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Subjectivity is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual.

– Gilles Deleuze¹

Spirit...is volatile, whereas the soul is weighted, a center of gravity.

– Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari²

Mary: Does the soul have a body?

Doctor: What do you mean, young lady, the body has a soul.

Mary: I thought it was the opposite.

– Hail Mary

In an article on montage written for *Cahiers du cinéma*, Jean-Luc Godard made an observation that has been quoted many times in many contexts:

If direction is a look, montage is a heartbeat...what one seeks to foresee in space, the other seeks in time....Cutting on a look is...to bring out the soul under the spirit, the passion behind the intrigue, to make the heart prevail over the intelligence by destroying the notion of space in favor of that of time.³

This passage appeared in 1956, almost three decades before Gilles Deleuze published *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* in 1983 and 1985, respectively. Yet despite the distance between those dates, the young critic's remark anticipates key aspects of the philosopher's film-theoretical stance. The need to displace the notional bias toward space with a conception of time as a concrete and dynamic force is the single most vital element in the thinking of Henri Bergson, whose ideas about this

subject – ramified into such areas as affect, memory, perception, language, and the ontological properties of mind itself – play indispensable roles in Deleuze’s writings on cinema and allied areas of immanence, multiplicity, and difference.

Godard’s statement also resonates with Deleuzian theory in its preference for the material (heart) over the abstract (intelligence) and in its praise of filmmaking that breaks the “link between man and the world,” in Deleuze’s phrase. When a technique of this kind detaches a film and its spectator from the “general system of commensurability” that habitually orders perception and action in space and time, cinema can perform its liberating function of bringing thought “face to face with its own impossibility” and animating the “higher power of birth” that this encounter can catalyze. “The sensory-motor break,” Deleuze declares, “makes man a seer who finds himself...confronted by something unthinkable in thought.” Seeking cinematic expression of precisely this – the unthinkable in thought – through innovative and far-reaching means, Godard works the assemblages of montage and *mise-en-scène* into volatile folds that reveal, refract, and reflect upon their own rich mysteries. Above all he probes the potential of the irrational cut, which for Deleuze marks a limit or interstice between paradoxically “non-linked (but always relinked) images,”⁴ producing structures more akin to the productive branchings of the rhizome than to the arborescent linearity of classical film.

In this essay I consider ways in which certain ideas developed by Deleuze and Félix Guattari, particularly in connection with the practice they call schizoanalysis, illuminate the 1985 film *Hail Mary (Je vous salue, Marie)*, which is actually two films in one – a molar *ciné-assemblage*, in Deleuzian terminology. The longer portion, written and directed by Godard, presents the biblical myth of the Virgin Mary translated to the present day, depicting Mary as a young Swiss woman who works in her father’s gas station, plays basketball for relaxation, receives the Annunciation when the angel Gabriel flies in on an airplane, and has a cab-driving boyfriend named Joseph who is understandably perturbed when she tells him she’s pregnant. This is preceded by *The Book of Mary (Le Livre de Marie)*, a shorter piece made by Anne-Marie Miéville that focuses on an adolescent girl coming to terms, psychologically and spiritually, with her parents’ impending divorce. Sharing the collective title *Hail Mary*, the movies are connected by a splendid irrational cut: the Mary of Miéville’s film is sitting at a table with a soft-boiled egg before her; a tight close-up shows her cracking off the egg’s top with a knife; the severed portion falls onto the table; and an intertitle reading *At That Time (En Ce Temps Là)* instantly appears, followed by a shot of light rain falling across windswept reeds on a country slope. This marks the start of Godard’s film, which slides into existence so softly and subtly that one isn’t sure it has begun until the opening credits appear shortly afterward.

I'll focus my attention on Godard's portion of *Hail Mary*, which I've chosen from his expansive oeuvre because it is one of his most intellectually and aesthetically adventurous works, and because its complex imbrications of narrative drama, theological speculation, Catholic iconography, and Protestant music are well suited to the themes I want to explore. One of these is the connection between Godard's highly intuitive cinema and the "transcendental unconscious" that Deleuze and Guattari speak of in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, where they declare that a materialist revolt against psychoanalytical strictures must rediscover the unconscious as an assemblage of desiring-machines, geared not to representation and meaning but to the production of desire and "libidinal investments of the social field."⁵ Another is Godard's interest in the theologically informed psychoanalytical theories of Françoise Dolto, and how this relates to the schizoanalytically informed atheology that Deleuze and Guattari espouse. A third is the applicability of some central schizoanalytical tropes – deterritorialization, lines of flight, nonhuman becoming, and the body without organs – to *Hail Mary*, which deterritorializes being in ways that are physical, metaphysical, astrophysical, or all three. And throughout the discussion I'll be following (sometimes tacitly) the notion of *soul* as it winds through Godardian cinema and Deleuzian theory, often using such aliases as *virtuality* and *élan vital* and *spiritual automaton*.

My goal is less to arrive at a conclusive destination than to emulate the strolling schizo imagined by Deleuze and Guattari, scanning the horizon for intriguing desiring-machines, spiritual automata, flows of becoming, and breaths of fresh film-philosophical air.⁶ Our guide for this excursion is Godard, who attempts in *Hail Mary* to achieve "an 'Immaculate Conception' of the frame,"⁷ by which he means a mode of improvisational practice that eschews preconceived framing, selection, and organization so as to open fresh frontiers of intuitive perception. The most powerful way to experience his work is to follow its flows toward the non-place that Deleuze and Guattari describe, "a world created in the process of its tendency, its coming undone, its deterritorialization."⁸ In other words: find the body without organs in Mary's enigmatic egg; apply the "schizoanalytic flick of the finger"⁹ as decisively as she cracks its macrogametic shell; then watch as one story closes and another, surpassingly schizoid tale begins.

