

## CHAPTER 10

# THINKING MOEBIUSLY

## CAN WE LEARN ABOUT RITUAL FROM CINEMA WITH *MULHOLLAND DRIVE*?

### Author's Note

In 2001 I saw David Lynch's extraordinary film *Mulholland Drive* in Stockholm. The next evening I returned with Galina Lindquist, and she was equally enthusiastic. We discussed the film over and over again, imagining its implications beyond representation. I perceived *MD* as a moebius movie, as a moebius surface in action. Not as evident a moebius movie as Lynch's *Lost Highway*, yet so much more complex in its turning-into-itself-coming-out-elsewhere in order to return to itself, differently. In 2005 I participated in a discussion on "The Interface Between Ritual, Theatre and Film," in Ascona, Switzerland. Out of this came a draft of this chapter. I had never formally studied film as a medium, though in the late 1970s and early 1980s I had co-taught a course with Elihu Katz on public events and media events, which also was beneficial for the creation of *Models and Mirrors*. Elihu is a founder of the sociology of communication, and the course rehearsed many of the televised media occasions that formulated the argument of *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (1992), that he coauthored with the semiotician of communication, Daniel Dayan. So I was not completely unfamiliar with thinking on screen images, sequences, and their narratives.

In perceiving *MD* as a cosmos in difficulty, I was influenced by Deleuze's brilliant thinking on cinema. Interestingly, his ideas moved extremely well through the moebius movement of *Mulholland Drive*.



Regularity is easier to represent than chaos.  
 If one were to say: I want to represent chaos  
 using a handful of mud, it's quite hard to show  
 the viewer that it's mud. Such things only work  
 when they're still recognizable.  
 —M. C. Escher

There are new things coming up every second . . . but  
 the present is the most elusive, because it's going real fast.  
 —David Lynch in *Lynch on Lynch*

## Prolapse

Recently the following happens to me, or, more moebiusly, happens to me as I am happening to me: before me the light of the television screen implodes, a whiteness spiraling inward within the screen, swallowing itself. I am elsewhere, perhaps in another room; perhaps I go through the screen, imploding. Startled, I am facing myself, self to self. The I facing I, a quizzical smile on his tight lips, holds up his hands in loose fists and waggles them toward me. Whatever else is happening here, I am opening space—perhaps within my self—that has not existed, and this space is interactive, open-ended, emergent, reflexive. However it is that I and I arrive together within this opened space (as the TV screen seems to enter within itself), the movement is not linear. Perhaps in a moebius-like dynamic I curve into my self and divide, so that I both repeat myself and produce myself as different, permutating my self through its transmutations. Though I am the I that I am, I have no doubt that the I facing I is I. Yet two. Yet different. I *in-flect* myself into *re-flection* that enables the two-ness to be recognized as different from the one-ness, and so to relate to this in an embryonically nonlinear way (I am startled; I smile and waggle fists toward my surprise; I stare at my waggling fists). A generative dynamic, a creative process, in which I, momentarily a micro-world unto myself, become a site of cosmogenesis, somewhere within-through the *interval* opening between one-ness and two-ness, sliding into and out of myself, involuting, evolving. Moebius movement, one-ness curving through its own space, through its own time, repeating its own space-time yet creating this as different, as two-ness, as two-ness that then is both inside and outside itself, yet where/when inside is no less outside, and outside no less inside.

Borges (1994: 15), in his brief meditation, *Borges and I*, opens with the inflecting line, “It is to my other self, to Borges, that things happen,” and closes with, “I cannot tell which one of us is writing this page,” Borges relating moebiusly to Borges, curving through one another. The inflection opens a site of cosmogenesis, an interval for a two-ness of Borges through which Borges is taking over Borges until they merge, becoming one but different, each inside~outside the other.<sup>1</sup> In my experience and in Borges’s imaginary, mimesis, the creation of difference from sameness, is no

less moebius, a dynamic that permutes our singularities, such that the permutations transmute sites of cosmogenesis without destroying their elasticity.

## Moebius Dynamics

The moebius dynamic is a *self-entering form* (Neuman 2003: 143, 145) such that each re-entry, each curving through itself, is no less a folding in the Deleuzian sense (Deleuze 1993: 8) than it is an opening of interiority, recursively opening space/time where, again, none had existed.<sup>2</sup> As it exits itself it re-enters itself; in re-entering itself it re-exits itself. It has no stable exteriority or interiority, no ground on which to rest, only changing perspectives through movement. This kind of self-organization is pivotal to the film, *Mulholland Drive*, which I discuss in detail below, and which I use to ask whether the study of rituals of transformation can learn from cinema.

As I will stress throughout this chapter, moebius dynamics bring disparate levels or domains into conjunction, yet relate to them as *existing on a single plane of continuous movement*. In this regard, the moebius dynamic is implicated in rituals that transform within and through themselves (see Chapter Three; Handelman 1998; Kapferer 1997) by generating, operating, and moving through multiple actualities, enabling them to turn into one another. Too, this dynamic is implicated in films that bring multiple actualities into existence, blurring their boundaries and traversing them. I discuss actuality (and virtuality) further on.

Moebius dynamics, curving, folding recursively, and, no less, virtuality and actuality, are all entangled in my question of, can we learn about ritual from cinema? In these dynamics of curving and folding there is something that speaks to many rituals that in their self-organizing propensities have the capacities to do transformation within and through themselves. Rituals that do transformation seem to have properties of self-organization, of forming themselves through themselves within themselves, in ways that enable complex changes to be done through them. Thus, shaped into their plan, their design, is the future to be actualized.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, these rituals are reflexive, such that in being cognizant of themselves as they are practiced, they include themselves within themselves. In this regard, no less than the doer practicing the doing of ritual, the ritual that is being done becomes aware of the doer (see Baudrillard 2000: 76), incorporating the doer within itself, thereby further effecting what is being done. Can we learn about ritual from cinema? If so, then thinking on their respective movements within and through themselves may well be the axis of their relatedness.

These nonlinear dynamics—from the point of inflection, through more complex folding and moebius movement, to degrees of self-organization—often are submerged in ritual forms. These dynamics sometimes are intertwined and overlaid with masses of detail and elaboration, sometimes coded so that only ritual specialists enter these hidden or disguised space-times of ritual, sometimes highly schematized so that what is present to the senses is powerfully minimalist yet enclosing (as may be

the case with the activity of ritual texts within rite). More simply, ritual worlds commonly interpolate, interpenetrate, and fold together the visible and not-visible, the unseen and seen as the *um-felt* of the *umwelt*, and this conjoining of here-not-here often is understood by natives (whoever they are) as locus or nexus of trans-formation.

Film is hyper-real because it is hyper-visual, magnifying, reducing, changing proportions, altering angles of perception, giving shape to the seemingly shapeless, speeding up, slowing down, superimposing, fading and zooming, reversing time, inverting space, through shot, cut, and montage, and, for that matter, hyper-moving, for even if stilled, its images are coiled into and tense with motion. Paraphrasing Claude Levi-Strauss, film is good to imagine with.<sup>4</sup> It is our crooking medium, a misshaping medium for imagining the visual—for enabling visibility to fill and overflow the imaginary, visibility as the great enlightenment sensory adventure (see Jay 1993, Levin 1993). And, so, also a medium for imagining how trans-formings might look-like-they-are-happening-even-though-we-cannot-know-they-are-happening.<sup>5</sup>

I have tried elsewhere to identify how dynamics of trans-formation are done through ritual, approaching this problematic from various perspectives (Handelman 1998, 2005, 2006), and regarding all of these attempts as failures, albeit, perhaps, interesting ones. I fully expect to fail over and again—dynamics of transformation in themselves are indeed elusive within rituals that make change happen through themselves, and these dynamics slip away from discourse that cannot address their very fullness of existence in multiple planes, dimensions, vectors, circumferences, that Deleuze calls virtuality—regardless of whether such discourse is symbolic, semiotic, structuralist, hermeneutic, phenomenological, and perhaps systemic. Transformation is elusive because it is dynamic rather than a ritual recipe; shapeless, fluid, trajecting, vectoring, rather than moving between static points of start . . . stop . . . start. And I am neither a Renaissance alchemist nor a modern scientist.

