A Thousand Tiny Sexes, a Trillion Tiny Jesuses, and the Queer Gospel of Mark

Stephen D. Moore
smoore@drew.edu

Abstract

Queer theory’s standard origin story centers on Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Teresa de Lauretis. This article proceeds down a less-traveled road, one yet to be explored in biblical studies. Like standard queer theory, this trajectory’s roots are also in French thought—not that of Foucault or Jacques Lacan, however, but of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The difference this makes is considerable, yielding, among other things, a concept of the gendered body that is neither discursive (à la Foucault) nor performative (à la Butler) but virtual; a concept of sexuality that exceeds the human/nonhuman binary no less than the heterosexual/homosexual binary; and an alternative version of the antisocial thesis in queer theory that precedes Lee Edelman’s influential Lacanian version by more than thirty years, namely, Guy Hocquenghem’s Deleuzoguattarian version. How might all or any of this translate into queer biblical reading? Addressing this question through an extended analysis of the Gospel of Mark is the principal project of this article.

Keywords

Queer theory; queer hermeneutics; Gospel of Mark; Gilles Deleuze; Félix Guattari

Introduction: Hismeneutics, Theirmeneutics, Queermeneutics

The pages that follow explore one of the less-traveled roads of queer critical thought, a path yet to be pursued in biblical studies. Like “classic” queer theory, epitomized by Judith Butler’s Gender Trouble,¹ this trajectory’s roots also lie in French thought—not that of Michel Foucault or Jacques Lacan, however, but of Gilles Deleuze, alone and with Félix Guattari.² To preview the path to be traversed, the difference this relocated point of origin

² Dedicated attempts to articulate a Deleuzian or Deleuzoguattarian queer theory have included Michael O’Rourke, ed., The Becoming-Deleuzoguattarian of Queer Theory, Rhizomes 11/12 (Fall 2005/Spring 2006); Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr, eds., Deleuze and Queer Theory (Deleuze Connections; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); David V. Ruffolo, Post-Queer Politics (Queer Interventions; Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009); and Nick Davis, The Desiring-Image: Gilles Deleuze and Contemporary Queer Cinema (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013). Also relevant are Frida Beckman, Between Desire and Pleasure: A Deleuzian Theory of Sexuality (Plateaus—New Directions in Deleuze Studies; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013); Frida Beckman, ed., Deleuze and Sex (Deleuze Connections; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011) and Anna Hickey-Moody, Deleuze and Masculinity (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), together with Jasbir K. Puar, Terrorist Assemblages:
makes for the capabilities of queer thought is considerable, yielding, among other innovations, a concept of the gendered body that is neither discursive (à la Foucault) nor performative (à la Butler) but virtual; a concept of sexuality that overflows the human/nonhuman binary container no less than the hetero/homo container; and an alternative version of queer theory’s “antisocial thesis” that precedes Lee Edelman’s influential Lacanian version (proclaimed in his 2004 book *No Future*) by more than thirty years, namely, Guy Hocquenghem’s *Homosexual Desire*, a manifesto sprung from a manifesto to the extent that it extends the sexual politics of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*. The loop formed by Deleuze’s own subsequent engagement with Hocquenghem is also part of the tale to be told, as are Deleuze’s, and Deleuze and Guattari’s, further pronouncements on sex. How might Deleuze and Guattari’s hyperqueer theory (which is what their concept of sex amounts to) translate into biblical hermeneutics—or, since Deleuze and Guattari rejected the enabling assumptions of hermeneutics, into biblical *hism*hermeneutics, *therrm*hermeneutics, or *queerm*hermeneutics? That is the driving question of the train of thought now beginning to chug down our less-traveled road, one without a pre-laid track.

**The Desire That Knows No Name**

*Anti-Oedipus* unveils with brio a materialist theory of desire. It refuses the capitalist separation of labor and libido, production and reproduction. For the neo-Marxist authors of *Anti-Oedipus*, the unconscious is a factory. The unconscious “engineers, it is

---

*Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Next Wave: New Directions in Women’s Studies; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), which draws strategically (even if not extensively) on Deleuze and Guattari.  

2 Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). (All too) briefly, the antisocial thesis in queer theory is radically anti-assimilationist. What the homophobic forces of right-wing reaction have gotten right, for Edelman—more right, indeed, than the left—is that queerness, fully embraced, threatens “the wholesale rupturing of the social fabric” (*No Future*, 14).  


5 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 24, 49, 55.
machinic.”⁷ No factory is complete, indeed, without machines, and what “pound away and throb” in the unconscious are “desiring-machines,”⁸ defined by their capacity for unlimited connectivity.⁹ Desiring-machines were actually what early Freud unearthed in the unconscious as “the domain of free syntheses where everything is possible: endless connections, nonexclusive disjunctions, nonspecific conjunctions, partial objects and flows.”¹⁰ But later Freud lost his nerve, burying the desiring-machines in the back lawn of the Holy Family’s home and taking up residence in that bourgeois domicile.¹¹

What are the ramifications of Deleuze and Guattari’s hyperconnective theory of desire (whose surface we have scarcely scratched) for sex and sexuality in general and sexual identity in particular? Sexual identity dissolves instantly in the theory, for reasons outlined below, which places Deleuze and Guattari at one end of the queer identity spectrum. But it is not a lonely place to be. Queer theory, even or especially in its “classic” manifestations, has tended overwhelmingly to lean anti-identitarian: look no further than the subtitle of Butler’s Gender Trouble, which, of course, is Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, or Edelman’s oft-repeated dictum: “For queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one.”¹²