God/ard

Godard was interested in psychoanalysis when he started conceptualizing *Hail Mary*;¹⁰ more precisely, he was interested in a particular species of Freudian thought, which he found in a book by Françoise Dolto, a French physician and psychoanalyst (1908-1988) who specialized in child psychology. A member of the Freudian School of Paris who worked alongside Jacques Lacan for many years, she developed the very Lacanian

idea that beginning in the fetal stage, persons evolve an “unconscious image of the body” that constitutes the “symbolic incarnation of the desiring being.”¹¹ By the late 1970s she was “the best known and most beloved psychoanalyst in France,” according to psychoanalytic theorist Sherry Turkle, who summarizes her core contribution thus: “Where other psychoanalytic thinkers stressed childhood sexuality, Dolto insists on childhood lucidity.”¹²

Most important for our purposes, Dolto was also a practicing Roman Catholic who wanted “to add a mystical foundation to her thesis of the body image,” according to psychoanalytic historian Élisabeth Roudinesco; her reasoning was that the Incarnation and the Resurrection, through the Crucifixion, “pulled Christ out of a ‘placenta’ and a uterine world to accede to eternal life,” allowing him to become “the very metaphor of desire that leads humankind...on a great identity quest.”¹³ Dolto believed that “psychoanalysis which seeks to substitute analysis for ‘acting out’ reinforces the Christian ethic just as the Christian ethic reinforces the psychoanalytic one.”¹⁴ One of Dolto’s projects was a series of radio dialogues with Gérard Sévérin, another Freudian School psychoanalyst. These were published in book form as *L’Évangile au risque de la psychoanalyse*,¹⁵ the text that captured Godard’s interest.

According to biographer Richard Brody, the roots of *Hail Mary* lie in an unrealized Godard project provisionally called *Fathers and Daughters*, a film “about incest” that would feature Godard playing the role of God, an “invisible and ubiquitous” presence, opposite the young actress Myriem Roussel, with whom he was infatuated. When he ran into resistance from Roussel, who was wary of the ticklish material he was coming up with, he looked for a more sensitive way of approaching the subject of forbidden desire. For a while he considered a story about Sigmund Freud and the early patient known as Dora, he said later. “Then, I looked at it with regard to God the Father. And I came upon the story of Mary.”¹⁶ He also came upon Dolto’s work, or at least one corner of it.

Although the typical Godard film is liberally bestrewn with literary allusions and quotations, there is often a surprising murkiness about what Godard has actually read, since he is frequently content to cite a work on the basis of fleeting acquaintance rather than serious engagement. (No matter what appears within a movie, biographer Colin McCabe writes, “it would always be a mistake to assume that Godard had read a particular book.”¹⁷) This uncertainty extends to Dolto’s work. Godard ran across her book, he recalled,

and in her introduction – I didn’t really read the rest of the book – she spoke of Mary and Joseph in a way that I never heard before. It seemed very cinematic: the story of a couple. And I’m very

traditional. I've always made love stories and stories of couples. So that's how I got to the story of "God and his Daughter."¹⁸

This theme – a couple in love – sounds rather too conventional for Godard in the 1980s, and his account of its genesis sounds rather too neat, asking us to see him as a teller of tales whose unfettered imagination peers down all manner of challenging conceptual byways – incest and taboo, father Freud and daughter Dora, God and Godard himself – and ultimately returns with "the story of a couple" that is "cinematic" and "traditional." Is something wrong with this picture?

There certainly is. It will be obvious to anyone who encounters *Hail Mary* that not even Godard could have set out to make a traditional "story of a couple" and somehow ended up with the exfoliating schizz-flows of this eminently rhizomatic film. Here as elsewhere, Godard's statement of intent is a creative semi-fiction – a purposefully inchoate *supplement* to a cinematic experience that is irreducible to language and unrepresentable except by its own intensive singularities. Godard's films usually do tell stories, but his real business is forging a new kind of cinema – a cinema of *between* and a cinema of *and*, as Deleuze describes it, which "does away with all the cinema of Being = is" and makes visible "the indiscernible."¹⁹ Whatever role Dolto's psychoanalysis, or anyone's psychoanalysis, played in the origin of *Hail Mary* is surely outweighed by these grander considerations.

I don't mean to suggest that Dolto's psychoanalytical work exercised no influence whatever on the evolution of *Hail Mary*. Godard was sufficiently interested in *L'Évangile au risque de la psychoanalyse*, or at least the introduction, to mention it in interviews about the film; a few of its phrases appear in the dialogue; and certain of its ideas are detectable within the movie's intellectual and affective matrices. But while Godard's limited Dolto reading influenced the early stages of his script, the finished film reflects little of her thought. (This isn't surprising. I find her book a naïve and superficial work marked by essentialism, nebulous language, and biblical hermeneutics that turn into flights of self-indulgent fantasy.) In sum, it is as clear as matters can be with a Godard film that *Hail Mary* was influenced very little by psychoanalytical ideas. On this score the authors of *Anti-Oedipus* can rest content.

...and...and...and...

