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Miraculous Realism: Spinoza, Deleuze, and Carlos Reygadas's *Stellet Licht*

Niels Niessen

The screen is not a support, not like a
canvas; there is nothing to support, that
way. It holds a projection, as light as light
—Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed*¹

The crystal is expression. Expression
moves from the mirror to the seed.
—Giles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The
Time-Image*²

A Certain Spirit

Only by representing the miraculous can the cinematic image achieve true immanence; that is, become one with representation, with its immanent miracle. Such was my initial, and perhaps overly idealist, thought upon having watched Carlos Reygadas's 2007 film *Stellet Licht/Silent Light* (Mexico, France, the Netherlands, Germany), one of these rare films that can be seen many times but *felt* only once. The idea of immanent miracle I take from Alessia Ricciardi, who in her 2007 article "Immanent Miracles: From De Sica to Hardt and Negri" develops the concept in her reading of Vittorio de Sica's

Miracolo a Milano/Miracle in Milan (1951, Italy). At the end of this film, one of the many films that has been said to mark the end of Italian neorealism, Toto, the chosen one, leads the poor of Milan's shantytown to the promised land, where "good morning really means good morning," by bestowing the brooms of the city's street sweepers with his magical power. Ricciardi writes,

Ultimately . . . *Miracle in Milan* may be said to allegorically depict, in the final flight of the poor, the paradoxical capacity of neorealist film to convert pessimism into an act of immanent faith, as a miracle can only emerge from a contingent and immanent perspective. Perhaps this is the reason why many critics regard *Miracle in Milan* as the last neorealist film, as a kind of apotheosis of the form that makes explicit neorealism's claims not to realism but to faith and belief in the world.³

In this essay, I will employ the paradoxical concept of the *immanent miracle* to discuss cinema's own magical aspirations to redeem reality. I will analyze the implications of cinema's desire to realize the impossible and to reveal the world. What is an image that strives to be one with its object of representation? How does one recognize this miracle through which cinema aspires to become the world? And does the miraculous, as Ricciardi suggests, necessarily imply an escape from immanence, and from realism? These are the kinds of questions that I will address throughout my discussion of *Stellet Licht*, which I will read in conjunction with Benedict de Spinoza's *Ethics* (posthumously published in 1677). Yet I won't treat Reygadas's film as a direct expression of Spinoza's theory of immanence, because to label *Stellet Licht* as a "Spinozist" text would exclude other, more mystical interpretations of this film. Nor will I use Spinoza's elaborate treatise on the emotions as an analytical tool to dissect the moral dilemma of *Stellet Licht*'s protagonist, a Mennonite farmer—because Johan's problem is too classical for that: he has lost his heart to a woman other than his wife, the mother of his children. Still, Reygadas's film shares a *certain spirit* with Spinoza's philosophy. Not only would it be a mistake to conceive of Spinoza as a secular thinker, as Spinoza was offended by being called an atheist,⁴ but many of Spinoza's friends and protectors were Mennonites.⁵ I therefore suggest that the miraculous *time-image* that is Reygadas's film proves productive for an understanding of Spinoza's *third type of knowledge* or intuition, especially in terms of the temporality that this knowledge, the blueprint of the immanent miracle, involves.

The concept of the time-image is of course drawn from Deleuze's two *Cinema* books, which are both concerned with images of time.

Whereas the *movement-image*, the subtitle of *Cinema 1* (1983), refers to an indirect representation of time in which time is subjugated to movement, the *time-image*, the subtitle of *Cinema 2* (1985), presents a direct, immediate image of time. Though Deleuze makes clear from the very beginning that his project “is not a history of the cinema” but “a taxonomy, an attempt at the classification of images and signs,”⁶ there definitely runs a historical strand throughout the two volumes.⁷ Despite his efforts to not present the passage from movement-image to time-image as one of progress, Deleuze simultaneously also does not hide his enthusiasm for films that manage to fulfill cinema’s promise, an image of time, most directly. The type of time-image in which pure time becomes most palpable is arguably the *crystal-image*: “[I]t is time, that we see in the crystal. . . . We see in the crystal the perpetual foundation of time, non-chronological time, Cronos and not Chronos. This is the powerful, non-organic Life which grips the world.”⁸

Nonchronological time or eternity also being the temporality of Spinoza’s intuition, the image of the crystal and the crystal-image will help to elucidate some of the more controversial, because arguably more mystical, passages in part 5 of the *Ethics*. Moreover, the terms in which Deleuze, who thinks of cinema as an expression of subjectivity, discusses the crystal-image directly resonate with some of the more crucial passages in his *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (*Spinoza et le problème de l’expression*, 1968). This resonance makes it all the more remarkable that Spinoza’s name is mentioned only twice (in footnotes) in the entire *Cinema* project.⁹

Can *Stellet Licht* be classified as a crystal-image? I would argue yes, albeit that its glimpse of “pure time” operates very differently from the one in Alain Resnais’s *L’Année dernière à Marienbad/Last Year at Marienbad* (1961, France, Italy), for example. Due to its repeated appearance in *Cinema 2*, including in the chapter on the crystal, Resnais’s film becomes the archetype of the time-image. But *Stellet Licht* is not just an example in this dance between cinema and philosophy; it is a privileged example. Apart from the spiritual proximity between its miraculous realism and Spinoza’s system, this is so for two more reasons. First, *Stellet Licht*, as I will argue, operates on two registers simultaneously, the one realist and diachronic, and the other miraculous and synchronic. In doing so, it not only produces a crystalline image but also shows the very passage from movement to time and from representation to expression. Second, Reygadas’s film heavily cites and, simultaneously, significantly goes beyond—in terms of the production of a miraculous time-image—Carl Dreyer’s *Ordet* (1955, Denmark). Dreyer is one of the few directors whom Deleuze discusses in relation to both the movement-image and the

time-image. In *Cinema 1*, Deleuze describes Dreyer as a director of the time-image *avant la lettre*:¹⁰

By suppressing “atmospheric” perspective Dreyer produces the triumph of a properly temporal or even spiritual perspective. Flattening the third dimension, he puts two-dimensional space into immediate relation with the affect, with a fourth and fifth dimension, Time and Spirit.¹¹

The ways in which *Stellet Licht* cites *Ordet*, which in an interview Reygadas calls “a miracle of film,”¹² are numerous, including narrative elements, mise-en-scène, dialogue, characters’ names, pace, and atmosphere. *Stellet Licht* certainly also is, to paraphrase Deleuze, “a triumph of a properly temporal or even spiritual perspective” (as were Reygadas’s preceding features, *Japón/Japan* [2002, Mexico et al.] and *Batalla en el cielo/Battle in Heaven* [2005, France et al.]). But equally crucial are the differences between the two films. Unlike *Ordet*, *Stellet Licht* is in color, the importance of which cannot be understated; Reygadas harbors “atmospheric perspectives” of cinematic landscape painting throughout; and, most important, whereas *Ordet*’s miracle appears as a fairly isolated moment, *Stellet Licht* is made entirely of miraculous matter.

