the phrase "solid matter" as opposed to "solid thing" or "solid object" is similarly significant in that it pairs a term that implies shapelessness and molecularity ("matter") with an adjective that imposes shape and molarity ("solid").

John pulls this "lump of glass" up to the surface, and the narrator imagines, like a child, its many possible original forms, where it had come from, and also what it could become. "It was impossible to say whether it had been a bottle, tumbler, or window-pane," admits the narrator, and envisions the many types of jewelry ("part of a necklace, or a dull, green light upon a finger") into which it could be made (Woolf 25, 26). The narrator also invents elaborate stories about how this "gem" ("perhaps after all it was really a gem") came to rest on the shore (Woolf 26). The narrator's telling of John's perception of this green object, described variably as both "irregular" and "definite," "thinn[ing] and thicken[ing]," "opaque" and "light" (Woolf 25, 26), is unstable, fluid, and

generative. Charles, however, "dismisses" the lump of glass completely because it is not flat and cannot be skipped.

As with the varying compositions and perceptions of rock described previously, this piece of green glass works, according to Brown, as "the figure, or the conceptual image, that Woolf offers us to think… the world anew" (22). That is, the lump of glass as experienced by John offers us a new, more fluid mode of understanding objects and world around us. This is an understanding that resists hardening into a firm, over-coded shape, one that sees through the "object" to "matter." Brown calls the lump of glass a "material metonym whose metonymic function has been arrested— the unconsummated metonym, as it were" (22). In other words, the lump of glass stands for something else, but that something is not pre-determined. To Brown's ideas I would add that, given the focus on sight and vision evident from the very beginning of the story, Woolf also offers us this image as a way to *see* the world anew. The green lump of glass allows for a liquid vision more like "visually sensing" than "seeing as." John "turned [the lump of glass] in his hands; he held it to the light; he held it so that its irregular mass blotted out the body and extended right arm of his friend. The green thinned and thickened slightly as it was held against the sky or against the body" (Woolf 26). This found object from the sea, without "any edge or shape" (Woolf 25), becomes a new lens through which to re-envision bodies and worlds.

The poet Wallace Stevens was likewise attracted to a liquid visual aesthetic. His poem "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" (1924) presents five almost identical stanzas, each with ultra-fine variations of the reflection of clouds as produced by the "machine/ of ocean" (6-7). The poem enacts, and therefore shapes, a liquid visuality, one that generates

shifting impressions and sensations of the "sea-clouds" (13) rather than a solid and fixed image. Poet and critic Jonathan Holden applies a productive "mathematical analogy" to "Sea Surface," suggesting that when each of the poem's repeating "coefficients" is coupled with a variable, "a different value or 'light' [is assumed] in each section" (136). For example, the word "green" recurs in exactly the same position in each stanza, but varies in quality as "paradisal green," "sham-like green," "uncertain green," "too-fluent green," and "motley green" (Stevens 5, 23, 41, 59, 77). While Holden points to the fluidity of perception enacted by this poem with his assessment that these varying values are, rather than numerical, "aesthetic— … an intimation of something impalpable yet recognizable" (136-137), I would counter that these descriptions of green are not at all recognizable. That is, they are not fixed like the shades of green one finds in a Crayola box. Unlike the designation "lime green," for example, "uncertain green" will likely take on a different hue in each reader's imagination, because it is not an over-coded and fixed referent. Furthermore, the notion of "uncertain green," with its utter lack of confidence, will naturally waver within each individual's reading, producing, perhaps, multiple synchronous greens (a "motley-green," perhaps?). These oscillations of visual reference,[15] and the reader's particularly active co-generative role, constitute the poem's sense of liquid visuality, which is materialized by the figure of the ocean-machine. This ever-generative body of water is, at the same time, a metonym for Stevens' poesis.

[15] My use of "oscillations of reference" is a play upon the phrase "point of reference." The commonality of "green" in each of the five lines links them in relation to one another, yet the unrecognizable qualifiers such as "uncertain" and "too-fluent" set their relationship in motion. Furthermore, the adjectives themselves seem to convey movement; "uncertain" indicates an oscillation or mediation between positions, and "too-fluent" suggests a green that outdoes itself, that spills outside of its own greenness. Even "sham-like green" hints at an imposter green, one that splits itself in two as one shade that purports to be another.

While “Sea Surface” is a stand-out example of liquid visuality in Stevens’ work, many of his poems are more concerned with a liquid *aurality*. His well-known poem “The Idea of Order at Key West” (1934) concerns the poet’s (implied with the word “maker”) “rage to order words of the sea” (54), contemplating whether “the dark voice of the sea” (21) is “sound alone” or “more than that” (28). The speaker of the poem declares that, with respect to a certain “she” singing by the sea, “the water never formed to mind or voice” (2), and that “the song and water were not medleyed sound” (9). In making these negating statements, the speaker insists on a gap between self (“mind or voice”) and environment (“water”), and between raw material (“water”) and art (“song”). Yet in this dogmatic insistence, the speaker plays a sly trick equivalent to the “don’t think about a purple elephant” scheme. Essentially, in declaring that “the water never formed to mind or voice,” the reader then *forms* water to the mind and voice. In announcing that “the song and water were not medleyed sound,” the reader then creates a liquid medley.

This ebb-and-flow movement of saying one thing and performing another is constant in the poem, and seems to work at unraveling binary oppositions between self and other, art and environment, maker and made. Perhaps in solidarity with the final line of W.B. Yeats’s “Among School Children” (1928), in which the speaker asks, “How can we know the dancer from the dance?” (64), Stevens’ supposed “rage to order” backfires in a soup of fluid selves and sentient seascape (“the genius of the sea” (1) and the “speech of air” (26)). This is especially evident in the following stanza:

> She was the single artificer of the world
> In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,
> Whatever self it had, became the self

That was her song, for she was the maker. (37-40)

Not only does this section of the poem seem to logically contradict the negating line mentioned in the previous paragraph in that the sea *does* take form because of her voice, its wave-like lulling, repetition, and enfolding of the words "she," "sea," and "self," not to mention their alliteration, ensure that there is no "single artificer." In other words, the multiple, fluid selves that emerge like waves— distinct for a moment and then immersed once more in an uncertain plurality—*unmake* the notion of a singular maker or subjectivity. The word "she," already fluid as a pronoun without specific reference (the singing "she" remains unidentified), is made even more ambiguous in line 40, where it can be read as referring to the sea. The sea, then, is implicit and vital as co-creator, and the "machine" to which Stevens often turns with his poetry. Stevens finds a similar generativity in the temporality and movement of music and sound, and in "The Idea of Order at Key West" the figure of the sea and the realm of sound come together to materialize his liquid aesthetic. Indeed, with water's liquid babble (Bachelard 32) and its importance in "research on rhythm" (Deleuze *Cinema 1*, 77), liquid visuality often includes echoes, as well as traces, of the aural.

Cinema and Emergent Visualities

In the modern era, the advent of technological apparatuses like microscopes, telescopes, and cameras have allowed human beings both to enhance their sense of vision and to produce new modes of seeing. Cinema, with its unique ability to create an "impression" or "image" of time (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*; Deleuze *Cinema 2*), is an especially powerful medium for reshaping vision in the age of liquid modernity, when

"it is mostly time that matters" (Bauman 2). The past several decades have seen film scholars work toward the articulation of various cinematic "visualities"— from "transcultural visuality" (Zhang) to "queer visuality" (Kincaid) to "haptic visuality" (Marks), among others. The notion of haptic visuality, developed by Laura U. Marks in her book *The Skin of the Film*, has been particularly influential in the world of film scholarship. Marks describes "optical visuality," more or less equivalent to the solid state of perception that I described earlier in this chapter, as "see[ing] things from enough distance to perceive them as distinct forms in deep space: in other words, how we usually conceive of vision" (162). With haptic visuality, alternatively, "the eyes themselves function as organs of touch" (162). Haptic seeing "discern[s] texture" rather than form, and is "more inclined to move than to focus, more inclined to graze than to gaze" (162). Haptic visuality "pull[s] the viewer in close," implicates the body, and "privileges the material presence of the image" (163).

Marks' notion of haptic visuality is helpful to my own project, which aims to show how liquid images instantiate a "liquid visuality," for several reasons. For one, it serves as a model for articulating other, less optical, modes of seeing.[16] For another, there are several senses in which haptic visuality and liquid visuality overlap. Perhaps the most apparent intersection of the two visualities is in their potential "up-closeness" and materiality. Both haptic visuality and liquid visuality tend to cultivate a nearness that dissolves molar forms into molecular matter, thereby heightening the participation of the other senses. Haptic visuality can be said to be more specifically human, more intimate,

[16] It is curious, but not coincidental, that she builds on the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari in a parallel manner.

and more directly implicative of the body and its sense of touch. Liquid visuality can be conceptualized as a variation of haptic visuality in that it "touches" water with the eyes. Both modes of seeing are "more inclined to move than to focus," although I would argue that liquid visuality moves with a different rhythm, more akin to water. Finally, both visualities are, I would suggest, involved in the somewhat political project of decolonizing the eye and making (material) space for non-dominant modes of seeing and envisioning. Marks writes that her purpose is largely to show how haptic images are being called upon to "represent the experiences of people living in diaspora" (xi). Liquid images, relatedly, shape a mode of seeing that is more heterogenous and diverse, more intersubjective and relational, than that for which solid, optical vision allows. Liquid visuality, then, may be one of cinema's contributions to evolving our eyes for the age of liquid modernity.

Water's Material Echo in Cinema

The cinema has a relationship with water and liquidity that, in a sense, predates its own birth. Analog photography, one of the cinema's most immediate and intimate predecessors and the medium with which it initially shared the commonality of "film stock," relies heavily on water and liquid chemicals to produce and process images. Photographer Jeff Wall, in his short but influential essay "Photography and Liquid Intelligence," elaborates his understanding of the "liquid intelligence" of the medium. "Water," he explains, "embodies a memory-trace of very ancient production processes—of washing, bleaching, dissolving, and so on" (Wall 109). Therefore, he claims, "the echo of water in photography evokes its prehistory" (Wall 109). Russian filmmaker Andrei

Tarkovsky's suggestion that "maybe [his love for water is] an ancient memory, my ancestors energizing to life from water," has an interesting resonance with this line of thought. If water in photography echoes the ancient processes of (its) production, it must in some ways spill over into its "sibling" medium (Prodger). The making and developing of celluloid film stock, in fact, involves liquid chemicals and rinsing techniques that recall those used in the darkroom to produce photographs. Water also played a role in the history of fluid camera motion; a steam-powered engine was developed to power a camera strapped to a horse's saddle for Abel Gance's silent film *Napoléon* (1927), largely considered innovative and experimental for its time.

The motion-picture camera, however, has also produced images of water since its beginnings. Three of the ten films presented by the Lumière brothers at the first ever public movie screening at the Salon Indien du Grand Café in Paris prominently feature water: *L'arroseur arrosé* (*The Sprinkler Sprinkled*, 1895), *La pêche aux poisons rouges* (*Fishing for Goldfish*, 1895), and *Baignade en mer* (*The Sea*, 1895). The novelty of a medium that captures motion and time meant, naturally, that filmmakers were drawn to the element that best expresses temporality and movement. In other words, to explore water as an image was to explore the potentials of the medium. Deleuze discusses the early relationship between water and cinema in *Cinema 1*, explaining that "water is the most perfect environment in which movement can be extracted from the thing moved, or mobility from movement itself. This is the origin of the visual and auditory importance of water in the research on rhythm" (77). Filmmaking that investigates the image of water is, essentially, "research" on visual rhythm and an exploration of "the real as vibration in its deepest sense" (78). While photography, perhaps, "freezes" time (an echo of

liquidity), the cinema thaws it, bringing its vibration or pulse before our eyes. Water in cinema, I'd therefore suggest, often enacts a *metacinepoetics* in that it speaks to the unique temporality and fluidity of the medium. "Perhaps more than any other element," writes Gaston Bachelard in *Water and Dreams*, "water is a complete poetic reality" (15).

Deleuze locates a "predilection for running water" with what he calls the "members of the French school" (*Cinema 1*, 77), filmmakers like Jean Renoir, Jean Grémillon, and Jean Vigo who were active in the 1930s and 40s and whose work is often labeled "poetic realism." According to Deleuze, the copious images of water in the films of this period— whether present as rivers, canals, the sea, or other liquid forms— reveal "a perceptive system distinct from earthly perceptions" (77). In other words, the films establish, via water images, a liquid perceptive mode as a counterpoint to land-based, solid perception. Deleuze highlights Vigo's *L'Atalante* (1934) as the film that "bring[s] this opposition to its peak" (79). Widely considered to be one of the greatest films of all time, *L'Atalante* features a newly married couple, Jean and Juliette, who live on a river barge that carries cargo to and from Paris. Jean, the captain of the barge, is a rather controlling and jealous husband who "limits her activities to washing, sewing, and cooking" (Kline 28). In one scene, Juliette expresses surprise when Jean keeps his eyes closed as he dunks his head in a washbasin, exclaiming "Don't you know you can see your beloved's face in the water?" (see Fig. 1.1). He then dunks his head in again and opens his eyes underwater, but sees nothing. He is incapable of perceiving through and/or with water. In this way, the film establishes Jean's perceptive mode as, initially, solid, while Juliette's is more liquid in nature.

Fig. 1.1. Juliette says, "Don't you know you can see your beloved's face in the water?" in *L'Atalante*.

Near the end of the film, Jean becomes angry with Juliette and sails away from Paris, leaving her behind. However, he soon begins to miss her, and in order to "find" her, dives into the river. Underwater he is finally able to "see" her, and see *like* her. She is "floating" in her wedding dress, her image superimposed over that of Jean swimming (see Fig. 1.2). The film-viewer's perception is therefore simultaneously liquid as the couple's faces and bodies overlap and blur, and what we see is more of an assemblage of relation than two distinct and separate individuals (see Fig. 1.3).[17] The water enables this relational visuality, materializing the connective and generative mode of seeing that Jean adopts from Juliette but needs to discover and enact on his own. Indeed, he appears, in one moment of the sequence, to see through Juliette's eyes as he learns to perceive liquidly (see Fig. 1.4). It is therefore clear why Deleuze chooses *L'Atalante* as the film which best highlights the opposition between solid and liquid perception.

[17] My choice to use the word 'film-viewer' instead of 'spectator' stems from my encounter with Teresa Rizzo's *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. Rizzo points out that "feminist film theory inherited… binary logic" in its engagement with ideas of spectatorship, and so "the term 'spectator' is now seriously compromised; to use it in a productive way is virtually impossible" (6). She proposes the term "film-viewer" "in the hope of suggesting an understanding of the film-viewer as fully embodied" (7).

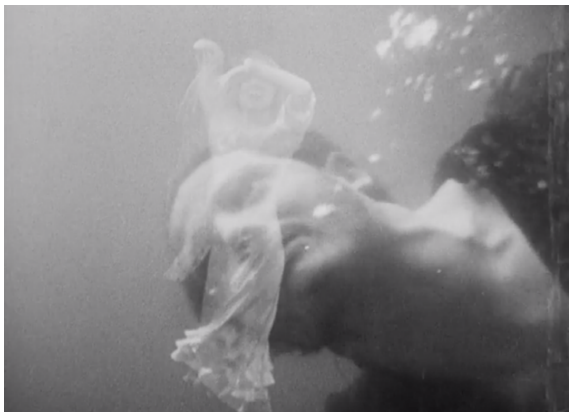

Fig. 1.2. Juliette and Jean liquidly superimposed in *L'Atalante*.

Fig. 1.3. The blending of Jean and Juliette's faces in *L'Atalante*.

Fig. 1.4. Jean sees liquidly through Juliette's eyes in *L'Atalante*.

The Liquid Perception-Image

In *Cinema 1*, Deleuze discusses the three "avatar[s]" of the movement-image, one of which is the *perception-image* (64). The perception-image "is related to a center of indetermination" (64); in other words, it relates back in some degree to a center or a subject. In this sense, Deleuze's perception-image is very much related to subjectivity. Deleuze describes three states of the perception-image, which correspond to the three phases of matter on Earth: solid, liquid, and gas. I have already discussed the solid state of perception earlier in this chapter; however, in terms of perception specific to the cinema, it corresponds to a highly subjective camera-eye, one that reflects a dominant character's point of view ("molar or human perception" (84)). Gaseous perception, as Deleuze describes it, is "the pure vision of a non-human eye, of an eye which would be in things" (81). Gaseous perception no longer relates back to a "privileged center," and similar to the notion of objectivity, sees "without boundaries or distances" (Deleuze *Cinema 1*, 81). Within this state of perception, the "eye is in matter" (81); matter itself is "vibrant" and "vital" and perceives at all of its points and in all of its movements.

Liquid perception, then, is the slippery state in between. It is "a perception not tailored to solids, which no longer has the solid as object, as condition, as milieu" (80). The subjective center is put into movement, but not so much as to become the "free movement" (84) enacted by gases. Liquid perception reflects a state of matter in which the "molecules move about and merge into one another" (84); in other words, the notion of the perceiving self as whole and complete is opened and expanded, other selves and perspectives merging into and overlapping. Deleuze writes that liquid perception is "a more than human perception" (80), and I take this to mean several things. The first is

that, unlike the "non-human" quality he ascribes to gaseous perception, "more than human" still relates to humanness. That is, liquid perception implicates more than *one* human. It is intersubjective and interrelational. The second way in which I understand "more than human" is "human and more." In other words, liquid perception opens up the notion of intersubjectivity to include animals, plants, and other elements of the natural world, *in addition* to humans. It is an ecological intersubjectivity. Finally, I read "more than human" as "more than humanly possible." This is the same sense with which Deleuze discusses the "clairvoyant function" that becomes possible in water. Liquid perception, similar to clairvoyance, is a type of seeing that goes beyond the normal limits of the human eyes. Perceiving liquidly means a per-*seeping*, a seeing that sees between, inside, through, and beyond rather than merely what the light refracts from surfaces.

Liquid perception renders visible, therefore, the subtle and the intricate as well as the "spiritual." Hence the notion of a perception that is both "more delicate and vaster" (80). This "molecular perception" (80) renders visible the intricacies, movements, and relations that normally go undetected via molar or solid vision, yet its scope is also "vaster," encompassing the "spiritual" horizon of the possible. Deleuze claims that the "liquid image" prominent with the French school reveals "a spiritual power of the cinema, a spiritual aspect of the shot" (84). For "it is through the spirit," Deleuze says, "that man goes beyond the limits of perception" (84). For Deleuze, however, the "spirit" and the "spiritual" have little to do with religious faith. Rather, Deleuze's spirit refers to the vibrant materiality of "the whole which changes" (48), the "pure ceaseless becoming" (10) that is without a doubt enigmatic and awe-inspiring. "The Possible [opens] up space

as a dimension of the spirit" (117), Deleuze says, and this spiritual possibility is rendered material and visible with the liquid image.

In sum, Deleuze articulates liquid perception as a type of "flowing perception" (80) that loosens the constraints of solid, optical vision and individual, human subjectivity. Liquid perception, therefore, renders visual and visible what we usually consider to be beyond the "normal" limits of perception. Liquid images can be and are often read as intersubjective, interrelational, ecological, molecular, clairvoyant, spiritual, and poetic. They can also be read, I would argue, as subversive. Deleuze describes liquid perception as "drawing along and effacing" solid perception. He also uses comparative phrases like "more than," "no longer," and "vaster" to suggest a newer type of perception that unravels an oppressive original. Finally, liquid perception is, in itself, open, unstable and changing. This is evident in the difficulty or even impossibility of its definition. Indeed, Deleuze must explain what it is largely by establishing what it is *not* (merely human, solid, etc.). It is a "promise or implication" (80), vast in its possibilities and open in its continual becoming of something new.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that Deleuze's discussion of liquid perception is void of reference to time or temporality. Indeed, for Deleuze, the liquid perception discovered by the French school remains within the regime of movement-images. He says, "[The French school] created from [liquid perception] not the new image, but the limit or ultimate point of convergence of the movement-images" (*Cinema 1*, 80). The narrative, he says, still "retained its solidity" (80). In other words, liquid perception, as Deleuze describes it, does not yet produce the direct time-image, the "coexistence of distinct durations" (*Cinema 2*, 12) of non-chronological time that

Deleuze argues neo-realism discovers. Yet how can any theory of liquidity, for which "it is mostly time that matters," ignore the topic of time and temporality? Part of my project, then, will be to show how Deleuze's articulation of the time-image relies on images of water and a vocabulary of fluidity. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, I hope to show, "rediscovers the thread of water" (Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 86). Having established this, I will then conclude by recapitulating my own notion of "liquid visuality" which, in a certain sense, "updates" Deleuze's notion of liquid perception for a cinema of time.