Deleuze and Guattari state that the infinite series "and...and...and..." is the very fabric of the rhizome.²⁰ The additive is a concept long embraced by Godard, whose films and videos continually strive to erase boundaries and celebrate the productivity of paradox.²¹ An endless "...and...and...and..." would be the perfect subtitle for his oeuvre. One of Godard's closest affinities with Deleuzian thought lies in his insistence on a radically *intuitive*

cinema that opens lines of escape *from* linearity, rationality, and organicity and *toward* the open-ended natural-historical-social multiplicities of the transcendental unconscious. This is the non-metaphysical unconscious that Deleuze and Guattari describe as

material rather than ideological; schizophrenic rather than Oedipal; nonfigurative rather than imaginary; real rather than symbolic; machinic rather than structural – an unconscious, finally, that is molecular, microphysical, and micrological rather than molar or gregarious; productive rather than expressive.²²

The transcendental unconscious radiates automatic desire, and the subject attached to its desiring-machines has “no fixed identity” but is “forever decentered, *defined* by the states through which it passes.”²³ Although he does not use schizoanalytic language, Godard approaches the unconscious as the schizoanalysts do, not as a site for archeology (the psychoanalytic task) but as a plane of immanence that forever pulsates with positive desire, which can either be diverted into static *being* or liberated into boundless *becoming*. The idiosyncrasies, eccentricities, excesses, and paradoxes of his films are products of his instinctive urge to create a destabilized and destabilizing cinema that seeks to purge the sociopolitical unconscious of entrenched habits and beliefs. *Hail Mary* envisions a virtual, intensive realm, showing Mary’s desiring-becomings as lines of flight toward the nonhuman sexualities of impregnation by spirit and production of intermingling Word and flesh, and Joseph’s as matters of the social field, of the codings and stratifications that are flummoxed and then vanquished by his intimacy with Mary’s deterritorializing flows. At the end of the film both characters are again enmeshed in quotidian reality, and the addition of their child to the household (...and...and...and...) indicates, as does Gabriel’s valedictory appearance to Mary, that they are newly defined by the states through which their decentered becoming-souls have passed and are continuing to pass.

“Just as in the New Testament,” critical theorist John E. Drabinski observes, “Godard’s Mary is uniquely chosen to make a home *with* God in a world from which the true God has fallen away,²⁴ reconnecting by way of his soon-to-be son....The virginal space of Mary...extends to her a social economy in which she is an uncanny presence.”²⁵ This is an important point, and all the more so because the uncanny in Godard, and in Deleuze, has been regrettably undertheorized to date. Exploring it is outside the scope of this essay, but I’ll append two statements that I find illuminating in this regard. The first is Martin Heidegger’s remark in *Being and Time* that “uncanniness pursues *Da-sein* and threatens its self-forgetful lostness.”²⁶ The second comes from Robert Mugerauer’s gloss of Heidegger’s point: “[T]he uncanny is liberating for us because in it and through it we can be called to and find a way to recover what has gone missing, to come back into what is our own and to find a new ground in place of the groundlessness of

the they."²⁷ This is the ground that Mary and Joseph are recovering at the end of *Hail Mary*, and that their uncanny child is discovering in ways that are radically inflected by his uncanniness. "The big error, the only error," Deleuze has said, "would be to believe that a line of flight consists of fleeing life; a flight into the imaginary, or into art. But to flee [fly] on the contrary, is to produce the real, to create life, to find a weapon."²⁸ This is exactly what Mary and Joseph have done, and what their child will continue to do. As his counterpart in the Bible says, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."²⁹ A weapon.

A Euclidean postulate

There was a certain democracy in those great Protestant families that I come from and that left me the time to find, by myself, that in fact it is not the body that has a soul. And I found that line in Artaud, in which, by a simple play on words, he posits, like a theorem, a Euclidean postulate: "I want the soul to be body, so they won't be able to say that the body is soul, because it will be the soul which is body."³⁰

- Jean-Luc Godard

Turning to the above-quoted statement by Deleuze that subjectivity "is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual," and bearing in mind Deleuze's high regard for Godard, who explicitly addresses questions of soul in *Hail Mary*, we may ask whether the two film-philosophers have the same sort of thing in mind when "soul" comes into their discourse. Clearly neither is referring to conventional beliefs of traditional religions. "I'm not a religious person, but I'm a faithful person," Godard has said. "I believe in images."³¹ Although the positions of Deleuze and Guattari vis-à-vis the spiritual are complex, some indications can be gleaned from their statement in *What Is Philosophy?* that atheism "is not a drama but the philosopher's serenity and philosophy's achievement. There is always an atheism to be extracted from a religion."³² Such declarations notwithstanding, however, Godard and Deleuze and Guattari bring soul, spirit, and related terms into play when it suits their purposes, and I don't think this can be written off as careless terminology. Godard has stated that while he doesn't practice the Protestant religiosity which with he was raised, he is "very interested" in aspects of Roman Catholic thought.³³ And no philosopher exercised a stronger influence on Deleuze than Henri Bergson, whose metaphysics of body, mind, and soul – of *corps*, *esprit*, and *âme* – leads him to say that, "giving the name of Idea to a certain *settling down into easy intelligibility*, and that of Soul to a certain *longing after the restlessness of life*...an invisible current causes modern philosophy to place the Soul above the Idea."³⁴ Some thirty years later he declares that if we are able to get

beyond the brain's restrictive function of attentiveness to the instrumental and extensive, "there enters in something of a 'without' which may be a 'beyond.'...Suppose that a gleam from this unknown world reaches us....Joy indeed would be that simplicity of life diffused through the world by an ever-spreading mystic intuition."³⁵

These are not theistic statements, nor would it make sense to tie Deleuze or Guattari to them. What does make sense, I think, is to detect a connection between Bergson's conception of soul and the notion of the body without organs. Deleuze and Guattari discovered the BwO in Antonin Artaud's extraordinary 1947 radio play *To Have Done with the Judgment of God*, which concludes thus:

Man is sick because he is badly constructed.
We must make up our minds to strip him bare in order to scrape off
that animalcule that itches him mortally,

god,
and with god
his organs.