Stellet Licht

From the beginning to the end of Reygadas’s film, time is out of joint. *Stellet Licht* is framed by two long, slowly panning shots of an accelerated sunrise and sunset accompanied by sounds of nature: crickets, birds, a cow (figure 1). Through the real-time illusion that these long takes create one would hardly notice that image and sound, which has a regular tempo, are not in sync. In between these two shots spans a more-than-two-hour-long cinematic “day,” over the course of which seasons change while time itself is brought to a standstill.

The story is set in a Mennonite community in Northern Mexico, and most of the dialogue is in Plautdietsch, originally a Low Prussian variety of East Low German, with Dutch and Frisian influences. (Viewers with a knowledge of German, Dutch, or Danish are able to understand bits and pieces, though this was not Reygadas’s intention.¹³) Most parts of the film follow Johan (Cornelio Wall), a middle-aged farmer married to Esther (Miriam Toews), with whom he has seven children. But Johan now loves Marianne (Maria Pankratz), his “natural woman,” as his father (Peter Wall) calls her during their



Figure 1. *Stellet Licht/ Silent Light*, dir. Carlos Reygadas, 2007.

discussion of the moral dilemma Johan finds himself in. Johan does not know whether his love for Marianne is the work of God or the Devil, but, as he confides to his father, “If this is the work of the devil, I feel sorry for myself. Truly! But now I have to know who’s the woman I must love.” “I can’t tell you what to do,” his father responds, “but I know if you don’t act quickly you will lose them both.” Esther knows about Johan’s love for Marianne because he has been honest with her, and she suffers in silence.

The pace of the film is slow, painstakingly slow at times, and it is shot and produced in what could be called a classical neorealist style: nonprofessional actors, location shooting (in the small town of Cuauhtémoc, Chihuahua), extremely long takes, little dialogue, etc.¹⁴ Simultaneously, however, beneath its minimalist surface, the story harbors an almost Lynchean tension, which becomes most palpable during the sequence toward the end, in which Johan and Esther are driving through a rainstorm. “Remember when we loved traveling like this?” Esther interrupts her silence. “We wouldn’t stop singing. We were always happy. . . . However it was, just being next to you was the pure feeling of being alive. I was part of the world. Now, I am separated from it. . . . How I wish it was all just a bad dream.” She calls Marianne a “whore,” but also feels pity for her. “Poor Marianne,” she says. The scene contains several cues for an imminent car crash, but instead Esther becomes unwell and Johan stops the vehicle. Having disappeared into the rain, Esther breaks down. “I’m cold Johan,” she says to herself while her dress is getting

soaked, before she collapses against a tree. When Johan goes looking for her, he finds her unconscious and probably already dead. “My name is Johan. This is my wife. Her name is Esther,” he says off screen and in broken Spanish to two truck drivers. “The enemy is implacable,” his father tells him while standing next to Esther’s bier. “It’s not the Devil or anyone else. It’s me,” Johan responds, upon which he kneels down, not to pray but to cry.

Stellet Licht thus seems to unfold as a minimalist representation of a man who sees all his truths shattered and who comes to realize that his guilt is not predetermined by transcendent forces but instead is fully immanent to his own desire. In apparent contrast to the rigid belief system of the community it depicts, the film creates an expectation in its viewers of a cinematic text that just shows and that is devoid of any symbolic depth or spectacle. This is precisely the reason why its miraculous dénouement *works*; that is to say, produces an affect in the viewer, and in retrospect reveals the film’s image, both the cinematic matter *and* its product, to be immersed in divine power drawn from the black screen with which the film opens. Only through the crickets on the soundtrack is this black screen revealed to be the night. At the end of the film, when this blackness returns, not only Johan’s but also the viewer’s belief in the world has been shattered, as she no longer knows what she is watching or has been watching. *Stellet Licht* does not merely give the representation of a miracle; that is to say, show its effects. Instead, it becomes it.

The reader who has not yet watched Reygadas’s film (or Dreyer’s *Ordet*) should be aware that the following paragraphs will “spoil” his or her first-time viewing experience of *Stellet Licht*, because, as I already said, its miracle only works once.

“I’d give anything to turn back time . . . go back to things as they used to be,” Johan says to Marianne outside of his house, where Esther’s body has been laid. “That’s the only thing in life that we cannot do, Johan,” is her reply. While embracing Johan, Marianne looks up into the sun and stretches out her arm. The following shot, which places the viewer in her subject position, shows her hand covering the sun, not to protect her eyes but rather to touch the light (figure 2). Immediately thereafter she goes to see Esther. Alone in the immaculate white room, Marianne remains motionless in front of the bier, then walks around it, caresses its cloth, and finally kneels down next to it at the height of Esther’s face (figure 3). She rises again, bends over Esther’s body, and kisses her lips. When Marianne moves her face away, the screen just shows Esther’s face, now shot from above. A tear rolls down her cheek, its cheek. As the shot continues, the viewer starts to imagine that this tear is not Marianne’s and that a very slight movement can be discerned



Figure 2. *Stellet Licht/Silent Light*, dir. Carlos Reygadas, 2007.



Figure 3. *Stellet Licht/Silent Light*, dir. Carlos Reygadas, 2007.

in Esther's face. Esther's lips then part and she opens her eyes. "Poor Johan," she speaks into the camera. "Johan will be alright [literally "in peace," *in frieden*] now," Marianne answers. "Thank you, Marianne," Esther replies.

The room, its whiteness, the miracle and the way it is shot, are all direct citations from *Ordet*. In Dreyer's film, the miracle is Johannes's resurrection of Inger, his sister-in-law, who has died during childbirth.

Johannes, 27 and a former theology student, believes he is the “living Christ.” Because he is. Yet, when early in the film he states in one of his prophecies that he has come again “to bear witness to [his] Father who is in Heaven—and to work miracles,” neither his family, the village pastor, nor the viewer believes him. They all think that he has gone mad after studying Søren Kierkegaard, a belief that makes Inger in turn state to her husband that “Johannes is perhaps closer to God than the rest of us.”

Ordet is set in a Protestant farming community in West Jutland (Denmark) that is internally divided over the question of what constitutes the right Protestantism. This division manifests itself in a rivalry between two families. The Borgen family, to which Johannes and Inger belong, and on which Johan’s and Esther’s family in *Stellet Licht* is loosely modeled, are traditional Lutherans. The Petersens are at the center of a fundamentalist sect. When Peter Petersen opposes the marriage between his daughter Anne and Anders Borgen, the latter’s father, Morten, accuses Peter of running a group of “gravediggers” while associating his own Christianity with “life.” Yet it is death that brings the two camps together, when Morten and Peter bury the hatchet in front of Inger’s bier. Soon thereafter Johannes returns, after having disappeared into the fields for several days. “You have found your wits again,” his father exclaims when he notices that the madness has left his son’s eyes. “Not one of you has had the idea of asking God to give Inger back to you again,” Johannes responds coldly. He is still the savior. All he would have needed in order to save Inger’s life is one person, just one, to express his faith in him. “Inger,” he says, “you must rot, because the times are rotten. Put the lid on.”