The Liquidity of the Crystal

Deleuze writes that the time-image "gives what changes the unchanging form in which the change is produced" (*Cinema 2*, 17). It seems odd that, for a philosopher whose thought is very much associated with fluidity and mutability, the time-image would take on a solid, unchanging form. Yet Deleuze uses the figure of the crystal, which evokes rigidity and edges, to elaborate his ideas on the image of time. The *crystal-image* forms when "the actual optical image crystallizes with its own virtual image" (69). This type of filmic image, therefore, has two crystal-like sides: the actual image that we see on the screen, and the virtual, or "spiritual," image which it produces. This is the way in which we experience time, Deleuze says. He writes:

> What constitutes the crystal-image is the fundamental operation of time:…Time has to split at the same time as it sets itself out or unrolls itself: it splits in two dissymmetrical *jets*, one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all the past. Time consists of this split, and it is this, it is time, that we see in the crystal… The visionary, the seer, is the one who sees in the crystal, and

> what he sees is the *gushing* of time as dividing in two, as splitting. (*Cinema 2*, 81, emphasis mine)

Deleuze's description of the crystal-image makes clear that its configuration is more liquid than solid. Just below its surface, we uncover the "gushing of time," its "jets" and its "flows" (98). Time is *liquidly* crystalline, according to Deleuze, and therefore, liquid images, I would argue, implicate this doubleness of time. "Water equals time and provides beauty with its double" (134), writes Brodsky in *Watermark*. Water doubles itself as simultaneously actual-material and virtual-spiritual.

It is interesting that, in Deleuze's cinema theory, the French school's use of water is what offers a "promise or implication" of the time-image. Water is what guides the image toward its future. Although, Deleuze claims, Renoir "fully shares the general taste of the French school for water, [he] makes such a special use of it" (*Cinema 2*, 87). The water in Renoir's films, according to Deleuze, gives us a "third side or third dimension" (85) of time. "Something takes shape inside the crystal," Deleuze says, "which will succeed in leaving through the crack and spreading freely" (86). This "spreading freely" recalls the movement of liquids and materializes in the films as water. While the tendency of the past is preserved in the cracked crystal ("everything that has happened falls back into the crystal and stays there" (87)), the tendency of the "presents which pass and are replaced emerges from the scene and launches itself towards a future, creates this future as a bursting forth of life" (87-88). As I see it, then, Deleuze claims that the third "side" of time materialized by water in Renoir's films is this aspect that points toward an emergent future. Water in the cinema of time, I would argue alongside Deleuze, materializes an "opening of the future" (88) into that-which-is-becoming.

Therefore, liquid visuality, as I will attempt to show in the following chapters dedicated to the films of Fellini, Tarkovsky, and the Disney film *Moana*, engages a mode of seeing that implicates time as an open and generative future. In addition to its qualities that are intersubjective, interrelational, ecological, molecular, generative, spiritual, and poetic, liquid visuality also touches on the political in that it offers a line of leakage away from oppressive solidity. However new the idea of water-as-emergent-future may seem in Deleuze's *Cinema* books, if we look closely, this theme was already embedded in Virginia Woolf's "Solid Objects." In burrowing through the sand to reach the seawater, John's eyes lose the intensity of "thought and experience" attributed to solid personhood and express "nothing but wonder, which the eyes of young children display." Eyes filled with wonder are engaged in a mode of seeing that marvels at the way in which the world becomes. Children's eyes behold with wonder because they have not yet entirely learned to "see as"; in moments of wonder they see-swim, their eyes attuned to the object of vision in its becoming and unfolding toward the future. Brodsky writes in *Watermark*, which is set in Venice, a city constantly and continually overspilling with water, that "the eye [is] our only raw, fish-like internal organ, indeed [it] swims here: it darts, flaps, oscillates, dives" (28). Can we (re-)teach our eyes to swim, to visually sense the liquid becomings and rhythms of the "future as the bursting forth of life"? This dissertation explores the works of filmmakers, artists, poets, and writers, who, in making "special use" of the liquid image, are doing just that.

In exploring what it means to possess a Body without Organs, what it feels like to live and experience a liquid, non-hierarchical body that becomes, Deleuze and Guattari quote Henry Miller's *The Tropic of Capricorn* (1939), a semi-autobiographical novel that

The New York Times Book Review claimed "reaches toward the spiritual core of life" (Smith, J.Y.). Miller's passage, indeed, appears to render a person who has found not only their virtual Body without Organs but also their liquid eye:

> I no longer look into the eyes of the woman I hold in my arms but I swim through, head and arms and legs, and I see that behind the sockets of the eyes there is a region unexplored, the world of futurity, and here there is no logic whatever, just the germination of events unbroken by night and day, by yesterday and tomorrow. The eye, accustomed to concentration on points in space, now concentrates on points in time; the eye sees forward and backward at will. The eye which was the eye of the self no longer exists; this selfish eye neither reveals nor illuminates. It travels along the line of the horizon… That is why I no longer look *into* the eyes or *through* the eyes, but by the legerdemain of will swim through the eyes… to explore the curve of vision. (Miller 121-122).

CHAPTER 2

The Liquid Hyperfilm: Fellini, Deleuze, and the Sea as *forza generatrice*

> I was born in a city by the sea, Rimini; I lived and very often worked in a town by the sea, Fregene. So for me the sea is an obligatory setting, an ancient vision, a deeply rooted dimension. Indeed it appears again and again in almost all my films, but not only as a place of memory, like scenery or a backdrop: rather like a *force generative* of ghosts, invaders, hallucinations, motionless magic. It's a blue, gray, or dark line on the horizon; an approach to a mute panorama, a path that leads to nowhere.
> (Federico Fellini, qtd. in Tornabuoni, emphasis mine)

While rarely featured as his films' main settings, the sea makes brief appearances throughout Fellini's repertoire in scenes that seem to lap at each other like waves. *La strada* (1954), for example, ends with Zampanò collapsing on the beach (see Fig. 2.1), an image that prefigures Marcello's detached perch on the sand near the end of *La dolce vita* (1960) (see Fig. 2.2). The lascivious Volpina in *Amarcord* (1973) (see Fig. 2.3) mirrors the buxom Saraghina in *8½* (1963) (see Fig. 2.4), both women haunting stretches of the shoreline. The long shot of Titta on the pier at the end of *Amarcord* (see Fig. 2.5) evokes a similarly composed shot of the five friends staring out to sea in *I vitelloni* (1953) (see

Fig. 2.6), and the brief, up-close shot of the plastic waves in *Amarcord* anticipates the more overtly plastic seascapes in *Il Casanova di Fellini* (*Fellini's Casanova* 1976) and *E la nave va* (*And the Ship Sails On* 1983). These scenes resonate with one another interfilmically, communicating most effectively at the level of Fellini's "hyperfilm."

Fig. 2.1. Zampanò collapses on the sand at the end of *La strada*.

Fig. 2.2. Marcello perches on the sand at the end of *La dolce vita*.

Fig. 2.3. Volpina against the backdrop of the sea in *Amarcord*.

Fig. 2.4. Saraghina against the sea in *8 ½*.

Fig. 2.5. Titta staring out to sea in *Amarcord*.

Fig. 2.6. One of the five friends staring out to sea in *I Vitelloni*.

Described by Millicent Marcus as "the unitary, on-going creative project that links the artist's biography to his cinematic corpus at a relatively high level of abstraction, where the author's *life in filmmaking* comes to coincide with *the film of his life*," the hyperfilm works, according to Marguerite Waller, as a "conceptual matrix within which to read [Fellini's] individual films" (Marcus 170; Waller 19). It thereby also offers itself as a framework within which to read the recurring motif of the sea and the shoreline that Fellini referred to as his "obligatory setting." Conversely, the fluidity of the sea points toward the fluidity of the hyperfilm, the former serving as a kind of *mise-en-abyme* of the latter.

The Hyperfilm as Assemblage

As a "bounded but infinite intertext made up of all of Fellini's films" (Waller 18), the hyperfilm recalls Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theory of the *assemblage*. While difficult to define due to its departure from the notions of unity and essence, the assemblage has been described by Deleuze scholar Thomas Nail as "an arrangement or layout of heterogeneous elements," a multiplicity that is "neither a part nor a whole"

(Nail 22). An assemblage holds loosely together but is essentially open, its composition determined by mixtures and external relations rather than fixed, inherent qualities. In this sense, an assemblage is always in process, "always free to recombine again and change its nature" (Nail 23). Assemblage theory is, in effect, an approach to understanding something not by asking what it is or what it means, but "what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed" (Deleuze and Guattari 4). If approached as an assemblage, Fellini's hyperfilm is no longer a fixed form comparable to a Platonic ideal (Marcus 170) but a fluid multiplicity in continual transformation.

Why should we consider the hyperfilm/assemblage a critical framework when engaging with Fellini's work? For one, Deleuze wrote about Fellini's cinema as particularly performative of his philosophy, in particular his concept of the crystal-image. The crystal-image makes "time itself" visible, time as "split[ing] in two dissymmetrical jets, one which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all the past" (Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 82, 81). Deleuze puts it another way: "What we see in the crystal is always the bursting forth of life, of time, in its dividing in two or differentiation" (91). While I will not take up a discussion of time in this chapter, Deleuze's pairing of the words "life" and "time" suggests their likeness, and even interchangeability, for his philosophy of cinema.

For another, Fellini approached his life and work as a hyperfilm/assemblage. He spoke about the importance of being "open to life" and "liv[ing] spherically—in many

directions," indicating his willingness to be shaped by what he encountered (Chandler 93, 97).[18] This was an attribute he brought to his filmmaking as well, explaining that:

> The illness of an actress, which makes it necessary to replace her, a refusal from the producer, an accident that holds up work— all these are not obstacles but elements in themselves, from which a film is made. What exists in the end takes over from what might have existed…. Making a film doesn't mean trying to make reality fit within preconceived ideas; it means being ready for anything that may happen. (Fellini, *Fellini on Fellini*, 100)

Fellini came to understand filmmaking as fluid and improvisational, an open and heterogeneous process that was in turn "metamorphosed" by the multiplicity of what I am here denoting as the hyperfilm-assemblage. "I cannot distinguish my films from one another. For myself, I've always directed the same film," Fellini admits (Fellini, *Fellini on Fellini*, 164). Each film, then, is a metamorphosis of the "on-going creative project" that sweeps up in its path of becoming Fellini's "life in filmmaking"— dreams, drawings, relationships, interviews, and anything else that implicates or affects his creative process. Even after the director's death, the hyperfilm continues to evolve as film-viewers and scholars engage with the films, and new concepts are born from these interactions.

[18] Furthermore, Fellini was particularly malleable in relation to his past. He gave interviewers different answers to the same question, and was contradictory in the telling of events, even to friends: "I'm accused of being especially imaginative in the recounting of the story of my own life…. I don't think of myself as a liar. It's a matter of point of view. It's indispensable for a storyteller to enhance his story, to color it, to expand it, to extend its dimensions… I do this in life just as I do in my films" (Chandler 263).

Rhizomatic Cinema

Waller draws a comparison between Fellini's hyperfilm and a "cinema of thought and thinking," which refers to Deleuze's project, in his books on cinema, of describing an "image [that] becomes thought, [that] is able to catch the mechanisms of thought" (Waller 19; Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 52). This thought-image "takes as its object, relations, symbolic acts, [and] intellectual feelings" (Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 198). Deleuze's cinema of thought and thinking departs from classical cinema's reliance on action and linearity and accesses the more relational, rhizomatic rhythms of the mind. Deleuze and Guattari point out that "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order" (Deleuze and Guattari 7). Like an assemblage, the rhizome "has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*" (Deleuze and Guattari 25). Comparable to the plasticity of the brain and its neural network, the rhizome does not have a predetermined evolution but unfolds and connects by way of off-shoots.

Deleuze further elaborates his notion of a cinema of thought:

> cinema doesn't just operate by linking things through rational cuts, but by relinking them through irrational cuts too … there's a hidden image of thought that, as it unfolds, branches out, and mutates, *inspires a need to keep on creating new concepts*, not through any external determinism but through a becoming. (*Negotiations*, 149, emphasis mine)

Deleuze is concerned with thinking, not as the unveiling of truth, but as the emergence of new concepts. It is as if the cinema discovers a synaptic pattern and momentum that is visible on screen but also implicated off-screen, "hidden" and "unfold[ing]" in the mind of the viewer. In her comparison of Fellini's hyperfilm to a Deleuzian "cinema of thought and thinking," Waller suggests that the creative linking enabled by the filmmaker and that discussed by the philosopher are akin (19). Furthermore, if "the brain is the screen," as Deleuze declared, and "the screen… can be the tiny deficient brain of an idiot as much as a creative brain," then approaching Fellini's oeuvre as a hyperfilm-assemblage renders the film-viewer particularly privy to the brain of the filmmaker (Deleuze and McMuhan 48, 49). That is, the hyperfilm offers access to Fellini's mindscape through its audiovisual evocations of the filmmaker's "creative brain" and its particular artistry.[19]

Images of scaffolding and incomplete structures in the individual films hint at the existence of this connective and creative hyperfilm. They recur throughout Fellini's filmography, and are very often visually associated with the sea. These "strangely functionless structure[s]" (Harcourt 11) make their first obvious appearance in *Le notti di Cabiria* (*Nights of Cabiria* 1957) when we see children climbing on a metal framework next to Cabiria's house. We see a similar incomplete structure on the beach at the end of *La dolce vita* as Paola tries and fails to communicate with Marcello above the sound of the wind and sea (see Fig 2.7). What is referred to as the spaceship launching pad on the seaside set of the unfinished film in *8½* is really an enormous scaffold (see Fig. 2.8), and in *Amarcord* Volpina attempts to seduce the workers who are laboring at a beach

[19] See Hava Aldouby's account of mirror neurons and cognitive neuroscience in relation to the hapticity of Fellini's films in the *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Federico Fellini*.

construction site filled with scaffolding and piles of bricks (see Fig. 2.9). Additionally, one could argue that a sort of rudimentary version of these incomplete structures already exists in *I vitelloni* in the form of a mangled fence that protrudes into the frame as the five friends walk aimlessly along an empty beach (see Fig. 2.10).[20]

Fig. 2.7. Incomplete structure on the beach in *La dolce vita*.

Fig. 2.8. The enormous scaffolded set, near the beach, in *8 ½*.

[20] Harcourt seems to agree: "Fellini emphasizes [the vitelloni's] own feeling of irrelevance and functionlessness by the many apparently useless structures that we see sticking up out of the sand" (10).

Fig. 2.9. Scaffolds on the beach in *Amarcord*.

Fig. 2.10. The mangled fence on the beach in *I vitelloni*.

But what are these enigmatic structures doing there? According to Peter Harcourt, "questions like that can have no answer on any rational plane" (1). Indeed, to ask what the structures are or what they signify would be counterproductive to approaching the hyperfilm as an assemblage. Instead, I would argue that there is a rhizomatic mechanism at work. As open, unfinished forms that gesture toward linking and building, they reach out beyond the individual films and "transmit intensities" among one another. Closely related to the many structures and scaffolds on which lighting is rigged and which support other aspects of the filmmaking process in *La dolce vita*, *8½*, and *Intervista* (1987), they implicate the "elevated or heightened film" (Marcus 170) in the process of

being made (see Fig. 2.11). Furthermore, like Deleuze's "hidden image of thought," the incomplete structures act as signals to the film-viewer that say *build something here*.

Fig. 2.11. The structures on which lighting is rigged in *Intervista*.

While it might appear contradictory to use the term "incomplete structure" in light of Deleuze and Guattari's opposition of the rhizome to any kind of structure (Deleuze and Guattari 12), I play with these words to draw attention to the fact that these "unnecessary construction[s]" (Harcourt 11) are essentially structures that fail at being structure-like. That is, they are not complete ("neither a part nor a whole") nor do they have a determined beginning or end. They are, perhaps, "between things, interbeing," or remnants of structures that are pointing to, or becoming, something new. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that there are "rhizome-root assemblages" and that "a new rhizome may form in the heart of a tree, the hollow of a root, the crook of a branch" (15). Fellini's incomplete structures, in addition to suggesting the actuality of the hyperfilm, also function as visual reminders of arborescent knowledge from which rhizomatic and creative thinking bursts forth.

The *forza generatrice*

In short, it is not the created object that matters to Fellini, but rather the process and vitality of creation itself. The driving force of art and of biological life, for Fellini, are one and the same.

> [With the cinema] I can re-create life in movement, emphasizing it, enlarging it, enhancing it and distilling its true essence. For me, it's closer than music, painting, or even literature to the miraculous creation of life itself. It's actually a new life form, with its own pulse of existence (qtd. in Chandler 263).

For Fellini, to create cinema is to create life. He gives us, Deleuze writes, "life as spectacle, and yet in its spontaneity" (*Cinema 2*, 89). Deleuze evokes the palpable vitality of Fellini's films in articulating the "third state" of his crystal-image: "the crystal caught in its formation and growth" (88). This type of crystal-image is a "seed-image, in the process of being produced" and the principal mode of "the film which takes itself as its object in the process of its making" (76). In other words, the seed-image film is saturated with a sense of expansion and often with the unfolding of its own creative process. Deleuze's primary example is, of course, *8½*.[21] However, there are many other examples, as "the method [was] increasingly adopted by Fellini" (88). We might name the final scene of *E la nave va,* when the camera pans to reveal the inner workings of the film's

[21] Interestingly, *8½* is also what Marcus calls the most "transparent example" of the hyperfilm, "in which film and hyperfilm come to intersect in almost total identification between Guido and his author (170)."

production, or the entirety of *Intervista*, a film that is set at Fellini's beloved film factory, Cinecittà, and stars the director himself.

Deleuze's comments on Fellini can themselves be rhizomatically unpacked. As the word "seed" carries connotations of the arborescent, so the "crystal" evokes rigidity and edges, rather than the fluidity and mutability typically associated with Deleuze's thought. Even his crystal, we discover, involves the "gushing of time," its "two flows" or "jets" (Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 81, 98, 81). Just as liquidity haunts Deleuze's work, an "interbeing" that seeps "between things" and underneath his words, the life-generating force of water is felt through Fellini's ubiquitous visual and sonic images of fountains, springs, spas, wells, rivers, seashores, and other water sources. Throughout the director's body of work, the vital, creative force that Fellini called the *forza generatrice* rises to the surface and makes the hyperfilm both palpable and metamorphic.