For you can tie me up if you wish,
but there is nothing more useless than an organ.
When you will have made him a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his automatic
reactions and restored him to his true freedom.

Then you will teach him again to dance wrong side out
as in the frenzy of dance halls
and this wrong side out will be his real place.³⁶

Deleuze and Guattari limn the body without organs as the antithesis of the theological body whose unyielding organization, imposed by God, is always already stopping up fluxes, draining off flows, squashing intensities, and blocking becomings at every pass. "[T]he system of the judgment of God," Deleuze and Guattari assert, "the theological system, is precisely the operation of He who makes an organism...because He cannot bear the BwO, because He pursues it and rips it apart so He can be first, and have the organism be first." The organism is "a phenomenon of accumulation, coagulation, and sedimentation" that strangles the BwO with "forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchized organizations, organized transcendences."³⁷ The body without organs is a fundamental trope of schizoanalysis, and it has strong links to schizo-cinema. Films that connect the BwO with the viewer-screen assemblage can open up the latter (i.e., us) to becoming by engulfing us with affect that, as Anna Powell puts it, "undermines spatial and temporal orientation and unravels symbolic

hierarchies....Slumped in our cinema seat, or in front of the domestic screen, our customary mind/body maps become fluid and perceptive BwOs."³⁸

The body without organs is related to the theory of thought that Deleuze and Guattari encapsulate in *What Is Philosophy?* when they present a tripartite schema of disciplines and their productions – philosophy/concepts, art/affects, science/functionives – whose criss-crossing interactions culminate at points where “[e]ach created element on a plane calls on other heterogeneous elements, which are still to be created on other planes: thought as *heterogenesis*.”³⁹ This is a discursive way of expressing the concept of *chaosmos*, a portmanteau word borrowed originally from James Joyce and referring to the interchangeability of *cosmos* and *chaos*, order and disorder. The body without organs is surely a chaosmic being – a concatenation of plateaus, a “component of passage” that is “always swinging between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free.” It is “that which one desires and by which one desires.” It is “nonstratified, unformed, intense matter, the matrix of intensity, intensity = 0; but there is nothing negative about that zero.”⁴⁰ It is “the body without an image,” on which “the proportions of attraction and repulsion...produce, starting from zero, a series of states in the celibate machine; and the subject is born of each state in the series, is continually reborn of the following state...consuming-consummating all these states that cause him to be born and reborn.” And it is the “intense...tantric egg.”⁴¹

It is also a hazy, mysterious presence in *Hail Mary*, evoked in subtle ways that are all the more striking by virtue of the fortuitous nature of their congruity with schizoanalytic discourse. Perhaps it's the tantric egg, “the full egg before...the organization of the organs,” that closes *The Book of Mary* and opens the chaosmos of Godard's film, in which Mary's indiscernible ovum plays a pivotal role. (Deleuze and Guattari: “There is a fundamental convergence between...the biological egg and the psychic or cosmic egg.”⁴²) Maybe the non-negative zero is what we see in the 10 on Mary's basketball jersey, or maybe it's what we hear when Gabriel accosts Joseph with the words, “What's the common denominator between zero and Mary? Mary's body!” (Maybe we also sense it when he calls Joseph an “Asshole!”) More substantially, it is surely the body without organs that pulses within the deterritorialized flows of soul-body-becoming when Mary endures a night of solitary schizo-orison before the birth of her child, wracked with delirium as her soul and body pass through the molecular deaths and micrological births of dis-organized desiring-machinic parturition. The schizoanalysts use Artaud's vision to exemplify a “destratified, decoded, deterritorialized” body, consisting exclusively of “connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities”⁴³ that escape the judgment of God across and upon the plane of immanence. Godard uses it to crystallize a cinema of frameless images, of immaculate signs, of the “process of making nature possible,” and of the univocity of metaphor and actuality.⁴⁴ “Reason is

always a region," Deleuze declares, "carved out of the irrational – not sheltered from the irrational at all, but traversed by it and always defined by a particular kind of relationship among irrational factors. Underneath all reason lies delirium, and drift."⁴⁵ Like him, Godard sees delirium and drift as entirely positive qualities that proffer our best hope for freeing our machinic flows from stifling cultural categories and liberating them into torrents of untrammelled love and productive desire.

