

## LOVE WILL

"The only film I really want to make I will never make, because it is impossible. It is a film on love, or about love, or with love."  
*Jean Luc Godard, 1966*

The film "Hail Mary!" tells the story of the Annunciation set in contemporary France. Joseph has loved Mary for two years, but in no way have they physically consumed their relationship. The angel Gabriel, marked by his abrasive, mortal mannerisms, visits Mary and lets her know she has been chosen. What this does is ennoble Mary's hitherto inexplicable recoil from Joseph. Acknowledging the celestial dimensions her body now possesses, Joseph learns to accept the distance that has and will always exist between them. One scene in particular crystallizes the specific nature of this love as a perfect circuit of desire against space:

Mary's protruding pregnant belly commands the screen, and to the right, Joseph's hand moves towards it. As he does, he tells her "I love you." Mary replies: "No." She moves his hand away from her. He repeats the gesture, and again, she repels him. Then he tries something different: he starts with his palm near her belly, and moves it away, uttering "I love you." This time, Mary replies "Yes." Joseph now understands how and with what conditions he can love her.

Desire consists of the looping of attracting and repelling, in sequence. When Joseph's hand moved away from Mary, in her eyes he proclaimed his love. When he moved his palm to her in the first place, *that he may then move it away*, he created the mechanics that would allow the proclamation to occur at all. This is a reversal of the conventional geography associated with 'love' which equates greater proximity with greater intimacy. In the case of Mary and Joseph, the spatial proximity between their bodies is only the precondition of then inserting distances between them.

I think about these things, and the paradoxical shapes they make, and how they might relate to an incisive phrase by Rem Koolhaas that claims architecture is a 'poisonous mixture of omnipotence and impotence.' If this is the case, then all (architectural) works conceived by the author(s)' love-for-the-work must embody this strange, yeasty consistency of attraction and repulsion. In effect, work done on, or about, or with love is always estranged from some part of itself, always opposing itself: *becoming impotent, becoming omnipotent*. I try to list some things that accord with this description.

## US APART

"What mode of being is symbolized by the slimy? I see first that it is the homogeneity and the imitation of liquidity. A slimy substance like pitch is an aberrant fluid.....But immediately, the slimy reveals itself as essentially ambiguous because its fluidity exists in slow motion: there is a sticky thickness in the liquidity."  
*Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness (Routledge:1995, p607)*

The 'slimy' is problematic for Sartre because it has a familial link to water, yet, like an evil twin brother, persists in behaving deviantly. Whilst water is clear, slime often has a murky, distilled opacity; whilst water has a quick liquidity, slime often moves, as Sartre points out, in slow motion. The 'sticky thickness' is a tumescent force that resides in the slime, transforming it materially into a substance that evokes ambivalent feelings of disgust or unease in the spectator. Now, imagine a vessel that contained clear water and slime is poured into it. What is the resultant materiality as it oozes in time?

Le Corbusier's *Carpenter Center for Visual Arts* (Harvard, Mass, 1964) is made from a static, regular ascending concrete cube flanked by two bulbous protrusions that face away from each other. The building is situated between two main streets, Quincy and Prescott. One of the aims was to entice students, who were simply passing, to "look in from the outside, eventually enter and register to work...." (from 'Le Corbusier 1910-65'). Effectively, the building had to seduce the students into signing up for a number of voluntary courses newly offered by the University. To facilitate this, there is a ramp that cuts through the assemblage of solid mass. It is pinned down on both Quincy and Prescott, with no evident hierarchy of beginning or end. The ramp ascends two storeys up, engages momentarily with the dark of the cube's body - where you can enter the studios directly - and then nonchalantly descends again on the other side.

The ramp has taken on the desiring attributes of the subjects it carries: for the passing human traffic, the ramp establishes the conditions of seduction by offering proximity - the uterine entry at second floor - but not enforcing it. Since the ramp *doesn't end in the building*, but just brushes by it in a moment of adolescent excitement, the visitor is given a choice to engage fully or pull back and move on. The rough, exposed concrete of the entire building clothes the experience with a raw epicness. This illuminates the strange relationship the agile ramp has in the total orchestration: it is both expressive and apologetic, persuasive and quiescent.

## NOT TEAR

When I go on holiday, and I reach my hotel room, I expect certain things to be there, in certain places. I expect for the soap, the towels, and the television all to be there, in pristine 'newness'. I also expect that these items are easily reachable. *I don't want to travel far in my room once I have travelled so far to get there in the first place*. If the promise is met, I can stay in the hotel room and literally within the length of a couple of metres, have all my needs adequated. I recede from the outside, inwards, with my own private constellation. *"I don't have to move."*

I don't have to move because the hotel room offers me an excess of ciphers to consume: an abundance of utilities, entertainment and things to do. *Even though I know there is nothing really to do*. And as I look around the room, and check the menu for room-service, and discover that the name of the hotel is embedded in the toothbrush by the sink, I begin to think, maybe there are too many things here. Maybe it is all too close to me. And I remember how Slavoj Žižek wrote that the "post-modernist reversal shows the Thing itself as the incarnated, materialized emptiness", and calls this 'The Obscene Object of Postmodernity.' Like Kafka's God, the 'obscene object' causes the subject to feel alienated from it because it is too near, not impossibly far. The 'obscene object' is palpably present, excessively so, and in its abundant presence, emanates a core of absence. All the play of sounds, surfaces, objects, signs and instructions in my hotel room have made the space prickly with too much expectation and a topography of provisions that offer to sate those expectations, and more.

*I then remember Tokyo.....*

Inside a capsule, in a Capsule Hotel, I watched a Woody Allen film with Japanese subtitles; and I remember thinking how this institution, though strange to me, had got everything so right. How the reception desk with its baskets of disposable razors, toothbrushes, soaps, and the flat-brown slippers in majestic rows on the floor had become perfectly reduced atoms, symptoms, of a breed of mobile domestic life. That in its mathematically exact performance, you could complete a circuit of lack (nowhere to sleep for a night) with a circuit of desire (literally SOMEwhere to sleep) by turning all your excessive desires inside-out. The windowless cocoon of the capsule, with its analogue console panel straight from *2001: A space Odyssey*, is the limit of personal internalisation. It is an urban blemish that suffices to be your 'home'; a physical lack of space to move in but an excess of flick switches .

Yes, for now, that is enough: on or about or with, love.