Who or what clusters at the identitarian end of the spectrum? Millions more people than at the other end, needless to say, an exponentially expanding multitude. And an ever-greater number of them employ an elaborate taxonomic idiom to label themselves and others, an in-group language that has become ever more exquisitely precise. Teaching gender and sexuality seminars over several decades has positioned me to observe first-hand the incremental increase of exactitude displayed in, say, the circle of self-introductions, that hallowed first-day-of-class ritual: “I’m a cisgender male feminist LGBTQIA ally”; “I’m a genderqueer non-binary AFAB”…. I was reminded of that self-naming ritual this morning as I perused the elegant, often moving, online article collection, Audre Lorde Now.¹³ sex/gender self-identifications interlacing intersectionally with racial/ethnic self-identifications as the contributors introduce themselves as, for example, “an Afro-

---

⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 53.
⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 54, together with 1-50, a chapter titled “The Desiring-Machines.”
¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 54.
¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 51-56, the first section of the chapter titled “Psychoanalysis and Familialism: The Holy Family.”
¹² Edelman, No Future, 17.
¹³ Lorde being widely seen as, among other things, the preeminent “precursor” for the queer-of-color trajectory in queer studies, principally because of her Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1984).
Cuban feminist activistx, non-binary, fantasticaly fat, trans masculine historian,” or “a Puerto Rican/Irish multi-gendered street scholar and freedom maker.”

It all amounts to a glorious full turning of the circle whose constricting origins Foucault chronicled in his history of sexuality. Once again, in other words, “perverse” sex is proving an “incitement to discourse” of Foucauldian proportions. The eruptive discoursing of sex in the eighteenth and especially nineteenth centuries was a time for a parade of “figures, scarcely noticed in the past, to step forward and speak, to make the difficult confession of what they were.” More particularly, however, it was the age of nascent psychiatry and psychology and rampant sexology, and consequently for the taxonomic “entomologizing” of a multitude of “perverts,” ranging from “Krafft-Ebing’s zoophiles and zooreasts” to “Rohleder’s auto-monosexualists,” and on to “mixoscopophiles, gynecomasts, presbyophiles, sexoesthetic inverts, and dyspareunist women.”

The significance of the contemporary counterpart, the proliferation of queer (counter)names, the ever more precise terminological encapsulation of sexual identities, sub-identities, and sub-sub-identities should not be downplayed. It represents a quiet—when not clamorous—sexual and hence social revolution, creating potent pockets of countercommunity within the larger society. But is the distance between nineteenth-century sexological taxonomy, epitomized by Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s monumental Psychopathia Sexualis (1886), and, say, the “Terms, Definitions & Labels” webpage of Amherst College’s Queer Resource Center (“Accomplice,” “AFAB,” “AMAB,” “Ally,” “Allyship,” “Androgyny,” “Aromantic,” “Asexual”...) really the yawning gulf it might seem to be? Deleuze would not think so, were he still alive, and for reasons worth pondering.

Deleuze would sit out the contemporary identitarian dance, in other words, morosely nursing his drink in a corner of the club. But why precisely? Not because of his...

---

14 Conor Tomás Reed, ed., Audre Lorde Now, CUNY Center for the Humanities, July 16, 2020: https://www.centerforthehumanities.org/news/audre-lorde-now. The two contributors whose self-descriptions I quote are, respectively, Tito Mitjans Alayón and Reed.
16 Foucault, The History of Sexuality, 43.
17 See https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/our-community/queer-resource-center/terms-definitions. This useful and informative glossary of almost a hundred terms ends, tellingly, with the caution: “Again, this is not an exhaustive list of terms and definitions! New language emerges as our understanding of these topics changes and evolves.” Such resources now abound and continue to multiply.
18 Deleuze’s presence in the club, however, and even less that of Guattari, would not raise any eyebrows. In contemporary idiom, Guattari was an LGBTQIA+ ally of the first order. In particular, he was an active force in the Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire, launched in 1970 (Deleuze was also a member), and organizer of the 1973 incendiary queer publication-event, Trois milliards de pervers (Three...
sexual orientation but rather because of his philosophical orientation, which precludes him from believing in identity. More precisely, Deleuze’s philosophical—and political—convictions compel his refusal of the concept of identity. Again, why? The following sentences from Brian Massumi’s foreword to Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus capture it well: “The annals of official philosophy are populated by ‘bureaucrats of pure reason’ who speak in ‘the shadow of the despot’ and are in historical complicity with the State…. Theirs is the discourse of sovereign judgment, of stable subjectivity legislated by ‘good’ sense, of rocklike identity, ‘universal’ truth, and (white male) justice.” Identity, for Deleuze, possesses a sinister aspect even when presenting a benign face.

How might all of this be related to queer existence, specifically? Enter Guy Hocquenghem clutching his Homosexual Desire. It’s still fifteen years before the first attested use of the term “identity politics,” but that’s all he wants to talk about as he joins Deleuze in his lonely corner of the club. Channeling Anti-Oedipus he announces: “Homosexual desire’—the expression is meaningless.” Ah, the book’s title is a spoof, then. Deleuze smiles appreciatively. “There is no subdivision of desire into homosexuality and heterosexuality,” Hocquenghem continues. “Properly speaking, desire is no more homosexual than heterosexual. Desire emerges in a multiple form, whose components are only divisible a posteriori, according to how we manipulate it. Just like heterosexual desire, homosexual desire is an arbitrarily frozen frame in an unbroken and polyvocal flux.” What, then, is desire chipped free from its frozen frame, reanimated and released? There is a certain ineffability to desire in the Deleuzoguattarian sense, as Hocquenghem recognizes. For him, as for Deleuze and Guattari, homosexuality is no longer the love that dare not speak its name. Rather, “[b]oth heterosexuality and homosexuality are the precarious outcome of a desire which knows no name.”