Before returning to the miracles Johannes and Marianne ultimately perform, we need to examine the miracles they are themselves. Johannes is not just the Messiah, the new Christ; he is also his own testifier, the “man sent from God” that John 1:6 describes. He is both the word (*ordet*) and the word made flesh. He has been sent “to bear witness to the Light,” the light of men that is life, but he is also the bearer of that light.¹⁵ Marianne, on the other hand, can be seen as an angel, a being more than human and less than divine who operates on behalf of God and who heralds, in silence, the event, the new day. Or as Luce Irigaray describes the figure of the angel,

Between God, as the perfectly immobile act, man who is surrounded and enclosed by the world of his work, and woman, whose task would be to take care of nature and procreation, *angels* would circulate as mediators of that which has not yet happened, of what is still going to happen, of what is on the horizon.¹⁶

But what if the angel is the promise herself, as is the case with Marianne? Then the miracle does not come as a surprise; hence the total absence of wonder in the reaction of Esther's daughters when they find their mother awoken from "a sleep without waking up," as death has been explained to them earlier. They do not react *as if* their mother's resurrection were the most normal event, because it is. Comparably, in *Ordet* it is the child who is the first to express her belief in Johannes, simply because she has no reason not to believe that her uncle is not the One he says he is. To truly believe is to know no better. The bigger is the wonder created in the viewer, who by mediation of the little girls' presence in both films, and their normalization of the miraculous, is affirmed in his or her disbelief, and in the fact that the miracles' afterimages cannot be simply explained by, for example, attributing the event to one of the characters' imaginations. Esther and Inger have *really* opened their eyes. Not the ontological status of the films' diegetic relations to reality, but the viewer's perspective on the films has been transformed—a transformation that is real and that cannot be undone.

It is important to notice that *Stellet Licht's* miracle, unlike the one in *Ordet*, is an all-female affair. Angels, as Irigaray emphasizes, in spite of their mediating role in a patriarchal religious system, are not ungendered themselves. Marianne is still Johan's "natural woman," and the kiss with which she awakens Esther is not merely a symbolic transmission of divine spirit but is highly sensual and even erotic. In other words, Marianne remains a woman, and the miracle she performs is embodied by her corporeal existence and perhaps fully coincides with it. Nevertheless, to read the narrative's ontology as strictly immanent would be reductive. Johan may have lost his faith, but the film itself keeps open the possibility of a transcendent, though not necessarily personified, presence intervening in earthly existence. First, there is a strong suggestion of divine inspiration in Marianne's reaching out to the sun. Second, already prior to their bodily contact at the moment of Esther's resurrection, a connection appears to exist between the two women. "Poor Esther," Marianne says right after she and Johan have made love, an expression that, as we have seen, will be repeated by Esther in relation to both Marianne and Johan. So even though it remains explicitly ambiguous whether the film at all points offers a mere representation of religious people, or itself bears in its diegesis the mark of a transcendent and/or pantheistic god, it by all means is a moral (but nonmoralizing) story centering on religious themes of guilt, forgiveness, and ultimately self-sacrifice, first by Esther and then by Marianne, who by undoing time gives up her "perfect man," as she has called Johan earlier.

This question regarding the film's own ontological status would likely have been resolved, as it is in *Ordet*, had the narrative included Johan's confrontation with his resurrected wife. Though Johan ultimately does enter the room, the camera hides the reencounter by only presenting it through his eyes, in a point-of-view shot showing Esther in profile, listening to her daughter. After this shot, and following a butterfly drawn by the sunlight, the film cuts outside to a sun-speckled image of the room's window, through the slight opening of which the insect now escapes. What is certain nonetheless is that the viewer has witnessed a miracle, whatever its nature or origin. Johan has been forgiven for his infidelity and indetermination, and through the intervention of Marianne, who has now disappeared, he has been granted the impossible, an undoing of time and a new chance with his wife.

An Advance on the Truth

What, actually, is a "miracle"? A miracle is more than impossible and less than possible. A miracle is not simply the impossible becoming possible; it is that event that remains impossible even though its very occurrence has demonstrated the opposite. And, strictly speaking, a miracle does not *occur*; that is to say, it does not occur in the present tense. A miracle knows no presence for the reason that it changes the very notion of what it means to be present. A miracle either cannot take place at all or it has already taken place. It is that event which cannot be imagined before its occurrence, nor believed in after it, even though the exclamation "I cannot believe this" means the exact opposite of what it states. But if the miracle has taken place, it always already had. "Miracles no longer happen," as the pastor in *Ordet* says to Johannes.

In chapter 6, "Of Miracles," of his *Theologico-Political Treatise* (1670), Spinoza, who did not believe in miracles either, writes,

By miracle, I here mean an event which surpasses, or is thought to surpass, human comprehension: for in so far as it is supposed to destroy or interrupt the order of nature or her laws, it not only can give us no knowledge of God, but contrariwise, takes away that which we naturally have, and makes us doubt of God and everything else.¹⁷

"God or [*sive*]¹⁸ Nature," for Spinoza, is immanent cause; that is, simultaneously *causa sui* and *causa generis*, cause of itself and cause of everything. It is cause that is immanent in its effects and, as such,

precedes its effects only logically, not diachronically. God's essence, unlike that of everything else (including humans), involves his existence. Even though Spinoza keeps God's name and gender intact, he refutes the notion of God as a personified, interventionist being. For God to intervene in the course of nature, to perform miracles, would mean to act out of a lack, whereas Spinoza's God is perfect by definition. God is Nature and as such simply is. People's belief in miracles, Spinoza argues, is founded on their imagination of God as a power distinct from that of Nature, which they understand to be his creation. Instead of making an effort to understand God and working through the "unusual phenomena" of which they do not grasp the natural causes, they prefer to remain in ignorance, "partly from piety, partly for the sake of opposing the students of science."¹⁹

God does not reveal himself—that is to say, express himself—through miracles or signs. And when he seems to do so, this tells a lot about the observer's anthropomorphic projections onto God but nothing about God himself. For example, in *Stellet Licht*, right after Johan and Marianne have had sex, Johan, now lying on the bed alone and staring at the ceiling, sees a leaf twirling down. The leaf is heart-shaped and, as such, contrasts with the other symbolic form that is included in the point-of-view shot of Johan's perspective: the cross formed by the ceiling beams. "What's that on the floor, there?" Johan asks when Marianne returns to the room. "A leaf," she says. "A cedar leaf?" "Yes, red cedar." As with the butterfly in the resurrection sequence, the film leaves open whether the leaf and the beams just happen to take a furtive symbolic constellation in Johan's—and by extension the viewer's—chance observation or whether they really are divine revelations. But if these observations are understood as signs in need of interpretation, according to Spinoza this occurs only after the interpreters (Johan, viewer) have modeled these signs' alleged author after their own all-too-human conceptions of freedom, love, and sacrifice. As Gilles Deleuze explains Spinoza's position,