Conceptual personae

The particularities of style in *Je vous salue, Marie* are of course crucial in conveying the affects and ideas that Godard has on his mind. One of his starting points for the film was his wish to juxtapose "Catholic images and Protestant music,"⁴⁶ not as harmonious consorts but as contrapuntal elements in dialogue with each other and with the movie's larger deterritorializing objectives. "I knew that the only music that would work would be Bach," he said in 1985. "And it couldn't have been Beethoven, or Mozart, because historically Bach was the music of Martin Luther. And...Luther was attacking the Catholic church, specifically the way the church makes images."⁴⁷ Expanding on the theme of Bach's uniqueness, critic Charles Warren writes that the composer's music evokes "a grasp of the things of the universe in their essentials and essential relations, and as they may, on principle, be recombined....Bach is thus in accord not so much with law as with an unaccountable, personlike spirit at the heart of things."⁴⁸ Warren makes no mention of Deleuze or Guattari, but the "spirit" he alludes to sounds very like what they call the *conceptual persona*, the "something else, somewhat mysterious, that appears from time to time or that shows through and seems to have a hazy existence halfway between concept and preconceptual plane, passing from one to the other."⁴⁹ The sound and spirit of Bach in *Hail Mary* serve wonderfully as conceptual personae, as "fluctuating figures who...express qualities or perspectives that want to become-other, to deterritorialize towards another plane by constructing its concepts," in theorist D.N. Rodowick's words.⁵⁰

Similar things can be said about the painterly impulses in *Hail Mary*. Filmmaking is "like painting," Godard told me in 1994, "but it's also different from painting, because you use not just space but time."⁵¹ Film scholar Sally Shafto points out that Godard has often presented himself as a cinematic painter, playing down the collaborative nature of filmmaking and thereby promoting the filmmaker's work as a "solitary and divine creative act." The painterly aspects of *Hail Mary* also mirror his respect for Renaissance Catholicism, which responded to Luther's faith in words by reaffirming the power of images; this inspired Godard's remark that Luther reformed not only the church but also the audiovisual domain. God has long been an alter ego for Godard, according to Shafto, who argues that he likes

to see himself as a “distant as well as omniscient and omnipotent creator.” Hence the special vitality of light in Godard’s aesthetic, serving not only as the material ground of cinema but also as a symbol of and metaphor for the divine.⁵²

Turning to the all-important subject of montage, *Hail Mary* may be Godard’s most far-reaching essay in the irrational cut. Destabilizing edits occur constantly, and their disorienting effects are often intensified by unorthodox camera placements that blur conventional notions of foreground and background. The primary narrative, centering on Mary and Joseph, is intercut with subplots – Joseph’s strained relationship with his former girlfriend Juliette, a Professor’s relationship with a student named Eva – in such jaggedly interstitial ways that newcomers to the film often have trouble sorting out what’s going on, much less sounding its deeper dimensions. These devices turn *Hail Mary* into a *planar* filmic entity, a mercurially shifting surface that eschews empirical logic and psychological depth, instead folding narration back upon itself through *faux raccord* cuts and radical relinkages that transform the arboreal protocols of narrative thrust, linear montage, figural representation, and naturalized mise-en-scène into a rhizomatic assemblage of ontological conundrums and epistemological ruckuses.

Sublimity

[A] creator who isn’t grabbed around the throat by a set of impossibilities is no creator.”⁵³

- Gilles Deleuze

The issues I’ve raised and the examples I’ve adduced are far from exhaustive; but I think they give a reasonable overview of the territory, so that we can now consider a central question: is it justifiable to claim that *soul* has connotations for the Godard of *Hail Mary* and the Deleuze of schizoanalysis that go beyond the negational, skeptical, and metaphorical meanings often encountered in materialist philosophy and art? I think the answer is yes, with the obvious caveat that the soul of which I speak has nothing to do with that of religious orthodoxy. In the essay “Nietzsche and Saint Paul, Lawrence and John of Patmos,” which appears in Deleuze’s last published book, he writes, “The soul as the life of flows is the will to live, struggle and combat.”⁵⁴ This idea and its ramifications may not equal the visionary intuitions of a Saint Paul or a John of Patmos, but Deleuze’s reference to soul (not the only one in this essay) reinforces the impression that his thinking has drawn close to theological terrain, and may perhaps have entered it. If this conclusion seems to go against the Deleuzian grain, the reason might have more to do with modernist intellectual biases than with the actual trajectory of the philosopher who said in 1980 that

if philosophers have spoken to us so much of God – and they could well be Christians or believers – this hasn't been lacking an intense sense of jest. It wasn't an incredulous jesting, but a joy arising from the labour they were involved with....God and the theme of God offered the irreplaceable opportunity for philosophy to free...concepts...from the constraints that had been imposed on them.⁵⁵

Deleuze may be jesting as well, but if that's so, the jest has the richly positive aura of which he speaks; if "atheism is the artistic power at work on religion," as he said in the same discussion, he has at times been a highly creative artist in this field. Godard jests a good deal in *Hail Mary* as well – at times Gabriel is almost a slapstick character – and he does so in the same affirmative spirit. He too has known the elation of freeing concepts from the preconceptions and prejudices that have so long blocked off their flows of infinite becoming.

Some critics group *Hail Mary* with its immediate predecessors, *Passion* (1982) and *First Name: Carmen* (*Prénom Carmen*, 1983), as a "trilogy of the sublime";⁵⁶ the sublimity of *Hail Mary* takes its most vivid form in exquisite nature imagery. Godard's growing fascination with sights and sounds of nature indicates a wish to bypass his individual ego so as to produce "virgin" percepts and affects in his films. (Deleuze: "The inalienable part of the soul appears when one has ceased to be an ego."⁵⁷) The immersion of *Hail Mary* in the natural world extends to its lyric celebration of Mary's virgin body as a sublime substance, revealing Godard's urge to approach the spiritual not through *transcendence* of the physical but through a passionate *awareness* of materiality; this in turn reveals the ongoing influence of Godard's early mentor and teacher André Bazin, a devout Catholic who regarded cinema as the most privileged means of recording the glory of the physical world and thereby unveiling materiality as not the *representation* but the *embodiment* and *incarnation* of the holy spirit. Godard's nature images exploit the retinal reality-effects of cinema while simultaneously segmenting, fragmenting, and collaging those effects into a mosaic of discontinuous surfaces, aiming to penetrate the hard shell of material reality (perhaps as Miéville's young Mary shatters her enigmatic egg) and gain some glimmering of *invisible* realities beyond. Along with this eloquent fracturing of space comes a profound reconfiguring of time, within scenes and among them, transforming chronological-extensive time into durational-intensive time – the time of the Deleuzian crystal-image, "the indivisible unity of an actual image and 'its' virtual image," which uncovers "the hidden ground of time," the double flow of "presents which pass and...pasts which are preserved." By merging our spectatorial brains with the "peaks of present and sheets of past" on the crystalline screen, we find that memory, the virtual, "is not in us; it is we who move in a Being-memory, world-memory."⁵⁸ Absorbing this counterintuitive lesson is exactly

