
EGG (IMAGINAL DISCS)

There's a scene in *Godzilla Vs Mothra* (1992) where Mothra,
dying,
demolishes the Diet and spins a cocoon,
smothering the corruption of neoliberal politics in her gossamer
chrysalis.

The caterpillar's last cry –
mournful arcs of silk at sunset
her promise (perhaps her threat) of a coming reincarnation.

During metamorphosis, Lepidoptera
completely dissolve.

While dormant, the larval creature digests itself and becomes
what entomologists call 'tissue cell soup',
a primordial snot
which eventually coalesces into the structure of the new
creature.

So she's in there, churning,
insect slush body,
first grub, then goo, then goddess.

Gestation:

the body is what
the body would be if it was not
the body.

There's Christian iconography in most of the Mothra movies
that complements and amplifies their unambiguous environmentalism
and anticapitalism.

In *Mothra* (1961), for instance, the villain Clark Nelson is a greasy capitalist plundering the natural world, (Carl Denham rewritten as malicious twit, the whimsically charming adventurer revealed as viciously arrogant slaver, expropriator, colonizer) and his defeat is enacted underneath a church, the sun's rays framing the cross with a magnificent halo.

So there's this gorgeous connection, in *Mothra* movies, between justice, holiness, and transformation.

Maybe that's why I love Ando in *Godzilla Vs Mothra 92*: because, even though he's a bit of a dope, a labrador salaryman, he is brave enough to recognize his wrongdoing and change for the better in the face of injustice.

(Obviously, that's what's good about fantasy films: like parables or ballads, they embarrass you into sincerity – like, of course it's fucking corny, of course that's Kenpachiro Satsuma in a suit, but what are you achieving by pretending it doesn't touch you?)

When *Mothra* hatches from her Diet cocoon, ethereal rupture, glitter fog, amniotic gunge become new flesh, the resurrection of the physical body is a spectacle, a triumph. Even the soldiers are awestruck

by the holy monstrosity,
the colossal moth rising, shrieking, from the ruins of its pupa.

The soup isn't formless
undifferentiated slop.

Rudiments persist as 'imaginal discs', clusters of
old flesh –

head, thorax, limbs and genitalia –
surviving the storm of potential.

Developmental biologists call it 'cell fate':
having lain dormant, the new body reaches
out from the grub's physical subconscious
and becomes what it would be if it
were existent.

Mothra doesn't think: *Mothra is*.

Its justice is automatic, a reflex or instinct.

When its priestesses are in danger, it knows what to do:

Protect furiously.

But unlike Godzilla, which is indestructible –

its every resurrection a cataclysm

(at least in the Heisei versus films of 1984-1995, which characterize

Godzilla as a

terrifying, unpredictable enemy) –

Mothra's indestructibility and the inevitability of its rampages

are the indestructibility of hope,

the inevitability of goodness.

We know that moths remember being caterpillars. Well, maybe not
exactly, but

there was a study where they showed that mature Lepidoptera

were averse to the smell of a chemical
(ethyl acetate, an industrial solvent often found in nail polish remover
and used for decaffeination)
because prior to metamorphosis any exposure to this smell
had been accompanied by an electric shock.
So torture shows that memory survives
insect transubstantiation.

(Saying that the moth body remembers its grub body
like steam remembers ice, like scar remembers wound
may be inaccurate, strictly speaking, but then,
I'm no entomologist.)

The body is a cloak –
shifting, malleable, opaque –
a mystery whose presence
obscures.

The word 'body' is the cloak
that, draped, hugging contours,
gives the mystery shape.

Does Mothra's larva know the pattern
that will decorate her wings?
Is her beauty in there from the beginning
buried, encoded, an imaginal disc
that, like the memory of torture, cannot disappear?