The *forza generatrice* of Fellini's films has a deep resonance with philosopher Henri Bergson's *élan vital,* a concept that Deleuze adapts to his own philosophical practice. Deleuze employs the term in *Cinema 2* when distinguishing between the falsifying power of the forger and that of the creative artist: "[Forgers] have neither the sense nor the power of metamorphosis; they reveal an impoverishment of the vital force [*élan vital*]…. Only the creative artist takes the power of the false to a degree which is realized, not in form, but in transformation" (146). The *élan vital* is a power that continues to give and transform rather than to master or dominate. Deleuze describes it as "the outpouring becoming" (146), a fluid, generous force. The articulation of this creative becoming as an "outpouring" and "overspill[ing]" (Deleuze and Guattari 21) illuminates

Fellini's use of the sea as an "obligatory setting" and embodiment of the *forza generatrice.*

Fellini's Creative Unconscious and the Sea as Screen

> I lived a life apart, a lonely life in which I looked for famous models like the poet Leopardi to justify my fear of bathing suits, and my incapacity to enjoy myself like the others who went splashing into the sea (perhaps why I find the sea so fascinating, as an element I have never conquered: the place from which come our monsters and ghosts). In any case, in order to fill the gap, I had turned to art. (Fellini, *Fellini on Fellini* 14, 16)

Fellini had a profound and complicated relationship with the sea. He suffered from seasickness, explaining that "even when the sea is still, I'm afflicted with anxiety, nausea, dizziness" (Costantini 135). He describes an early attempt to film at sea for *Lo sceicco bianco* (*The White Sheik*, 1952) as "a disaster" and subsequently chose to film sea scenes from the shore, by helicopter, or increasingly, to recreate the sea altogether (Costantini 34, 35). Even more apparent than Fellini's physical discomfort at sea, it seems, was his psychological unease. In *Il libro dei sogni* (*The Book of Dreams* 2008), Fellini's illustrated diary recounting dreams that spanned three decades of his career, there are mentions of a "scary" or "stormy" sea (492, 512), often associated with the port of Rimini. The ever-present and haunting backdrop of his childhood was the domain of

monsters and ghosts, prostitutes and intimidating femininity, body-image insecurities,[22] and potential invaders. One such invader turned out to be, surprisingly, the circus. Fellini recalls:

> When the circus arrived at night, the first time I saw it as a child, it was like an apparition… The previous evening it hadn't been there, and in the morning there it was, right opposite our house. Immediately I thought it was some kind of oddly-shaped boat. This meant that the invasion—because of course there must have been an invasion—had something to do with the sea. Some small band of pirates, I supposed. Then, quite apart from my terror, was the deciding factor of the clown, who loomed fascinatingly up out of this marine atmosphere. (Fellini, *Fellini on Fellini* 128)

While this tale of Fellini's first encounter with the circus correlates with his intuition that the sea brings forth strange and terrifying things, it also marks a pivotal moment when the sea becomes something other than frightening for the young Fellini. The clown "loom[s] fascinatingly up out of this marine atmosphere," adding nuances of the playful and expressive. Considering the importance of the circus to Fellini's films, and the fact that

[22] "As I was skinny and had a complex about it—I was nicknamed Gandhi—I refused to wear a bathing suit" (Fellini 1976, 14).

he equated circus and cinema,[23] the sea seems to reinvent itself here, exciting not just fear but imagination and creativity. We can link this to the fact that Fellini's "fear of bathing suits" and "incapacity to enjoy [him]self" in the water occasioned his pursuit of art.

This double nature is embodied in the creature dragged from the sea (see Fig. 2.12) at the end of *La dolce vita*. It is grotesque and unidentifiable, a "monster" as one actress exclaims directly to the camera. "Terrible," cries another. Yet the commotion around the creature also generates an eruption of languages— we hear Italian, German, English, and French within a matter of seconds— as well as an explosion of questions and speculations. "It's alive!" "It's been dead for three days." "Is it male or female?" "Do you love your mother?" "Who knows where it comes from?" "Where's the head and where's the tail?" Despite, or perhaps because of, its foreboding foreignness, the creature becomes the center not of answers and identification but of open-ended possibility and imagination.

Fig. 2.12. The creature dragged from the sea at the end of *La dolce vita*.

[23] Fellini claimed that "the cinema is very much like the circus…. That way of creating and living at one and the same time, without the fixed rules which a writer or painter must observe, the fact of being plunged into the action itself: that's what the circus is. It has such strength, such bravery, and I feel that the cinema is exactly the same thing" (98).

Fellini again depicts the sea as a fearsome space that drives creativity in his account of a dream about Picasso:

> There was a great stretch of sea, which looked to me as the sea looks from the port of Rimini: a dark, stormy sky, with great green waves and the white horses on them that appear during storms. In front of me a man was swimming, with powerful strokes, his bald head poking up from the water… . Suddenly he turned toward me: it was Picasso, and he made me a sign to follow him further on, to a place where we should find good fishing. No need to be a psychoanalyst to realize that I saw in Picasso a kind of tutelary deity, a charismatic presence, a genius in the mythological sense of the word— protective, nourishing, vital. To me Picasso is the eternal embodiment of creativity as an end in itself, with no other motive, no other end, than itself—irruptive, unarguable, joyous. (Fellini, *Fellini on Fellini* 147)

In this dream, the sea is dark and daunting, and we're unsure whether Fellini is swimming behind Picasso or watching him from the shore. However, it is clear that Picasso feels at ease in the water with his "powerful strokes," and that Picasso's sea, with its "good fishing," represents an artistically fertile space. Fellini declares Picasso his "genius in the mythological sense of the word," a guiding spirit through the intimidatingly liquid process of creativity. We witness this apprenticeship in action when the imagination begins to transform trepidation by inventing white horses that unfurl

from the threatening waves.[24] However, Fellini values Picasso above all as an "embodiment of creativity as an end in itself." He redirects the focus of the dream away from the product of creation to the process of creativity ("good fishing" as opposed to "fish"). Although Picasso is the explicit symbol of this "vital" and "irruptive" creativity, the sea becomes the overarching symbol of generativity, that which begets Picasso himself.

While the sea acts as a *forza generatrice* in Fellini's hyperfilm, it's important to note that many of his characters remain on the shore or in boats. Like Fellini himself, they are attracted to the water but maintain their distance. The sea becomes a sort of distance-dependent projection space, not unlike a screen, that brings forth images, memories, and "hallucinations." In Fellini's earlier films, the film-viewer can sense the memories and visions that arise for the characters at the seaside, but cannot see them. At the end of *La strada*, for example, Zampanò comes face-to-face with the phantoms and emotions that haunt him as he staggers into, then out of, the surf, falling to the sand. As he breathes heavily and stares out to sea, his eyes appear to catch sight of something and to follow it fearfully up toward the sky. We can only imagine what he sees or remembers, but we sense that, as a place intimately tied to Gelsomina (Gieri 95), the sea brings forth these visions. In the beach scene at the end of *La dolce vita*, we cannot see inside Marcello's head as he reclines on the sand and takes in the scenery around him, but it is as if we do— the sea monster, the incomplete structure, and the inaudible Paola are markedly surreal and dream-like figures.

[24] Horses were a common theme in Picasso's art and images that recur in Fellini's films.

Throughout *8½*, the film-viewer gets privileged access to Guido's dreams, fantasies, and memories. Yet it is at the end of the film, after the director has shot himself in the head and "killed" the film within the film, that the sea becomes the screen against which a new, rhizomatic film-assemblage emerges. Though the spaceship launching pad set is proximate to the shore, the sea is not entirely apparent to the film-viewer until after the gun shot, when, in addition to the sonic image of wind familiar in Fellini's films, we hear the sound of waves break through the soundscape. As Guido sits in the car with the film critic Daumier, who asserts "destroying is better than creating . . . ," Maurice, the clown-like telepath, offers something quite different: "Wait, Guido! We are ready to begin. All my congratulations." Maurice then lifts his baton as if to begin conducting an orchestra, and there is a cut to Claudia against the backdrop of the sea as she turns to face the camera. This conducting gesture, I would argue, is the rhizomatic maneuver of a new circus-film-memory-assemblage, unleashing a sequence of images of people from Guido's life and memory who stand out against the sea-screen and begin to walk together toward the film set. Guido suddenly accepts the turmoil inside his head, admitting that "this confusion is me. Not as I'd like to be, but as I am." The film cannot begin production until there is no longer anything external to it; that is, Guido's life/mind and the film must become synonymously chaotic and unfixed. The sea, as that which "helps to establish the typical Fellinian landscape of the mind" (Corbella 15), plays an important role in this scene in generating the rhizomatic connections that enable Guido's mind, his film, and *8½* to be understood as an assemblage.

Perhaps the sea is an ancient screen of sorts. Past generations in coastal territories watched it intently for the dangers and novelties it brought from afar. This could be, in

part, what Fellini meant when he called the sea an "ancient vision." In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari note that, from the perspective of the land, the "sea, the Ocean, the Unlimited, first plays the role of an encompassing element, and tends to become a horizon: the earth is thus surrounded, globalized, 'grounded' by this element, which holds it in immobile equilibrium and makes Form possible" (495). They use this example in explaining how the long-distance, or optical, vision of striated, organized space differs from the close, or haptic, vision of smooth space. While the sea is what Deleuze and Guattari call "a smooth space par excellence," that is, a space of continual variation and "pure connection," it "become[s] a horizon" with a straight, screen-like edge when seen from a distance (479; 493). From this distanced perspective, the smooth sea persists, but as a backdrop that enables form and optical vision. This is very much the sense of the sea-screen in Fellini's early- to mid-career films. The smoothness of the sea is felt as a "place of possibility [and] change" (Corbella 15), yet ultimately its function is that of a background or screen. It allows the fantastic Forms of the mind to take shape.

In *Giulietta degli spiriti* (*Juliet of the Spirits*, 1965) it is the sea that is the backdrop of Giulietta's first vision: her neighbor Suzy swinging on a trapeze-like chair over the water.[25] This apparition is followed by the procession-like arrival by sea of Suzy and her entourage ("Now *this* is a vision, the kind of vision even I believe in," says the doctor in Giulietta's party). Their entrance is so surreal that the subsequent transition to what is clearly Giulietta's dream is seamless, inviting speculation that the entire beach sequence has been a dream. Or perhaps more accurately for Fellini's cinema, the dreams

[25] This recalls Wanda's first vision of the eponymous character in *Lo sceicco bianco*. The sea, in addition to generating visions, generates rhizomatic links between films.

are the actuality. “Our dreams are our real life,” Fellini claimed, “[and] the stuff of which my films are made” (Chandler 58). Giulietta sinks deeper into the life of her mind when she approaches the shore and takes over from the red-robed investigator the job of heaving a rope from the water (see Fig. 2.13). A strange ship then floats into the frame from screen left, carrying dead horses and naked warriors with swords and arrows drawn. We get the impression that Giulietta has pulled up repressed images or archetypes from the depths of her unconscious.

Fig. 2.13. Giulietta against the sea-screen in *Giulietta degli spiriti*.

According to psychoanalyst Carl Jung, “the sea is the favorite symbol of the unconscious, the mother of all that lives” (Jung 177). Fellini was well aware of this connection, as he was a keen reader of Jung’s writings. In fact, *Il libro dei sogni* is a product of his encounters with Jungian analyst Ernst Bernhard, who encouraged Fellini to write down and illustrate his dreams (Kezich “Somnii Explanatio...”). One entry in the book, dated 30 March 1968, begins with the words “Anxieties for the usual film. Make it? Don’t make it” (514). There is a sketch of a diver at the bottom of the sea, and the opposing page reads like words of self-motivation: “Sink down into the marine abyss

down into the unconscious, fish in the unknown chasm of the sea and come back up with the treasures" (Fellini, *The Book of Dreams*, 251). Echoing the Picasso dream recounted earlier, this illustration and accompanying description identify the sea as both the symbol of the unconscious and the space where creativity happens. The sea of unconsciousness is inevitably where Fellini found good fishing.

The beach scene in *Giulietta degli spiriti* also works at the level of the hyperfilm. The images Giulietta pulls up from her unconscious are peculiarly prescient of what we see in the maritime scenes of *Fellini - Satyricon* (1969), Fellini's next full-length feature film. The boxy, container-like ship (see Fig. 2.14) full of half-naked, spear-wielding warriors in Giulietta's dream is a harbinger of Lichas's squarish vessel (see Fig. 2.15), overrun with minimally clothed prisoners and javelin-bearing soldiers. Even the lifeless horses floating on a raft in Giulietta's dream and the dead whale hauled up from the sea in *Fellini - Satyricon* seem similarly surreal and symbolic. If the hyperfilm is an assemblage always in process, then it makes sense that in one film we can see indications of another emerging. These are visual traces unfolding, like a rhizome, from the middle "which it overspills" (Deleuze and Guattari 21). The hyperfilm is especially emergent against the sea-screen because the sea, as symbol and stimulus of the creative unconscious, is where the *forza generatrice* is concentrated.

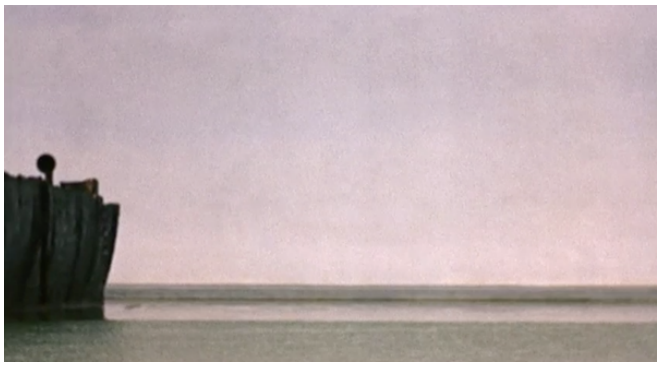

Fig. 2.14. The boxy ship in the dream sequence of *Giulietta degli spiriti*.

Fig. 2.15. Licha's boxy ship in *Fellini – Satyricon*.

The Plastic Sea and Cinema as Hyper-Genre

> I can't distinguish what really happened from what I made up. Superimposed on my real memories are painted memories of a plastic sea (Fellini qtd. in Bondanella and Pacchioni 265).

Fellini - Satyricon ends, like several of Fellini's other films, at the sea. Encolpio decides to join the crew of the Africa-bound ship, whose rectangular sail looks like a blank screen set against the horizon (see Fig. 2.16). However, the sail-screen is visible to

the film-viewer only when the ship is beached. Once the perspective shifts to that of the ship sailing on the sea, it is as if the film-viewer's screen has taken the place of the sail-screen, bobbing up and down on the waves. We seem to be peering "through" the screen and into Fellini's creative vision, identifying for a moment as captains of the hyperfilm. The horizon tilts back and forth, no longer an orienting line, and fades from fuzzy grays to sharp blues and back again. Here the sea-screen is problematized, rendering Form impossible within the encroaching smooth space (the island in the distance is thickly veiled with mist and practically invisible) (see Fig. 17). It is as if Fellini "sets sail" toward his source of creativity, toward and on the smooth, haptic space of the sea, in hopes of getting somewhere new with his art (*Fellini – Satyricon* was made in 1969 after Fellini had been "laid up in the hospital" (Costantini 74)). The scene then cuts to a close-up of Encolpio against a sparkling sea-screen. The frame freezes and morphs itself into a painting (see Fig. 18), as if to insist on creating rather than capturing an image. Finally, the camera pulls back to reveal that the portrait of Encolpio is really one of several frescoes of the film's main characters, painted on crumbling walls, alternative "screens" foregrounded while a distant sea-screen all but fades into the background.

Fig. 2.16. The ship whose sail look like a screen in *Fellini – Satyricon*.

Fig. 2.17. The tilted horizon and barely visible island in *Fellini – Satyricon*.

Fig. 2.18. Encolpio's image as it transforms into a painting in *Fellini – Satyricon*.

My impression of this final scene of *Fellini - Satyricon* is that it prefigures an alternative handling of memory, the sea, and the source of creativity in Fellini's films. *I clowns* (*The Clowns* 1970) and *Roma* (1972) come next, both of which undertake the task of reshaping Fellini's memories. However, *Amarcord* is his next film containing images of the sea and his first to feature the technique of recreating it in the studio: "I believe in constructing daylight, and even the sea, in a studio. In *Amarcord*, I built the sea. And nothing is truer than that sea on the screen. It is the sea I wanted, which the real sea would never have given me" (Fellini, *Fellini on Fellini* 165). While the "real sea" had been associated with Fellini's unconscious and his memories of vulnerability, the plastic sea, by superimposing "painted memories" on "what really happened," becomes both "truer" to his creative vision and less threatening. By reinventing the sea on his own

terms, Fellini appears to transform the "element [he had] never conquered," transferring the source of his creativity from his unconscious to the media and materials of production that make cinema possible.

Reconstructing the sea from solid materials such as plastic transforms the typically "smooth space par excellence" into a striated, organized space. In *Amarcord*, the striation of the sea is evident in the way the boats gather like a small city to await the ocean-liner *Rex* (the "king" around which the smaller boat-subjects organize). The overt falsity of the constructed sea (the plastic sheets are waved in our face at the end of the scene just to make sure we have noticed (see Fig. 2.19)), in addition to characterizing the Fascist regime and its glorified ship, is Fellini's way of playing with the "powers of the false": "narration ceases to … claim to be true, and becomes fundamentally falsifying" (Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 131). That is, Fellini is on board with Deleuze when he says that "truth is not to be achieved, formed, or reproduced; it has to be created" (146). Fellini's plastic sea is an exposition of his created "truth," as well as a reminder that "cinema is an art of illusion, and sometimes the illusion must show its tail" (Fellini qtd. in Samuels 96). Fellini increasingly revealed his magician's tricks on screen,[26] to the point where, at the end of *E la nave va*, he lifts the curtain completely and exposes what's behind the scenes of the film's making.

[26] One of Fellini's nicknames was *il mago* ("the magician").

Fig 2.19. The plastic sea made noticeable in *Amarcord*.

In actuality, all of *E la nave va* is an exposure of, and homage to, the cinematic art form. The film-viewer is made "aware of the fact that the point of it all is to record it on film, to make a show of it" (Perricone 79). That the film draws attention to itself is evident in numerous details, from the plastic sea and painted sunset ("how marvelous; it looks fake," says one of the ship's guests) to the manipulated film speeds, excessive camera movements, and techniques such as grainy scratches and iris-out. Additionally, the apparatus of cinema is referenced throughout the film, from the camera that films the narrator in the opening silent-film sequence to the make-shift screen that plays footage of the opera star Edmea Tetua while the ship is sinking. Ironically, however, the sea-screen is virtually absent from *E la nave va*. Despite the fact that the sea is ever-present as background, it no longer functions as the *forza generatrice* of visions, dreams, and memories. Instead, it works as a signifier of artifice, a "falsifying power," reiterating not "life as spectacle" but *cinema* as spectacle. Cinema, posits the film, is not only spectacle by means of its artifice but also because of its relationship to music, dance, painting, photography, poetry, and other artistic genres cited in *E la nave va*. Cinema is all of these things, boasts Fellini, and more: it is the hyper-genre, the generative mechanism of (his)

life. The sea's relationship to creativity, though, is not entirely lost when the art of cinema inherits the role of *forza generatrice* in this film; Edmea Tetua, whose artistic spirit "hovers above everyone" on the ship (Perricone 78), was, as a character puts it, "born from the sea, like a goddess," and there her ashes return. This correlation between the sea and the artist/goddess recalls the relationship between smooth space par excellence and the striated forms it enables. The deification of the "high arts," though, or of any organization that implements exclusions, insides and outsides, and hierarchies, is a sure-fire way, the film suggests, to "sink the ship." Both nationalism and imperialism figure prominently among these, as the Austro-Hungarian vs. Serb naval battle, whose cross-fire sinks Edmea's ship, the *Gloria N.*, implies. Survival takes the deterritorializing form of a lactating rhi(zome)noceros bobbing on the waves in a lifeboat.

In *Intervista*, Fellini's penultimate film, images of the sea are almost entirely absent. There is, however, one striking exception: as the trolley journeys toward Cinecittà, Sergio gazes out of the window at the countryside and sees an elephant, after which there's a cut to an image of a herd of elephants walking in the surf (see Fig. 2.20). It is as if the image of the elephant that Sergio sees hauls up its own archetype of elephants from a cinematic unconscious. Just as Fellini's dreams and visions had become the images of his films, this cinematic vision generates elephants, both live-action and cardboard, as images of the film being made at Cinecittà. Fellini's cinema, not Fellini auteur, is its own "creative brain." Frank Burke notes that "[Fellini] appears as the recycled product of his own films of forty years" ("Changing the Subject" 40). Instead of the creative artist in the process of making the film, we witness the film's making (and unmaking) of the artist. Intervista, as the title suggests, posits cinema as "seeing

between,"[27] a seeing that questions, interacts, and relates. As the film in which the hyperfilm-assemblage becomes aware of and performs itself, *Intervista* experiments with a liquid vision that doesn't just capture or encompass but also connects, creates, and transforms.

Fig. 2.20. The brief image of elephants emerging from the surf in *Intervista*.

While the sea is visually absent from *La voce della luna* (*The Voice of the Moon* 1990), Fellini's final film, one could suggest that it's there in the form of an echo, a subtle "voice" that speaks to us, as if from the depths of a well, beneath and between the visual images of the Earth's surface. The moon, associated with the ocean's tides and with its own phases, coaxes the film-viewer, along with Salvini, to "listen" and "hear" rather than to "understand." I'd like to suggest that, in *La voce della luna*, sound and hearing (in Italian *sentire*, which also means "to feel") are posited as rhizomes with which to access "reality,"[28] the nature of which is (often uncomfortable) change. While *Intervista* celebrates the cinema as "seeing between," this film betrays a disillusionment

[27] I owe this idea to Frank Burke, who writes that Fellini's filmmaking in *Intervista* constitutes "a 'seeing between' ('inter-viewing') of prior significations and codes" ("Federico Fellini: Realism..." 39).
[28] Degli-Espositi quotes Fellini as saying that *La voce della luna* attempts to capture "the voice of reality—innocuous, domestic, everyday banality that ends as a threatening vibration" (51).

with the visual image in "postmodern Italy" (Degli-Espositi 44) and encourages us, instead, to *hear* between. Hence the opening of the film, when sound comes before image, suggests a new way to access the visual. Likewise, the excess of antennas (this film's version of incomplete structures) on the roof where Salvini sits with Nestore (see Fig. 2.21) reminds us that television transmits via radio waves and provokes us, perhaps, to intercept and reconfigure the visual with our ears. There is always the possibility of hearing drums and chants in the quiet of the fields, or a waltz in the midst of Michael Jackson's "The Way You Make Me Feel" (which, translated into Italian, could also mean "the way you make me hear"). Conversely, the many visual holes in the film (the one that opens for Salvini at the cemetery, for example) lack generativity and lead nowhere new.