as difficult (or easy) for us as it is for Mary to realize that the soul has a body, not the other way around.

Into the chaosmos

Another character in *Hail Mary* who strikingly manifests the Godardian-Deleuzian ethos is one I briefly touched on earlier: the Professor, an unnamed academic from Czechoslovakia who is having an affair with a student named Eva and working out a kind of chaosmic philosophy. We first meet him in a classroom, where he is explaining his theory that life on Earth could not have originated through random chemical reactions. He points to a scientific chart, showing a slender horizontal line bisecting a red bulge at the center, and says it “can only be explained by something...intercepting light at a specific wavelength.” For him, this establishes the presumption that what we know as life originated “in space” and that we are extraterrestrials as much as we are Earthlings, perhaps even more so. “The astonishing truth,” he continues, “is that life was willed, desired, anticipated, organized, programmed by a determined intelligence.” He demonstrates this thesis by having a student named Pascal work a Rubik’s Cube while Eva covers his eyes and verbally guides his choices. To solve the cube blindfolded would take 1.35 trillion years, the Professor says, but one move per second guided by the eyes and mind can do the job in two minutes.

There is nothing very impressive about the Professor’s notions, which have the hollow ring of Erich von Däniken and “intelligent design” pseudoscience. Godard is not vicariously pitching theories, however. He is schizoanalyzing theory, not using schizo terminology but performing schizo operations, such as transforming commonsense instances of either/or reasoning – the Earth/space binary, the us/them duality, the difference between 1.35 trillion years and two minutes – into assemblages marked by rhizomatic intensity *and* radical multiplicity *and* indiscernible difference *and* crystalline consistency, mapping escape trajectories of the body without organs in all its deterritorializing virtuality. By saying we were born in the heavens, which could include Heaven itself, the Professor and Godard take us along lines of flight that are incomprehensible to the soul-as-body but radiantly clear to the body-as-soul.

Mary is swept by this clarity at the end of her transformative night of spiritual suffering; but as prelude to this outcome her organ-ized theological body must be therapeutically twisted, distorted, and wrenched way from the desiring-machines that have enchained her to the ordinary human sphere. We perceive traces of her becoming-soul in the words of her interior monologue, which zigzags rhizomatically between negative and positive poles:

Earth and sex are in us. Outside there are only stars. Wanting isn't expanding by force. It's recoiling into oneself from level to level, for eternity. You don't need a mouthhole to eat with and an asshole to swallow infinity. Your ass must go in your head, and so descend to ass level, then go left or right to rise higher....I'm a woman, though I don't beget my man through my cunt.

And then suddenly, luminously, "I am not resigned. Resignation is sad. How can one be resigned to God's will? Are we resigned to being loved? This seemed clear to me. Too clear." And a bit later, after her child's birth, "How did He look? What was He like? There are no looks in love, no outward seeming. No likeness. Only our hearts will tremble in the light." Only now, and in the film's final scene, does Mary realize the promise she intuited at the beginning: "I wondered if some event would happen in my life. I've had only the shadow of love...in fact, the shadow of a shadow, like the reflection of a water-lily in a pond, not quiet, but shaken by ripples in the water, so that even the reflection is not yours...."

The supreme act of philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari write, is "not so much to think THE plane of immanence as to show that it is there, unthought in every plane, and to think it in this way as the outside and inside of thought, as...that which cannot be thought and yet must be thought."⁵⁹ Accordingly, the challenge each of us confronts is to discover, in Rodowick's words, the "thinker within me that is the unthought of my thought [and] is...the power to transform life by revealing new lines of variation in our current ways of thinking and modes of existence."⁶⁰ Godard comes amazingly close to visualizing this insight at the end of *Hail Mary*, when Mary hears Gabriel's last greeting ("Nothing. Hail, Mary!") and then gets into her car and lights a cigarette. She is simply having a smoke, like countless characters in countless New Wave movies; but sometimes a cigarette is not just a cigarette. Its smoke blurs the borderlines between inner (body) and outer (world) as it transubstantiates an ordinary herb into a vaporous essence, subliminally dis-organizing Mary's self in an act of *inspiration* that is both literal and metaphorical. She then draws a lipstick tube toward her mouth, almost as if she were testing the Professor's theories with her own tiny spaceship; and indeed, the Professor's diagram closely resembled the inverse of this image, a closed mouth with puckered lips. After a tentative touch or two she begins to apply the lipstick, and the film ends on an extreme close-up of Mary's open mouth, so large that parts of it don't fit within the frame, ringed by her red lips but dominated by the dark emptiness at its center.