Desire, so unnamed, touches everything intimately and queers everything utterly. Straight sex and sexuality are customarily distinguished from queer sex and sexuality. But

---

Billion Perverts; Deleuze and Foucault were among its three dozen or so contributors), and for which Guattari was legally prosecuted, tried, and fined for “affronting public decency.” See Félix Guattari, “Three Billion Perverts on the Stand,” in his Chaosophy: Texts and Interviews 1972-1977, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. David L. Sweet, Jarred Becker, and Taylor Adkins (Semiotext[e] Foreign Agents Series; Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2009), 215-24, which includes Guattari’s notes for his (militant) self-defense in his trial. Foucault also testified in the trial.


20 Hocquenghem, Homosexual Desire, 49.

21 Hocquenghem, Homosexual Desire, 49-50. Cf. 148: “Every day a thousand kinds of homosexual behaviour challenge the classifications imposed on them.”

22 Hocquenghem, Homosexual Desire, 75.
there are no straight lines in desire any more than in nature. Desire queers heterosex completely while revealing homosex to be insufficiently queer. Bisexuality also dissolves in desire’s incessant flux. Deleuze and Guattari declare: “[S]exuality...is badly explained by the binary organization of the sexes, and just as badly by a bisexual organization within each sex. Sexuality brings into play...n sexes.... Sexuality is the production of a thousand sexes, which are so many uncontrollable becomings.” Sexuality thus reimagined, as Deleuze reflects in dialogue with Hocquenghem, “open[s] itself up to all sorts of possible new relations, micrological or micropsychic, essentially reversible, transversal relations, with as many sexes as there are assemblages, not even excluding [most shockingly of all?] new relations between men and women.... It is no longer about being a man or woman, but inventing sexes.”

Neither Hocquenghem nor Deleuze, however, want to see the queer slink quietly away, stripped of all sexual specificity. For both of them, the queer is a scare figure of the first order, a figure to frighten little children and terrify their parents. Hocquenghem argues that if “the homosexual phantasy...contains a complex knot of dread and desire,...is more obscene than any other and at the same time more exciting,...arousing mixed feelings of horror and desire,” it must be that “homosexuality expresses some aspect of desire” that “appears nowhere else” and “haunts the ‘normal world.’” Homosexuality “produces itself without reproducing,” so that every homosexual is “the end of the species.” They “can only be a degenerate, for [they do] not generate.” Homosexuality—or, as we would now say, the queer—thereby eludes both the capitalist calculus of production (“the queer [is] a proletariat of Eros,” Deleuze interjects, a worker like no other who produces the product society cannot want) and the heterogenital calculus of reproduction, falling outside the “social” altogether, entering into a perverse “relationship with the Outside,” indeed, becoming the Outside inside the social.

---

26 Hocquenghem, Homosexual Desire, 107-108. These are representative excerpts from Hocquenghem’s extended articulation of what would in due course—stamped not with his name, as we saw earlier, but with those of Bersani and Edelman—be termed the antisocial thesis in queer theory. Edelman himself, however, acknowledges that he sees Hocquenghem’s position on queers—which Edelman summarizes as: “we do not intend a new politics, a better society, a brighter tomorrow, since all of these fantasies reproduce the past, through displacement, in the form of the future”—as anticipating his own (No Future, 30-31).
27 Deleuze, “Preface,” 287.
All of this, however, amounts to only one end of the sexual continuum in this particular body of (proto-)queer theory, the militant end. Its other end is extraordinarily ordinary. Since desire is coextensive with the social in the theory, “sexuality is everywhere.” Aislinn O’Donnell notes how “intimacy is ‘desexualized’” and “the erotic is demystified” in Deleuzian thought, becoming less an “ecstatic” experience than a dimension of everyday encounters, habits, practices and even infrastructures. One imagines here moments like sitting in a ward, drawing or gently massaging the bodies of women who are HIV+ with stage 3 or 4 AIDS, or the tender camaraderie of a group of ex-political prisoners which forecloses ready stereotypes about men and soldiers, or an ant struggling to climb up a leaf, writing, or the look in a student’s eyes at the encounter with a new thought.

The example of the ant and the leaf is especially significant. The “everywhere” where desire, sex, and sexuality are active is one that precedes, exceeds, eludes, and elides the human. “Everywhere there is libido as machine energy,” and to cordon off conceptually what humans do with humans sexually from what occurs between “the red clover and the bumble bee, the wasp and the orchid” is to misapprehend how that libidinal megamachine operates. Anthropocentric queer theory, we should conclude, is insufficiently queer, is too conserving of the human with its speciesist subjugation of the nonhuman. Queer theory in the Deleuzoguattarian mode, meanwhile, spills over into ecotheory:

If we consider the great binary aggregates, such as the sexes or classes, it is evident that they also cross over into molecular assemblages of a different nature, and that there is a double reciprocal dependency between them. For the two sexes imply a multiplicity of molecular combinations bringing into play not only the man in the woman and the woman in the man, but the relation of each to the animal, the plant, etc.: a thousand tiny sexes.

Millisexuality? Well, why not.