Fig. 2.21. The excess of antennas in *La voce della luna*, recalling the incomplete structures in some of Fellini's other films.

Kezich tells us that, of Ermanno Cavazzoni's novel *Il poema dei lunatici* on which *La voce della luna* was loosely based, Fellini "like[d] the notion that at night the water in the well is awakened by the moon and starts uttering faint messages that only madmen and vagabonds can perceive" (Kezich, *Federico Fellini*, 380-381). If, for Fellini, the water whispers, then the drips and leaks in the film (the leaking pipes below the city,

for example, and the dripping pool of water Salvini and Gonnella encounter before entering the discoteca) also speak. They reverberate with Deleuze's *ligne de fuite*, commonly translated as "line of flight," but also meaning line of flow or leakage. The line of leakage is the flow toward the external, the rhizomatic movement away from over-coded form, oppressive structure, and "everyday banality" (Fellini qtd. in Degli-Esposito 51). Leaks, subtle as they may be, are what make the "outpouring becoming" possible. If we follow Fellini's line of leakage, if we listen underneath and between the dominant regime of the televisual (*tele*-vision can also be understood as "seeing at a distance"),[29] we might rediscover the director's well of aural and liquid creativity inside the film that critics largely deemed a failure. What's more, the hyperfilm's liquidity immerses us in Fellini's singular generativity, shaping not an optic *tele*-vision, but a liquid *inter*- and *hyper*-vision that leaks off the screen and between the senses to enable creative becomings.

[29] "Tele" is a combining form that means to or at a distance, as in "telekinesis."

CHAPTER 3

"Tarkovsky's Wash": Water as the Materialization of Creative Immanence in the Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky

> Nothing is more beautiful than water. But since everything in life has a reflection in our unconscious, I wouldn't like my love for water to be seen from too narrow a viewpoint. Maybe it's an ancient memory, my ancestors energizing to life from water, who knows? In any case… I couldn't make a film without water.
>
> —Andrei Tarkovsky, *A Poet in the Cinema* (1984)

The cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky, from his celebrated student featurette *The Steamroller and the Violin* (1961) to his final film *The Sacrifice* (1986), is brimming with water. The liquid element seeps and purls on screen in a multitude of states and configurations: puddles, rivers, creeks, ponds, rain, snow, fog, steam, mist, the condensation of breath, baths, pools, drops, leaks, waterfalls, water basins, water glasses, vases filled with water, and more. Water is also, in rare moments, a subject of the characters' dialogue or monologue, as in *Nostalghia* (1983), when Domenico shouts, "Man, listen—in you is water, fire, and then ash," and in *The Sacrifice*, when Alexander tells his son the parable of watering the barren tree. The abundance of water in Tarkovsky's films has attracted a lot of attention from film viewers and film critics alike; yet the director was always reticent about its purpose, likely due to his mistrust in the ability of language to explain the artistic image (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* 104).

However, Tarkovsky's declarations that "water is very important to me" ("Faith Is the Only Thing..." 182) and "I couldn't make a film without water" (*A Poet in the Cinema*) reveal the extent to which water informed his filmmaking. Indeed, the water that leaks, collects, and flows between and among his entire cinematic oeuvre implicates, it would seem, a metapoetics of water reminiscent of Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini's liquid hyperfilm. Here, I argue that "Tarkovsky's wash" (Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 75), or what could be considered his painting with water on screen, renders material his creative process of "sculpting in time." What's more, I suggest that this materialization implicates the director's pursuit for spiritual truth as creative immanence.

Andrei Tarkovsky is largely considered to be one of the world's greatest filmmakers. Born in 1932 in Zavrazhye, a village on the banks of the Volga River in Russia, Tarkovsky was raised both in the nearby Yuryevets and in Moscow, where he studied music and painting. His father, who left the family early in the director's childhood, was the famous Soviet poet Arseny Tarkovsky, and his mother, Maria Vishnyokova, was a proofreader likewise educated in literature. Tarkovsky spent the war years of his childhood in the countryside of Yuryevets, an experience that deeply informed his first feature film, *Ivan's Childhood* (1962). When, upon finishing school, Tarkovsky lacked focus and a clear career path, his mother sent him on a two-year research expedition to the Kureika River in Siberia ("I Love Dovzhenko" 39).[30] There, immersed in the wet and snowy biome of the taiga, he made the decision to become a film director. He applied for a very competitive spot at the State Institute of

[30] By all other accounts, his expedition lasted just one year. However, Tarkovsky himself says in an interview that he was there for two years.

Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow,[31] was accepted, and his diploma project, *The Steamroller and the Violin*, earned him many accolades. That proved the beginning of a successful, albeit often challenging, career in filmmaking. Tarkovsky directed just five films—*Ivan's Childhood, Andrei Rublev* (1969), *Solaris* (1972), *The Mirror* (1975), and *Stalker* (1979)— over the course of his more than twenty-year career in the Soviet Union; his projects were often delayed, halted, or rejected altogether by the Soviet authorities (Tarkovsky, *Time within Time*). This led to Tarkovsky's decision to renounce his Soviet citizenship and exile himself in Italy, where he made his penultimate film, *Nostalghia* (1983). Tarkovsky insisted, "I am not a Soviet dissident. I have no conflict with the Soviet government." But if he returned home, he said, he "would be unemployed" (Goodman). Afforded great artistic freedom in Europe, Tarkovsky, however, struggled personally—his wife and son were continually denied visas to join him. Only when he became extremely ill with lung cancer, shortly after shooting his final film *The Sacrifice*, was his family wholly reunited. Tarkovsky died from lung cancer in Paris in 1986, never having returned to his homeland.

The Rhizomatics of Childhood

Water was ever-present in Tarkovsky's childhood. Born and raised near the large and culturally important Volga River, he felt at home when there was running water nearby. In the book *Sculpting in Time*, Tarkovsky's testament to filmmaking and the artist's purpose in general, he discusses rain as "typical of the landscape in which [he] grew up; in Russia [there are] long, dreary, persistent rains" (212). His childhood

[31] Seán Martin tells us that "there were around 500 applicants for only 15 places" (3).

surroundings were therefore saturated with water. Fundamental as well is the fact that during Tarkovsky's time in Siberia, he was literally surrounded by, if not immersed in,[32] water. Sean Martin writes:

> He walked many hundreds of miles along the river Kureika, where he spent a lot of time drawing and thinking…. Alone with nature—and himself— for the first time since his days as an evacuee in Yuryevets, he resolved to become a film director. (2-3)

This experience in the wilds of nature, so connected to water, was the occasion of Tarkovsky's resolve to pursue art in the form of filmmaking. The fact that his film school entrance examination, the short treatment of a film he titled *Konsentrat*, "describe[es] the head of a geological expedition waiting on a foggy pier for some papers to be delivered" (Martin 3), further links Tarkovsky's cinematic beginnings with water.

That water accompanied both his commitment to cinema and his childhood is important because Tarkovsky placed a lot of importance on childhood as artistically formative. In the documentary *Andrei Tarkovsky: A Poet in the Cinema* (1984), he asserts that "childhood always determines our future, especially when our work is linked to art." Tarkovsky suggests that the conditions and experience of childhood are particularly implicative of ways in which artists will later create. He also claims that "a poet has the imagination and psychology of a child, for his impressions of the world are immediate" (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 41).[33] An artist, for Tarkovsky, is not only shaped by

[32] By some accounts, Tarkovsky was panning for minerals in the river itself.

[33] By "poet" Tarkovsky intended a talented artist of any genre, since for Tarkovsky "each art is poetic in its highest and finest forms" (Ishimov and Shejko 133).

childhood (as we all are), but is readily able to access that psychologically generative mode that children possess by default because their world is, for the most part, new. "I see a time when I had everything before me and I was immortal and all was feasible," says Tarkovsky. "My childhood is still beside me to support and stimulate my creative activity" (*A Poet in the Cinema*), he confirms. Therefore, I would venture that water, as "persistent" as it was in the period of Tarkovsky's artistically formative youth, is inextricable from and revealing of the modality with which he creates.

Deleuze also find examples in childhood and the modalities of children. Specifically, he turns to "the role of the child in neo-realism" (*Cinema 2*, 3) when explaining cinema's crisis of the action-image. According to Deleuze, the figure of the child was prominent in Italian neorealism because of the collapse of the "already deciphered real" (*Cinema 2*, 1), that is, a closed and determined narrative. He writes, "in the adult world, the child is affected by a certain motor helplessness, but one which makes him all the more capable of seeing and hearing" (3). In other words, children, for the most part, do not have "automatic and preestablished" (3) responses to the world, ones that lend themselves to the conditioned narratives against which Neorealism reacted. Rather, they possess a "nakedness" of "sensory-motor connections" (3) that enables them to continually bring their own fresh narrative into being.[34]

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari similarly discuss the indeterminacy of the child: "It is as though, independent of the evolution carrying them

[34] As a personal anecdote, I have recently had this experience with my two-year-old daughter. While reading her a story I had read to her many times before, she pointed out a tiny, but eye-opening, graphic detail. Thus the "narrative," which in my head was already pre-scripted, jumped to life in a way that was completely new.

toward adulthood, there were room in the child for other becomings, 'other contemporaneous possibilities' that are not regressions but creative involutions" (273). We get the sense that, for Deleuze and Guattari, there is a sort of rhizomatic space inside the child that disrupts their determined trajectory. The rhizome works in such a way that at any point it "can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order" (Deleuze and Guattari 7). For Deleuze and Guattari, roots and trees impose order and lead to tiresome knowledge and oppression, whereas the rhizome, like the child, emancipates truth as creative becoming.

Tarkovsky was influenced by Neorealism during what is known as the Khrushchev Thaw (1953-1964),[35] a period of cultural and political relaxation in the Soviet Union that coincided with his time in film school (Bird; Jones). We might even read his privileging of the psychology of childhood for creativity as Neorealist and rhizomatic in tendency. In fact, Tarkovsky's first two major cinematic accomplishments, *The Steamroller and the Violin* and *Ivan's Childhood*, both center around the life of a child. *Ivan's Childhood*, Tarkovsky's self-described "qualifying examination" for "the right to work in cinema" (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 27), follows the eponymous character on the frontlines of war as he seeks to avenge the deaths of his family members. It is, however, a very poetic film, "the revelation of [Ivan's] interior world" rather than a "strong storyline" (Tarkovsky *Sculpting in Time*, 29, 30). Considering Tarkovsky's ideas about the generative state of mind of the child, we might even interpret "Ivan's Childhood" as "Andrei's Poetics," as he was still very much "naked" to world of

[35] These dates are approximate; please see Lindsay Powell-Jones's PhD dissertation "Deleuze and Tarkovsky: the Time-Image and Post-War Soviet Cinema History" for a more in-depth explanation of the Khrushchev Thaw and how it influenced Tarkovsky.

filmmaking. The many images of roots and trees in the film, in fact, rather than affirming an oppressively linear filmic modality, seem to create "room" for "other becomings."

The film opens with a medium close-up of Ivan peering out from behind a tree. Yet the disordered lines of the tree's bark, the splay of pine needles, and the spider web that disrupt Ivan's face, as well as the camera's slicing of the tree's verticality, imply that the film will depart from narrative modalities modeled on the tree (see Fig. 3.1). The camera then vertically tracks the tree to its top, as if to reverse that thought and seal Ivan's fate. This reversal indicates a pattern in the film, a continual interruption of the linear with the poetic, of war with childhood, and vice versa. Ivan subsequently frolics about in a summer's day field, the camera's movements bumpy and disorganized, as he haphazardly chases a butterfly. Then, in another reversal of the earlier vertical tracking shot, the camera swoops down as if by zip line from a high-angle long shot and plunges through the leaves of a tree and into the earth. We are suddenly up-close and personal with the tree's roots that are emerging from the soil (see Fig. 3.2). These roots, however, do not suggest order or oppression. Their rhizome-like protrusion from the soil, association with the antics of Ivan's childhood, and horizontal tracking by the camera reconfigure them as generative. Deleuze and Guattari explain that "a tree branch or root division may begin to burgeon into a rhizome" (15), and the many images of roots and trees in the film seem to me to play with this burgeoning, this "making room," that interrupts their vertical and linear trajectory. Thus, there is a tension between the two modalities—tree-rhizome, linear-poetic, war-childhood—as when the ravages of war frame Ivan aesthetically and even possess an eerie beauty (see Fig. 3.3).

Fig. 3.1. Ivan and the tree reconfigured as rhizomatic in *Ivan's Childhood*.

Fig. 3.2. Rhizomatic roots of *Ivan's Childhood*.

Fig. 3.3. The ravages of war frame Ivan in a way that is eerily aesthetic in *Ivan's Childhood*.

However, as Ivan's death by hanging reveals, even poetry cannot ultimately interrupt or reconfigure the oppressiveness of war. In the final scene, a flashback of Ivan and his sister playing hide-and-go-seek on the beach, we see a dead tree in its vertical entirety, and then with a high-angle shot the dead tree frames Ivan and imposes its fatalistic meaning as he slowly backs out of the frame (see Fig. 3.4). While Ivan searches for his sister on the shore, a pile of detached roots, which looks more like a dead rhizome, haunts the background (see Fig. 3.5).[36] Ivan, who should have remained a rhizome of "contemporaneous possibilities," has been condemned to the all-too-familiar and oppressive fate of war. In the final shot, the camera tracks Ivan as he runs along the shore with his hand outstretched, and then the camera plunges, headfirst, into the dead tree.

Fig. 3.4. The dead tree frames Ivan and imposes on him its fatalistic meaning in *Ivan's Childhood*.

[36] Curiously, this scene, for me, brings up many poetic associations with the final scene of Fellini's *La dolce vita*. The fact that *Ivan's Childhood* was released just two years after the Fellini film makes it likely that Tarkovsky saw, and was influenced by, the film's poetics.

Fig. 3.5. A pile of detached roots recalls a dead rhizome in *Ivan's Childhood*.

The role of water in *Ivan's Childhood* is highly symbolic, but even its fixity as a symbol, in moments, interrupts itself. At the end of the film's opening childhood sequence, a pre-war flashback, Ivan's mother is seen carrying a pail of water, from which Ivan then eagerly drinks. Water becomes linked at this point with his mother and with his memory. When, in the Russian war camp, Ivan falls asleep to the sound of rain leaking from the ceiling, we see his fingers dripping with water, and the camera pans vertically to reveal that he is now at the bottom of a well, presumably the one from which his mother drew the water. The subsequent dream sequence shows Ivan and his mother peering into the well, and she tells him, "You can see a star in the daytime in a deep well." This fairy-tale generated in the depths of the well would seem to seal the fate of water in the film as poetically maternal; however, its meaning oscillates before our eyes when the mother's lifeless body is suddenly splashed with water from the pail. Resembling the spurting of blood, the water in this scene takes on the additional connotation of loss.

Relatedly, a second dream sequence portrays Ivan and his sister in the back of a truck full of apples glistening as it rains. Water's relationship to Ivan's memory is thus

reinforced, but this scene's glaring citation of the sensuous, glistening apples in Alexander Dovzhenko's *Earth* (1930), a film Tarkovsky admired immensely,[37] simultaneously destabilizes and opens its meaning (see Fig. 3.6). Water is now linked to Ivan's as well as Tarkovsky's memory, and specifically, his cinematic memory. Thus, water speaks to the linear-poetic, war-childhood dialectic of *Ivan's Childhood* in that it is both a fixed and an unfixed symbol, but its role is not quite as emancipated as the one it takes on in his later films.

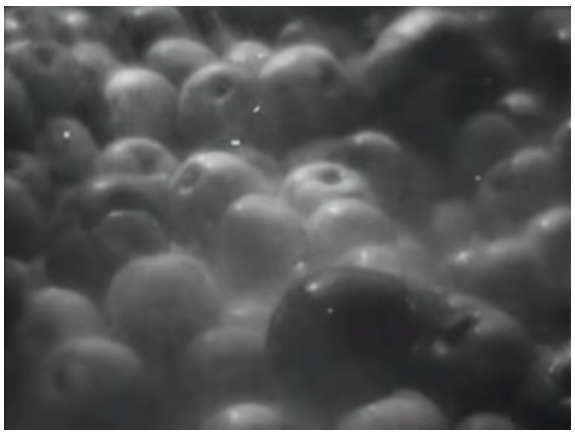

Fig. 3.6. Apples in *Ivan's Childhood* as compared to the apples in Dovzhenko's *Earth*.

[37] In an interview with Günter Netzeband, Tarkovsky says, "I love Alexander Dovzhenko very much. I believe he is a genius. He created a film which I have not stopped watching over and over again to this day: that is *Earth*. I cannot explain why this film touches me so deeply" (42).

The Sensuous Materiality of Water

In *Sculpting in Time*, when Tarkovsky addresses the recurrent questioning by critics and audiences of "what rain signifies in [his] films," he writes

> Rain, fire, water, snow, dew, the driving ground wind—all are part of the *material* setting in which we dwell; I would even say of the truth of our lives… The screen brings the real world to the audience, the world as it actually is, so that it can be seen in depth and from all sides, evoking its very *smell*, allowing audiences to *feel on their skin* its moisture or its dryness— [it's unfortunate that] the cinema-goer has so lost the capacity simply to surrender to an immediate, emotional aesthetic impression. (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 212-13, emphasis mine)

This "immediate, emotional aesthetic impression" Tarkovsky desires for the film-viewer recalls the sensory-motor suspension that makes the child "more capable of seeing and hearing." "What can it mean to [the film-viewers]," Tarkovsky ponders in *Sculpting in Time*, "when they have not shared with the author the misery and joy of bringing an image into being?" (20). With his use of water, I would argue, Tarkovsky relaxes the film-viewers' habitual sensory modes and makes "room" for them to co-create the filmic experience with their mind as well as with their bodies. Water can evoke smell, or thirst, and "allow[s] audiences to feel on their skin its moisture." Indeed, the tactile qualities of Tarkovsky's water give it an insistent materiality on screen.

In *Ivan's Childhood*, Ivan's fingertips drip with water just before the dream sequence with his mother at the well (see Fig. 3.7). The visual and sonic images of drops falling slowly from his fingers—the bodily organs with the highest sensitivity to touch—ask, if not demand, the film-viewer to engage with water as haptic. When we hear, but do

not see, the dripping water that accompanies Ivan throughout the rest of the film, it alerts the attention of our hands, as if the mother's physical absence were a material presence.

Fig. 3.7. The haptic image of Ivan's fingers dripping with water in *Ivan's Childhood*.

Near the beginning of *Solaris*, Tarkovsky's "science fiction film" about a psychologist, Kelvin, who goes to investigate the bizarre effects of the oceanic planet Solaris on a space station's inhabitants, Kelvin stands, unmoving, in a torrent of rain, his clothes slowly soaking in the water. The suspension of Kelvin's movement in this shot, I would argue, invigorates the presence of the rain, which drums, insists, on water as tactile. With the subsequent zoom-in on the rain-pattered contents of a tea cup (see Fig. 3.8), an object that jumps to the consciousness of both the hands and the mouth, and the inviting fruits that glisten nearby, water speaks to the intelligence of the body on multiple sensorial levels. The immediate impression of earthly, flowing water, to which Kelvin readily surrenders, provides a stark and important contrast to the eerie, oleaginous liquidity of Solaris's ocean (see Fig. 3.9). A "distinctive brain" (*Solaris*) whose waters churn rather than flow, the thinking ocean embodies Tarkovsky's mistrust of language

and rational thought when it comes to creativity. “Art does not think logically, or formulate a logic of behavior” (41), Tarkovsky writes in *Sculpting in Time*. One might even say that the ocean of Solaris stands in for the “alien” aesthetic objectives placed upon Tarkovsky by Soviet authorities.[38] However, as Robert Bird reminds us, “[Tarkovsky’s] emphasis, as always, was not on [any kind of] philosophy but on the tangible and visual experience” (117).