Revelation is not an expression, but a cultivation of the inexpressible, a confused and relative knowledge through which we lend God determinations analogous to our own (Understanding, Will), only to rescue God's superiority through his eminence in all genera (the supereminent One, etc.).²⁰

In Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, God is expressivity, that which explicates (literally unfolds) itself in and is implicated by each thing. God expresses himself through his infinity of "attributes," which may be thought of as perspectives on substance that are simultaneously

fully part of substance, and of which only extension and thought are available to the human intellect. God expresses himself, and it is only through his expressions that the mind can obtain adequate knowledge; that is, knowledge of the causes of that by which *modes* are affected. *Modes* are defined as “the affections of substance, or [*sive*], that which is in something else, through which it is also conceived.”²¹ This “something else” is substance. Spinoza distinguishes between modes of extension and of thought; that is, bodies and ideas. Crucial is that bodies and ideas are in a relation of parallelism; that is, an idea of a thing exists fully separate from that thing’s existence. A human being is a mode, too, a body-mind. It is a body insofar as it is considered under the attribute of extension; it is a mind insofar as it is considered under the attribute of thought.²²

How do humans relate themselves to the divine substance that they are of? Spinoza distinguishes among three types of modal knowledge: imagination, reason, and intuition. Whereas imagination pertains to both (bodily) affections and the perception of signs, both of which yield only inadequate, passive knowledge, the latter two pertain to adequate knowledge, and activity of mind, in the sense that they increase the mind’s power to act, its power to be affected. By “adequacy,” Spinoza understands the degree to which an idea expresses its own cause. The first form of adequate knowledge is reason, which proceeds by the interpretation of signs and the creation of concepts, and is geared toward the development of common notions, or of that which is universal to several modes of existence. The second form of adequate knowledge is intuition, which is directed at knowledge of individual modes. Spinoza writes, “This [third] kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of some of the attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things.”²³ It is in the third type of knowledge that I am most interested, not only because this epistemological stance toward the immanent One-all can potentially help us to understand the crystal time-images created in cinema, but also because the question of its possibility forms the hinge of Spinoza’s philosophy.

Given that everything is connected to everything in Spinoza’s system, to adequately understand the essence of singular things seemingly implies knowing the cause of a thing’s essence, and consequently the cause of this cause, *ad infinitum*. But Spinoza, unlike Descartes, avoids the trap of infinite regression. For Spinoza, to know the essence of a singular thing means to know its place and movement within the concatenation of Nature, and hence to, in a sense, know this concatenation, which is immanent cause, itself. Put differently, to know intuitively means to understand Nature through the essence of a singular thing, which serves as a lens through which the mode

“perceives” Nature. This is not a lens in the sense of a magnifying glass placed between this mode and Nature, which would imply a form of perception as contemplation that more applies to the second kind of knowledge, but one in the sense of a crystal ball from within which the mode, the identity of which now dissolves, is enveloped by the world’s necessity, “considered under a species of eternity.”²⁴

If the essence of a particular mode can be known, it is only through glimpses of eternity. I write “if,” because strictly speaking it remains ambiguous in the *Ethics* whether *intuition*, which, rather than the “highest” type of knowledge, is the simultaneous excess and condition of possibility of the other types of knowledge, can be achieved at all. This ambiguity results from this type of knowledge’s very nature. Intuition simultaneously exceeds language and forms its condition of possibility, concepts, and linguistic structures pertaining to reason. Spinoza only acknowledges this dilemma implicitly, through his style of writing. Whereas, as Deleuze points out, the greater part of the *Ethics* is written from the narrative perspective of the second kind of knowledge (down to proposition V.21),²⁵ the remainder of the fifth section is written from the perspective of intuition. Or, to be precise, it is written *as if* from intuition’s perspective. Spinoza’s approach in these passages could be conceived of as a form of free indirect discourse, in the sense that he attempts to render his narrative voice immanent to his subject matter, the latter being *divine love*, “the love by which God loves himself; not in so far as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explained through the essence of the human mind, considered under a species of eternity.”²⁶ To partake in this love Spinoza calls *beatitude*.²⁷

As if. The problem is not whether intuition is possible, but *that it needs to be possible*. Spinoza’s entire system is predicated upon its possibility, a possibility—and this is the problem—that is improvable by definition. Yet from the perspective of substance there are no problems, God being perfection himself, whereas from a modal perspective problems are there to be solved, through theorems and demonstrations, which is what Spinoza does. Knowing that intuitive knowledge needs to be possible, he writes as though it is possible before it will turn out to be possible, if it will at all. Spinoza takes out an advance on the truth before even having established the latter’s existence, not because he deems the risk worth taking, but because he has turned this strategy into the only option by proclaiming truth as the standard of itself and of what it is not.²⁸ As a consequence, it is only from a modal perspective that the third kind of knowledge appears to arrive last. From its own point of view, which is God’s, intuition is the zeroness that makes it possible for modes to count and to move from one to two in the first place.

It is also along these lines that I interpret the following crucial passage in Deleuze's *Expressionism in Philosophy*:

[I]t would be absurd not to recognize the following: that things that do not exist by their own nature are determined in their existence (and in the production of their effects) by something that itself does exist necessarily and does produce its effects through itself. It is always God who determines any cause to produce its effect; so God is never, properly speaking, a "distant" or "remote" cause. Thus we do not start from the idea of God, but we reach it very quickly, at the beginning of the regression; for without it we would not even understand the possibility of a series, its efficiency and actuality. *Whence it little matters that we proceed through a fiction.* The introduction of a fiction may indeed help us to reach the idea of God as quickly as possible without falling into the traps of infinite regression.²⁹

If this necessary fiction indeed results in crystalline sparks of "the love with which God loves himself,"³⁰ the latter's advent can only be conceived of as an "immanent miracle." Rather than a subject's escape from immanence, as Ricciardi interprets the ending of *Miracle in Milan*, I would argue that the immanent miracle is his or her becoming-immanent. So, at the end of De Sica's film, rather than Toto and his comrades taking flight from the world, they become it.

This miracle's immanence lies in that the instant of its occurrence is a confirmation of the world rather than a transformation. In it, it is not the world that undergoes an inexplicable, miraculous change. It is the mode's epistemological relation to the world that is transformed. In other words, the immanent miracle refers to a radical shift in a mode's perspective on the world that comes from within this perspective but cannot be explained or expressed by this perspective. In this shift, the possibility of which remains uncertain by definition, the mode perceives Nature as if through Nature itself. This epistemological shift, which is one of beatitude, is as instantaneous as it is ephemeral. But at the same time it is eternal, because whereas the instant of its occurrence, which is timelessness itself, can be defined as reason's self-defying movement, reason is also defied in its remembrance of this instant.

Therefore, from a modal standpoint the immanent miracle really is a miracle, whereas from the perspective of substance it is always already explained by the inexorable laws and rules of Nature, the latter for Spinoza being a system without remainder. As a concept, *immanent miracle* joins these two perspectives that conceptually exclude each other, but that in the third type of knowledge ephemerally touch or seem to touch.