---

29 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 30.
30 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 293.
31 Aislinn O’Donnell, “Beyond Sexuality: Of Love, Failure and Revolutions,” in Beckman, Deleuze and Sex, 217. Tellingly, most of the essays in Deleuze and Sex are interchangeable with most of the essays in Deleuze and Queer Theory (see n. 2 above).
32 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 323.
33 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 213.
34 Especially as “polysexuality” is already taken. The term was still available in 2011 when Ronald Bogue featured it in the title of his contribution to Deleuze and Sex (“Alien Sex: Octavia Butler and Deleuze and Guattari’s Polysexuality,” in Beckman, Deleuze and Sex, 30-49). By now in LGBTQIA+ culture, however, “polysexuality” has displaced “bisexuality” as the preferred term for “attraction to all genders”—but perhaps not to all 1,000 of them.
Millisexuality, Madness, Mark

Tweaking Deleuze and Guattari’s claim that “[a] schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model [of active desire] than a neurotic lying on the analyst’s couch,” we might say that a millisexual out for a walk is a better model of active desire than two or even many subjects, queer or otherwise, having sex on the analyst’s couch. Such a stroll in the wild would, however, be no walk in the park. For to immerse oneself utterly in millisexuality—whatever that might mean, the “whatever” necessarily being unknowable in advance—would be to risk being seen as mentally disabled at best and a danger to society at worst.

In response to the ever implicit (when not confrontationally explicit) question of sexual identity, the millisexual would answer, like the much-maligned “demoniac” of Mark 5:1-20, “My name is Legion; for we are many” (5:9). Impelled by inhuman desire, the millisexual would transition between the human-animal body and the nonhuman-animal body: “And [they] came out of [of the human being]

“What demons do is jump across intervals [...] Becoming...is the demonic element par excellence.”

and entered the pigs” (5:13). The millisexual might even be driven by desire to seek intimate union with, utter immersion in, an aqueous body: “And the herd, numbering about two thousand [each with a thousand tiny sexes, moreover], rushed down the steep bank into the sea” (5:13). Such desire, altogether untrammeled, would propel the millisexual outside, cause them to be expelled from the social body: “He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any longer...; for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces” (5:3-4). And abandoning himself, themselves, outright to transspecies and transelemental desire might not end well for the millisexual: “[They] rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned” (5:13). With millisexuality, then, we find ourselves returned effectively to the Deleuzoguattarian proto-version of the antisocial thesis in queer theory and to a sexual subject whose mode of existence is one of extreme marginality and absolute precarity.

---

36 When not venturing my own translations of the Markan material I quote, I have recourse to NRSV (as here).
Mark’s Jesus, however, notwithstanding his own perpetually precarious positionality and self-elected marginality, shows surprisingly little empathy for millisexuality in the episode we have been considering, seeing it only as a malignant condition requiring eradication. That is not to say, however, that the Gospel of Mark is, overall, inimical to queerness, or even to hyperqueerness on the outsized Deleuzoguattarian scale. For queerness has long stirred within this singular narrative, causing it to pace restlessly within the apostolic family circle that early became its cage. Let’s retitle it the Queer Gospel of Mark in honor of the Secret Gospel of Mark, that sublimely queer,

“But the youth, looking upon (Jesus), loved him and began to beseech him that he might be with him…. And after six days Jesus told him what to do and in the evening the youth comes to him, wearing a linen cloth over his naked body. And he remained with him that night, for Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God.”

even if possibly forged fragmentary text, which scholars call Secret Mark for short to show they are intimate with it, whether or not they believe in it. Let’s refer to our text as Queer Mark, then.

How does Queer Mark begin? Improbably, as we shall see, but that too is significant. Queerness, fully torqued theoretically, is regularly conceived as an active process of emergence whereby what is and what was is remade as what has never yet been. José

---

38 Construction of the cage began with Papias’s early second century claim that although the author of this gospel “had not heard the Lord nor had he accompanied him,” he did accompany Peter and dutifully transcribed the authoritative words that issued from the chief apostle’s mouth (Expositions of the Saying of the Lord, quoted in Eusebius, Church History 3.39.15, NPNF trans.).

39 Morton Smith’s translation of what he argued were fragments of an alternative version of canonical Mark preserved in a previously unknown letter of Clement of Alexandria; see his Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 446-47. Smith, a distinguished historian of antiquity, claimed to have found the letter in the Mar Saba monastery outside Jerusalem in 1958. Three other scholars went in search of the letter in 1976 and found it. Sometime after 1990, however, the pages with the fragments mysteriously vanished, having been photographed, however, in the interim.

Esteban Muñoz’s oft-cited pronouncement is paradigmatic here: “I contend that if queerness is to have any value whatsoever, it must be viewed as being visible only in the horizon.”

Queerness, thus reimagined, can be said to find its corollary in the Deleuzian concept of the virtual. Necessarily oversimplifying, we might say that queerness and virtuality are but two names for a single project: counter-actualization of the present.

As much as anything, Deleuzian thought is a philosophy of the virtual, and so it should come as no surprise that Deleuze occasionally assigns a creative agency to virtuality that borders on the theological (even while carefully remaining on the atheological side of the line), remarking, for example, that “it is on the basis of [the] reality [of the virtual] that existence is produced” — which returns us to Queer Mark. Within it, virtuality would be the impersonal omnicreative agency that the protagonist personifies as parental. “Abba, Father, for you all virtualities are actualizable” (panta dynata soi—14:36), he pleads, knowing that he has reached a life-or-death fork in his tale. Functionally speaking, virtuality absorbs the actuality of the character whom we call “God” in this narrative.

“Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice” (Mark 9:7). “Every actual surrounds itself with a cloud of virtual images.”

---

41 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 11. And again: “Queerness is not yet here.... [W]e are not yet queer.... The future is queerness’s domain” (1). The present, in contrast, “is a prison house,” a “totalizing rendering of reality” (1).

42 Arguing from different premises (different from mine and different from each other’s), Claire Colebrook and Mikko Tuhkanen also identify the Deleuzian virtual with the queer. See Claire Colebrook, “On the Very Possibility of Queer Theory,” and Mikko Tuhkanen, “Queer Hybridity,” in Nigianni and Storr, *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, 16-23 passim and 104-105, respectively.

43 Colebrook’s phrase (“On the Very Possibility,” 20).


or, to say the same thing another way, “[this] actual character is no more than a virtuality.”48 As such, the God of this gospel bristles with queer potential. How much of it is actualized in the narrative?

Queer Mark begins improbably, as we had begun to say, with its protagonist embarking on an ostensibly impossible mission. A minor member of a conquered people, an unknown peasant from an undistinguished hamlet, his first words in the narrative (“The time is fulfilled, and God’s Empire [ἡ βασιλεία του θεοῦ] is at hand”—1:15) are an announcement of a virtual empire, an empire in emergence, that of this subject people’s deity, an empire to rival, even to supplant, the already actual, all-encompassing present empire, that of Rome. But he will not throw himself alone into the iron-fanged maw of the imperial megamachine. In the scene tradition has dubbed “the call of the first disciples” (1:16-20), he summons four fellow-nonentities to follow what they cannot know in a mission they cannot comprehend.

An immensely alluring man appears out of nowhere in this scene. He beckons imperiously and four other men follow him silently. Queer virtuality here engineers an emergence at once momentous and mundane. Peasant A puts one foot in front of the other on the path that was not there a moment ago but has now opened up in front of him, and peasants B, C, and D plod after him. Significantly, the path promptly leads away from the heteropatriarchal family: “Immediately...they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired laborers and followed him” (1:20). And it is not only the father who is abandoned; the mention of Peter’s mother-in-law (1:30-31) evokes the unmentioned wives (contrast Luke 18:29) whom Peter and his fellows have left behind in order to be with Jesus. By 3:31-35, the queer counter-family has been formed and Peter has himself become Jesus’s mother: “They said to him, ‘Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.’ And he replied, ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ And looking at [his disciples] seated in a circle around him [καὶ περίπλεπσαμενος τους περὶ αυτον κύκλῳ καθημένου], he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers!’”—3:34; see also 10:28-30).

Just as significantly, and implicit in some of what has already been said, our protagonist is mentally disabled, psychically queer. He hears voices (“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased”—1:11). He has consequential encounters with long dead people (“...Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus”—9:4) and other nonexistent entities (“He was...tempted by Satan...and the angels waited on him”—1:12-

48 Deleuze, “The Actual and the Virtual,” 150.
13). Indeed, he is assailed by specters (“Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they...shrieked, ‘You are the Son of God!’”—3:11). His sizable family, which includes his mother and at least six siblings (6:3), is deeply disturbed by his bizarre behavior: “His family [hoi par’ autou]...went out to restrain him [kratēsai auton], for they were saying, ‘He has gone out of his mind [exesteī]!’” (3:21).49 In short, he is schizophrenic. But Deleuze and Guattari would not hold that against him. For them, schizophrenia is a revelatory state suffused with revolutionary potential.50

Our boy likes to walk, so let’s walk with him (which is precisely the idea that his “first followers” had). When it comes to the desiring-machines everywhere operational in both the psychic and social spheres, “[a] schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst’s couch,” as we noted earlier.51 Everywhere the “whirr of machines”—plant machines, animal machines, celestial machines—“all of them connected to those of his body,”52 Indeed, our hero will hold the earth itself up as the quintessential embodiment of the pure virtuality that is the inbreaking Empire of God. “Listen!” he exclaims. “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path.... Other seed fell into the good earth [tēn gēn tēn kalēn] and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold” (Mark 4:3-8). A little later he muses: “God’s Empire is as if someone would scatter seed on the earth [epi tēs gēs],...and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth [hē gē] produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head” (4:26-27). Once again, he gropes for an analogy; once again, the earth-machine generates one: “With what can we compare God’s Empire, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown on the earth [epi tēs gēs], is the smallest of all

49 The scholarly consensus takes the ambiguous phrase hoi par’ autou (literally, “those with him”) to refer to Jesus’s family here (as in Prov. 31:21 LXX; Susanna 33; Josephus, Ant. 1.193), and exeste (in this context at least) to denote mental derangement. Both interpretations may be traced at least as far back as Jerome, who writes in his letter to Eustochium, “In the gospel [of Mark] we read that even his kinsfolk desired to bind him as one of weak mind” (Letter 108, NPNF trans.), and in his Vulgate renders exeste as in fuorem versus est (loosely, “he is become mad”).

50 Deleuze and Guattari have been accused of romanticizing schizophrenia. Their (anti-)method of schizoanalysis, however—which, among other things, apprehends schizophrenia positively as an expansive model for thought—far from being dreamed up in an academic office or seminar room, emerged primarily out of Guattari’s clinical work with schizophrenics at La Borde, the psychiatric facility in the Loire Valley where he spent his entire professional career. In his final book, Guattari explained that schizoanalysis had been designed to counter simplifying psychiatric reductions of the condition known as schizophrenia and to work instead “towards its complexification” (Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995], 61). Anti-Oedipus, whose concluding chapter is an exhaustive exposition of schizoanalysis (273-382), may be seen in hindsight as a particularly early example of critical disability studies.