Fig. 3.8. Water drums upon objects that jump to our awareness of the senses in *Solaris*.

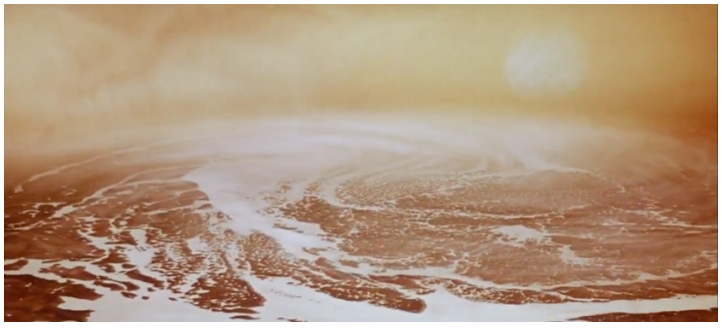

Fig. 3.9. The oleaginous liquidity of the ocean in *Solaris*.

Tarkovsky’s final film, *The Sacrifice*, which is about a former actor, Alexander, who experiences a spiritual epiphany at the onset of World War III, features a dream

[38] In *Sculpting in Time*, Tarkovsky writes about the “protests from the film authorities every time we tried to replace narrative causality with poetic articulations” (30), and Robert Bird points out that *Andrei Rublev*, the film Tarkovsky made immediately before *Solaris*, was laden with “incessant conflict” (114) with the studios.

sequence particularly rousing of the senses. Accompanied by the sound of continually dripping water, Alexander sits in a chair that rests on a water-slickened floor, staring outside a half-veiled window at the snowy landscape. The camera zooms in on the veil, and suddenly we see Alexander on the other side of the window. For a flash of a second, the veil falls, and then we, too, are immersed in the "immediate aesthetic impression" of Alexander's dream. As Alexander sloshes through the melted snow and wet leaves, we *feel* his feet sink, languidly, into the saturated earth. Tellingly, we are denied visual access to Alexander's face; we identify instead with his feet, and then with his hands, as they sensuously pull a cloth full of coins from the saturated leaves (see Fig. 3.10). The coins, which as currency already solicit touch, spill loosely from his fingers and beg to be chased after with our own hands, as if we were eager children.[39] What's more, this scene "evoke[s the] very smell," one our bodies intimately remember, of *petrichor*: the wet earth after it rains. These scenes are just a few of the many in which Tarkovsky creates sensual space for the film-viewer; with his use of water he tricks our eyes into smelling, touching,[40] and thirsting. Water becomes material because our senses, child-like, call it into being.

[39] Additionally, the coins are haptic in that they ask to be "exchanged" with the many coins in Tarkovsky's other films. In *The Mirror*, for example, Alyosha eagerly grabs the coins that falls from his mother's purse, and in *Stalker*, coins are some of the objects that we see in the tracking shot of the stream.

[40] See Laura Marks's *The Skin of the Film*, in which she discusses "haptic visuality": "eyes themselves function like organs of touch" (162).

Fig. 3.10. Alexander's feet sink sensuously into the wet leaves.

"Tarkovsky's Wash": A Painterly Materiality

In Tarkovsky's cinema, water is not only material but also *a* material. That is, water is a real material substance, like paint or clay,[41] with which he crafts his films. Deleuze refers to Tarkovsky's use of water as "Tarkovsky's wash" (*Cinema 2*, 75),[42] alerting our attention both to the abundance of water in his films and to its painterly aesthetic. Tarkovsky affirms his paint-like wielding of water when, asked in an interview what the "shots underwater… with remarkable colors" in *Stalker* represent, he responds, "I don't know. And I also feel that if we begin to talk about those things we will never stop. In any case, when we shot, we approached these issues as painters" ("Interview With Andrei..." 61). Tarkovsky dismisses any logical or philosophical discussion of the watery images, and instead redirects the focus to his painterly process. That Tarkovsky would approach the cinema as painting is not hard to believe; in addition to having studied painting as a child, he also continually references famous paintings, and painters,

[41] If Tarkovsky's cinema is "sculpting in time," then his use of water might also be considered clay-like.

[42] The translator's note explains that Deleuze's use of the French word *lavé*, similar to its English translation, "has the sense of 'washed out' or 'watery' and of the wash used by an artist" (Deleuze *Cinema 2*, 293).

in his films. The entirety of *Andrei Rublev*, for one, is a film about the eponymous medieval Russian icon painter. Both *Solaris* and *The Mirror* cite Bruegel the Elder's *Hunters in the Snow* (1565), and *The Sacrifice* prominently features Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Adoration of the Magi* (1481). Additionally, there are many other, more subtle intertextual citations, of Renaissance portraiture, for example, and the landscapes of David Caspar Friedrich (Bird).[43] Suffice it to say, painting plays an important and intentional role in Tarkovsky's films.

The paint-like materiality of Tarkovsky's water is evident from the very beginning of his career. In *The Steamroller and the Violin*, the story of an unlikely friendship between a violin-playing boy, Sasha, and the operator of a steamroller, Sergei, water spreads throughout the streets of Moscow as if it were fresh paint dribbling on a concrete canvas (see Fig. 3.11). Indeed, the creative spirit with which the city, and the rooted communist ideologies therein, should be reshaped post-war is one of the film's major themes. The film opens with a scene in which Sergei intervenes when Sasha is bullied by the neighborhood boys for being a musician. We glimpse Sasha's unique artistic spirit in the following scene as he walks to his violin lesson. In the windowpanes and mirrors of a shop window, Sasha sees images of himself, and of the surrounding cityscape, as if they were an abstract composition (see Fig. 3.12). Tarkovsky's comment on the screenplay for this scene reads: "The mirror surfaces slice up the sparkling space and heap onto each other the reflected objects, which are cast from one dimension into

[43] Both *The Mirror* and *The Sacrifice* reference Renaissance portraiture. What's more, Eugenia in *Nostalghia* looks as if she walked straight off of a Botticelli canvas. *Ivan's Childhood* cites David Caspar Friedrich's *The Cross Beside the Baltic*, and the final shot of *Nostalghia* recalls his *Ruins at Eldena* (Bird 66).

another, engendering a new, wonderful and fantastic world of color" (qtd. in Bird 34). Indeed, the abstract geometrical exuberance of the scene recalls the "composition" paintings of Wassily Kandinsky,[44] an artist for whom "music was [was] the best teacher" (Kandinsky 21), and whose work and philosophy create overtones in *The Steamroller and the Violin*.

Fig. 3.11. Water dribbles aesthetically down the street in *The Steamroller and the Violin*.

Fig. 3.12. Sasha framed as an abstract composition in *The Steamroller and the Violin*.

[44] According to Magdalena Dabrowski, a curator at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), Kandinsky "viewed the Compositions as the most important works of his entire oeuvre," and they "convey [his] fundamental principles of art" (7).

Once Sasha arrives at his violin lesson, however, we become viscerally aware that he is, in general, subject to stifling limitations of his creative spirit. He becomes disappointed when his strict violin teacher tells him he has "too much imagination" and makes him to stick to the rhythm of the metronome. As Sasha leaves the lesson room, the metronome continues to impose its order on a glass of water that vibrates with the monotonous ticking. It becomes ever more apparent throughout the film that water, essentially a metaphor for creativity and a stand-in for paint, cannot and should not be confined. In one scene in which Sergei insists that Sasha stand up for himself against the bullies, we see Sasha standing on a small puddle of water whose pattern resembles the paint stain on the wall behind him (see Fig. 3.13). The emancipation of both the water and the paint from restricting containers implicate Sasha's growing confidence, with Sergei's influence, to take control of his musical style and of his life. Subsequent scenes in which water flows from a faucet that foregrounds one of Moscow's Seven Sisters (see Fig. 3.14),[45] and people gather excitedly around a demolition project despite the unrelenting rain, remind us that water speaks to the transformation of both a little boy *and* the city in which he lives.

[45] The Seven Sisters are a series of Stalinist skyscrapers in Moscow built between 1947 and 1953, not long before *The Steamroller and the Violin* was made.

Fig. 3.13. The shape of the puddle resembles the paint stain on the wall in *The Steamroller and the Violin*.

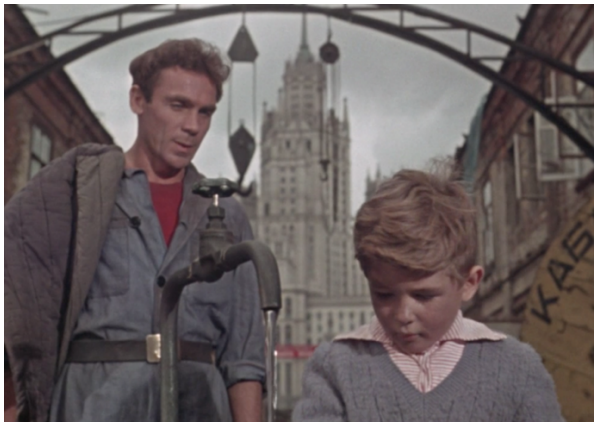

Fig. 3.14. A water faucet foregrounds one of Moscow's Seven Sisters in *The Steamroller and the Violin*.

The film reaches its own creative peak during a scene in which Sergei and Sasha eat lunch together in a quiet angle of Moscow. While the two discuss the war and the anatomy of the violin, and while Sasha plays the violin for Sergei, the camera explores a poetics of water. Their faces dance with the light refracted from a nearby puddle, and the puddle inverts and abstracts their surroundings (see Figs. 3.15 and 3.16). In the end, however, the film suggests that the creative freedom embodied by water is not a political and cultural reality. Despite his plans to see a movie with Sergei, a meeting that is symbolic, perhaps, of the opportunity cinema presents to bring the concerns of artists and

those of workers into dialogue, Sasha is forbidden by his mother to leave the house. Only Sergei, the worker, enters into the cinema house. In an epilogical fantasy sequence, however, the camera launches through a mirror image of Sasha, races down the suddenly more aesthetically-pleasing stairway of the apartment building, and gives us the film's final shot of Sasha chasing the steamroller across a pavement painted with water (see Fig. 3.17). The two ride off together out of the frame, in hopes of a cinema that will, one day, marry communist pride and artistic freedom.

Fig. 3.15. A tree abstracted in a puddle in *The Steamroller and the Violin*.

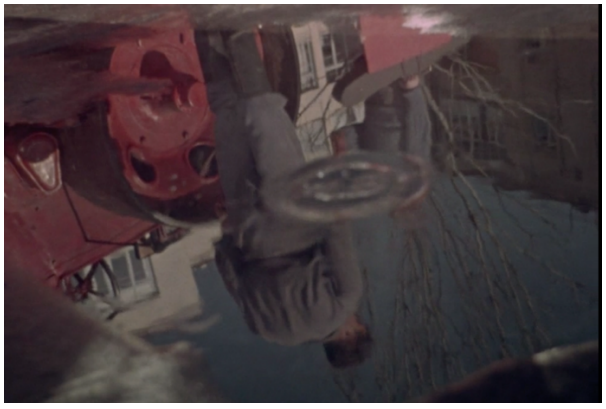

Fig. 3.16. The image of Sergei and Sasha inverted in the puddle in *The Steamroller and the Violin*.

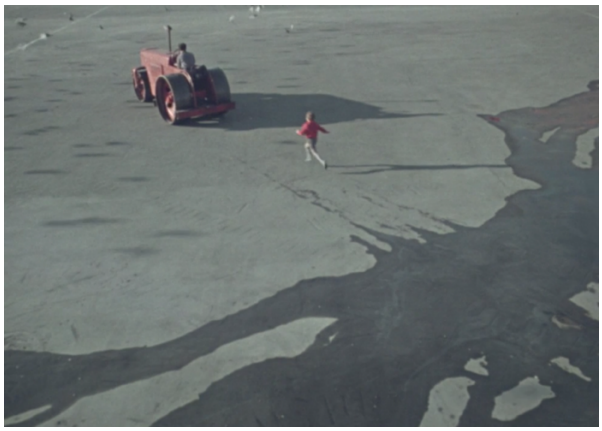

Fig. 3.17. Sasha chases the steamroller through an aesthetic wash in *The Steamroller and the Violin*.

The poetics of water that Tarkovsky experiments in *The Steamroller and the Violin*, with its inquiry into reflection, refraction, and surface sheen, recalls philosopher Gaston Bachelard's articulation of the "superficial poetry," or *formal imagination*, of water. In his book *Water and Dreams*, Bachelard writes that "every poetics must accept components of material essence" (3), and he maintains that there is a dominant material element— fire, air, water, or earth—within every artist's particular poetics. He then distinguishes this *material imagination* from *formal imagination* by explaining that the latter works with "forms and colors, variety and metamorphosis, or by what surfaces become," while the former engages with "depth, volume, and the inner recesses of substance" (Bachelard 2). For Bachelard, water is expressed by the formal imagination, superficially, through a "poetry of reflections" that "produce[s] fleeting and facile images" (11, 20). In other words, Tarkovsky's painterly experiment with water in *Steamroller*—the refraction of light, inverted images, the drip patterns—would make that film's poetics of water more "playful" than "profound" (11). For Bachelard, "the transition from a [superficial] poetry of waters to a [material] metapoetics of water" means "discover[ing] enduring water, unchanging and reborn…the nourishment of

flowing phenomena" (11). While I disagree with Bachelard's emphasis on "the lovely monotony of matter" (2), and I find his material imagination of water to be somewhat contradictory in that it is both "unchanging" and "reborn," I think that this unintentional pointer toward the double nature of time as the "heart" of water is vital to Tarkovsky's metapoetics.

The "Liquid Crystal": A Materiality of Time

> I used water because it is a vital, living substance that continually changes form, that moves. It's a very cinematographic element. And through this I tried to express the idea of the passage of time. Of the movement of time. (Tarkovsky on *Andrei Rublev*, "My Cinema in a Time..." 101)

In the progression of Tarkovsky's cinema, water will come to express time. For the director, however, time is not linear, historical, or evolutionary; it is a "state" "in which a person lives" (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 57, 58). Time includes both "complex" memory and "the present [that] slips and vanishes like sand between the fingers" (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 57, 58). Tarkovsky's notion of time thus corresponds to Deleuze's concept of the crystal-image, in which time "splits itself into two dissymmetrical jets, one of which makes all the presents pass on, while the other preserves all of the past" (*Cinema 2*, 81). Time simultaneously flows forward in continual, spontaneous change, and pools or collects in a reflective past. This double

nature, or crystallization, of time—time made visible—Tarkovsky calls a "stamp," or an "impression of time" (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 59). For both Deleuze and Tarkovsky, making an image of time's complexity is the unique ability of the cinema.

Deleuze calls Tarkovsky's crystallization of time the "liquid crystal" (*Cinema 2*, 75). In doing so, he emphasizes both the materiality of Tarkovsky's water as well as, I believe, its flow. That is, a liquid crystal is one that resists its own edges, its own "preservation," and therefore what takes precedence is the flow, or the "passage," of time, rather than its pooling. Robert Bird writes of the "insistent present-ness" (190) of Tarkovsky's films, and I think this is an apt designation, especially considering Tarkovsky's privileging of observation as "the basic element of cinema, running through it to its tiniest cells" (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 66). This translates to moments like the one in *Solaris* when the camera spontaneously investigates the contours of Kelvin's ear. I do not mean to suggest, however, that Tarkovsky's project is concerned *only* with observing the present as it passes; rather, I think he is particularly invested in the various rhythms, or "time-pressures," with which cinema calls on lived experience and brings it back to life as presence. Tarkovsky writes that time "pulsates through the blood vessels of the film, making it alive" (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 114). Just as the past must be accessed by a mind that lives in a present that passes, so the depiction of time in cinema is only convincing, and meaningful, if it is channeled through the current of the now.

Not surprisingly, Tarkovsky describes his time-pressures "metaphorically as brook, spate, river, waterfall, ocean," and explains that "joining them together engenders that unique rhythmic design which is the author's sense of time" (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 121). While he almost certainly would have designated Federico Fellini, with his

"open, expansive temperament" (Tarkovsky, *Time Within Time*, 289), an ocean-pressure auteur, Tarkovsky, because he liked "brooks very much" (*A Poet in the Cinema*), seems to have gravitated toward a brook- or river-pressure of time. However, since Tarkovsky does not give any specific indications of how these time-pressures differ from one another, it is extremely hard to parse them in his films. I might guess that Tarkovsky's tracking shots speak to his brook-pressure of time, in that they are both intimate and flowing. Regardless, for my purposes, what is important is that Tarkovsky found in water the various rhythms he needed for creating impressions of time, and that, correspondingly, his impressions of time were created, or "painted," with water.

Let us turn to *Stalker* and the aforementioned scene of "shots underwater" with "remarkable colors." Tarkovsky's last film made in the Soviet Union, *Stalker* is about a guide (called the "Stalker") who leads a Writer and a Professor on a journey through the mysterious Zone in search of the Room that will grant their innermost desires. On a fundamental level, as I see it, the film is an exploration of the relationship between water, time, and cinema. The waterlogged Zone, full of polluted streams, trickling pipelines, and gushing ruins, is a place where "everything changes at every moment" (*Stalker*), especially the "pressures" of time. This particular scene, in which the Stalker and the Writer have lost track of the Professor and decide to continue ahead without him, seems to enact its own complex "split" in time. While the camera zooms in on the smoldering embers of an extinguished fire, we hear the voice of the Writer, offscreen, say, "Look at that! How can it be?" And the Stalker says, "I explained it to you, it's the Zone…" A tracking shot then flows along a stream filled with discarded objects. Only after this tracking shot ends does the film visually affirm that the Writer and the Stalker have been

caught in some kind of past separate from what we as film-viewers see; they rediscover the Professor in the same place where they had left him before, the fire fully aflame. That is, to clarify, when the Writer says "Look at that!", he is referring to the rediscovered Professor, a sort of "past" affirmed by the burning fire; however, the visual image, in revealing the smoldered fire and then flowing ahead, splits time into another separate "jet." Indeed, what Robert Bird calls a "fold in space" (164) seems more like a knot or a fray in time. Furthermore, the tracking shot betrays its own embedded split— the ruined tiles, the syringe, the rusted scraps, and the calendar pages are relics from a preserved past that are "washed" in Tarkovsky's tracking present.

Bird writes that "water is the very basis of aesthetics, as a medium that transforms the world into image" (23), and he points out that after Tarkovsky's experiments with water in *Stalker*, "we are now aware of the water as a medium" (165). I would emphasize that we are aware of it as a *painterly* medium. When all three men have arrived in the antechamber of the Room of desires but decide not to go in, they watch it rain down on a pool of sparkling light. We then get what seems to be our only glimpse from the perspective of inside the Room: water that covers the tiled floor, and in which we see the Professor's disactivated bomb and a live catfish (see Fig. 3.18). To the sound and vibration of a train on its tracks, seemingly misplaced but associated with the film's beginning and with its end when the train adjacent to the Stalker's house vibrates the liquid in a glass, "filmy" ribbons of blackish and reddish ink swirl and expand aesthetically in the water until the fish and the capsule are no longer recognizable (see Fig. 3.19). With its water-turned-swirls-of-inky-film, our glimpse inside the "innermost desires" of Tarkovsky's cinema reveals, quite simply, a painted liquid that overtakes

narrative and form. Robert Bird writes that "the three men's journey through the elements has culminated in nothing other than a new vision of the earth through water" (165). It's true that, at one point in the Zone, we even see the earth rolling as if it were liquid. This new vision, this "Zone," suggests Bird, is the cinema itself (69). The repetitive lulling of the invisible train on its tracks haunts the shot as a reminder of early cinema's investigation of linear movement (Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 78), and, in a sense, splits our impression of the cinematic medium into its own crystal-image: a linear past affiliated with trains and a fluid present associated with water.

Fig. 3.18. Ribbons of red and black ink in the water inside the Room in *Stalker*.

Fig. 3.19. The ink swirls materialize an aesthetic of time in *Stalker*.