### Thinking on Ritual through Filmic Dynamics

I thought to attempt here to learn something about visualizing ritual transformation through film, trying to open an *interval* between them,<sup>6</sup> a space-time for reflection, from which to move in the direction of both without denying either.<sup>7</sup> I do not mean documentary film on ritual, which, like the anthropologist strives for realism and authenticity in reporting and representation, nor film that uses “ritual” as such in its plot or narration; rather, I mean film that permutes its own inflections, its moebius-movements and their shapings. Film that in a filmic sense may have qualities of self-organization built into its forming; film that perhaps can be *seen* and through this *felt* to do trans-formation through its self-organizing qualities. Film that imagines all of this and that tries to give visual shape to its imaginings, encouraging trajectories of desire for the just-out-of-sight.<sup>8</sup> Thereby (wittingly or not) trying to make these dynamics visible. I will try to see some of these thoughts through *Mulholland Drive*.

Consider the following, in which Larisa Kingston-Mann has a *filmic* response to actuality, one that permutes another potential actuality by imagining this through the virtual film medium which plays with time/space in the creation of actualities:

While reading my economic history, I came across this information: that the engineers at Ford and Co. had gotten some of their ideas about an assembly line from seeing the Chicago slaughterhouses, the way the carcasses swung down a line on chains, being disassembled piece by piece.

And I thought: such a rich image, and whose idea was it to reverse that image, so that it was one of assembly, of adding-together, instead of taking-apart? Such a *filmic response*, is it not, to run the slaughterhouse in reverse [my emphasis]? It's happening at the same time as the rise of the movies: the early "teens" [of the Twentieth Century], and I can't help thinking there's something so timely about it, the way early films were constantly playing with the ability to thread it backwards and have people miraculously un-eat food, buildings spring to life and be kissed by the wrecking ball, the hero unsticks from the ground and flies up to the top of the tall building. And here is someone who runs the slaughterhouse backwards, building cows. And from that takes inspiration, that you can have a moving line which accumulates parts until voila, a finished product, an automobile, a model T-for-time-runs-backwards. I love synchronicity.<sup>9</sup>

A model T-for-time-runs-backwards, a dynamic that imagines one mode of production, one actuality, into another, so that cars emerge from cows, one form of movement turning into another, permuting the same dynamic of motion.<sup>10</sup> To look at a film in this way pushes to discard baggage from anthropology that imposes formal strictures on ideas of ritual, and, no less, baggage from film studies that take their theoretical impetus from varieties of textual criticism and cultural critique. The sorts of constraints that anthropologists commonly impose on "ritual" as a global integument, giving to it hardness, rigidity, and inflexibility, for example, between its exterior and interior, a framing that makes digital the relatedness of ritual to not-ritual, an either/or distinctiveness that accords with the classic Durkheimian separation of sacred and profane realities. Then, formal properties posited for ritual naturalistically mimic this framing, giving to ritual qualities of repetition, stylized behavior, order (Moore and Myerhoff 1977: 7), and Rappaport's (1999: 24) influential definition of ritual as: "The performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers." Such formal qualities, argues Rappaport (1999: 53), establish the bedrock messages of ritual as canonical.

Much thinking on ritual in anthropology reduces transformation done through ritual to narrative, to, in Geertz's phrasing, stories that people tell themselves about themselves, thereby recuperating values, identity, group boundaries, and so forth—another version of Durkheimian group solidarity without effervescence. Transformation is reduced to narrative and plot, and how change occurs through ritual contexts

becomes a matter of how narrative is put together and performed. Analysis of cinema, following on approaches of cultural studies and literary criticism, so often understand films as narrative, as dramatic psychologies of personae, as representations of social order, as surrealist and parodic reflections of all of these—as metacommentaries on social life.

Given that so many rituals are organized to act on and to transform aspects of social orders, we must consider dynamics that are interior to such rituals as their own worlds of self-organization, put together to do transformation. Worlds unto themselves, such rituals contain the dynamics of permutating themselves within themselves, thereby transforming whatever is within them, the intention of their attention. Such rituals enfold and permute actualities of cosmos, health, maturity, life-passage, and so forth. Rituals that do transformation produce “the shock of the real immanence of the metaphysical” (Murphie 2002: 192). Film in its own right is an assemblage that includes the imagination, with the capacity to play with *showing* the actualization of potentials of the metaphysical, the metaphysical understood as existence forming and re-forming through potentialities becoming actualities. Film can *show* how actualities intersect and collide, changing and effecting one another.

Film paradoxically is a flat medium that peers into *depths* and their interior workings (Stephenson and Debrix 1970: 55). Nonetheless, in order to try to think on ritual through film, the usual baggage of plot, narrative and representation needs to be put aside as much as possible, thereby highlighting dynamics that enable certain films to have the strange processes and coherences that they do, dynamics that should not be reduced to technology and filming techniques. Ideas of Deleuze—singularity, actuality, virtuality, crystallization—resonate with and hone my desire to focus on moebius-like dynamics, and I will make intensive use of them in discussing the film, following the synopsis, below.

### *Mulholland Drive*

Moments lost in time,  
like tears in rain.  
—*Blade Runner*

*Mulholland Drive*, (henceforth *MD*) written and directed by David Lynch, attracts scholars of cinema. Their studies treat the film as a whole, as a unity, and so as one that contains mystery, and puzzles to unravel. Most cut to the perspective that Sinnerbrink (2005: 3) calls “reductive” rationalism—“the tendency to treat films as illustrations of theoretical concepts or ideological perspectives that can be properly deciphered only once submitted to conceptual analysis or subsumed within a philosophical metalanguage.”<sup>11</sup> These studies agree that *MD* has no conventional linear narrative, but do find linear logic by arguing that *MD* combines dream (the first four-fifths of the film) together with hallucination and flashback, all of which are explained

by the final one-fifth that is the reality, the authentic, exposing the dream character of the first four-fifths, thereby straightening and stiffening the former (Hayles and Gessler 2004; Sinnerbrink 2005; Nochimson 2002).<sup>12</sup>

*MD* is unsettling not because it divides into dream positioned before reality, but because the film is constructed as an entirety within itself, never leaving itself, providing an entirely interior optic on/in itself without any exterior perspective whatsoever for the viewer who is drawn within, disoriented, unable to take an Archimedean standpoint, confused by the multiple actualities that Borges (1998) summarized as the garden of forking paths.<sup>13</sup> A film that swallows itself, a form re-entering itself moebiusly, aligning the strange relations among its actualities on the same plane, transforming itself from within itself, without positing to itself any exterior perspective—in this sense a world without exteriority. Thus, the autopoiesis of a world permutating itself into worlds, and, perhaps in this aiding another look at ritual, though the film on its face has no relation to ritual. This is what I will want to scratch at a bit in the concluding section.

### Despite the above Disclaimers, a Practical Need for a (Somewhat Skewed) Synopsis of the Plot

The opening shot is of young couples jitterbugging without background except for the shadows they cast, then overlaid dreamily through a rising mist by the happy face of a young blonde woman, and then by a grandparental-looking couple, one on either side of her.

A beautiful young brunette with hair to her shoulders, wearing a black dress, is being driven at night in a dark-colored car up winding, wooded, dark Mulholland Drive in Hollywood. Above and out of sight, two cars full of raucous youngsters are drag-racing downhill. The dark car suddenly stops, the brunette is alarmed, the driver (another man sitting next to him, both in dark suit and tie) turns, a silenced pistol aimed at the brunette. At that moment the drag-racers crash into the parked car. The brunette alone staggers away from the accident, through the woods, downhill, falling asleep under bushes next to an apartment complex, the Havenhurst. She awakens to a middle-aged woman directing a taxi-driver to load her bags; the brunette then slips inside the woman's well-to-do apartment before the latter locks the door.

[I]<sup>14</sup> Two men are sitting in Winkies diner during daytime. One tells the other of a dream he's had for the second time—it is half-night, he is sitting in Winkies, and he is terrified. His friend is standing by the counter, next to the cash register, and he too is frightened. The sitting man sees through the wall of the diner, sees a horrific face outside, at the back of the diner. He tells his friend, in the present, "He's doing it." And wants to know whether that man is outside now. His friend goes to the counter to pay, standing exactly where he did in the dream. They go outside, around to the back of Winkies. As they near the backyard area, a face slides out from behind the wall of the diner—a face blackened with dirt, perhaps with fungus, with long, dark,

matted hair, a derelict's face with gleaming eyes and teeth. The dreamer clutches his heart, collapsing. The Derelict's face slides back, out of sight.