Before returning to the immanent miracle that is *Stellet Licht*, I need to examine Spinoza's theory of time, which remains rather implicit in the *Ethics*. Spinoza distinguishes between two temporalities: duration and eternity, the former corresponding to modes, the latter to substance. As for human existence, whereas its bodily extension has a limited and measurable duration, the soul, or the body's essence, can be expressed only under a species of eternity.³¹ "[W]e sense and experience that we are eternal," Spinoza explains. "For the mind senses those things that it conceives in understanding no less than those that it has in the memory. For the eyes of the mind, by which it sees and observes things, are demonstrations."³²

The mind *senses*. It is here that Spinoza's necessary fiction manifests itself. Suddenly imagination comes to the aid of reason, yet not as its dialectical negation, but as its enhancement. Only in an intuitive short-circuit can the eyes of the mind, which really are crystal balls, see the demonstrations they are themselves. Intuition is knowledge of immanent cause, which is the condition of possibility of existence itself. Rather than leading human understanding back to bodily passions, intuition touches the mind, much like imagination consists in a bodily imprint. On the one hand, intuition is a limit, namely *of* (double genitive) reason. It is the end point of reason's process without constituting its ending. It is the point where *conatus*, human desire to persist in being in combination with a consciousness of that desire,³³ spins on its place and bounces back, into difference and differentiation.

On the other hand, intuition is a process in and of itself that "opens up" in the infinitesimal point in diachronic time in which *conatus* is not what it is; namely, at the point when it is at rest. At this point of rest, time itself comes to a standstill. This process, which is the concatenation of Nature itself, stands perpendicular to that of *conatus*, both spatially and temporally, space and time being indistinguishable at this point, which is the nondifferentiated One that is always already there. It is here, or at this moment, that *conatus* touches eternity, which is God's infinite essence.

While circumscribing this eternal knowledge, it is important to remember the obvious fact that the *Ethics* is a text and, as such, cannot possibly express this touching of eternity without contradicting itself. It is as though the *Ethics*, at the points it becomes most expressive, bounces back against its own discursive limits. The limit of reason is also the limit of language, and knowledge of immanent cause is also knowledge of the condition of possibility of language. And in a way Spinoza's text performs its own linguistic turn, albeit implicitly: "The mind *senses*." Whereas in most parts of the *Ethics* Spinoza mainly uses examples and comparisons, in the final pages

he takes recourse to metaphors. In intuition, binaries such as “finite” and “infinite,” and “movement” and “rest,” that are the silent foundations of Spinoza’s concatenation of definitions, propositions, and demonstrations break down.

Spinoza’s “linguistic turn” becomes most visible when one, while keeping this metaphorical understanding of intuition in mind, goes back to the few sentences in part 2 in which Spinoza writes *about* intuition from the perspective of reason. He does so by means of an example. Having illustrated merchants’ ability to, given three numbers, quickly find a “fourth number which shall be to the third as the second is to the first,” either by unreflexive experience (imagination) or mathematical knowledge (reason), Spinoza writes,

But in the case of very simple numbers there is no need of these [i.e., experience or mathematics]. For example, given that the numbers are 1, 2, and 3, everyone will see that the fourth proportional number is 6; and we see this much more clearly because we infer the fourth number from the very ratio that we see with one intuition that the first has to the second.³⁴

Though this example remains insufficiently expressive of intuition, it nevertheless illustrates intuition’s relation to reason. From a modal perspective, reason is the indispensable fundament for intuitive knowledge. Because the merchant who immediately comes up with “6” of course must have a grasp of proportionality. Otherwise he might also have chosen “4” (linear sequence), or “5” (sequence of primes), or any number—because for every finite sequence, say y_x , of length n , there exists a function $f(x)$ such that $y_x = f(x)$ for all $x \leq n$, with x and n positive integers. Intuition is reason made one’s own; in this example, knowledge of proportionality. It is incorporated reason that has divested itself of itself through its use. Through this incorporation, reason becomes invisible, which explains the split second in which this type of knowledge comes to mind.

From a modal perspective, this instant of intuition can only be expressed as one of anachronicity, an instantaneous “flash” in which time makes no sense as the result of a diachronic misrecognition of the synchronic, of eternity. It is the temporality of *déjà vu* and visions, of specters and prophets, of miracles, phenomena in and by which time itself seems to be out of joint. It is also the temporality of the crystal-image, which leads me back to *Stellet Licht*, because an aspect of Reygadas’s film that I have so far only hinted at is its intricate representation and deployment of time.

Immediately after the sunrise with which the film opens, it cuts to a wall clock, which indicates 6:27 a.m. In the swinging pendulum, the viewer sees the reflection of Johan and Esther's family gathered around the breakfast table. They are praying, eyes closed, against the backdrop of the monotonous ticking of the clock. After breakfast is finished, Johan remains sitting alone at the table. He then gets up, stops the clock, and again sits down at the table, where he bursts into tears. The kitchen scene takes almost ten minutes and sets the pace for the rest of the narrative. At the end of the film, right before Johan goes to see Esther, the same clock is wound again by Johan's father. 7:41 p.m. Despite this stopping and rewinding of a wall clock being another significant citation of *Ordet*,³⁵ what does this representation of *Stellet Licht*'s narrative as taking place outside of diachronic time imply for our reading of the film? A bit more than thirteen hours of diegetic time are shown to have passed between sunrise and sunset, but during this day it has rained, snowed, and been warm enough to swim outside. The film's slow pace is deceptive, because in fact time flies by in *Stellet Licht*. Its miracle not only takes place in the infinitesimal instant that Esther opens her eyes, a revelation that then in retrospect "washes over" or "drenches" the film's images, but its images themselves are made out of miraculous matter. As such, *Stellet Licht* appears to be a prime example of cinematic expression.

Time Crystals

What is a cinema of expression? To answer this question, one first needs to look at what separates expression from representation. Deleuze, in his discussion of attributes in Spinoza, explains this distinction through the metaphors of mirror and seed, respectively. Whereas the mirror reflects or reflects upon an image, the seed, Deleuze writes, "'expresses' the tree as a whole."³⁶ All acts of expression move through representation. Expressions reflect and multiply the essence of a thing. But, Deleuze writes, "[W]hat is expressed is at the same time involved in its expression, as a tree in its seed."³⁷

Mirror and seed, representation and expression, correspond to two types of realism: representational realism and expressive realism, the former always being somehow involved in the latter. Both are narrative categories, but whereas representational realism is characterized by the objective distance it pretends to maintain between subject and object of narration, in expressive realism this distance is incessantly being bridged by the attempt to render the narrative perspective immanent to the subject matter. In plain terms,

representational realism speaks about reality, whereas expressive realism speaks *as if* through reality.

This process of immanentization of narrative perspective could also be called *free indirect discourse*. Linguistically, free indirect discourse is a form of quotation without quotation marks that blurs the demarcation line between subjective and objective discourse. When carried out consistently, as in Gustave Flaubert's *L'Education sentimentale* (1869), it has the double-sided effect of, on the one hand, rendering immanent the author's act of narration to the narrative, and, on the other hand, mediating the narration by one or more characters' desire.³⁸ Free indirect discourse thus functions as a discourse of desire, not in the sense that it penetrates into the innermost psychology of the individual characters, but in that it reveals these characters' desire as being the product of larger social and literary processes of subjectification.