The Permeability of Matter and Spirit

When Deleuze refers to "Tarkovsky's wash," a great example of which is the shot discussed above, he makes reference to a specific type of technique that had its origins in classical East Asian ink-washed landscape paintings. Ink washing involves the use of black ink watered down in the varying gradations of "charred," "thick," "heavy," "pale," and "clear" (Fa 178), and therefore works with the subtleties of shade and density rather than color. Additionally, "ink wash painting is a direct grasp of the essence of things while disregarding their actual, superficial manifestations" (Fa 178). Recalling Bachelard's privileging of the material over the formal imagination, this "grasp at essence" highlights the fact that ink washing is a "spiritual" art in line with Buddhist and Taoist philosophies (Fa 176). While Confucian art "emphasize[s] social order [with its] bright colors" and "unrestrained lines," ink washing, instead, unravels that order with its focus on "great colors [as] colorless" and "the great image [as] shape[less]" (Fa 177). Echoing Deleuze's sensory-motor "nakedness" of the child as one of Neorealism's reactions to Fascism,[46] ink wash painting aims for an unconditioned, spiritual immediacy. The ink-wash shot from *Stalker*, I would argue, with its meditative filmy swirls and its slight tone variations, could be considered an ink-wash that, as Tarkovsky says elsewhere, is "placed within time" (*Sculpting in Time*, 58).

Time is a "spiritual category" for Tarkovsky, and it is the job of art to "shape [the] spiritual structure of the soul" (Tarkovsky *Sculpting in Time* 58, 41). The director, although Christian-oriented, was engaged in a variety of philosophies and aesthetics of

[46] In the book *The History and Spirit of Chinese Art*, Zhang Fa quotes Lao-Tzu as saying, "The five colors make man's eyes blind; the five notes make his ears deaf" (177), which has obvious overlap with Deleuze's point that children are "more capable of seeing and hearing."

the spirit. He was, for example, well-versed in the meditative purpose of Japanese haiku, "Taoist music," and the ancient Sanskrit "Veda" (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* 66, 240, 240). Deleuze writes that Tarkovsky's liquid crystal "constantly bring[s] us back to the question: what burning bush, what fire, what soul, what sponge will staunch this earth?" (*Cinema 2*, 75). In other words, the water that saturates Tarkovsky's films is there, in part, to spark a spiritual thirst, to fire up the soul. Hence, his films often give us images of fire reflected in, or accompanying, water. In *The Mirror*, for example, the barn goes up in flames despite the rain, and in *The Sacrifice*, the burning house flickers inside the surrounding puddles. For Tarkovsky, the dynamic contrasts of fire and water, as well as interiors and exteriors— like the yin-yang symbol we see on Alexander's robe at the end of *The Sacrifice*—indicate spiritual transformation. In this sense, we can see the considerable influence of Kandinsky's call to represent the "all-important spark of inner life" (Kandinsky 1) on Tarkovsky's work.

Deleuze points out that, with the crystal-image, "there is this mutual search… of matter and spirit" (*Cinema 2*, 75), and Tarkovsky confirmed that the theme of his films was an attempt to "balance out spiritual and material needs" (*A Poet in the Cinema*). The director was continually seeking "a kind of distillation" (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 66) of the spiritual-material, and one of his solutions was to "mov[e], in [his] films, from the external to the internal" (*A Poet in the Cinema*). Thus the figure of the house, which in dream analysis represents the whole person, features prominently in Tarkovsky's films and is continually permeated and transformed by the earthly elements. In *Stalker*, for example, the walls of the bedroom that the Stalker shares with his wife and daughter look more like the rough and bumpy walls of a rock cave. Water collects on the floor in thin

puddles, and once we are immersed in the similar but much more pronounced aesthetic of the Zone, we get the impression that we have always been, but are now deeper inside, the stalker's consciousness. In *The Mirror*, too, Tarkovsky's semi-autobiographical "turning crystal" (Deleuze *Cinema 2*, 75) of dreams, childhood memories, and voiceovers of his father's poetry, the mother immerses her plant-like hair in a washbasin against the backdrop of mossy, cave-like walls. Fire flickers and doubles in a mirror, resembling votive candles, and we feel a sort of reverence for this liquid mother, as if she were a mysterious Madonna in a wet grotto (see Fig. 3.20). When rain and plaster cascade down from the ceiling, painting the screen with glimmering streaks and chunky texture (see Fig. 3.21), the mother disappears from the image altogether, and it is as if Tarkovsky has achieved, for a moment, his coveted distillation. Exteriors and interiors collapse into one another; memory becomes poetry, and poetry memory. Tarkovsky's wash—"shapeless," "colorless," and essentially timeless—[47] is seamlessly spiritual-material.

Fig. 3.20. The mysteriously liquid mother in her grotto-like surroundings in *The Mirror*.

[47] Tellingly, the screen grab does not do this scene justice. Tarkovsky's wash must be "placed in time," and the sense of time is felt, ironically, as timelessness.

Fig. 3.21. The streaks of water and chunks of plaster paint the cinema screen in *The Mirror*.

In Tarkovsky's films, water "perforates interior and exterior spaces" (Burns 114) both visually and sonically. In *Ivan's Childhood*, the sound of dripping water accompanies Ivan in interior spaces, even when there is no visual evidence of water. In *Nostalghia*, water pitter-patters musically against glass bottles in Domenico's farmhouse. In *The Sacrifice*, while the camera explores Da Vinci's painting "Adoration of the Magi," we hear the lull of the sea's waves. In *Solaris*, when Kelvin sends the replica of his wife back into outer space and then enters his bathroom, we hear, rather than see, the water rushing from the faucets. The camera noticeably cuts any visual association with water out of the frame, as if the sonic image of water were also an awkward replica of its visual "original." As a sort of curious aside, bathrooms appear to have a certain prominence in Tarkovsky films. In *Nostalghia*, for example, the lighting of the bathroom in the hotel room scene elevates its status to that of windows (see Fig. 3.22). Perhaps this is because, as "water closets," bathrooms are the rooms in which water most flows, entering as well as exiting in reciprocal exchange with the outside world.

Fig. 3.22. The bathroom is lit up and emphasized as a fluid portal, on par with the window, in *Nostalghia*.

Water and Creative Immanence

Of *Nostalghia*, made in self-imposed exile in Italy and co-written with Tonino Guerra, Tarkovsky said: "I was able to fully express myself. And I have to say that I received confirmation that cinema is a great art form, capable of representing even the imperceptible states of the soul" ("My Cinema in a Time..." 102). The film follows a Russian poet, Andrei, as he travels in Italy to research the life of a Russian composer; however, as Tarkovsky, and the film's title, confirm*, Nostalghia* is more so a poetic rendering of Andrei's—the protagonist's and the director's—internal landscape. The film opens with a long shot of mist floating gently through what is supposed to be the Russian countryside, with a large river in the distance. Tarkovsky chose this filming location in Tuscany "for its resemblance to the countryside near Moscow" (Mitchell 6). The mist, which is water in another physical state and a phenomenon that occurs when warm and cool air meet, could be seen as the materialization of the generative encounter between two "cultural climates": Italy and Russia. *Nostalghia*, the film as well as the feeling, is also effectively its own mist (or mystery). The subsequent scene locates the action decisively in Italy, yet the fields and the mist seem almost identical to the previous

"Russia" scene, and we intuit that, despite productive exile in Europe, Tarkovsky's objective in the cinema remains the same: to materialize the (director's creative) spirit, and to spiritualize matter.

In one particularly striking scene, Andrei, having met the town "madman" Domenico at the baths of Bagno Vignoni, goes to speak with him at his farmhouse. As Andrei enters the interior space of the man's home, the external landscape as seen through the window continues fluidly inside the room with its rolling hills and river (see Fig. 3.23). The camera zooms in on this tiny river, but the shot soon confuses the perspective—we can no longer really tell whether this is a close-up of an interior replica or a long shot of an exterior landscape (see Fig. 3.24). Inside Domenico's home, or rather, inside his spirit, his sense of time, Andrei sees what it might be like to live fluidly, without exteriors and interiors. Domenico is socially condemned by the town's people as mad, but Andrei speculates that "He's not mad, he has faith," and that he is "certainly closer to the truth." The "internal" river Andrei sees through Domenico's fluid perspective could be the one from the beginning of the film; it could be the one from Tarkovsky's childhood; it could be one of the rivers that flows through *Ivan's Childhood*, *Andrei Rublev*, *Solaris*, or *Stalker*. It could be all of them, or none, and it is precisely the immediacy of this poetic possibility that matters.

Fig. 3.23. Andrei's view of the exterior landscape fluidly entering the interior in *Nostalghia*.

Fig. 3.24. A close-up of the tiny interior river, which gives the impression of a vast exterior landscape, in *Nostalghia*.

Water drips and puddles all around Domenico's open-plan house, and there is a large poster on the wall that reads 1 + 1 = 1, an equation that mimics Domenico's comparable assertion that "a drop plus a drop makes a bigger drop, not two." For Domenico, a "former mathematics teacher" (Sushytska 39), the order imposed on the world is stifling and destructive. "Overcoming this either/or logic," points out Julia Sushytska, "requires creativity and calls for a work of art" (Sushytska 39). Thus *Nostalghia*, the film itself, is the director's act of creative "faith" and the overcoming of the Russia-Italy binary logic. Deleuze writes, "there is no other truth than the creation of the New: creativity, emergence" (*Cinema 2* 146-147). This fluid and generative

perception to which Domenico's leaky house speaks trickles through to Andrei, protagonist, as well as Andrei, film director. One could say that Domenico's ideals implicate the protagonist's and the director's, in a sort of "holy trinity" of spiritual beliefs. When, at several points in the film, Andrei sees Domenico's face in the mirror instead of his own, it is as if the director's is also reflected (see Fig. 3.25). It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that there are clues to Tarkovsky's spiritual beliefs, as an individual and as an artist, in the dramatic speech that Domenico makes before setting himself on fire in Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome.

Fig. 3.25. Andrei sees Domenico's face in the mirror in *Nostalghia*.

Domenico shouts, "What ancestor lives in me? I can't live simultaneously in my head and in my body. This is why I am not able to be just one person. I am capable of feeling an infinity of things at the same time." Just when Domenico has proven to be three, himself and the two Andreis, he now becomes increasingly multiple. He is "not just one person," and an ancestor lives in him. Echoing the epigraph to this essay in which Tarkovsky suggests that water is an "ancient memory, my ancestor's energizing to life," Domenico understands himself as intersubjective and intertemporal. While the previously

mentioned notion of 1 + 1 = 1 risks pointing back to a transcendent higher power, these words show that Domenico's idea of oneness is much more nuanced. While he shouts to the people below, the camera darts around the *piazza*, revealing an ever-increasing number of people, insisting on the oneness of the multiple. However, consistent with Domenico's point that two drops of water added together make a larger one, a true multiplicity, as intended by Deleuze and Guattari, is one that, when added to or subtracted from, changes not only in quantity but in quality: "a multiplicity has… only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature" (8). This is why Domenico demands, "Man, listen—in you is water, fire, and then ash." He wants humanity to understand its nature as the multiple that changes. Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that, like truth, "the multiple *must be made*" (6). Therefore, the camera's "addition" of human figures on screen is not enough to make humanity whole (see Fig. 3.26).[48] In the spirit of Domenico, we must also set ourselves on fire; we must change in nature, react, transform.

Fig. 3.26. While Domenico gives his speech, people collect like mere numbers around the piazza in *Nostalghia*.

[48] For Deleuze, the "whole" is not necessarily complete. While the whole has no outsides, it is continually expanding and contracting itself.

While Domenico burns, and then dies, in the piazza, Andrei suffers a heart attack inside the emptied baths at Bagno Vignoni. These deaths are "difficult to accept, unless we understand them mythologically, as a sacrifice that opens in us the possibility of the new" (Sushytska 42). Indeed, for Tarkovsky, "death does not exist. Man often mixes up the concepts of suffering and death; the latter does not exist for me" (*A Poet in the Cinema*). In *The Sacrifice*, Alexander says something nearly identical in a monologue to his mute son: "There is no such thing as death. No, there is the fear of death, and that is an awful fear." For Tarkovsky, death is just a difficult phase of life, a transformation entangled with the suffering of the human body. For Deleuze, "life in its more radical sense…already include[s] what we normally take to be death" (Colebrook 3). In this more radical conception of life, this "plane of Nature," or "plane of immanence," as Deleuze and Guattari call it,[49] "there are no longer forms or developments of forms; nor are there subjects or the formation of subjects… there are only… longitudes and latitudes, speeds and haecceities" (265, 266). Death, then, "can only be conceptualized as the intersection of *elementary reactions* of *different speeds*" on the plane of Nature, which is life (268, emphasis mine). The deaths of Domenico and Andrei, rather than implicate the "death" of the Russian director's creativity in exile, on the contrary indicate "an entirely new creation, something that has not yet existed" (Sushytska 39). For the first time in his career, Tarkovsky was given reign to create almost entirely unrestricted. We, as film-viewers, are made privy to this "entirely new creation" only as we are brought to its very brink, where we are expected to participate, as co-authors, in its making. This is why the final shot of the film, on the surface level a simple folding of the Russian *dacha*, or

[49] Other names for it are "plane of consistency" (4) and "plane of composition" (258).

country home, into the Italian cathedral, gives us the poetics of water in a form that has not yet existed in this film: snow (see Fig. 3.27).

Fig. 3.27. The final shot of snow falling on a Russian *dacha* embedded within the Italian cathedral in *Nostalghia*.

We might say that the deaths of Domenico and Andrei (and essentially, of the "Soviet Tarkovsky" and the "Italian Tarkovsky") are really indicators of the death of the organism and the discovery of the "Body without Organs." Deleuze and Guattari describe the organism as "the organization of the organs" and "a phenomenon of accumulation, coagulation, and sedimentation" that imposes "forms, functions, bonds," and hierarchy (158, 159). The organism is imposed upon, controlled from outside by "the judgment of God," "He who makes an organism" (Deleuze and Guattari 158). The Body without Organs is the "dismantling" of this organized and pre-packaged organism, opening the body to "connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, and territories and deterritorializations" (Deleuze and Guattari 160). This "dismantling" can be as painful as it is rejuvenating (like nostalgia?), but as Tarkovsky hinted, it is not to be confused with death. God, as "He who makes an organism," is also He who enables death. "The

judgment of God uproots [the Body without Organs] from its immanence and makes it an organism, a signification, a subject" (Deleuze and Guattari 159). At the end of *Nostalghia*, both Domenico and Andrei, and therefore Tarkovsky, have not "died," but have rather "ceas[ed] to be an organism" (Deleuze and Guattari 159) and are on the brink of an entirely new spiritual-material experience: immanence.

I recognize that, due to Tarkovsky's reputation as a "religious" and "spiritual" director, it might seem like a stretch to claim that Tarkovsky's God is, in fact, immanence. However, what has become more and more apparent to me is that Tarkovsky finds God, finds spirituality, in life and its complexities of becoming. Immanence, which refers to the doctrine that the divine is embedded in the material, is described by Deleuze as "in itself: it is not *in* something, *to* something; it does not depend on an object or belong to a subject" (Deleuze, "Immanence" 4). Hence Domenico shouts in the piazza, "We need to stretch the soul everywhere, as if it were a sheet distending into the infinite." We are lost, he seems to say, if we do not stretch our understanding of the divine to the furthest corners, where there are no insides and outsides, where the distillation of the material-spiritual is a reality. Wasn't this indeed what Tarkovsky described as his larger purpose, to "balance spiritual and material needs"? Immanence *is* this reconciliation of the inner and the outer, the spiritual and the material, that Tarkovsky, creating, revealed in his art.

Tarkovsky does not push an overt religious agenda in his films, despite the fact that there are many citations of scripture and religious imagery. In *The Sacrifice*, Tarkovsky's final film, there is a curious intermingling of paganism ("the witch," the elements), Taoism, (the "yin yang"), Christianity ("The Adoration of the Magi,"

Alexander's prayer), and perhaps even other spiritualities. He created this dynamic in the film, he explains in one of his last interviews, because "it is necessary to afford the spectator the freedom to interpret the film according to their own inner vision of the world, not from the point of view I would impose upon them" ("Faith is the Only Thing..." 179). Via poetic associations, the film-viewer "becomes a participant in the process of discovering life, unsupported by ready-made deductions from the plot or ineluctable pointers by the author" (Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* 20). Tarkovsky, perhaps, was planting spiritual rhizomes rather than religious seeds.

The final shot of *The Sacrifice* is of a dead tree, an echo of the final shot of *Ivan's Childhood* (see Fig. 3.28). If the parable Alexander tells his son at the beginning of the film were to be Tarkovsky's message, if religious faith and continual watering were enough to bring the tree back to life, then we might see buds sprouting in affirmation. Is it up to the film-viewer to restore the tree to life? The possibility is there, but it seems unlikely, as the shot severs the dead tree from its trunk and from its roots, where we would need to pour our water. Instead, the tree's rhizome-like branches project wildly against a rippling sea. The slightly high angle interrupts the tree's verticality, which in addition to the movement of the sea, reorients it horizontally. Tarkovsky's water does not lie at the foot of the tree in hopes of arborescent life; what lies at the foot of the tree is Alexander's son, "little man," who speaks his only line of the film: "In the beginning was the word. Why is that Papa?" He pours his bucket of water on the dead tree, and the tiresome cycle of beginnings and endings would appear to continue ad infinitum. However, "a new rhizome may form in the heart of a tree…, in the crook of a branch" (Deleuze and Guattari 15). Tarkovsky's water "washes" these rhizome-like branches in

an enticing glimmer, as if to say: the spirit is here, immanent. “When we talk about God making man in His own image and likeness, we should understand that the likeness has to do with His Essence, and this is creation” (Tarkovsky qtd. in Chiaramonte 86). The sea fades in the overexposed light, and the rhizomatic lines of leakage lead off the screen where we can carry them into a world that, amazingly, erupts in creative immanence.

Fig. 3.28. The final shot of the rhizome-like branches in *The Sacrifice*.

CHAPTER 4

"Staring at the Edge of the Water": Liquid Eco-Intersubjectivity and Perception in Disney's *Moana*

The true eye of the earth is water.

—Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams*

Disney's animated features have, over the years, earned a great deal of disapproval from film-viewers and scholars alike for their racial, ethnic, and gender misrepresentation and stereotyping. A 2004 study entitled "Images of Gender, Race, Age and Sexual Orientation in Disney Feature-Length Animated Films" shows that in the vast majority of Disney animated features, women are depicted as "domestic" and "helpless," and valued more for their appearance than their intellect (Towbin, Haddock, Zimmerman et al.). The authors of this study point out, furthermore, that in many Disney films the "characters [are] nearly all [w]hite, and the [film's] expectation [is] that all people are or should be like this" (Towbin, Haddock, Zimmerman et al.). The authors also conclude that the films that do represent racial or ethnic minorities, or non-Western cultures, portray them, for the most part, negatively (Towbin, Haddock, Zimmerman et al.). Since it is not within the scope of this chapter to examine the many instances of prejudice and stereotyping in the nearly one hundred year history of Disney animated films, it suffices to say that Disney has earned itself a bad name for its often racist and sexist filmmaking. However, some Disney-film commentators are beginning to say that, as of late, there has been an improvement in Disney's ability to spin an inclusive narrative. Aisha Harris, a culture writer for *Slate Magazine*, boldly proclaims in the title of her story that "Disney

Has Entered a Progressive, Inclusive Third Golden Age." She argues that the company's "megahit" *Frozen* (2013) "marked a turning point for how Disney [tells] its stories," and that one of their more recent animated features, *Moana* (2016), "confirms" this.

Directed by the Disney duo Ron Clements and John Musker, of *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and *Aladdin* (1992) fame,[50] *Moana* tells the story of a young woman on the fictional island of Motunui who is next in line to become chief. Moana has an instinctual pull toward the ocean, at whose shore she often finds her intuitive and spirited grandmother, Tala, but her father has a strict rule that "no one goes beyond the reef." However, when the island's natural resources start disappearing due to the demi-god Maui's theft of the heart of mother island and creation goddess Te Fiti, it is up to Moana to save her people by finding Maui and convincing him to return the heart. She journeys beyond the reef and across the ocean, outwitting *kakamora* (coconut pirates), the giant coconut crab Tamatoa, and the lava monster Te Kā, all the while rediscovering her people's wayfinding roots and therefore "who [she] truly [is]."[51]

Moana does look and feel different than most other Disney movies; there is something "progressive" about the film even apart from the way race and gender are represented. In this chapter, I will argue that the protagonist of the story, Moana, is not an individual heroine but a liquid eco-intersubjectivity that models an Oceanian, as well as an ecological, sense of relational self. The film also shapes a corresponding liquid mode of perception for the film-viewer who has become all too used to solid ground.