A young woman arrives in Hollywood, (apparently) accompanied by a warm older couple, Irene and her partner, who address the young woman as Betty, treating her gently, gravely, and tenderly, then leaving in a limousine, [II] grinning and laughing together with glee, somewhat unpleasantly. Both are most pleased. Betty takes a taxi to the Havenhurst apartment complex, where she will stay while her aunt Ruth is traveling. She meets Coco, the manager who gives her the key. Inside she finds the brunette who says she's been in a car accident and has lost her memory. Asked her name, she takes that of Rita, from a movie poster of Rita Hayworth in the bathroom.

Cut to a depth-shot of a room painted red (the Red Room) [III], lengthened beyond ordinary proportions, a foreshortened microphone hanging on the wall. Deep within the narrow room sits a small man in a wheelchair, Mr. Roque, who hears reports through the microphone and issues orders by implication. He says that *the girl is still missing*.

Betty tells Rita to look in her purse for ID. A close-up of the black purse, the loud sound of the zipper opening. Inside are bundles of cash and a large, triangular blue key. [IV] At that moment Rita remembers she had been going to Mulholland Drive. Betty wants to investigate the accident. Betty and Rita are sitting in Winkies Diner, checking the newspaper for information about the accident. Rita sees the name Diane on the wall (the name of the waitress on duty), and Rita remembers the name, Diane Selwyn, and wonders if its hers. Outside Winkies, Betty calls Diane Selwyn's number. Though the voice on the answering machine is not Rita's, Betty knows the voice.

Adam Keshner is casting the female lead for his film, *The Sylvia North Story*. At a boardroom meeting, Keshner, the director, is told bluntly by two mafia types to hire Camilla Rhodes by saying while Camilla is auditioning, "This is the one." They show him the photo of a young blonde with upswept hair and pouty lips. Keshner refuses. One of the mafia types yells, "This is the girl. It is no longer your film. *This is the girl!*" Cut to the Red Room. [V] Mr. Roque is listening to the boardroom discussion through the microphone. The film producer comes from the meeting to report to Mr. Roque, who implies that the entire production should be shut down.

Keshner's credit cards are canceled; his bank account emptied. He receives a message to go to a corral at the very top of Beechwood Canyon, there to meet the Cowboy. That night he drives to the wilderness at the road's end, going through the crude gateway, a steer skull at its apex together with a light flashing red as he enters, emitting a droning sound. [VI] The corral is empty, but Keshner turns and there is the Cowboy, a medium-sized trim figure, with a kerchief around his neck and a white six-gallon hat on his head. The Cowboy warns Keshner about his attitude, telling him to take Camilla Rhodes during the auditions, saying "This is the girl." He adds, "You will see me one more time if you do good; you will see me two more times if you do bad."



Betty goes to her own audition for a lead role while Rita stays in the apartment. The director, Bob Brooker, tells Betty and the actor with whom she is playing the scene, “Don’t play it for real until it gets real.” The audition goes extremely well, and Betty is taken to the casting audition for the *The Sylvia North Story*, where Kesher says, “This is the girl” when blonde Camilla Rhodes (the woman in the photo) is auditioning. Betty and Adam exchange looks of longing, but Betty runs off to help Rita find her identity.

The two women go to the address they found for the name, Diane Selwyn. A female neighbor who knows Diane Selwyn does not recognize Rita, so she is not Diane. There is no response to the knocking on Diane’s door. Betty finds a smallish window that opens and enters. The front door opens from within, Betty reappears, one hand over her mouth and nose. Going through the dark apartment the women enter the bedroom. On the bed, lying on its side away from the doorway, knees bent, is a decomposing woman’s corpse. A close up of her distorted face, but she is unrecognizable, perhaps with dark blonde hair. Both women flee in panic. A close up of their faces—they are terrified—rippling in-and-out of phase, here-and-not-here, shattering. [VII]

Back in the apartment, Betty cuts Rita’s hair, disguising her with a shortish blonde wig. Standing side-by-side before a full-length mirror, both blonde, they shift toward one another, though their features are strikingly different. Sleeping together in the same large bed, they make love, Betty saying she is in love with Rita. Betty’s profile (she is on her back) and Rita’s full face (she is on her side, facing Betty’s profile) seem to have a common integument. Later, Rita mutters in her sleep, “Silencio, silencio, no hay banda [there is no band], no orchestra, silencio, silencio . . .” Rita opens her eyes, saying, “It’s not okay.” She’s terrified. Yet now she knows where to go (apparently to find her lost identity). Though it is 2 a.m., she asks Betty to accompany her—to the Club Silencio, at the dead end of a broad, deserted alley.

Inside is a small auditorium with plush seats but few occupants. A few box seats overlook the stage, only one of which is occupied, by a stately, gowned woman, her blue hair piled atop her head. Onstage is a magician, saying, “This is all a tape recording. There is no band, yet we hear the music . . . It’s all recorded . . . It is an illusion . . .” “Listen,” he intones, raising his arms as violent thunder echoes throughout the Club, suffused in blue light. [VIII] Betty, terrified, shudders uncontrollably and Rita holds her. Onstage, the magician disappears in a cloud of smoke. An MC in a red suit presents the singer, Rebekah Del Rio.<sup>15</sup> With close-ups of her heavily made-up face, she sings Roy Orbison’s country-and-western song, “Crying,” in Spanish with great pathos. Rita and Betty weep together. Del Rio collapses onstage and is dragged off. Her voice continues the song. Betty opens her purse and finds a square blue box with a small triangular opening. The lovers look at each other with dread; they rush to the apartment.

Rita goes to the bedroom closet for her purse, the cash and triangular key inside. Suddenly she realizes Betty is gone. She opens the blue box with the blue key and

peers inside. A closeup of indigo darkness fills vision totally, the box heard falling with a thud to the carpet. [IX] The doorway to the bedroom looms, the dark corridor beyond. Aunt Ruth appears in the doorway, looks into the room, but it is empty, no purse, no box, no clothes on the bed. She looks puzzled, as if she heard something and had come to check, shrugs and leaves.

The doorway looms and the dark hallway within, rippling and shuddering in-and-out-of-phase moving into still greater darkness, opening into a dark room, a figure lying on her side on the bed, face hidden, knees bent. The sound of a door opening—standing in the doorway the Cowboy says, “Hey pretty girl, time to wake up.” Darkness. [X] Again the woman on her side, the Cowboy in the doorway closing the door carefully, and again the girl on her side. Darkness again.<sup>16</sup> The sound of knocking, the woman turning over, awakening, putting on a worn robe. Its Betty, though looking slovenly, disheveled, dull. The apartment resembles the one in which Betty and Rita found the rotting corpse.

At the door is the female neighbor who addresses Betty as Diane, asking where she’s been. An ordinary blue key lies at the edge of the coffee table. She says, leaving, “Oh, by the way, those two detectives came by again looking for you.” Cut to Diane at the kitchen sink, looking through the window. She turns suddenly and there is Rita, though Diane calls her Camilla. Then Diane is shivering, scared. Cut to Diane in the bare kitchen, making coffee. She takes her cup toward the sofa. Camilla is lying there, bare-breasted as Diane, also bare-breasted, climbs over the back of the sofa onto Camilla, and they caress. There is no blue key on the coffee table. Camilla pushes Diane away, saying “We shouldn’t do this anymore.” (Here [wherever this is] Camilla Rhodes is the lead in Adam Keshner’s film, *The Sylvia North Story*, and is having an affair with Keshner). Raging, Diane throws out Camilla. Diane in shorts sits on the sofa, crying with fury, masturbating, as the phone rings in the bedroom. Answering the phone, Diane is wearing a black dress. Camilla is calling—the car is waiting to take Diane to an address on Mulholland Drive.

A dark car driving through the night up winding Mulholland Drive, stopping unexpectedly. Diane is alarmed; but Camilla appears, taking her by the hand up through the woods to Adam Keshner’s home where a party is underway. Here Coco (the Havenhurst manager) is Keshner’s mother. Diane tells that she won a jitterbug contest; her aunt died, leaving her some money, so she came to Hollywood, meeting Camilla on the movie set of *The Sylvia North Story*, where Camilla was the star. Diane hoped for the part, but the director, Bob Brooker was not impressed with her. A blonde woman whispers in Camilla’s ear at the dinner table. They kiss intimately. Camilla is “This is the girl,” the Camilla Rhodes whom the mafia men were adamant would receive the lead in the film. Camilla/Rita enjoys Diane’s pain and discomfort. The Cowboy passes in the far background, going elsewhere. Keshner, laughing, is announcing to everyone his and Camilla’s . . . the sound of a crash . . .