One valid Deleuzian interpretation of this shot would lead in negative directions: we are looking at a black hole, the part of the white wall/black hole facial system wherein the latter element, modeled after light-trapping singularities in space, is a territorializing blockage, the upshot of a failed line of flight.⁶¹ We may also interpret it in positive terms, however – as an

instance of what Deleuze calls the “gaseous image, beyond the solid and the liquid,” which seeks (like drugs) to “*stop the world*” and “*make one see the molecular intervals*, the holes in sound, in forms, and even in water” and to “*make lines of speed pass through* these holes in the world.”⁶² Or we can take it as film scholar Kevin Z. Moore does when he finds it the emblem of the “virginal source” of Mary’s power, to wit, her “belief in the body as an aspect of mind,” the effects of which we can observe in physical action but can see only as “the black hole outlined by the film.”⁶³

I incline toward the second and third options, but I think a more productive, liberating, and intensive way of fathoming this quintessentially mysterious image leads beyond the realm of mystery to that of mysticism. Although this subject is more explicit in Bergson than in Deleuze, its resonances with Deleuzian film theory are articulately brought out by cultural critic Michael Goddard when he understands mysticism as a set of practices that actualize a “prediscursive seeing and hearing,” which opens an ecstatic pathway to and through the crystalline regime of signs. Goddard notes that while hallucinatory and ecstatic experiences can be brought about by schizophrenia, drug consumption, and mystical practices, it is only through the latter that “processes of recollection can maintain and extend their sensory metamorphoses into sustainable processes of subjectivization,” formulating time crystals whereby “experience of the unknown, of the virtual, can be reintegrated and redeveloped as spiritual experiences...without sacrificing their singularity.” Goddard concludes that “the ‘spiritual’ or ‘spirits’...can be conceived of as virtually inhering in the material world in the form of temporalities, or conversely the material world can be conceived of as existing in the spiritual or in God in the same way that it exists in time. The spiritual and the material are simply two distinct yet indiscernible sides of the same fold.” He adds that a truly crystalline cinema must lead back out of the movie theater “into a re-spiritualization of life itself, through the transmission of [the] experience via the crystalline regime of signs to the spectator.”⁶⁴

Godard, the faithful filmmaker who believes in images, would surely agree; and so might Mary, who rejoins the quotidian world at the end of her story, bringing with her the knowledge of a singularity – a child, a soul, a thought, a virtuality, a body without organs, an unprecedented upsurge of the *élan vital* – that promises to deterritorialize the actual in literally inconceivable ways. “At the limit,” Deleuze himself observed, “it is the mystic who plays with the whole of creation, who invents an expression of it whose adequacy increases with its dynamism.”⁶⁵ In this play there arises the intense sense of jest – of joy – that brave philosophers have found by pursuing thinking toward the becomings-flows of the infinite. If we share this delight it is because, as Deleuze tells us, “the essence of art is a kind of joy, and this is the very point of art. There can be no tragic work because there is a necessary joy in creation: art is necessarily a liberation that

explodes everything.”⁶⁶ Mary too feels the gladness of creating, and never more so than at the end of her tormented night, when she climbs out from under the impenetrable judgment of an inexplicable God and says, softly and simply, “I am joy. I am she who is joy.” At such a moment the unthought in thought, for Mary and Godard and perhaps us as well, is tremblingly close to being thought.

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- ¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1989, 82-83.
- ² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 366.
- ³ Jean-Luc Godard, “Montage my Fine Care,” in *Godard on Godard*, ed. Jean Narboni and Tom Milne, trans. Tom Milne (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), 39-41, cited at 39.
- ⁴ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 169, 277, 168, 169, 278.
- ⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 350.
- ⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 2.
- ⁷ “Godard/Sollers: The Interview (Extracts),” trans. Pasquale G. Tatò, in Maryel Locke and Charles Warren, eds., *Jean-Luc Godard’s Hail Mary: Women and the Sacred in Film*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 123-124, cited at 124.
- ⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 322.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 321.
- ¹⁰ In this essay the title *Hail Mary* refers to Godard’s portion of the film unless otherwise specified.
- ¹¹ Eric Binet, “Françoise Dolto.” *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education* vol. 29, no. 3 (1999): 445-454. Reprinted at UNESCO: International Bureau of Education (2000), 1-8, cited at 1, 3 http://docs.google.com/gview?a=v&q=cache%3AbD9iHeTsj0gJ%3Awww.ibe.unesco.org%2Ffileadmin%2Fuser_upload%2Farchive%2Fpublications%2FThinkersPdf%2Fdoltoe.PDF+binet+dolto&hl=en&gl=us&sig=AFQjCNFE1hgh3wly-WJMuyBeiT7F5M1mg&pli=1 (accessed 2 October 2009).
- ¹² Sherry Turkle, “Tough Love: An Introduction to Françoise Dolto’s *When Parents Separate*,” *PsicoMundo* (1995), n.p. <http://psiconet.org/dolto/textos/turkle.htm> (accessed September 15, 2009). Emphasis in original.
- ¹³ Élisabeth Roudinesco, “Françoise Murette Dolto,” in Lawrence D. Kritzman, ed., *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 508.
- ¹⁴ Turkle, “Tough Love,” n.p.
- ¹⁵ Françoise Dolto and Gérard Sévérin, *L’Évangile au risque de la psychoanalyse*. (Paris: Éditions universitaires Jean-Pierre Delarge, 1977). Published in English as *The Jesus of Psychoanalysis: A*