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[50] Clements and Musker also directed Disney's *Hercules* (1997) and *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), among others.

[51] "You know who you are… who you truly are" is a line Moana sings at the end of the film as she returns the heart to Te Fiti. As I discuss later in this chapter, the self-realization of Te Fiti is synonymous with that of Moana.

Inclusive Disney: Hard to Swallow?

> For years, we've been swallowed by your culture. One time, could you be swallowed by ours?[52]
>
> —Pape Mape, an elder from Mo'orea, to Ron Clements

Originally, the *Moana* directors wanted to make a new animated film that centered on the pan-Oceanian myths of the demi-god Maui.[53] However, the production team's multiple research trips to islands such as Mo'orea, Samoa, and New Zealand, to name a few of the islands they visited, changed the course of *Moana*'s development. "When we listened to the people, that's when we touched the beauty of the Pacific Islands. It changed the story, and it changed us," says *Moana* producer Osnat Shurer (qtd. in Robertson 9). While being "touched" doesn't equate to "be[ing] swallowed," the Disney team were nonetheless open and receptive enough to allow the film's entire narrative to change. Those encounters and exchanges led Disney to create the Oceanic Story Trust, "a consultation team which involved Pacific artists, anthropologists,

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[52] *Moana* director Ron Clements recounts in an interview with the website *Moviefone* that an elder on the island of Mo'orea posited this question to the production team and that it informed their approach to the film.

[53] I have chosen to use the words "Oceania" and "Oceanian" rather than "Pacific Islands," "Pacific Islander," or other terms, unless these other terms are quoted directly from others. My reason for this choice is due to having read Alice Te Punga Somerville's "Where Oceans Come From" in which she explains that "the term [Oceania] is most closely associated with a pair of essays that propose Oceania as a name for a rather more ancient, and yet continuous, Indigenous conceptualization of the region: Samoan writer, artist, and educator Albert Wendt's 1974 'Towards a New Oceania' and Tongan writer, educator, and philosopher Epeli Hau'ofa's 1993 'Our Sea of Islands'" (25). Furthermore, Somerville points out that the term Oceania "not only produces a place different from 'Pacific' but also gestures towards the large and ever-expanding body of scholarly, cultural, activist, and educational work that engages Oceania as its key term—and thus frame—of reference" (26).

historians, fishermen, linguists, and community leaders" (Sternberg 1). This group of cultural experts had real sway on the film's development; their roles included "fact-checking, vetting drafts of the script, and sharing their knowledge and stories throughout the filmmaking process" (Sternberg 12). When Clements and Musker worked on *Aladdin*, their research began and ended at a Saudi Arabian expo at the Los Angeles Convention Center (Giardina, "Animation Roundtable…"). Thus, *Moana* is historic in that it is based in immersive research, and it is the first Disney film to incorporate the views of people "who are not considered Disney 'insiders'" (Sternberg 2).

The positive effect of the Oceanic Story Trust on the outcome of *Moana* can be seen in light of the results of a research project conducted on "[whether] the film successfully represent[s] a broad range of Pacific cultures and peoples" (Sternberg). The study interviewed and surveyed participants from a variety of nations in Oceania, and the results affirm that the vast majority of participants found *Moana* to have "successfully captured a pan-Pacific identity" (Sternberg).[54] While some participants expressed points of contention with the film,[55] overall *Moana* seems to have been embraced by the people of Oceania as a fairly accurate representation of their cultures. What is more, the collaborative nature of the Oceanic Story Trust has "challenge[d] [Disney's] dominant filmmaking process" (Sternberg 2). In other words, not only were Oceanians successful

[54] According to the study, "more than 75% of [the] participants agreed or strongly agreed that their countries and/or cultures were accurately represented in *Moana*" (Sternberg 9).

[55] Specifically, several people expressed dissatisfaction with the film's portrayal of the mythological *kakamora* pirates as coconuts rather than people. This was found to be especially offensive because of the coconut's use as a "well-worn racial slur used against islanders along with other brown-skinned people" (Sternberg 18). Some study participants also found *Moana* to be "Polynesian-centric" (Sternberg 20) rather than representative of all Oceanians. Finally, some participants were critical of the fact that Moana "doesn't listen to her father" (Sternberg 42) and that she took on the role to save the island, as in their cultures this would be considered a "male responsibility" (Sternberg 41).

in helping shape Disney's depiction of their cultures, they also influenced and made real change in *Disney's* mode and method of filmmaking.[56] When Shurer says in the quote above "it changed us," she admits this change in their "dominant filmmaking process." She also suggests that, on a more subtle level as individuals, their ways of thinking and perceiving were transformed.

Moana, the "Anti-Princess"?

Moana drew a lot of attention from critics as the first Disney "princess" with no love interest. This isn't, however, the only way that she stands out from Disney's past heroines. She is, admittedly, beautiful, yet she is valued by her family and community not for her appearance but for her leadership and bravery ("She's doing *great*," says one of the islanders after Moana resolves the issue of the diseased coconut trees). She's ambitious and adventurous ("see the line where the sky meets the sea? It calls me"), assertive ("You *will* board my boat"), and compassionate ("Sometimes our strengths lie beneath the surface… Perhaps there's more to Hei Hei than meets the eye"). Furthermore, there is, refreshingly, no drama embedded in the plot regarding the fact that

[56] It's to be seen whether the Story Trust method will be retained for other Disney films; however, considering Disney's reach and impact, I think it can be argued that this approach has made a difference even with one film.

a female is next in line to become chief.[57] Although Moana's royalty does, perhaps, officially make her a princess, her outright declaration to Maui that "[she's] *not* a princess" essentially equates to Disney poking fun at its own reputation— and more specifically, that of *Moana*'s directors Clements and Musker— for depicting princesses with little to no ambitions other securing a man's affection. This move signals Disney's willingness not only to acknowledge its previous failures in terms of gender stereotyping but also, perhaps, to distance itself from the idea of a princess altogether. The directors "saw this as a hero's journey, a coming-of-age story, in a different tradition than the princess stories" (Clements qtd. in Berman). This clear crack in the princess tradition is what led Eliza Berman, a writer from *Time* magazine, to label Moana the "ultimate anti-princess" ("Why Disney…"). However, in line with binary thinking, the label "anti-princess" merely re-enforces the figure of the princess. I hope that my reading will show that, instead, Moana becomes something new altogether.

Moana is bold and self-reliant. We see her self-sufficiency as a young adult when she fixes the roof of a fronded hut in front of a perplexed male peer, and again when she is trapped underwater and thinks "on her feet" by using a rock to break the coral.[58] When Maui traps Moana in his cave, she escapes using a combination of agility and guile. And despite the fact that legend seems to require her to find Maui in order to return the heart

[57] It is important to note that in the study undertaken by Sternberg, some Oceanians felt that the film's positioning of a young woman as next in line to become chief was at odds with their cultures. Others, however, celebrated it as recognizing the "fluidity in the Pacific Islands of how gender is treated" (Sternberg). During my personal conversation with an indigenous Hawaiian scholar at the Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association (PAMLA) conference in Honolulu in November 2017, this scholar expressed admiration for the fact that Moana is a female chief, which she said reflects her understanding of ancient Hawaii as matriarchal.

[58] I use this expression as a sort of pun because it is her foot that is trapped by the coral.

to Te Fiti, Moana handles much of the journey's adversity on her own. When the *kakamora* pirates steal the heart of Te Fiti and Maui has no interest in retrieving it, she singlehandedly takes it back. In addition to saving the heart, she also often rescues Maui. In the realm of monsters, when Tamatoa has Maui cornered and is about to devour him, Moana devises a clever plan to distract the massive crab, recover Maui's hook and guide him toward safety. Admittedly, Moana must rely on Maui's wayfinding skills and sense of direction for much of their journey, but her lack of this knowledge and skill is not due to the fact that she is female. All of the people on her island have lost touch with their identity as voyagers. By the end of the film, however, Moana has fully developed these navigational abilities through determination and practice, a fact which Maui himself points out ("You could come with us, you know. My people are going to need a master wayfinder," says Moana. "They already have one," Maui replies, implying Moana).

While Moana is clearly not a fragile or delicate princess, she is also not a hardened heroine. In other words, though she is confident and strong-willed, she also demonstrates the capacity to empathize with others and to be shaped by their influence. Moana's compassion is demonstrated through her commitment to Hei Hei, the chicken character who, according to Clements, "might be the stupidest character in the history of Disney Animation" (Sciretta, "How a Character…"). As mentioned earlier, Moana imagines that there could be "more to Hei Hei than meets the eye" and cares for him along her journey despite "his lack of basic intelligence."[59] Moana is also seen pouring coconut water into Pua the pig's mouth while beside her two peers are drinking it for themselves, hinting at her willingness to put others' needs before her own. Furthermore,

[59] These words are spoken by an elder in Moana's community who wants to cook the chicken.

she shows compassion and tolerance for members of her community when one peer endures a painful tattoo and a little boy has dance moves all his own.

Moana's empathy and compassion are established at the very beginning of the film, when as a toddler playing at the seashore she chooses to defend a baby sea turtle from hungry birds rather than fetch an attractive conch shell that is being pulled by waves back into the ocean. Referring to this key moment in the film, director John Musker says, "This empathy is why the ocean pick[s] Moana out" (Alexander, "Let's Talk…"). This act of empathizing with the baby turtle is what seems to awaken the consciousness of the ocean and lead it to choose Moana as the guardian of the heart of Te Fiti. After the baby turtle swims safely away, a magic shimmer ripples through the ocean toward Moana. The water parts and opens up a path for her to enter the realm of the ocean, as if it were an aquarium. A large wave then emerges and approaches Moana, mimicking her curiosity. Moana's finger and the tip of the wave touch, interconnecting their identities and their modes of intelligence, an intertextual reference to Michelangelo's fresco *The Creation of Adam* (1512) (see Fig. 4.1). However, what is brought to life here, I would argue, and in spite of the film's other biblical references,[60] is not man in the image of God but an intersubjectivity in the image of the ocean. Moana "touches" the liquid intelligence and creative spirit of the sea, which is simultaneously brought to life as a character with semi-sentient qualities. They are born in that moment as a complex, liquid inter-subject that, in the spirit of compassion and relation, transgresses the boundaries of the individual self and forms a multiplicity of characters and relations. In order to enrichen this liquid

[60] At the end of the film, the ocean parts like the Red Sea, and Moana walks through it to Te Fiti in the manner of Moses.

reading of the film, however, I will first develop, with the help of Gilles Deleuze, Edouard Glissant, and other scholars, my understanding of liquid intersubjectivity and its corresponding liquid perception.

Fig. 4.1. Moana and the sea touch "fingers," recalling Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*, in *Moana*.

Intersubjectivity and Liquid Perception

> Our subjectivity is so completely our own.[61]
>
> —Spike Jonze

The various definitions and understandings of subjectivity are rather fluid from the beginning. The *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* claims that subjectivity refers to "the subject and his or her particular perspective, feelings, beliefs, and desires… the term is often used to refer to the realm of experience, *however circumscribed and defined*, and is *typically* defined with reference to the first-person standpoint" (emphasis mine). This definition of subjectivity, as I see it, with its reference to multiple circumscriptions and definitions, betrays subjectivity's always already fluid nature.

The notion of intersubjectivity only further exposes this fluidity, pushing back on Spike Jonze's claim that subjectivity is "completely our own." Intersubjectivity "refers to

[61] Director Spike Jonze says this in an interview about his film *Her* (2013) (Brady).

the status of being somehow accessible to at least two (usually all, in principle) minds or 'subjectivities'" (*The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*). Intersubjectivity, then, expands the notion of subjectivity as individual to include multiple subjects and perspectives. This does not, however, mean a blending or homogenizing of the multiple. Rather, intersubjectivity cultivates a "unity-diversity" (Glissant 79) reflective of the philosophy of Relation.[62] In his book *The Poetics of Relation*, the French Caribbean philosopher-poet Edouard Glissant articulates his "Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (11). Identity is *extended*, not diluted or compromised, in its relation with others. Furthermore, this intersubjective mode of perception, this poetics, "prompt[s] the knowledge that identity is no longer completely within the root but also in Relation" (Glissant 18). Identity is *composed of* Relation, and intersubjectivity is this awareness of self as not only multiple but also as Relational.

Philosophies of intersubjectivity are as old as subjects. In her book *Angels of Desire: Esoteric Bodies, Aesthetics, Ethics*, interdisciplinary scholar Jay Johnston develops her idea of "subtle subjectivity" by investigating the "subtle body schemas" "most clearly present in Eastern conceptualizations of the body-mind" but integral to many ancient and indigenous cultures (2, 21, 21). For example, she discusses yogic philosophy, with its concept of the *chakras* ("wheels" of life force), which essentially constitute increasingly open, or aware, dimensions of the self. Johnston also cites "contemporary philosophical considerations of subjectivity" (14), such as Luce Irigaray's

[62] Relation, with a capital "R," refers to the "consciousness of Relation [that] is total, that is, immediate and focusing directly upon the realizable totality of the world" (Glissant 27). Glissant points out that, "when we speak of a poetics of Relation, we no longer need to add: relation between what and what? This is why the French word Relation, which functions somewhat like an intransitive verb, could not correspond, for example, to the English term relationship" (27).

notion of dual subjectivity and Deleuze and Guattari's Body without Organs.[63] What these concepts of subtle bodies and subjectivities have in common is a more expansive understanding of "the body-mind as varieties of force, and intensities" (Johnston 22), as essentially, Relation.

Johnston explains:

> Subtle bodies are understood to be comprised of a subtle form of matter-consciousness that exceeds the corporeal body, and, therefore, their proposition promotes an understanding of embodiment that is not exclusively tied to materiality. The space between 'object' and 'subject,' or between subjects, becomes a space of mutual occupation, where a shared intersubjective relation is born. This relation… is simultaneously both of, and not of, each of the subjects in relation… The subtle subject, by its very ontological constitution, is simultaneously placed in intimate and detached relations with alterity. *From this perspective*, the subject is always innately intersubjective, creative and open. (Johnston 2, emphasis mine)

Her conceptualization of the subtle body as a fine, molecular layer of the mind-body exceeding the limits of the physical body recalls Glissant's identity that extends in Relation. Furthermore, her reference to "intimate and detached relations with alterity" seems like another way of saying "unity-diversity." Both Glissant and Johnston are, in their own but similar ways, establishing a theory of intersubjectivity. Johnston says that "*from this perspective*, the subject is always innately intersubjective." I have added

[63] Johnston articulates Irigaray's ideas as such: "In Irigaray's relations of a dual subjectivity, the subject's energies interpenetrate one another. The subjects are understood to interrelate in relations of radical proximity, and, therefore, an inherent respect for difference is also a feature of the relation" (31).

emphasis to the words *from this perspective* because it is important to note that embedded within Johnston's articulation of this subtle intersubjectivity is the idea that it takes a certain type of perception to conceive of subjectivity in this fluid manner. She further develops this idea using Henri Bergson's philosophy and his notions of *durée* and "intuition," his name for an "inner vision" that "fractures [the general] concept of subjectivity [in Western culture] and opens onto models of interpenetration and coexistence, positing a subtle, fluid, temporal subjectivity" (Johnston 20).[64] In other words, at the level of the subtly intersubjective, perception becomes equally fluid.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Deleuze, who developed many of Bergson's ideas in his theoretical writings on cinema and otherwise, puts forth his own notion of intersubjective perception, which he calls *liquid perception*, in the book *Cinema 1*. While he characteristically avoids defining this or any other term, he describes it as "a more delicate and vaster perception, a molecular perception," as well as "a more than human perception" (80). Within these articulations one can see that the words "delicate" and "molecular" echo "subtle," while "vaster" and "more than human" relate to "exceed[ing] the corporeal body." Deleuze also explains that liquid perception "no longer ha[s] the solid as object, as condition, as milieu" (80). In other words, the traditional mode of singular, solid perception familiar to the West begins to erode within a liquid mode. Deleuze thus posits a splitting of what he has labeled the perception-image into "two states, one molecular and the other molar, one liquid and the other solid, one drawing

[64] Johnston writes that "Bergson presents durée as a heterogenous whole comprised of inherently fluid matter-consciousness in continual dynamic flux" (17).

along and effacing the other" (80).[65] The words "drawing along and effacing" in this articulation as well as "no longer" in the previous quote suggest that liquid perception is a more novel type of perception whose job it is to relax, blur, and open the solid parameters of "normal" perception. "Normal perception and opinion are solid, geometric," writes Deleuze in his book *Negotiations*. In other words, in Deleuze's view, solid perception is what is, or at least what has been, the dominant type of perception in the West, whereas liquid perception "disrupts dialogues of mastery and representation" (Johnston 1). Mastery can be equated with solid perception and subjectivity in the sense that a subject with mastery has "comprehensive knowledge or skill" and "control and superiority" over itself and other subjects (*Oxford Dictionary*). The word "complete" corresponds with the word "solid" in that it illustrates a subject that is fixed, cohesive, and has little room for or capacity to change. Conversely, within a liquid mode of perception, the subject, or "the center of reference itself [is put] into movement" (Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 77). The subject's sense of self and perspective moves and shifts, opens and changes, becoming uniquely intersubjective with a uniquely intersubjective modality of perception. With a liquid eye the inter-subject both sees and *is* Relation.

Liquid perception should be considered, I'd like to suggest, not only "clairvoyant" (seeing the subtleties not immediately apparent to the eyes), as Deleuze suggests, but also intersubjective and inclusive. Open and heterogeneous, liquid perception destabilizes the "center of reference," preventing the subject from hardening, solidifying, and mastering her/him/themselves. The liquid subject therefore continually reevaluates, renegotiates,

[65] In Deleuze's theory of cinema, the movement-image is made up of three varieties: perception-image, action-image, and affection-image. The perception-image is described as a "set of elements which act on a center, and which vary in relation to it" (*Cinema 1*, 217).

and transforms his/her/their sense of self in accordance with the surrounding subjects and environment. Quite different from the notion of a "Master," which unfortunately for the world of higher education, denotes a subject who is not only in possession of complete knowledge and power but also abuses that knowledge and power by placing other subjects in a position of disadvantage, the liquid subject has the spirit of a novice or an amateur. From the French word meaning "one who loves, lover," the amateur is drawn toward and into relation with the Other, and thrives on this relation rather than "pursuing it professionally or with an eye to gain" (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). Indeed, the figure of the amateur reminds me of Glissant's discussion of travel as "no longer the locus of power, but… the enjoyment of a relation" (19). The amateur, the "lover," sees and relates without possessing or conquering. Additionally, for the novice, from the Latin for "new," the task at hand needs to be completely reinvented. The liquid subject, therefore, sees with eyes that create the world.

Liquid intersubjectivity and perception, cultivated in multiple indigenous philosophical traditions throughout the world, may seem new and unusual in places like the United States, where the values of solidity are continually reinforced. In a paper that makes use of social psychologist Shalom H. Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values to investigate human values across various national cultures,[66] "findings with respect to the United States show a high degree of endorsement for values within the self-enhancement dimension — particularly those that focus on mastery (e.g., successful,

[66] "In Schwartz's model, values are classified along two core dimensions: from self-transcendence to self-enhancement and from openness to change to conservatism" (Schultz and Zelezny 128). This interestingly relates to my project of elaborating liquid perception in that the first dimension articulates the singularity versus plurality of the self, while the second dimension echoes the dynamics of liquidity versus solidity.

capable, independent, choosing own goals)" (Schultz and Zelezny 128). Americans are, at least as interpreted through this model, continually seeking to build up and solidify their sense of self. Narratives of the independent hero who singlehandedly saves the day, or who achieves a far-fetched goal, are prolific in American literature, cinema, and the other arts. Examples include Ayn Rand's 1943 novel *The Fountainhead* (which has a rather liquid-sounding title but upon further scrutiny is quite traditional in its reference to a source rather than a flux) and almost any Disney animated feature up to, and seemingly including, *Moana*.

As bold and hero-like as Moana may be on the surface level, the real protagonist of *Moana*, I will argue below, is liquid eco-intersubjectivity. The film, furthermore, shapes a liquid mode of perception that is revolutionary for those of us continually subjected to dominant solidity, as it models a primarily intersubjective, relational, and generative way of seeing and perceiving.