Cut to Winkies and a fallen tray. Diane is hiring a killer to murder Camilla. The waitress is named Betty. Diane pays cash, pushing a photo of Camilla across the ta-

ble, saying “This is the girl.” The killer gives her an ordinary blue key, saying “When it’s finished, you’ll find this where I told you.” At this moment, standing at the cash register is the man who accompanied the dreamer who saw the Derelict through the wall, behind Winkies.

Night. Alongside a dumpster behind Winkies the Derelict sits next to a small fire, turning the blue box in his hands. He puts the box into a paper bag and drops it to the ground. A close up of the open bag, an edge of the box visible. Two tiny figures, Irene and her partner, emerge screeching maniacally with laughter, their arms outstretched, reaching. [XI]

Cut to a close-up of the ordinary blue key on the coffee table, Diane sitting in her tawdry robe on the sofa, staring at it. A loud rapping on the door, the tiny figures of Irene and her partner crawling under it into the apartment. Diane hears the laughter, the knocking continues, the laughter wild and screechy and the old couple, now full-sized, arms outstretched reaching for Diane are upon her, as she turns and runs into the bedroom, flinging herself onto the bed, scrabbling in a drawer, frantically pulling out a pistol, shooting herself in the mouth, lying on her side, knees bent.

Heavy mist forms in the bedroom, entirely obscuring the scene. The mysterious visage of the Derelict, full-face, appears in the mist. Then the dreamy face of Betty/Diane, happy and vital as she is as Betty, and next to her the face of Rita/Camilla, but blonde and warm as she is as Rita.

Cut to the empty stage of Club Silencio, and to the regal woman in the box seat who quietly but sibilantly declares, “Silencio.”

## Transformative Moments

Analysis lives by and largely through map-making (and its cartesian, geometric origins), and the map, as John Vernon (1973: 10) comments, “Relates the whole to its parts as an addition of discrete entities rather than as a fluid unity of transformations.” Map-like, *MD* becomes a container with at least one neat compartmentalization: most of the film is fantasy, the last minutes, reality. Fantasy contrasted to reality—the former unreal, inauthentic, subjective; the latter, real, authentic, objective. Ultimately, any ruler-edged contrast between fantasy and reality recuperates a linear logic of progression in which reality is the benchmark, the touchstone, the foundation, whose stability (indeed, its reality-testing) gives the lie to fantasy. Anyone who embraces fantasy rather than reality verges on the psychotic or disappears within this miasma, in keeping with the map-like dualism between sanity and insanity (Vernon 1973). In keeping with these analyses, most of *MD* is the interior vision of a sick mind.

From this perspective the logic of *MD* is not that different from, say, the film, *The Night of the Following Day* (1968), a straightforwardly chilling tale of kidnapping, torture, and murder, in which only the very last minutes reveal the entire film until then to have been a dream whose horrific reality is only just beginning in earnest

as the film closes. . . In keeping with the fantasy/reality dualism, *MD*'s numerous strange-looking and strange-sounding characters and scenes are intended as entertaining curlicues, making a fairly mundane plot very mysterious. Is this it? A film cluttered with red herrings harboring clues in a fantasy re-arranging reality, enabling the dreamer to momentarily escape her lonely, miserable existence and its furies? As I commented, *MD* is good to imagine with for students of transformation, once we put aside the dualism of fantasy/reality and try to avoid using the film either as representation or as an illustration of theory. Then we can ask how this film imagines transformation, and whether this is helpful in opening space for imagining dynamics of transformation in ritual.

### The Opening and Closing of *Mulholland Drive*

Before turning to the moments I indicated in the synopsis, orientating toward and preparing for transformation and then actualizing this, I discuss briefly the opening and closing of *MD*, for together these demonstrate the powerfully recursive self-organizing in the film. The opening shot is of acrobatic jitterbugging couples, against a bluish background that has no dimensionality or orientation apart from that given by the dancing figures and the shadows they cast. The figures dancing in space, without flooring, without ceiling, without horizon. Some are dancing higher than others, some are huge, others quite small, while some are indistinct, parts here and there, disappearing into one another. On closer look, there are only a few couples, their foregrounding and size changing, overlapping—dancers permutating. Moreover the dancing is without beginning or ending—it is happening; it is a present—its only temporality that of the tempo and rhythm of the music and the movement of the dancers. But a present full of potentiality, a Deleuzian virtuality, complete, full, real, within itself.

Whitish mist billows, partly obscuring the dancers, and the dreamy, upraised, exalted face of Betty appears in the mist, joyous, exhilarated, then joined on either side by that of Irene and her partner. As long as it lasts (for over one minute) the dancing scene is self-reproducing. It is Klee's site of cosmogenesis, his nondimensional point, "an event that awaits an event," as Deleuze (1993: 15) puts it, an event that awaits in-flection, curvature, the folding of reality into itself—the formation of complexity. Cosmic form begins to take shape quickly—the mist obscuring the frenetic dancers as the faces of Betty and the old couple appear, a meta-presence that is launching this filmic micro-universe in which Betty is a major protagonist and the old couple have a significant role in her fate. Yet these faces are, like the dancers, still a nondimensional point, though in-flection has begun. Unlike the dancers, the faces clearly have identity, albeit virtual. Shortly, this virtuality of the filmic micro-cosmos will generate actuality—horizons of being and becoming, dimensionality, character, and trajectories of action becoming vectors of consequence.

*MD* closes immediately following Diane's suicide. Mist forms in the bedroom, swirling, gathering, entirely obscuring space. From within the mist the dark, mys-

terious visage of the Derelict appears, full-face. Then Betty/Diane's visage appears in silhouette, a happy, sparkling Betty, followed by the faces, side by side, of Betty/Diane and Rita/Camilla, both as blondes, intimately warming one another. Cut to the empty stage of Club Silencio and the blue-haired regal woman in the box seat, almost whispering, "Silencio." The close is just that, a closure, not an ending as such.<sup>17</sup> The closure of actualities, the return to cosmic nondimensionality, to de-flection, awaiting an event, awaiting an actuality.

The opening and closing mirror one another, a doubling of a sort, the near largest circuit or envelope of the film, in Deleuzian terms. The mists of space/time fold into the mists of space/time, though differently, for Betty is Betty/Diane, joined by Rita/Camilla, their potentialities of being multiplied, expanded, amplified. Their microcosmos is changed, for it has *per-mutated*, literally going through itself and altering, though not ending. Both the Old Couple who appear with Betty in the opening and the Derelict who appears just prior to the two women in the closing have crucial purposes, as I discuss below, in the forming of actualities between opening and closing. And beyond this fold, another yet more encompassing circuit, the opening of swerving, swooping, arcing, exuberant jitterbug dancing and music utterly stilled and folded into the unmoving, upright woman in the box seat at Club Silencio, with her emphatic whisper, "Silencio." The microcosmos re-entering itself moebiusly, quietening, stilling, awaiting . . . not ending.<sup>18</sup> Within these two great recursivities of "encompassing space" (Deleuze 1992: 218) is the entirety of the film's existence, of its presents and pasts, but no less the potentialities of its futures, yet unscreened (or screening interactively within viewers).<sup>19</sup> In this regard the film is ritual-like, a site of cosmogenesis, in-flection, closure . . . poised to begin the dynamic once again, yet responding to conditions that will generate other actualities.

## The Accident

The drag-racers crashing into the car in which the brunette is a moment from being murdered is an accident in the fullest sense—an unexpected happening in an unpredictable world that destroys an intended action, the murder. The accident is a Deleuzian *singularity*, a point or event from which divergences begin to occur as ordinaries are disrupted and re-form differently. An event resonating with the in-flected point of cosmogenesis. This is still the same world, yet altering itself within itself, as Deleuze (1993: 60) comments, "because a singular point is only the coincidence of two ordinary points from different vectors." One vector, the dragsters, collides with another, the-murder-in-process, and a new inflection appears as the brunette staggers away from the crash. Singularities, argues Deleuze (1990: 52), "are turning points . . . bottlenecks, knots . . . points of fusion and boiling." But the singularity "is quite *indifferent* to the individual and the collective, the personal and the impersonal . . . singularity is neutral," in the sense that it happens because it happens, yet it makes sense as such in the cosmos of its occurrence (De Landa 2002: 15, 35).