51 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 2.
52 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 2.
seeds...yet...becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the
birds of the air can dwell in its shade” (4:30-32). What of eschatology, that pulsing virtuality
so weighty for the Markan Messiah? The earth is also model and mentor here, as we later
learn: “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts
forth its leaves, you know that summer is near” (13:28).

All of this is sexual, as we saw earlier, the incessant interactions and intra-actions
of the thousand tiny sexes: the sower emitting his seed; the earth receiving the seed; the
seed gestating unseen within the earth; the earth bearing the plant, slowly thrusting it
forth; Jesus ingesting the plant in reverent wonder, taking it into the secret recesses of
his body

“The wisdom of the plants: even when they have roots, there is always an
outside where they form a rhizome with something else—with the wind, an
animal, human beings....”

while he ponders “the mystery [to mystērion] of God’s Empire” (4:11) to which the plant
bears silent testimony.54 Yes, from the fig tree and its fellow plants he is “learning his
lesson” (13:28), and the lesson is an eschatological one; but it is less a case of a Second
Coming than a Thousandth, even a Trillionth Coming. Who or what is coming, emerging,
in Queer Mark in and through this protracted labor? Who or what but a Body without
Organs.

How to Make Yourself a Bloody Body without Organs

The Body without Organs is a notoriously slippery Deleuzian concept.55 What this body is
without is less organs than organization—specifically, organization of a hierarchical or
static sort, regulated by inflexible habits or predictable behaviors. And in a society that is
rigidly hierarchical or assiduously self-perpetuating, one that misconstrues what
contingently is for what necessarily must be, to expose the Body without Organs is to

53 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 11.
54 For a different set of Deleuzian reflections on vegetal thought in Mark, see Dong Hyeon Jeong,
With the Wild Beasts, Learning from the Trees: Animality, Vegetality, and (Colonized) Ethnicity in the
Gospel of Mark (Semeia Studies; Atlanta: SBL Press, forthcoming).
55 Not least because the contours of the Body without Organs shift subtly as it slides through
Deleuze’s solo writings and those with Guattari. Elsewhere I have ventured a completely different attempt
to locate the Body without Organs in Mark; see my Gospel Jesuses and Other Nonhumans: Biblical
Criticism Post-structuralism (Semeia Studies, 89; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 50-59.
assail naturality, to assault normativity. That is why the jaws of the disciples drop in unison when their mentor announces: “You know that those purporting to rule the Gentiles [read: Romans] lord it over [katakryieouisin] them, and their exalted ones wield authority over [katexousiauzousin] them. It is not so among you, however; but whoever among you would be exalted must be your servant [diakonos], and whoever would be first must be slave [doulos] of all” (Mark 10:42-44).

They should not, however, be shocked. The Body without Organs has been manifesting itself in their midst, exposing itself through the hierarchy-stripping utterances of the outrageous man they have been following. The Body without Organs has taken the form of “a little child” (paidion) as their unleaderly leader has dissolved the seeming boundaries between himself and it, “enfolding” the child in his arms (enagkalisamenos auto) and thereby becoming a man-child assemblage so that he is enabled to say: “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me” (9:36-37). Indeed, the disciples themselves will need to undergo the becoming-child process

“...becoming-child; becoming-animal, -vegetable, or -mineral; becomings-molecular of all kinds.... Fibers lead us from one to the other, transform one into the other as they pass through doors and across thresholds.”

in order to actualize the virtual, nonimperial, divine empire: “Whoever does not receive God’s Empire as a little child will never enter it” (10:15).

What is more, the Body without Organs—the dehierarchized, demasculinized body whose attainment qualifies one to actualize that virtual empire—need not be “whole.” It can be a nonstandard body, a reconfigured body, for physical disability will pose no obstacle to entry: “If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off.... And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off.... And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out....” For it is preferable “to enter God’s Empire” as a Body without (certain) Organs (literally), “to enter life disabled” (kyllon eiselthein eis tēn gēn) with the queer disabled Messiah, than to be cast into Gehenna having never attained one’s Body without Organs (9:43-48).

———

56 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 272.
57 As Margrit Shildrick observes, the Body without Organs is a term “that ha[s] the potential to radically disrupt the devaluation of the disabled body” (“Prosthetic Performativity: Deleuzian Connections and Queer Corporealities,” in Nigianni and Storr, Deleuze and Queer Theory, 115). See further her Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity and Sexuality (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 157-59.
Being a solid, upstanding citizen, however, a pillar of normativity, replete with social status epitomized by wealth, will pose a near-insurmountable obstacle to actualization of the virtual divine empire: “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the Empire of God!... It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle” (10:23, 25). It will be infinitely easier for children, servants, and slaves, for "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first" (10:31; see also 9:35). And foremost among those privileged to be last, the very last of the last, are those who not only possess slave status but, even or especially if they are not actual slaves and emulating the example of their servile master, abandon themselves voluntarily, even eagerly, to “the slave’s punishment”.58 “If anyone desires to come after me, let them…take up their cross and follow me. For whoever would save their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life...will save it” (8:34-35). Sheer, utter insanity? Why, yes, absolutely. But to construct a Body without Organs is to flirt with madness, as our hero early discovered (we are returned to 3:21-22 and the straitjacket incident: “They went out to restrain him”).