The Ocean as Subject, The Subject as Liquid

> The water is mischievous; I like how it misbehaves.[67]
>
> — Gramma Tala

One of the most striking things about Disney's *Moana* is its rendering of water, or the ocean, as a semi-sentient character whose fluidity permeates the film both visually and metaphorically.[68] Directors Clements and Musker returned from research trips to

[67] Gramma Tala sings this line in the song "Where You Are."

[68] Water has a huge presence in the film, making up about 80 percent of effects shots.

Oceania with a strong sense of the importance of the ocean to the people and their cultures. “People in Polynesia talk about the ocean as if it is alive,” notes Musker (qtd. in Robertson). “We were infused with the ideas we learned about navigation, their connection to the ocean, how the ocean [is] a living being— having feelings and emotions,” Clements confirms (Machado). Inspired by the vibrant and vital relationship many Oceanians have with the ocean, often interacting with it as if it were alive (in an interview Clements recalls a Fijian navigator “who would caress” and “speak gently” to the ocean (Machado)), the directors decided it was essential to animate the ocean as a character in *Moana*. Consequently, according to the previously mentioned study that measured how well a pan-Oceanian identity was rendered in the film, the ocean was found by the participants to be the film’s single most accurately portrayed cultural element.[69] While the cultures of Oceania are many and diverse, there is overlap, and Relation, in the identity and importance of the ocean, a concept to which the region’s name boldly speaks.

“The ocean in *Moana* is an anthropomorphic force that occasionally nudges Moana along the way,” explains Adrienne LaFrance of *The Atlantic*. “Except the ocean character doesn’t have a face. And it doesn’t talk.” The ocean character (or “performance water” (Frost et al.) as the animators sometimes refer to it) often presents itself in the form of a wave, and taps Moana on the shoulder, spins and twirls her, nods, high-fives, and seems to convey emotions like curiosity and sadness. Furthermore, the ocean is Moana’s ally (“The ocean is a friend of mine”). However, its human-like qualities are

[69] “The results [of the study] suggested that the ocean (68.6%), family structure, ship/canoe, and animals (all 66.7%) were the most accurately represented elements of respondents’ respective cultures” (Sternberg 9).

limited, and those that are apparent, namely behaviors and emotions, dissolve every time the wave merges back into the larger ocean environment. The ocean enacts a fluid subjectivity by maneuvering back and forth between a subjective, character-like presence and an objective, landscape-like presence. "Disney's effects specialists and animators were constantly navigating the tension between wanting the water to look and act like actual water—but to be magical at the same time," according to LaFrance. The ocean character "navigates," or fluidly moves along, the subject-object spectrum, and its "center of reference" slips and slides. While the ocean's ability to act human is what seems to constitute the "magical," perhaps it is the characters' ability to *perceive* of the ocean as anthropomorphic, as both human and environment, that constitutes the magic. Moreover, if the "actual water" of the ocean for many Oceanians is alive, then it is this spirit that comes to life through animation in *Moana*. The non-Oceanian viewer is introduced to a new way of perceiving and understanding the ocean, and therefore a new way of perceiving and understanding the world. The film-viewer begins to adapt to liquid eyes.

Interestingly, the technical approach to animating the ocean in *Moana* illuminates the novelty of its fluid subjectivity. Clements explains:

> Anthropomorphic nature and living oceans… combine two areas of animation that are usually separate. We have what we call "character animation," and [this involves] the actors of the movie, and [the animators] really bring the character[s to] life in terms of their thought process[es] and their personalities. And we have effects animators, who [work instead with] things like the water and the ocean and fire— and usually they are separate—but we knew, [for the ocean character] in [*Moana*], they were going to combine. (qtd. in Machado)

Character animation (subjects) and effects animation (background/landscape) are normally kept separate and treated differently at Disney Animation Studios. The novelty of the ocean character is the hybrid technique that led to its hybrid identity. On a very "vast," quite "molecular" level, Disney has been "touched" and "challenged" by the stories and perspectives of the people of Oceania, and even its animation techniques have been revolutionized by a new way of perceiving the ocean. Likewise, the viewer, who might have been attuned to Disney's typical separation of these two areas of animation, picks up on this fresh mode of perception. The viewer's eyes adjust to a liquid mode of perception and to the fluid subjectivity that the ocean represents. In my reading of the film, however, to which I now turn, the subjective fluidity of the ocean extends beyond its own physical and subjective liquidness on screen. The liquid intersubjectivity that is the protagonist of the film comprises the ocean, the girl, Te Fiti, Gramma Tala, the environment, and eventually, even Maui. It is, in fact, life as Relation, the becoming-seeing of "unity-diversity."

Liquid Moana

Every wave carries us here –

every song to remind us –

we are skin of the ocean.

—from Robert Sullivan's "Ocean Birth"

The word *moana* means "ocean" in many languages of Oceania.[70] In light of this fact, the female protagonist is identified with the ocean even before the film begins, when her character was ideated and her name chosen. The fluidity and interconnectedness of *moana*— the ocean and/as the young woman— complicates whatever notion of subject/object and/or subject/subject that may have dichotomized them. Furthermore, that the title of the film is, essentially, "ocean," begs the question: Who, or what, is *actually* the protagonist of the film? If we replace the word "moana" with its synonym "ocean," a vast and expansive notion of the protagonist's subjectivity emerges. Conversely, if we think about the semi-sentient ocean character/landscape as *moana*, the two become drops in an even more complex liquid relationship that their *Creation-of-Adam*-like touch brings into be(com)ing.

Moana begins with these lines spoken by Gramma Tala: "In the beginning there was only ocean until the mother island emerged: Te Fiti." Te Fiti, who as the creation goddess generates "life itself" (and so, presumably, all of the characters including Moana) and who we realize by the end of the film looks exactly like Moana, essentially emerges *from* moana. Perceiving liquidly through and with *moana* allows us to pick up on an inherently creative yet differentiating intersubjectivity whose very identity is Relation. The protagonist is much more than just an adolescent girl; *Moana* posits a "vaster," more "molecular," and "more than human" self as that which will eventually save the world and the day.

[70] Karlo Mila explains that "*Moana*… is a Polynesian word that can be found in 35 contemporary Pacific languages" (64).

The word *moana* refers particularly to the depths of the ocean as opposed to the "high seas" (Malm).[71] In other words, *moana* is the vastness and expansiveness of the ocean from *within* and under the surface, rather than its breadth from, for example, a bird's eye or map view. In this sense, *moana* is tied to a form of perception that is immediately liquid. To understand its sense and significance one has to be submerged inside, perceiving from within the deep, liquid realm, not from a position above that is dry and removed. The subject has to be already inside and a part of *moana* to properly perceive of it, his/her/their sense of self flowing and de-centered. The concept of *moana*, as I see it and *a la* Glissant, allows for a particularly extended perception of self and sense of identity.

New Zealand poet and scholar Karlo Mila further articulates *moana* as "the sea we have in common, all the distinctive cultures of Pasifika, shaped by a continuous engagement with, and adaptation to, the largest ocean in the world" (64). The ocean as that which connects and continually produces Relation might seem new to those of us whose languages make use of phrases such as "oceans apart" or "an ocean between us," which reinforce the ocean as a space that isolates. The idea of the ocean as relational and generative is further illuminated through another word common to several Oceanian languages: *vā*, or *wā*, which, as Mila explains, "means relationships. However, it also means space— the space between us" (61). That a word could simultaneously mean "relationships" and "space" is, perhaps, hard to conceptualize from a solid point of view. Space, for an American audience, typically connotes emptiness and isolation. The space

[71] "The open sea… is referred to with two words: *vaha* signifies open or high seas, while *moana* refers to the deep sea and its characteristic colour" (Malm 6).

between two people, perceived solidly, becomes an empty space that begins where one person's skin ends and the other person's skin begins. However, *vā* seems to produce the space between subjects as subtle and interactive, essentially, as intersubjectivity.

Mila quotes the Samoan poet and scholar Albert Wendt to further unpack the significance of *vā* as "the between-ness" (Wendt qtd. in Mila 61). This articulation of *vā* resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's description of the rhizome as "always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo" (25). Deleuze and Guattari utilize the concept of the rhizome to advocate a mode of thinking and philosophizing that is, rather than arboreal and hierarchical, always in the unpredictable process of becoming. The "between-ness," then, rather than empty and sterile space, can be thought of as the becoming of intersubjectivity. The subject is no longer delineated by the skin-as-border; rather, there is a generative between-ness that "is simultaneously both of, and not of, each of the subjects in relation."

This idea is well-captured in Robert Sullivan's poem "Ocean Birth," quoted in part as an epigraph to this section. When he writes "we are skin of the ocean," the "we" asserts multiple subjects that are bound together to form skin of another subject, the ocean. However, the fact "we are skin" as opposed to "we are *the* skin" suggests that the amount of skin is not finite and that skin does not fully enclose and delineate the ocean as solid subject. The ocean is, rather, interactive between-ness, its skin contracting or expanding as it undergoes the continual "birth" of relation. The first stanza of the poem reads:

With the leaping spirits we threw

our voices past Three Kings to sea –

eyes wide open with ancestors. (Sullivan)

The absence of "the" before "sea," echoing that before "skin," gives "sea" an open immediacy and denies definite ("the"), or even indefinite ("a"), subjectivity. It is simply "to sea," a homophone of "to see",[72] at once noun (subject) and verb (relation). The lines are constructed in such a way that it is both "we" and "sea" that have "eyes wide open with ancestors"; "we" becomes both liquidly intersubjective *and* visual. Sullivan's poetic rendering of the ocean, together with the notions of *vā* and rhizomatic becoming, are useful, I believe, in reconceptualizing the ocean as *moana*: relational, generative between-ness. This expansive and expanding notion of *moana* is, as I see it, the subtle protagonist of the film *Moana*.

Why is it important to identify the subtle, oceanic protagonist of the film? For one, the intersubjective ocean and the relational perceptive modes that it generates are defining characteristics of Oceania, and to make use of these modes is to depart from isolating and distancing perspectives that have been imposed upon the people and the region. Tongan writer and scholar Epeli Hau'ofa describes the dominant, solid mode of perceiving Oceania, and refocuses on a more "holistic" and relational one, in his well-known essay "Our Sea of Islands." He argues that

> There is a gulf of difference between viewing the Pacific as "islands in a far sea" and as "a sea of islands." The first emphasizes dry surfaces in a vast ocean far from the centers of power. When you focus this way you stress the smallness and

[72] Sound, always an important element in poetry, seems especially vital in this poem considering its use of the words "voices," "song," and other musical terminology.

> remoteness of the islands. The second is a more holistic perspective in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships. (Hau'ofa 7)

Hau'ofa's choice of words such as "viewing," "focus," and "perspective in which things are seen" reveal the importance he places on the type of perception cultivated toward Oceania. Within the first type of view he describes, the "dry surfaces" of islands are emphasized and the "far sea" connotes the ocean as a space that separates. Furthermore, the speaker as well as the listener of the phrase "islands in a far sea" is immediately positioned outside of and far away from the region. Alternatively, when Oceania is rearticulated as "a sea of islands," the dominant noun in the noun phrase becomes "sea." The ocean is the center and the focus, and so the "totality of relationships" comes into view. Hence Hau'ofa's preference for the word "Oceania," rather than "Pacific Islands," as a name for the region. This second type of perceptive mode doesn't have the same distancing effect as the first. Just as when someone in a crowded public place announces that there is "a sea of people here," the speaker and listener of the phrase "a sea of islands" could likely be included within this "totality." As Māori scholar Alice Te Punga Somerville frames it, "Hau'ofa reminds us that Oceania *looks totally different* when one doesn't equate land with presence and water with absence" (26, emphasis mine). We are perceiving liquidly, and more "holistically," when we shift our understanding of ocean, and in fact, all supposed "empty spaces," to mean intersubjective presence.

Just like Moana, Gramma Tala is associated with the ocean from the beginning of the film, when her voice proclaims "In the beginning there was only ocean." Tala is the other character naturally drawn to the sea and is almost always seen at its shores. During the song "Where You Are," in which the villagers celebrate their traditions and

encourage Moana to "stay on the ground," Tala sings "I like to dance with the water/ the undertow and the waves/ the water is mischievous/ I like how it misbehaves." In contrast to Moana's father and his solid ideology, Tala flows with the ocean, often gesturing its waves. Her magical connection with the sea is apparent when stingrays swim in a circle around her. Furthermore, after Tala dies, her spirit returns to visit Moana in the form of phosphorescence that arises from the ocean (see Fig. 4.2). She is quite literally a liquid subject, an ancestral force understood to be "inside" and guiding Moana.[73] As is evidenced in the title of this scene's song "I am Moana (Song of the Ancestors)," Tala is just one of a plurality of ancestors that "sing" inside of her. Moana is sea and now also song, the call of her wayfinding predecessors whose expertise in ocean navigation has long been forgotten. Moana, then, can be seen as a liquid intersubjectivity who not only reimagines the space, but also the *time*, between subjects. Past generations arise, "eyes wide open," within *moana*, and the notion of time, like music, becomes more rhythmic than linear.

Fig. 4.2. Gramma Tala returns as phosphorescence arising from the sea in *Moana*.

[73] In the song "I am Moana (Song of the Ancestors)," Moana sings that the call of the sea and her ancestors "isn't out there at all, it's inside me."

In the song “I am Moana (Song of the Ancestors),” Tala asks Moana if she knows who she is. Moana sings:

I'm the girl who loves the sea

It calls me

I am the daughter of the village chief

We are descended from voyagers

Who found their way across the world

They call me

Just like Gramma Tala, the ancestors begin to appear as visionary phosphorescence from the ocean. The bluish, hazy images of multiple ancestors on their canoes are subtle and liquid, as mist is, and it is as if we can see their subtle bodies extending out to produce generative space (see Fig. 4.3). The ancestors sing and “call” to Moana, as does the sea, and at the same time, she is the “song” of all these relations. There is a complexity, a depth, to these interrelations that I’d argue is unprecedented for Disney. Moana continues singing:

And the call isn't out there at all, it's inside me

It's like the tide; always falling and rising

I will carry you here in my heart you'll remind me

That come what may

I know the way

I am Moana!

The ocean calls (and is called) Moana, and she realizes that this call— the sea, her grandmother, her ancestors— is inside of her, that essentially, it *is* her. She is the call; to

know of and understand herself as *moana* is her purpose. She is "like the tide, always falling and rising"; she is a fluid, oceanic subject. This scene, in my reading, marks the moment when Moana fully understands herself as liquid intersubjectivity. When she sings "I am Moana!", she signals this understanding verbally, and when immediately thereafter she dives into the ocean to retrieve the heart of Te Fiti, we understand her to have returned to the "heart" of who/what *moana* is: generative relation. Moana dives into *moana*, symbolic of liquid self-perception for every viewer—child or adult—who might identify with the protagonist.

Fig. 4.3. Moana's ancestor depicted as misty phosphorescence, recalling the subtle body that produces a generative "betweenness," in *Moana*.

Liquid Eco-Intersubjectivity

The film doesn't end with Moana's dive into the ocean and her embrace of an expanded and more subtle sense intersubjective self. To save her people from the environmental catastrophes that are afflicting their island, Moana must expand her sense of self even further to include the environment. She must be fully self-realized as a liquid, ecological intersubjectivity in order to succeed in her quest as heroine. Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, founder of the deep ecology environmental movement,

discusses the notion of an "ecological self" in his essay "Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World." In this essay, Naess points out that

> We may be said to be in, and of, Nature from the very beginning of our selves. Society and human relationships are important, but our self is much richer in its constitutive relationships. These relationships are not just those we have with other people and the human community. (516)

Here Naess suggests that an ecological self includes non-human life, and he explains that "the ecological self of a person is that with which this person identifies" (83). When a person identifies with elements of the natural environment, his/her/their sense of self becomes "wide and deep," a complex "plurality of components" (Naess 522). Therefore, the preservation of the environment becomes an act of self-defense (Naess 522). If we literally see ourselves in the river and the bird and the island, then our fight to protect those things becomes a fight to protect ourselves.

This is Moana's mission. In order to save her people from environmental destruction, she needs to "recognize and accept wholeheartedly [her] ecological self" (Naess 523). Moana needs to reassert herself as *moana*, as a liquid eco-intersubjectivity that is "wide and deep" with "vaster" and "more than human" perceptive abilities. Moana appears fully to realize her ecological self toward the end of the film when she has to face the lava monster, Te Kā. Te Kā originally "awoke" when Maui stole Te Fiti's heart, and as Moana attempts to reach Te Fiti in order to return her heart, Te Kā tries to block her by hurling lava. Eventually, with Maui's help, Moana makes it past Te Kā to Te Fiti, only to realize that "it's gone." As Moana stares, surprised at how little is left of the mother island, the animation mimics a rapid vertical tracking shot and from above we see the

outline of a female human body made from the varying shades of the ocean's blue (see Fig. 4.4). This move, in my reading, enacts Moana's engagement in "vaster" and "more than human" perception, as she sees herself within the natural environment that is degrading before her eyes. She literally sees the image of her body as ocean, her "skin [as] the ocean," the ocean as herself.

Fig. 4.4. Moana sees Te Fiti, and thus herself, in the ocean's depths in *Moana*.

With this newfound insight as to "who [she] really [is]," Moana turns toward Te Kā and is able to see that the spiral she is seeking and in which the heart of Te Fiti belongs is in the center of Te Kā's chest. Moana now understands that Te Kā *is* Te Fiti, and that she need not defeat or avoid Te Kā but rather show her some compassion, some "heart." Moana tells the ocean to "let her come to me" and then begins to walk calmly through the dry ocean bed that opens up, like the Red Sea, between her and Te Kā. As they approach each other and the "space" between them is reduced, Te Kā's destructive fire begins to cool, and they touch heads in a traditional Maori *hongi* (see Fig. 4.5). The hongi is a greeting in which two people press their noses and foreheads together, and through this gesture they are said to have shared the breath of life. When the hongi is performed, "the mauri between both people is symbolized" (Ryan 270). *Mauri* is "the interconnectedness of all things through the possession of being and a shared life force"

(Ryan 270). Therefore, when Moana and Te Kā hongi, they are acknowledging their "shared life force," essentially, their intersubjectivity. Indeed, once Moana places the greenstone heart onto Te Kā's chest, her hardened lava-rock skin breaks away to reveal a lush and green Te Fiti who has a striking resemblance to Moana. Te Kā is Te Fiti is Moana, and Moana is a protagonist whose identity is made up of ocean, lava, her ancestors, and the "life force" that Te Fiti represents. Moana has extended her identity to include the environment that sustains her; she has cultivated a liquid eco-intersubjectivity. The water that hissed and fizzled at Te Kā's touch now flows between Moana and the transformed goddess, a relational presence. Ultimately, even Maui is identified with this liquid eco-intersubjectivity when, as he shapeshifts into an eagle and flies up into the sky, water jets and spurts beneath him (see Fig. 4.6).

Fig. 4.5. Moana performs the *hongi* with Te Kā in a sign of their interconnectedness in *Moana*.

Fig 4.6. Maui shapeshifts into an eagle as the ocean imitates pyrotechnics in *Moana*.

Near the end of the film, we see that Moana has placed a conch shell on top of the pile of stones placed at the top of the island's highest peak by past (male) chiefs (see Fig. 4.7). The pile of stones was meant to "raise [the] whole island higher," and is a phallic symbol of solidity. Moana's shell, however, represents a new ocean-oriented era for her people. A fleet of canoes sailing "beyond the reef" makes it clear that her people have resumed the tradition of wayfinding, a "natural orientation process that uses surrounding environmental clues—sun, moon, stars, waves, and animals—to help set direction" (Baybayan qtd. in Lin). Wayfinders, the nomads, perhaps, of the sea, do not use maps or other instruments that fix landscape as the solid object of perception. Rather, they continually adjust their perception, and their path, to the shifting sea and the other fluid rhythms of the ocean environment. The film *Moana*, which in one Oceanian critic's words "serves as a contemporary *wa'a* (sailing vessel) that enlarges [Oceanian] presence in the world" (Tamaira 322), invites film-viewers to board this vessel and rediscover the ocean, and therefore ourselves, as Relation.

Fig. 4.7. Moana places a shell on top of a pile of stones, signaling an ocean-oriented era for her people, in *Moana*.

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