The trajectory the brunette develops is neutral—wandering downhill, perhaps because of the city lights below, perhaps downhill is easier going—but its accumulations are not. For her this singularity is also her re-birth from certain death. Her trajectory into life is creating *another actuality*. The singularity is a great rupture in the ordinaries of cosmic continuity, its effects akin to the damage wreaked by terrible illness or a natural disaster, a tiny yet cosmic occurrence.

Without her memory, the brunette is out-of-place in this actuality. She experiences her sensual reality, its immediacy, yet there only is this immediacy, for she has lost actuality, the present-ness of tense, the very relationality that moves her within present-past-future, the potentialities of relationality that are virtuality. Looking at herself in the bathroom mirror in the Havenhurst apartment, in the mirror of her potential knowledge of self, she begins recreating herself, forming and entering another actuality, another present that cannot pass into past because this is so foreshortened as to hardly exist as yet. As the brunette's virtuality re-forms, the actuality that emerges into being does so moebiusly, reorganizing her through an attractor itself coming into existence through the singularity of the accident—the powerful feelings she and Betty have for one another, the solidity of this second actuality.

Deleuze (1989: 81), following Bergson, argues that, “the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past . . . it has to split the present in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched toward the future while the other falls into the past.” Time is this split, Borges's garden of forking paths. The singularity of the accident blocks this dynamic of time splitting simultaneously in its actuality. In the singularity's wake, strange characters and weird forces appear, with moebius-like transformative effects on actuality.

For the brunette the singularity blocks the past, her virtuality, so that time in a sense is post-singular, time in which she has such an emotional effect on Betty who was on quite a different life-trajectory. As time re-forms again for the brunette, now Rita, the second actuality is forming, relating moebiusly to the one before as the women search for the brunette. So, too, do strange and menacing characters for whom the existence of “the girl” (still missing; this is the girl) is troubling. Something in the forming of this second actuality is aberrant, perhaps related to the continuing existence of the brunette, and to her becoming an attractor for Betty.

Deleuze (1989: 79) contends that “the image has to be present and past, still present and already past, at once and at the same time. The past does not follow the present that it is no longer, it coexists with the present it was. The present is the actual image and its contemporaneous past is the virtual image, the image in a mirror.” The image in the mirror, the ideal image, perfect in that it is the very idea of the image, is past, yet changing in its present, its actuality which comes into existence because of the potentiality of its virtuality, the idea of image.<sup>20</sup> The virtual and the actual, coupled together in what Deleuze refers to as the tightest of circuits, the tightest of recursivities, are what he calls an *image-crystal*, an image of present-ness continually

grounding itself in its own past-ness, its own tense-ness, of form moebiusly re-entering itself, the image of form re-entering the idea of form, the idea of form re-entering the image of form.

Every actuality is simultaneously and partially within its own virtuality, as the qualities of each pass into the other, refracting one another so that actuality and virtuality become indistinguishable within the image-crystal. The image-crystal that in my terms is form re-entering the image of form (witness Da Vinci, note 20) and emerging from this, is prominent in cinema *and* in certain rituals (Bruce Kapferer [1997, 2013] has argued these points, in his own way, for the virtuality-actuality of the Sinhalese Suniyama exorcism rite). The image-crystal, I add, is itself a focus of trans-formation, since potentiality enters actuality through virtuality; potentiality shaped to become actual (as we know is the case in ritual). Nonetheless, the dynamic of movement within the image-crystal is then moebius-like, a dynamic of connecting and relating planes of existing (and imagining) that, even if they are in conjunction (and they may well not be), are not continuous with one another. The first actuality (of which there is only a bare hint) turns into the second through a moebius-like dynamic in which terror turns into desire tinged with fear (Rita's emotions do bleed into the second actuality from the first). The great image-crystals of *MD* are the two that relate opening and closing: the opening dancers and the closing lady of Club Silencio, and the opening Betty and Old Couple and the closing Derelict, Betty and Rita.

Yet the brunette is memoryless, without past, with bare virtuality, without grounds from which to speak of her very existence (apart from her name, Rita, from a film poster of Rita Hayworth).<sup>21</sup> Her search for her memory, her identity, driven by Betty, is no less a search for the actuality she has lost. No less, menacing characters of whom she is unaware also want her back in that actuality within which she dies. These two trajectories, or "lines of the universe" (Deleuze 1992: 218), moebiusly join together moments that prepare the way for and do transformation, from one actuality to another. This is transformation that emerges from cosmic design, from the virtuality of the cosmos of the film (regardless of how limited this is), rather than from the shocks of singularity itself.

## Moments Preparing for Transformation

The first moment of preparation takes place at Winkies diner [I]. The diner reveals itself as moebius-space, an interiority full of curvature through which memory is refracted from one actuality to another. Here the dreamer recounts his vision of the horrific face he saw through the diner wall, the wall itself becoming mirror-like, another curve through which the dreamer faces a still deeper space, one that shortly will change his life. In the dumpster zone of detritus, the face slides out from behind the wall as the dreamer approaches, and the dreamer is struck down by the face as its power (his memory of his dream) enters him. The Derelict is interstitial, a homeless nomad, an urban forager curving to and fro, a creature of the interval which suddenly

opens for the dreamer. Like other creatures of the interval, he is a figure of great power, a shamanic shifter who moebiusly relates and changes the planes of actuality.<sup>22</sup> The dreamer enters a curve as he goes out the front door of the diner and around the side toward the back, the Derelict sliding out, conjoining the dreamer's gaze, completing the curvature, both suddenly on the same plane, both curving together despite the great disparity in their trajectories.

Like the first, the second moment introduces figures of power. As the Old Couple accompanying Betty sit in the back seat of the vehicle taking them away, they are grinning with glee, the sweetness they showed Betty becoming something else, perhaps malevolent [II]. They seem to know something she does not. Their very presence bodes apprehension. They too are shaping this actuality in which Betty shortly will meet Rita.

The third moment is the presence of the enigmatic, omnipotent Mr. Roque within the distorted dimensions of the Red Room [III], wherein he receives and coordinates reports about the missing girl—yet *where* is she missing from? Just missing from the accident scene? Missing from the actuality within which the accident happened and where she will be murdered? Missing from her own memory, thereby further rupturing plans for her elimination in the actuality of the accident? Beginning an actuality in which Rita-without-virtuality will meet Betty? An actuality in which Rita's presence will destroy Betty, yet perhaps will save herself elsewhere? If Rita recovers her memory, her past-ness, indeed her virtual selfness, will this resituate her in the actuality from which she has gone missing, or will she go elsewhere?

The fourth moment of preparation reminds that all the locations mentioned so far—the diner dumpster zone, the back of a car, the Red Room—are *intervals*, all in their own way the opening of space/time that had not existed a moment before, treacherous passages into interiorities, where things happen that are threatening to the ordinaries of mundane lives. The fourth is simply the close-up of Rita's black purse and the magnified sound as she unzips it, looking for her identity. *Riiip*—an interval opening. Inside she finds cash (which never makes sense in the actuality she now is helping to create) and the triangular blue key [IV], the key of virtuality which will open a perilous passage into the transformation of actuality. The key that already is forming another actuality within this second one. The very presence of the key suggests that some sort of *cosmic correction* to the effects of the singularity is being put in position.

The fifth moment is again in the Red Room, demonstrating Mr. Roque's power as the producer of *The Sylvia North Story* stands fearfully at the room's threshold [V], receiving indirect instructions to shut the film down, to pressure Adam Keshner into hiring Camilla Rhodes for the lead. In this actuality these forces will not permit Rita to become a star, and they are acting to drive her into the actuality of her death. The sixth moment is Keshner's meeting with the threatening Cowboy [VI], after he traverses the menacing archway into the metaspace of the corral. Like Mr. Roque, the Cowboy, a shamanic shifter, is shaping actuality to effect Rita.



Betty enters Diane Selwyn's apartment through a narrow aperture, a perilous passage into a dark interior of space/time that suddenly opens, of death and bodily corruption [VII]. Betty unknowingly sees her own rotting corpse. Or does she? Her corpse in this actuality? *This is the only point where I have to go outside the interiority of the film* to note that the actress who plays Betty does not play this corpse. Roche (2004: 46) comments insightfully that

the decomposition of Rita's and Betty's image occurs *after* they have been confronted with an image-crystal that functions as a bridge between the Betty/Rita part of the movie and the Diane/Camilla part, both parts reflecting each other without defining which is the reflected and which is the reflection . . . the image-crystal contains two films . . . the second image is *almost* identical to the first, so that one can't tell Diane apart from her reflection.