This scrutiny of desire is an inherently self-reflexive process in which the act of writing itself is brought to the text's surface. As V. N. Volosinov puts it, free indirect discourse (or quasi-direct discourse, as he calls it) is a narrative device that allows the artist to express the "living impression of voices heard as if in a dream." "It is fantasy's own form."³⁹ In Flaubert's prose, Volosinov argues, this device is given an especially complex nature, as it comes to reflect the writer's troubled relationship with his own creations.⁴⁰ When carried out consistently, free indirect discourse has the effect that none of its expressions can be fully ascribed to either the protagonist's subjective point of view or the absent-present narrator. So every time Frédéric, the "hero" of *L'Education sentimentale*, evokes "love," the reader simultaneously hears the writer, himself fictionalized, deriding Frédéric for the clichés he speaks in and for the one that his impotent character embodies.

Free indirect discourse can be found also in narrative practices other than literature, such as philosophy and cinema. In his essay "The 'Cinema of Poetry'" (1965), Pier Paolo Pasolini discusses what he calls the "free indirect point-of-view shot," which he describes as an "'interior monologue' of images."⁴¹ According to Pasolini, such a free indirect point-of-view shot will never correspond perfectly to literary free indirect discourse, for the reason that a filmmaker, unlike a novelist, cannot totally disappear into his or her characters. But the filmmaker can approach this interior monologue through the use of formal means: "His activity cannot be linguistic, it must, instead, be stylistic."⁴² This stylistic approach, Pasolini argues, reaches a climax in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Il Deserto Rosso/ Red Desert* (1964, Italy, France), as in this movie the free indirect point-of-view shot coincides with the entire film. Pasolini writes,

In *Red Desert* Antonioni no longer superimposes his own formalistic vision of the world on a generally committed content (the problem of neuroses caused by alienation), as he had done in his earlier films in a somewhat clumsy blending. Instead, he looks at the world by immersing himself in his neurotic protagonist, reanimating the facts through her eyes[.]⁴³

I only partially agree with Pasolini, as I wonder whether one cannot also point out forms of cinematic free indirect discourse that do not rely exclusively on stylistic means but are simultaneously inherent to the narration and, as such, are *also* linguistic. Though it might be true that Giuliana's delirium, more than that of Antonioni's earlier protagonists, is closest to the director's personal experience, already with *L'Eclisse/Eclipse* (1962, Italy, France) the director had rendered his narrative perspective immanent to the images. In this film, Vittoria's or one of the other protagonists' desire always already mediates the depiction of the materialist environment by which it is constituted. In other words, space and character are mutually determining. As a result, there is no image—or cinematic utterance—in this film that can be entirely attributed to either a diegetic or an extradiegetic point of view.

Also in *Stellet Licht*, many of the sequences are explicitly mediated by one or several of the characters' perspectives. One crucial example is one I have already discussed in relation to the resurrection sequence, in which first Marianne's and then the childrens' normalization of this event becomes integrated into the representation of the miracle itself. The second poignant example is in the scene in which Johan, after having made love to Marianne, goes outside to look for his children. Momentarily fearing the worst, the viewer is relieved when he or she finds them in the van of an American man, where they are fully absorbed by Jacques Brel's performance of "Les Bonbons" (the 1967 "breakup" version) on the minuscule screen of a portable television set. Johan's children are laughing out loud at this strange man whose language they do not understand. While Johan and Marianne are standing outside the van, she discretely grabs his hand. Then Johan joins his children. After the van owner has shut the door and Marianne has walked away, the TV becomes the film. This is the case both visually, as for one and a half minutes the frame is fully filled by the television image, and auditorily, because the only sound the viewer now hears is that of Brel's song (figure 4):

. . . Et tous les samedis soir que j'peux
 Germaine, j'écoute pousser mes ch'veux
 Je fais glou glou je fais miam miam



Figure 4. *Stellet Licht/ Silent Light*, dir. Carlos Reygadas, 2007.

J'défile criant: paix au Vietnam
 Parce qu'enfin enfin j'ai des opinions
 Je viens rechercher mes bonbons. . .⁴⁴

Most likely, Johan, like his children, does not understand the words. But immersed in the grainy black-and-white recording of Brel's expressive performance, and in diametrical opposition to its acrimonious subject matter, is Johan's sudden happiness, the simple happiness he is about to relinquish for love. At the core of this happiness is the open-ended worldview of his children, for whom "good morning" really means "good morning" and a funny song a funny song. The viewer won't get any closer than this to Johan's soul, to his wavering of mind.

What I want to illustrate with these examples is that free indirect discourse, in cinema but also in other practices, should be conceived of as a stance toward reality rather than a style of representation. Free indirect discourse is the striving toward a mutual determination between the narrative point of view and the plot-space, toward a point where the two are rendered immanent to each other. This space is simultaneously the fictional environment that characters inhabit, travel through, or wander around, and the textual space in which the narrative unfolds. In cinema, this textual space is the combination of frame and soundtrack, the place of the cinematic sound-image itself. In a cinema of expression, these two dimensions of the plot-space are intertwined to the extent that they merge or

seem to merge. If cinema were the world, to “witness” this instant of merging would be what Spinoza calls intuition.

At the phenomenological level of diegesis, immanence is achieved through the mutual determination of characters (or modes in general) and represented space; at the ontological level of the image qua image, it is achieved through the mutual determination of diegetic space and screen-soundtrack space. The first dimension of immanentization takes place at the level of the mirror and reflects upon the essence of the characters qua modes. The second dimension takes place at the level of the seed and expresses cinematic Nature; that is, its production of moving images. In analogy with Spinoza’s discussion of essences, the former consists in the characters’ desire, the latter in the sound-image’s mere existence, in the fact that the cinematic sound-image *is* before it is something else. It is only through representational immanence that cinematic immanence—that is, a sound-image free of representation—is reached, and that cinema becomes reality or, to paraphrase André Bazin, at least an asymptote of it.⁴⁵ Representation is a means to an end, this end being the expression of reality.