As we are seeing, then, the Body without Organs is neither an achieved state nor a static entity but an “exercise [in] experimentation,” “a set of practices,” a process of becoming, and a perpetually receding horizon: “You never reach the Body without Organs, you can’t reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit.”59 But is the Body without Organs an individual body or a social body? It is both and neither, because it exceeds the social, as ordinarily understood, through a process that evacuates the “I”:

We are in a social formation; first see how it is stratified...; then descend from the strata to the deeper assemblage within which we are held; gently tip the assemblage, making it pass over to the side of the plane of consistency.60 It is only there that the BwO reveals itself for what it is: connections of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities. You have constructed your own little machine, ready when needed to be plugged into other collective machines.... For the BwO is...necessarily a Collectivity (assembling elements, things, plants, animals, tools, people, powers, and fragments of all of these; for it is not “my” body without organs, instead the “me”...is on it, or what remains of me, unalterable and changing in form, crossing thresholds).61

---

58 As Valerius Maximus styled crucifixion (Memorable Deeds and Sayings 2.7.12), writing under Tiberius, the same emperor whose crucified subjects included Jesus of Nazareth. Much earlier, Cicero had described crucifixion as “the worst extreme of the tortures inflicted upon slaves” (Verrene Orations 2.5.169, LCL trans.).

59 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 150.

60 The plane of consistency, which Deleuze and Guattari also call the plane of immanence, is the virtual dimension in which desires, affects, and other related forces and flows circulate and interconnect unimpeded by repressive or sterile social mechanisms. “In effect, the Body without Organs is itself the plane of consistency” (A Thousand Plateaus, 40).

61 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 161.
All of which is to say: “And while they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to them and said, ‘Take; this is my body’” (Mark 14:22).

One man surrenders his body to a group of other men (“the twelve”—see 14:17), invites them to devour it, but only as a proleptic preenactment of his subsequent self-submission to other groups of men (14:43, 46; 15:1, 16) who will humiliate him abjectly (14:65; 15:16-20; see also 15:29-32, 35-36), flog him mercilessly (15:15), and penetrate him viciously with sharp objects (15:24).

“So many nails piercing the flesh, so many forms of torture.... [The BwO] utters only gasps and cries that are sheer unarticulated blocks of sound.”

this self-annihilating self-surrender (14:48-49; see also 8:31; 9:12b, 31; 10:33-34, 38, 45; 14:8, 21a) being performed in obedience to the imagined desires of yet another male—the paternal personification of the virtual that is to be actualized through the abysmal suffering of our hero: “Abba, Father, for you all virtualities are actualizable [panta dynata soi]; remove this cup from me, yet not what I desire but what you desire [all’ ou ti egō thelō alla ti su].”

That desire is the fulcrum of the entire ordeal-to-come is no accident, for “[t]he BwO is desire; it is that which one desires and by which one desires.” As such the BwO is ineluctably sexual, but it is also infinitely more than sexual. The desire that is the BwO both incorporates and transcends sexual desire as ordinarily conceived: “The organs distribute themselves on the BwO,” but the organs, far from being sexual organs in any simple sense, “are no longer anything more than intensities that are produced, flows, thresholds, and gradients.” A thousand sexes yet again, in other words, all of them differently actualized; but actualized in the instance we are considering by means of a systematically flayed back and an extended bodily suspension on nails driven through flesh. And subsequently actualized to infinity by the almost absurdly anodyne reenactment of that atrocious ordeal through the liturgical consumption of bread. Once again: “He took a loaf of bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to them and said, ‘Take; this is my body’” (Mark

62 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 9.
63 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 165, emphasis added.
64 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 164.
65 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 278.
14:22; see also Matt 26:26; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:23-24). A trillion tiny Jesuses and a trillion tiny sexes, then, differently actualized for each Eucharistic participant, down through the ages and across the planet, reverently or indifferently ingesting the broken body-bread and thereby initiating its intimate passage through the hidden depths of the ingester’s body from mouth to anus.

But that is merely the first course; the second is still to come: “And taking a cup and giving thanks he gave it to them and all of them drank from it. And he said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is spilled [ekchynnomenon] for many” (Mark 14:23-24; see also Matt 26:27-28; Luke 22:17, 20; 1 Cor 11:25). Implicit, then, in the elaborately choreographed all-male exchange that begins at the Last Supper and climaxes with Jesus’s death-torture is not homosexuality so much as haemosexuality.

As Gretchen Riordan notes in her essay “Haemosexuality,” even in contemporary cultural circles in which sexual fetishism in general raises few eyebrows, “blood is considered an inappropriate fetish object,” and in psychiatric literature blood fetishism is commonly categorized as a mental disorder—except, of course, when it is embedded in an organized religion. Then one can report not only on having intimate interactions with a man who, according to the historical record, has been dead for almost two thousand years, one can even declare that eating his body and drinking his blood is an essential element of that relationship; and to confess such beliefs and practices, far from causing you to be forcibly “restrained” or to have people say that you have “gone out of [your] mind” (Mark 2:21), is instead widely seen as the very badge of wholesome respectability and moral rectitude.