The transformation of actuality is almost done here; the women see and smell another potential actuality in virtuality, one not yet formed and determined in their own actuality (though on its way); and this shakes the stability of their own. As the women flee, their actuality begins to disintegrate—a closeup of their faces as they run forward shows them in terror, rippling and shuddering in-and-out-of-focus, here-and-not-here, shattering. An aperture seems to be opening around them even as they flee, sucking them in. Two films, in filmic terms, or the dynamic of one actuality transforming into another?

The two women twin, almost becoming one: Betty cuts Rita's hair, fitting her with a blonde wig—they look like one another, make love, fitting into one another. Made two, the two permutate toward becoming one as the solidity of actuality disintegrates around them, their love the powerful bond holding the second actuality together, protecting Rita from the destruction prevented by the singularity of the accident. Rita dreaming, mutters in her sleep—there is no band, there is no orchestra, it's not okay. She awakens distraught, but now knows exactly where to go to trace her lost identity—the Club Silencio. As memory returns and her virtuality deepens, she is being driven from this second actuality, as it is collapsing around her.

Club Silencio is an *interval* within which this actuality is deliberately made to disintegrate [A].<sup>23</sup> Perhaps another singularity is opening within actuality, yet this one is designed deliberately to take actuality apart in particular ways. I call this a planned, cosmic singularity because though the singularity is intended, no one is able to predict what manner of attractors will influence trajectories emerging from this maelstrom of inflection. Onstage, the magician, the MC in the red suit, and Rebekah Del Rio, all drive actuality to implode, losing its self-referents, a chasm opening between idea and action, signifier and signified, indeed between Actuality and Virtuality—there is no orchestra but there is music; there is thunder but no storm; the voice of Del Rio continues its pathos after she collapses. All sound is *now* a recording but *once* it was real. Actuality is detached from virtuality within this *interval* suddenly open-

ing in space/time, the continuousness of its moebius relation to virtuality rupturing. Just as Rita lost her memory and so her virtuality, creating a new actuality, now this entire actuality is losing its virtuality, its metaphysical grounding in what Deleuze calls grains of time, imploding within the inflecting singularity of Club Silencio. The visible, the actual, has no past nor future. And Betty in the depth of her purse finds the Blue Box, the aperture again of a moebius dynamic that will permutate actualities (perhaps as an infinite series) transforming this one into another. With the appearance of the Blue Box the second actuality stands forth as a circuit of key (its outset) and box (its close), an image crystal of actuality (the key) entering virtuality (the box), emerging moebiusly as actuality re-aligned and transmuted.

The collapse of actuality continues back in the apartment. Betty disappears, winking out behind Rita's back, and Rita herself and the remainder of this actuality implode within the Blue Box [B]. Vision enters the doorway, traveling a dark hallway rippling and shuddering, becoming still darker, opening into a darkened bedroom, a figure lying on her side on the bed, knees bent. This actuality is activated by the Cowboy [C] in the doorway, telling the woman it's time to wake up—in this actuality. Club Silencio, the Blue Box, the bedroom, the Cowboy, all are aligned moebiusly on the same plane, and one actuality crystallizes from within another, through the virtuality of the Blue Box.

Some of the characters in this third actuality are the same as they were in the second, while others are present but are other persons. This third actuality seems stable, every character has its memory and so its virtual potentiality. The cosmic attempts to stop Rita, now Camilla Rhodes, from becoming a star have failed, yet she will be destroyed, as will her destroyer, Betty, who is now Diane. That is, there is a greater dynamic driving the third actuality into virtual relations with the other two, a grand time-crystal of permutative actualities forming virtually through one another, moving toward the outer envelope that moebiusly joins together the opening and closing of the film, folding them into one another.

Thus, though the fate of Rita/Camilla may have been sealed in the first actuality, her moebius-like passage to the second and then the third, created an anomaly, the survival of "Rita," which this micro-cosmos eliminates. And, just as Diane and Camilla become so similar to and synchronized with one another in the second actuality, so they share the same fate in the third. The second actuality makes of them women twinned in love;<sup>24</sup> the third separates them agonistically, so that they destroy one another. The third erases all traces of the contamination created by the anomaly of the survival of "Rita" in the first actuality and the strengthening of this anomaly in the second.

The closing phase of the transformation of actuality [D] gathers together a great concentration of forces to destroy the permutating anomaly created by "Rita's" survival and, as a consequence, her life-giving relationship with Betty—this destruction includes the self-killing of the latter as Diane, after she has killed Rita. Coming together are the Cowboy activating the third actuality; the Derelict in the interval-space

behind Winkies; the Blue Box, aligning actualities on the same plane; the Old Couple, emerging from the Blue Box at the Derelict's feet, who attack Betty/Diane, driving her to self-death. In its own way, *MD* is a highly self-organizing micro-cosmos; and, again in its own way, mirrored through the refractions of modernity and cinematics, *MD* is a simple filmic form of a "primitive" cosmic logic of organization.

On the "surface" of the film none of this is evident, and hence the recourse among scholars and others to the cartesian dichotomy of fantasy/reality and the like. In my moebius-like visualizing of *Mulholland Drive*, I see the film creating a micro-cosmos within which there are dynamic permutations of actuality, in which the absence of virtuality is shown to be consequential for actuality, and in which modes of transformation are crucial to keeping this cosmos stable through permutations of actuality.

## Interval

The man who can't visualize a horse galloping on a tomato is an idiot.  
—Andre Breton

Sergei Eisenstein's pioneer thinking on montage is apposite here. Eisenstein (1975: 4) wrote that "while playing with pieces of film, they [the 'leftists of montage'] discovered a certain property in the toy . . . two film pieces of any kind, placed together, inevitably combine into a new concept, a new quality, arising out of that juxtaposition."<sup>25</sup> He (1975: 7; see also Eisenstein 1949: 254) continued, "The juxtaposition of two separate shots by splicing them together resemble not so much a simple sum of one shot plus another shot—as it does a creation . . . in every such juxtaposition *the result is qualitatively distinguishable* from each component element viewed separately."

The interval is a break that may expand into a gap, an intermediate space, a zone of difference, through which the film necessarily passes, and which may be used to alter it, ordinarily as sequence, but also radically, in its dynamic composition. Deleuze (1989: 276–79) discusses the interval in terms of *rational* and *irrational* cuts. The rational cut respects the integrity of images and sequences of image such that "the limit as interval is included as the end of the one [sequence of images] or as the beginning of the other [the next sequence]" (ibid.: 277). The intervals that are rational cuts construct a continuous world of images in which the interval itself serves the continuousness of the series. The irrational cut on the other hand slices through, divides, and thereby fragments images, image from sound, continuousness. "Euclidean coordinates" are lost (ibid.: 278).<sup>26</sup>

The irrational cut, however, *sets the interval free*, since it no longer has an integral relationship to the image by setting its limit, by maintaining the integrity of the unity of image and sound. In a way the interval exists in its own right, with its own permutative effects. The irrational cut enables the expansion, elaboration, and involution of the interval. The interval may become its own self-entering and self-exiting form, evolving its own virtuality-actuality.

*Mulholland Drive* shows just how powerful such intervals can be, figuring in its transformations, dissolving one actuality, ramifying another. In *MD* the intervals are the moments when virtual preparations are made for transforming actuality—often through characters I have called shamanic shifters—and in locations where transformation is done, in the Club Silencio and immediately after in the Havenhurst apartment, and in the third actuality, behind Winkie's. The interval freed by the irrational cut is *chiasmic*, in Merleau-Ponty's (1968) terms—a zone of cross-over through which one actuality transmutes or torques into another, perhaps bringing the latter into existence. This speaks to, perhaps even visualizes aspects of rituals of transformation, highlighting just how crucial the interval may be in such rites.

It is its irrational cuts (though I prefer a-rational) and its recursive involution and elaboration of the interval that make *MD* a film with an entirely interior view—so that any exterior Archimedean perspective is always subverted by moebius movement. The experience may be akin to being inside one's own body, entirely *in-bodied sensuously*, trying to make sense of a myriad of pulsating, throbbing, dripping, evacuating shapes and contours of flesh, connected by conduits of all sorts transporting fluids in many dimensions and directions, all composed of tiny en-walled bits with their own lives, utterly dynamic, impossible to comprehend, indubitably real.