Nobody has expressed the relation between cinematic means and ends better than Walter Benjamin. In “The Work of Art” essay, Benjamin claims that film, because of its “thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment,” offers “an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment.”⁴⁶ Benjamin’s hope was that film would help humanity to dialectically overcome the shock of modernity that film’s technology, including montage, was a product of. It was also this hope that led him, in the original version of this essay, to compare the medium’s promise of a “vision of unmediated reality” to “the Blue flower in the land of technology.”⁴⁷ This vision should not be thought of in terms of mimesis, precisely because in a capitalist society experience itself is inherently mediated. Rather, in order to redeem reality, and to bring dialectics, which is capital’s own movement, to an ephemeral standstill, film needs to dissect and fragment “the tissue of reality.”⁴⁸ As Miriam Hansen argues,

If the mimetic capabilities of film were put to such use, it would not only fulfill a critical function but also a redemptive one, registering sediments of experience that are no longer or not yet claimed by social and economic rationality, making them readable as emblems of a “forgotten future.”⁴⁹

We are very close to the expressive realism of the crystal-image here. Though Deleuze’s cinema-philosophy is less predicated upon the medium’s technology than Benjamin’s, and though their routes

to redemption lead these philosophers through very different territories, their cinematic utopias are identical: “an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment,” “a bit of time in the pure state.”⁵⁰ This is even more the case if one keeps in mind what representations and concepts are for Deleuze and Spinoza: tools. Representations are the tools that are necessary to produce an expressive image of a piece (an *aspect*) of the world that is free of tools—much like concepts in Spinoza’s system are ultimately geared at the production of an expressive, nonconceptual crystal *image* of the essence of a singular thing. “The crystal is expression,” Deleuze writes in *Cinema 2*. “Expression moves from the mirror to the seed.”⁵¹ I propose to read this passage through Deleuze’s earlier use of these same metaphors in his writing on Spinoza. At the basis of the image of the crystal stands that of the infinite circuit of reflection constituted by two mirrors facing each other, a circuit in which the “principle of indiscernibility” between what is actual and what is virtual “reaches its peak.”⁵² But the moving image, like the mind, is not a mirror in itself, and the moment the mind-image would try to become fully part of this mirroring circuit it would interrupt it. Hence the need of a third mirror, and a fourth, and a fifth. . . . It is the same trap of infinite regression that we encountered in relation to Spinoza’s intuition. But the mind—and for Deleuze cinema is a theory of mind—also senses that the crystal *must be possible*. Therefore, in order to arrive at the crystal and to become expressive, the cinematic image must take a leap toward the crystal right from the start and posit itself as seed, as an image in which the actual and the virtual coalesce:

[T]he seed is on the one hand the virtual image which will crystallize an environment which is at present [*actuellement*] amorphous; but on the other hand the latter must have a structure which is virtually crystallizable, in relation to which the seed now plays the role of actual image.⁵³

The very point of indivisibility between its two sides is what lies at the essence of the crystal-image, in and from within which we catch, as in a flash, cinema’s immanent promise: to see “time itself, a bit of time in the pure state, the very distinction between the two images which keeps on reconstituting itself.”⁵⁴ It is a glimpse of that which simultaneously causes itself and everything else, immanent cause.

From the mirror to the seed: it is this passage that *Stellet Licht* makes felt. By enveloping its viewers, the film makes them realize that they have been enveloped from the very beginning. After seemingly starting off as a representation of a world in which the boundaries between real and unreal are clear-cut, *Stellet Licht* little by little explicates itself as an expression of divine spirit. But at

the moment the viewer realizes—which for most people will be the moment of Esther’s resurrection—that present and past, actual and virtual, are no longer discernible, he or she immediately realizes that they never were, and that the film’s miracle was already imbricated with the blackness in which the film has unfolded itself. That is how the immanent miracle works, by positing itself, silently, at the beginning, as if it were possible.

Silent Light

We therefore need to return to the celestial body that appears at the film’s beginning, and which is represented as the power supply of Esther’s resurrection: the sun. But the sun is not God, and if it is, God is right there, as light, the “stuff” cinema is made of. On repeated occasions throughout *Stellet Licht*, the image is drenched in sunlight, when this light is refracted by the lens into colorful, translucent spots. Green, orange, blue, pink. They are the silent light of the film’s title. Much like confetti, they are sprinkled over the image, over the landscape, the animals, and Johan and Marianne kissing in the field (figure 5). More than to the presence of the filmmaker’s equipment, these spots testify to his refusal to protect the image from the abundance of light. The shots in which they occur constitute moments of overrepresentation, not in a spectacular or symbolic sense, but as representation exceeding itself and thereby turning



Figure 5. *Stellet Licht/ Silent Light*, dir. Carlos Reygadas, 2007.

expressive. By overexposing itself to the world, the image exposes itself as image. There is simply too much light, and the only place this light can go is the “surface” of the image, where it moves with the camera, as though sticking to the diegetic reality, thus creating a membrane between the viewer and the film’s actual image. The film’s image thereby makes itself felt and somehow turns itself inside out, as though enveloping itself back into the intangible stuff, “as light as light,”⁵⁵ it consists of.

This colorful light is no less miraculous than the imperceptible instant Esther opens her eyes. It is the film as a whole that presents itself as a miracle, in the sense that hidden at the surface of its dogmatic realism the film defies reality. From its out-of-sync sunrise to its sun-drenched landscapes, from Brel’s grainy performance to Esther’s resurrection, and from the anachronic winter to the starry sky into which the film fades away—they are all presented as sharing the same ontological status; namely, the miraculous ensemble that they constitute, and that, at the same time, they can only point at, the nonimaginable within the image, the nought within thought.

To conclude, *Stellet Licht* is an undeniably religious film. Not only does it represent a highly religious community, the social relations of which are embedded in a rigorous belief system, but its romantic narrative itself is also marked by a mystifying vision of love, desire, forgiveness, and belief, whether in God, Nature, or a combination of the two. Though part of this vision may be interpreted as resulting from the filmmaker’s desire (whether intentional or not) to give an immanent, “free indirect” representation of Mennonite beliefs and practices, as with Dreyer’s *Ordet* it is impossible to say where its representation of a religious community ends and its expression of divine substance begins. But precisely at this invisible point of indiscernibility, the film becomes productive for examining the striving for an immanent crystal-image, in philosophy as well as in cinema. Whereas the former produces concepts from concepts, the latter produces images from images. However, and in analogy to Spinoza’s third type of knowledge, the concept-free knowledge of the essence of a particular thing, cinema, in order to become fully expressive of its own movement, has to somehow free itself of the images it produces. It has to produce an image that simply *is*, without, or at least before, being something else. Such an equipment-free image would be nothing less than a miracle.

Notes

I would like to thank Cesare Casarino and Adair Rounthwaite for their comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

¹ Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 24.

² Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Continuum, 2005), 72.

³ Alessia Ricciardi, “Immanent Miracles: From De Sica to Hardt and Negri,” *Modern Language Notes* 122, no. 5 (2007): 1138–65, quotation on 1157.

⁴ See, for example, Étienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, trans. Peter Snowdon (London: Verso, 1998), 6.

⁵ As Gilles Deleuze points out in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (trans. Robert Hurley [San Francisco: City Light Books, 1988]), Spinoza’s *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (1632–77) opens in the Mennonite manner, with a spiritual itinerary. Moreover, during his life, Spinoza befriended several Mennonites, who were also responsible for the publication of some of his books after his death. However, rather than seeing influences of Mennonite pantheism in Spinoza’s philosophy, Deleuze explains this contact by the fact that Spinoza was drawn to the tolerance of the Mennonite circle.

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Continuum, 2005), xix.