- Freudian Interpretation of the Gospel*, trans. Helen R. Lane. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1979).
- ¹⁶ Richard Brody, *Everything Is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard*. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008), 457-458.
- ¹⁷ Colin MacCabe, *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at Seventy*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 207.
- ¹⁸ Brody, *Everything Is Cinema*, 457.
- ¹⁹ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 180.
- ²⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 25.
- ²¹ For more discussion see David Sterritt, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard: Seeing the Invisible*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 14, 141, 262.
- ²² Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 109-110.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 20. Emphasis in original.
- ²⁴ Recall a remark made by Fritz Lang, playing himself, in Godard's film *Contempt (Le Mépris)*, 1963: "Now it's no longer the presence of God, but the absence of God, that reassures man."
- ²⁵ John E. Drabinski, *Godard Between Identity and Difference*. (New York: Continuum, 2008), 91-92.
- ²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 277.
- ²⁷ Rober Mugerauer, *Heidegger and Homecoming: The Leitmotif in the Later Writings*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 42.
- ²⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam with Eliot Ross Albert, second edition. (New York: Columbia UP, 2002), 49.
- ²⁹ Matthew 10:34, Authorized King James Version.
- ³⁰ "Godard/Sollers," 124.
- ³¹ Quoted in Sally Shafto, program note for *Religion and Cinema: A Conference*, Princeton University, 2001, n.p. <http://www.princeton.edu/~csrelig/cinema/Scenario.htm> (accessed 18 September 2009).
- ³² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 92.
- ³³ Shafto, program note, n.p.
- ³⁴ Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T.E. Hulme. (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007), 46-47. Emphases in original.
- ³⁵ Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton with W. Horsfall Carter. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 315-317.
- ³⁶ Antonin Artaud, *To Have Done with the Judgment of God*, in *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag, trans. Helen Weaver. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 553-571, cited at 571.
- ³⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 158-159. Emphasis in original.

- ³⁸ Anna Powell, "Off Your Face: Schizoanalysis, Faciality and Film," in Ian Buchanan and Patricia MacCormack, eds., *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Cinema*. (London: Continuum, 2008), 116-129, cited at 123.
- ³⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 199. Emphasis in original.
- ⁴⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 161, 175, 165, 153.
- ⁴¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 8, 20; *Thousand Plateaus*, 153.
- ⁴² Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 181-182
- ⁴³ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 153, 164, 40, 161.
- ⁴⁴ Katherine Dieckmann, "Godard in His Fifth Period," in David Sterritt, ed., *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 167-174, cited at 170-171.
- ⁴⁵ Gilles Deleuze, "On Capitalism and Desire," in Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts: 1953-1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina. (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2004), 262-273, cited at 262.
- ⁴⁶ Giuseppina Marin, interview with Godard in *Corriere della Sera* (April 25, 1985), quoted in David Sterritt, "Miéville and Godard: From Psychology to Spirit," in Locke and Warren, *Jean-Luc Godard's Hail Mary*, 54-60, cited at 55.
- ⁴⁷ Dieckmann, "Godard in His Fifth Period," 171.
- ⁴⁸ Charles Warren, "Whim, God, and the Screen," in Locke and Warren, *Jean-Luc Godard's Hail Mary*, 10-26, cited at 14-15.
- ⁴⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 61.
- ⁵⁰ D.N. Rodowick, "Unthinkable Sex: Conceptual Personae and the Time-Image." *Invisible Culture* 3 (2000) http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/issue3/rodowick.htm (accessed 25 September 2009).
- ⁵¹ David Sterritt, "Ideas, Not Plots, Inspire Jean-Luc Godard," in David Sterritt, ed., *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 175-178, cited at 177.
- ⁵² Sally Shafto, "Artist as Christ/Artist as God-the-Father: Religion in the Cinema of Philippe Garrel and Jean-Luc Godard." *Film History* 14 (2002): 142-157, cited at 144, 145.
- ⁵³ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 133.
- ⁵⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. (London: Verso, 1998), 36-52, cited at 52. Mary Bryden compares different versions of this essay in "Nietzsche's Arrow: Deleuze on D.H. Lawrence's *Apocalypse*," in Mary Bryden, ed., *Deleuze and Religion*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 101-114, cited at 111.
- ⁵⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Seminar on Spinoza, 25 November 1980*, trans. Timothy S. Murphy. Quoted in Philip Goodchild, "Why is philosophy so compromised with God?" in Bryden, *Deleuze and Religion*, 156-166, cited at 156.
- ⁵⁶ See for example Marc Cerisuelo, "La Trilogie du sublime," in *Jean-Luc Godard*. (Paris: Quatres-vents, 1989), 207-232.
- ⁵⁷ Deleuze, "Nietzsche and Saint Paul," 52.

- ⁵⁸ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 78, 98.
- ⁵⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 59-60. Emphasis in original.
- ⁶⁰ D.N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 200-201.
- ⁶¹ Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*. (London: Routledge, 2003), 89.
- ⁶² Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 64, 85. Emphases in original.
- ⁶³ Kevin Z. Moore, "Reincarnating the Radical: Godard's *Je vous salue, Marie*." *Cinema Journal* vol. 34 no. 1 (Autumn 1994): 18-30, cited at 24.
- ⁶⁴ Michael Goddard, "The scattering of time crystals: Deleuze, mysticism and cinema," in Bryden, *Deleuze and Religion*, 53-64, cited at 54-56, 62.
- ⁶⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 112. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 61-62.
- ⁶⁶ Gilles Deleuze, "Mysticism and Masochism," in *Desert Islands and Other Texts: 1953-1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina. (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2004), 131-134, cited at 134.