This may also be the condition of participants in numerous rituals of transformation and in their intervals that are re-entering self-entering forms. From within the interval set free, without exteriority, there may be loss of balance, uncertainty, sometimes apprehension, as actuality forms but is not neatly accessible to literal description, or to enumeration of a series of acts, musical scores, utterances, commands, sacrifices, symbols . . . symbols. The interval of transformation can be itemized, yet I wonder whether it can be fully grasped as an entirety within itself—moebiusly, it is swallowing itself and whoever enters it. The interiority of much ritual dynamics is less amenable to academic *meta*-level discourse because it is so profoundly an *infra*-processual dynamic. A film like *MD* may give us some sense of how this might be visualized. It is a film that plays with in-between-ness, in-between the infinite seed-bed of virtuality and potential actualities coming into existence, a film that visualizes liminality from within itself. A film whose interior dynamics are never exhausted, never ending, perhaps only abating, slowing, curving moebiusly into themselves; and so, in Deleuzian terms, always “starting again in the middle rather than moving from a beginning to an end” (Rajchman 2000: 58). Transformative ritual, too, never ends despite its linear cause-and-effect appearance. Such ritual enters abeyance or abatement, existing in its virtual cosmos as an ever-present on-going dynamic of cosmic self-organization even when not activated; so that, once activated again, it begins “in the middle” of its own ongoing relationship to cosmic process.

I said earlier that Victor Turner's theory of transformative ritual—the single most influential theory of ritual in modern anthropology—is one of the interval. In his theory, transformation depends on the freeing of the interval.<sup>27</sup> The liminal phase in *rites de passage* is an interval that, in Deleuze's filmic terms, has been freed by irratio-

nal cut from the serial character of the mundane—the liminal phase is not sacred, rather it is *a-serial*, independent, a self-entering form of virtual space/time, moebiusly recursive as it generates actualities. Transformative ritual then can be understood as an assemblage for the generation of permutating actualities emerging from virtuality, within intervals. It is within intervals that powers meet humans. And I would not be surprised if, in cosmic terms, the interval in ritual which may look like a crack, a narrow aperture, opens interiorly, within itself, to swallow the compass of cosmos from within itself; as happens in the transformative moments of *Mulholland Drive*. Yet this would be a cosmos that throws up singularities. Not a legalistic, bureaucratic cosmos that turns singularities into exceptions—in which the accident, the illness, the earthquake, the desire, are exceptional in that they should never happen, and so they are to be dealt with and effaced through normative rules and regulations as exceptions to the rule, rather than as singularities. However, the cosmos that throws up singularities is often a traditional one, in which the singularity is unexpected but not unusual or exceptional; and, so, the cosmos which generates singularity is always in its own middle, as are the rituals resonating with this cosmos that are also in their own middle, even as they begin.

An interval theory of rituals of transformation would try to address the virtual-actual conundrum (as Kapferer 1997, 2013 has begun to do). I would think on the following. Rituals that do transformation through their own operations emerge through an irrational or a-rational cut that is elaborated into an interval. Whether this is predicated on dualisms of the order of sacred-profane or canonical-indexical (Rappaport 1999) is of less significance than that it is done. The interval is a virtuality, utterly real in its cosmic potentialities that generate and permute actualities, and that themselves become the outcomes of ritual. Thus Kapferer (1997) argues for the Sinhalese Suniyama exorcism that, through the virtual-actual relationship, actuality can be slowed, acted upon, mended, changed.

Within the interval, actuality is formed through recursiveness, through curvature and folding. Folding invokes the moebius movement of self-entering and self-exiting form, that of a highly interior perspective on ritual. Folding perhaps also *crumples* time, in Michel Serres's (1995: 81–122; Ma 2000) terms, and I think space as well, so that any time, any space, can touch and torque into any other. The crumpling of time/space injects reflexivity into the interiority of ritual; reflexivity of the kind that I sometimes describe as *the eye seeing itself seeing*—again, not a metaperspective on interiority but rather an infra-sensuousness through which senses are utterly attuned to themselves.<sup>28</sup> Within this virtuality of ritual, actuality is formed, formed so as to permute itself once the moebius dynamic self-exits, the folding turning inside-out, the new actuality returned to or torquing into the social surround of the ritual.

A brief example reported by Sundar Kaali (2006) shows the value of thinking through cinema about ritual. The ritual play, *Hiranya Natakam* is performed widely in South India. The play enacts the story of the demon king, Hiranya, whose son Prahlada was a great devotee of the god, Vishnu, and for this was persecuted by his

father who belittled Vishnu and challenged the deity to appear. In the climax to the play the *avatara* of Vishnu, Narasimha the man-lion, appears from within a solid pillar and disembowels Hiranya. In a number of villages that are geographically contiguous in the Tanjavur region the performance is varied in the following way: almost all of the characters are doubled in the performance area, each a mimetic of the other. Narasimha himself, the cosmic encompassment who, one may argue, contains all the other characters, is not doubled. For whatever the reasons that the characters appear in twos, this doubling seems to be a historically emergent property of the enactment of this ritual play in this locale. An emergent property that is an a-rational cut, opening an interval within each character.

Though this apparently cannot be seen, I believe that the doubles are *expansions* of one another, opening space/time that had not existed before—not so unlike the Handelmans and Borgeses with whom I opened this excursus. Within the performance zone the doubles may be bringing something else into being beyond the mimetic production of their similarity. The doubles create an interval between them, a singular interval of virtuality within the performance area itself. Moebiusly, the doubles interact amongst themselves through this interval with all its potentiality, moving the action inside and outside, permutating toward diverging performances, diverging outcomes. Put otherwise, within the performance area there are two, overlapping, ritual plays going on simultaneously, both articulated especially by the encompassing Narasimha. Yet, within the emerging embryonic space between them, these parallel mimetic performances are on their way to throwing up a variant of *Hiranya Natakam* in which each play, each set of actors, may diverge substantially from the other, thereby potentially creating a new storyline. Whatever the local conditions, the virtuality of the *Hiranya Natakam* cosmos is generating an actuality significantly different from the usual, an actuality taking shape through its own virtuality; an actuality generating further divergence through the interaction of its own doubling forms.

Especially interesting here is what did indeed happen during one performance. The defeat of the demon-king is usually marked by removing his crown and giving it to Narasimha. On this occasion, as Sundar Kaali notes, a performer of high status removed Narasimha's mask at the climactic moment and brought it to Hiranya (apparently without knowing consciously why he did so), thereby marking the victory of the demon-king over the god. Though this ending was corrected by doing the ritual-play over again (ridding the enactment of its unexpected singularity), the singularity itself was a potential outcome formed from virtuality, one with its own emotional and logical satisfactions. Moreover, given Narasimha's encompassment of the cosmos, this was an outcome with profound implications.

Can we learn from cinema about ritual? This may depend, for instance, on our theorizing the interval toward a theory of virtuality in ritual. The kinds of dynamics I have pointed to in discussing *Mulholland Drive* are not prominent in anthropological studies of ritual whose primary concern is the relationship between ritual and social order, with primacy in explaining the former accorded to the latter. Little attention

is given to how, as I put it in Chapter Three, ritual works in its own right through dynamics that belong to ritual, rather than those that are exterior to and apart from this. In its own ways, *Mulholland Drive* shows how the ritual imaginary may benefit from thinking with a theory of rite that draws together singularity and actuality within virtuality, and their alignment within interval through a self-entering self-exiting dynamic like that of moebius.

## Notes

My thanks to Ruth HaCohen, Lydia Ginzburg, Bruce Kapferer, and Galina Lindquist for their critical comments.