⁷ Deleuze presents this transition from a cinema of movement to one of time as a process that takes place differently at different moments in different places. One constant factor is that this transition is marked by “a crisis of the action-image,” the action-image indicating the type of cinema that had become dominant in the period until World War II. Deleuze writes in *Cinema 1*, “[I]t was first of all in Italy that the great crisis of the action-image took place. The timing is something like around 1948, Italy; about 1958, France; about 1968, Germany” (215).

⁸ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 79, emphasis in the original.

⁹ The absence of Spinoza is implicitly offset by the fact that the *Cinema* books are largely structured around Henri Bergson’s epistemology formulated in *Matter and Memory* (*Matière et mémoire*, 1869). Bergson’s theorization of the relation between the subject of knowledge, memory, and the world—a theorization according to which the subject, understood as the locus of experience, is an image that is simultaneously special and fully immanent to the image that is the world—is largely compatible with Spinoza’s theory of immanence.

¹⁰ This anachronic arrival is part of what makes up the time-image. Because even though the “soul of the cinema” (*Cinema 1*, 210) has passed from movement to time in the course of the twentieth century, simultaneously the direct time-image was always already there. Deleuze writes in *Cinema 2*, “The direct time-image is the phantom which has always haunted the cinema, but it took modern cinema to give a body to this phantom” (40).

¹¹ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 110–11. This passage is taken from a part of *Cinema 1* in which Deleuze discusses Dreyer in relation to the affection-image, the type of movement-image that Deleuze associates with the close-up. For Deleuze, the epitome of the affection-image is Dreyer’s *La Passion de Jeanne d’Arc/ The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928, France).

¹² In the same interview, Reygadas also speaks about his other influences:

I like Roberto Rossellini very much, and the conditions in which he had to shoot with whatever was there. . . . For me, Dreyer is also great. *Ordet* (1954) is one of the most moving films I've ever seen in my life, a miracle of film. Bresson is also a master, especially in the way he works with non-actors and uses sound. *A Man Escaped* (1956) is a personal favorite. Tarkovsky was the one to really open my eyes. When I saw his films I realized that emotion could come directly out of the sound and the image, and not necessarily from the story-telling" (cited in Tiago de Luca, "Carnal Spirituality: The Films of Carlos Reygadas," *Senses of Cinema* 55 [2010], www.sensesofcinema.com/2010/feature-articles/carnal-spirituality-the-films-of-carlos-reygadas-2/#2 [accessed 18 December 2010]).

¹³ An interview with Reygadas published in the Dutch newspaper *de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam) lays out his intention for the relation between the Plautdietsch spoken and the subtitles, which do not always literally translate the characters' words: "No one in the movie theatre understands that language, offering Reygadas the possibility to polish the subtitles according to his own view. 'This way I could keep the text as universal and neutral as possible'" (see Bor Beekman, "Acteurs Schaden de Film," *Cinema.nl*, www.cinema.nl/artikelen/3205063/acteurs-schaden-de-film [accessed 1 November 2009], my translation). In other words, in this film the subtitles are not simply a translation of the dialogue on the soundtrack, but belong to the original and in that sense form an integral part of the image.

¹⁴ It took Reygadas three years to establish relationships with the Northern Mexican Mennonite community depicted in the film, which is also the community to which Cornelio Wall, who interprets the role of Johan, belongs. In Canada, in another Mennonite community, Reygadas encountered Miriam Toews, who plays Esther. Maria Pankratz (Marianne), who is of German-Kazachstan origin, he only found after having rented an apartment in Amsterdam and searched Dutch and German farmer communities (see Beekman, "Acteurs Schaden de Film").

¹⁵ John 1.1–14. Citations are from the 1769 King James Bible.

¹⁶ Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 15, emphasis in the original.

¹⁷ Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, in *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), 86–87.

¹⁸ This "or" is translated as "or, in other words."

¹⁹ Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, 81.

²⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 181–82.

²¹ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. G. H. R. Parkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), I.D5. (I refer to passages in the *Ethics* by the part of the text in which they appear, "P" referring to a proposition, "S" to a scholium, "D" to a demonstration, "A" to an axiom, "Def" to a definition, "C" to a corollary, and "L" to a lemma.) All individual modes are composites; that is, they are in turn made up of smaller modes that "communicate their motions to each other in some fixed ratio" (*Ethics*, II.P13.L3.C.A2.Def).

²² Inasmuch as the attributes are parallel to one another, body and mind are, too, but that does not mean they are disconnected, because "[t]he object of the

idea constituting the human mind is the body, or [*sive*], a certain actually existing mode of extension, and nothing else" (*Ethics*, II.P13). A way to think of this relation of parallel connectivity is as one between two conducting tracks between which runs the alternate current that binds and separates them, this current being God, the monist quintessence of things, itself.

²³ *Ethics*, II.P40.S2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, V.P36.

²⁵ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 296.

²⁶ *Ethics*, V.P36.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, V.P36.S.

²⁸ "[J]ust as light manifests both itself and the darkness, so truth is the standard both of itself and of falsity" (*Ethics*, II.P43.S).

²⁹ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 137, emphasis in the original.

³⁰ *Ethics*, V.P36.

³¹ *Ibid.*, V.P23.S.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, III.P9.S.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, II.P40.S2.

³⁵ In *Ordet*, the wall clock in the Borgen's farm is stopped right after Inger's death, and rewound shortly after her resurrection.

³⁶ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 80.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ For example, in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931), the narrative point of view is divided over seven voices (of which one remains silent) that are rendered fully immanent to the narration.

³⁹ V[alentin] N[ikolaevich] Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 148.

⁴⁰ V. N. Volosinov writes, "Quasi-direct discourse, with its capacity for conveying simultaneously identification with and independence, distance from one's creations, was an extremely suitable means for embodying this love-hate relation Flaubert maintained toward his characters" (*Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 152).

⁴¹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, "The 'Cinema of Poetry,'" in *Heretical Empiricism*, trans. Ben Lawton, Louise K. Barnett, ed. Louise K. Barnett (Washington DC: New Academia, 2005), 167–86, quotation on 176 (originally published 1972).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 178.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁴⁴ ". . . And all the Saturday nights that I can / Germaine, I listen to my hair growing / I go glub, glub, I go yum, yum / I march in the street shouting 'Peace in Vietnam' / Because, after all, after all I have my opinions / I come to take my chocolates back . . ." In contrast to this 1967 version, the original 1964 version of *Les*

Bonbons was a fairly traditional love song: “J’veous ai apporté des bonbons / parc’que les fleurs c’est périssable . . .” [“I’ve brought you chocolates / because flowers are perishable”].

⁴⁵ André Bazin, “*Umberto D: A Great Work*” (1952), in *What Is Cinema?* vol. 2, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 61–82, quotation on 82.

⁴⁶ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 217–52, quotation on 234.

⁴⁷ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility [First Version]” (1935), trans. Michael Jennings, *Grey Room* 39 (2010): 11–37, quotation on 28.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁹ Miriam Hansen, “Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: ‘The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology,’” *New German Critique* 40 (1987): 179–224, quotation on 209.

⁵⁰ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 79.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁵⁵ Cavell, *World Viewed*, 24.