1. The phrasing, site of cosmogenesis, or “between dimensions,” is that of Deleuze (1993: 15), following Paul Klee, referring to the world itself, its beginning between Idea and inflection, an *elastic* point, becoming what it is but different, a permutative dynamic of the ways the elastic can be stretched, shaped in space, through time, through itself, as Klee demonstrates over and again. The Kleeian point is a particular event, a singularity in Deleuzian terms, attracting elements to itself, just as the canvas, the lines, the brush and hand, are attracted to and from that point, creating an image unlike any other yet entirely in the world of others, related genetically to them.
2. The moebius surface is traversed from one of its sides to the other without crossing an edge or border. Rosen (1994: 9) comments that, “points on opposite sides are intimately connected—they can be thought of as ‘twisting’ or ‘dissolving’ into each other, as being bound together internally.” So, “in the moebius transformation, reflexive self-reference and reference to the other are thoroughly blended . . . the moebius aspect turns back upon itself and, at the same time, upholds what is different” (ibid.: 14).
3. See this argument in Helm (2005: 78–79).
4. The influence of film on scholarly imaginations has hardly been broached. Algazi (2004) argues that Norbert Elias in 1935 thought in filmic terms while conceptualizing historical change. Zischler (2003) traces the films *Franz Kafka* (an inveterate filmgoer) went to see, and quotes Theodor Adorno to wit, “Kafka’s novels are not prompt books for the experimental theater . . . . Rather, they are the last, disappearing textual links to silent film (which, not coincidentally, disappeared nearly simultaneously with Kafka’s death)” (Zischler 2003: 58).
5. Egginton argues that theatre, as distinct from ritual, came into existence in its own right in fifteenth-century Spain with the invention of the stage, separating audience from actors. This created “the experience of fiction,” an alternative, viable imaginary reality that had not existed before, since during the Middle Ages the performance of a story was ontologically part of the entirety of the world, the only world in existence (Egginton 1996: 402; see also Egginton 2003). “Once the screen is in place, following Lacan, the gaze is never merely a position to be taken up, but rather an object to be desired” (Egginton 1996: 404). What the spectator cannot see, then, becomes the trajectory of desire. There, somehow, yet invisible; there, somehow, perhaps traceable through its traces. This brings us back to dynamics of transformation in ritual: whatever the goal of transformation, this is the desired—yet unseen, invisible, out of sight, distant, just around the corner, in front of our noses—toward which the trajectory of intentionality soars and burrows. Not the invisibility of separate worlds, distinct realities, but rather one cosmos, perhaps curving, folding, twisting, through whose virtualities one moves to reach or create other actualities.
6. The interval, to which I return in the closing section, is crucial to transformation through ritual.
7. Elsewhere, I argue adamantly that there is no over-arching idea, rubric, or phenomenon that can be called “ritual” around the world (Handelman 1998, 2006). Not because “ritual” is a Christian cultural formation (Asad 1993) not applicable elsewhere, but because there are perva-

- sive differences in self-organization between events or rituals that trans-form and those that do representation (Handelman 1998, 2004).
8. Andrey Tarkovsky (1989: 116), the singular director, writes that, “a self-organising structure takes shape during editing because of the distinctive properties given the material during shooting.” The logic of self-organization comes together when the “distinctive properties” of a rhythm of time, the “time-thrust within the frames” (ibid.: 119), comes through and then the entire film comes together through its rhythm of time. Tarkovsky (1989: 117) insists that, “time courses through the picture despite editing rather than because of it.” The film, then, is reaching beyond itself toward that which is out of sight, beyond the frame, beyond itself. See also, Frampton (2006) on the idea that (logics of) film *think* into existence their composition, movement, and characters. When watching a film we are embraced by a process of thinking embedded within the picture.
  9. From an email sent by Larisa Kingston-Mann to her mother, Esther Kingston-Mann (13 October 1998). Used with the permission of Larissa Mann, given in an email, 17 August 2005.
  10. Beller (2003: 95) shifts this kind of imaginary into a Marxist mode by arguing that the “cut” of assembly line work later shifts to the work of cinema spectators following the “cuts” through which film is constituted. “Cinema,” he argues, “took the formal properties of the assembly line and introjected them as consciousness.”
  11. Thus Zizek’s (2000) Lacanian analysis of a previous Lynch film, *Lost Highway* (1997); and a study of Lynch’s TV series, *Twin Peaks*, as media poetry that re-mediates the mythic character of American middle-class social order (O’Connor 2004).
  12. Hayles and Gessler (2004) argue that their solution to *MD* meets the ten clues that Lynch provided to enable viewers to make sense of the film. For Lynch’s ten clues, see <www.mulholland-drive.net>, and for his attitude to them, see Rodley (2005: 289). Gessler, <www.ssnnet.ucla.edu/geog/gessler/topics/mulholland-drive>, provides a minute summary of the chronology of *MD*. Buckland (2003) tells the production history of *MD* and its multiple threads.
  13. In this regard, the viewer becomes part of the systemic organization of the film, yet of its second-order systemics. The viewer then is organized by the reflexive self-organization of the film, and has difficulty seeing whether the film is purposive and goal-directed (see Glanville 2004: 1384). One consequence seems to be that a system of this kind “will always expand beyond the frames of reference adopted by observers . . . ,” and therefore is in principle unpredictable (Scott 2004: 1370). This is my understanding of *MD*—to some degree *the film is unpredictable to itself*, and struggles with its own uncertainty, sucking the viewer into this.
  14. Square brackets indicate the points in the film that are loci in which different dimensions are aligned on the same plane, junctures of potential transformation—of one dimension entering into and effecting another.
  15. Del Rio is a female vocalist in present-day Los Angeles, playing herself in the film. She has a website.
  16. By this point close to two hours of the film have elapsed. The remainder takes some twenty-five minutes.
  17. Claude Lanzmann, who directed the epic nine-hour film, *Shoah*, asked: “When does the Holocaust really end?” replying: “When I really had to conclude [the film] [. . .] I decided that the last image of the film would be [. . .] an endlessly rolling [. . .] train” (quoted in Felman 1992: 242). An actuality train rolling back into the potentiality of its virtuality.
  18. Thain (2004: 3, 7), in a Deleuzian analysis, notes how the close of *Lost Highway* curves, in my terms, into its opening. Buckland comments that the narrative of *Lost Highway* “is literally organized like a moebius strip.” (Posting to Film-Philosophy Salon <film-philosophy@jismail.ac.uk>, 8 January 2006).
  19. On interactivity between viewer and (TV) screen, see Handelman (2000, 2003).
  20. Da Vinci (2002: 79) caught this Deleuzian understanding of virtuality/actuality in the fifteenth century: “To see whether your painting as a whole corresponds to the thing represented, take a mirror and set it so that it reflects the model [which the painting represents], and compare



this reflection with your picture, and carefully examine the whole surface to see whether the two images of the object are similar . . . And since the mirror can create the illusion of relief by means of lines and of light and shadow, you, who have among your colors more powerful shadows and lights than those of the mirror, if you know how to combine them as you should, will also be able to make your work seem like the reality seen in a great mirror.”

21. Rita Hayworth suffered from Alzheimer’s and likely lost her memory and virtual existence within herself; so the poster itself is a perfect node for the brunette to search for her own identity, the two Ritas in themselves an image-crystal.
22. See Rodley (2005: 277) for the origins of Winkies and the Derelict.
23. Transformative moments are shown by capital letters.
24. Lynch (Rodley 2005: 289) calls *Mulholland Drive* “a love story.”
25. Without knowing Eisenstein’s writings, I argued this for ritual (Handelman 2004: 112), and more generally for the positioning in close proximity to one another of unrelated symbols that, as it were, magnetize a relationship between them and give to this the potentiality of significance, if not meaning (Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman 1993).
26. More recently I have begun to wonder how Deleuze’s distinction between irrational and rational cuts can be brought into planar conjunction with Andrey Tarkovsky’s adamant sense that frame and film are filled with “time-thrust” (1989: 119) that pulsates and moves the entirety of the film from outset to closure. The task of editing a film is discovering the time-thrusts of frames and allowing these to come together, indeed to “link together” (1989: 117). Tarkovsky continues, “The distinctive time running through the shots makes the rhythm of the picture; and rhythm is determined not by the length of edited pieces, but by the pressure of the time that runs through them. Editing cannot determine rhythm [ . . . ] time courses through the picture despite editing rather than because of it [ . . . ] The course of time, recorded in the frame, is what the director has to catch in the pieces laid out on the editing table” (1989: 117).
27. Turner’s predecessor, Arnold Van Gennep, likely was influenced by the nineteenth-century interest in the *limen*, the threshold of perception, which also so effected impressionist painting, especially that of Seurat and other pointillists (Predeville 1999: 377).
28. Picasso depicts this wonderfully in some of his cubist faces—one eye looking outward, the other trying to look at the face doing the looking, yet from within that face—a self-other perspective that is interior to a single figure. I’m thinking, for example, of *Der gelbe pullover* (1939) and *Der maler und sein modell* (1971), both in the Berggruen Museum in Berlin.

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