Let’s peer more closely into the cup, brimming over with his blood, that our hero is handing us across the table. “This is my blood” is the only invocation of the Greek word haima in this gospel, but it is a momentous one. The non-biological counter-family that the protagonist earlier proclaimed himself and his disciples to be (3:31-35; see also 10:29-30) now becomes a family bound by blood—consanguineal, yet neither patrilineal nor matrilineal because not the product of reproductive sexual activity. Within this queer family circle, which, by the time we arrive at the Last Supper, has narrowed to a fortified all-male enclave (“When it was evening, he came with the twelve”—14:17),68 the excluded excluded

66 In pronouncing on the Eucharist here are in what follows, I am glossing over all the fine doctrinal distinctions that were matters of life or (grisly) death in early modern Europe and that continue to define and divide Christian denominations today.
67 Gretchen Riordan, “Haemosexuality,” in Beckman, Deleuze and Sex, 75. Riordan’s essay does not engage with the Christian Eucharist and barely mentions Christianity. Having read no more than essay’s title, however, I knew I was going to be able to plug it into the Markan passion narrative.
68 A statement that must be set beside 15:41: “And there were many...women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.”
female abruptly erupts in the form of what Riordan would call “labial machines.” They “populate many territories; they are located on the face, they are female genitals, or they can be created almost anywhere on a body by cutting.” In the course of his flogging, labial machines emerge everywhere on the protagonist’s back; further labial machines open as he is nailed to his cross. They bleed profusely, and this is the very blood that fills the cup he extends proleptically to his genderqueer family prior to his ordeal, the blood, fervently imbibed, overflowing their own facial labial machines to soak their beards.

The Last Supper, then, is the initiatory rite and constitutive ritual of a haemosexual community. Riordan writes:

“Haemosexual” describes a wide variety of ways of encountering blood. Rather than transcribe them into conventional sexual acts, haemosexual encounters may be described as a multiplicity of connections that compose an experiment to create a bloody BwO. For example: Eyes closed, passive, nostrils flaring as they follow the ferrous scent. Lips slightly parted, swollen like two grapes about to burst. Tongue escaping its clammy cavern, anxious for the taste of copper and salt, iron and sugar…. A ferrous taste, a meaty scent, a sweet aftertaste.

Or, at least, a communion wafer melting on the tongue. “Loving haemosexually…means opening one’s lips to the intensities that flow across a bloody BwO,” even in the absence of blood.

**How to Make Yourself a Risen Body without Organs**

The bloody Body without Organs that the Markan Messiah constructs opens up an immensely productive plane of virtuality, and opens it up, specifically, within the (ostensibly) empty tomb. This tomb, “hewn out the rock,” is where the bloody Body without Organs is laid following its removal from the cross (15:46). Deleuze has, in effect, written about the final transformation of the queer disabled Markan Jesus: “For the schizophrenic, then, it is…a question of…transforming the painful passion of the body into a triumphant action…in this depth beneath the fissured surface,” of engendering “a glorious body”—more precisely, a glorious “Body without Organs.” This transformation

---

69 Riordan, “Haemosexuality,” 86.
70 Riordan, “Haemosexuality,” 87.
71 The most anodyne engagement of all with the horrifically tortured man who is the pivot of the Christian religion. The mystical ingestion of the communion wafer was a weekly, when not daily, feature of my Irish Catholic upbringing.
72 Riordan, “Haemosexuality,” 88.
is an anxious, agonizing process. The bloody Body without Organs laid in the tomb is conscious of “larvae and loathsome worms” beginning to infest it. But something else is also moving. “The Body without Organs is not God, quite the contrary. But the energy that sweeps through it is divine.”\(^{74}\) Or, which is to say the same thing, the energy that sweeps through it is virtual.

A word of explanation is in order here. On our way to the tomb with the women (“[they] brought spices, so that they might go and anoint him”—Mark 16:1), we detoured through the garden—not the garden in which the Fourth Gospel situates the tomb (19:41-42; 20:15), but the primeval garden (Gen 2:8-17) in which the Bible situates us all. There Eve and Adam are presented with the forbidden fruit (2:15-17; 3:1-5), a moment massively pregnant with virtuality. They both partake of the beguiling fruit (3:6).

“\(\text{The actual falls from the plane [of immanence] like a fruit.}\)”\(^{75}\)

and from that particular actualization of this singular virtuality—entirely mythic in its conception but immeasurably consequential in its effects—an entire world unfolds, preeminently a Christian world in which Adam and Eve’s “original sin” also marks the origins of human history. Also contained, however, within the virtual moment in which Eve and Adam are presented with the fruit is an altogether different actualization: they refuse the fruit, resist the temptation. An alternative world then unfolds, one in which there is no “fall” or “original sin” or ever has been. Not our world, then.

At this point, Deleuze, whose paraphrase of Leibniz I have been paraphrasing, observes: “Between the two worlds there exists a relation other than one of contradiction,”\(^{76}\) for a non-sinning Adam\(^{77}\) is neither an inherently contradictory nor impossible notion. Such an Adam, however, would be situated “neither [in] the same garden, nor the same primeval world”; “bifurcation” would have occurred.\(^{78}\) Deleuze is much taken with Leibniz’s name for the perplexing relation between two nonconvergent worlds: \textit{incompossibility}. 

\(^{74}\) Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{Anti-Oedipus}, 13.
\(^{75}\) Deleuze, “The Actual and the Virtual,” 150.
\(^{76}\) Gilles Deleuze, \textit{The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque}, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 59. Leibniz is a philosopher to whom Deleuze returned repeatedly, admiringly elaborating his thought even while thoroughly detheologizing it.
\(^{77}\) Eve does not feature prominently in Leibniz’s speculations, nor in Deleuze’s following him.
\(^{78}\) Deleuze, \textit{The Fold}, 61.
Where or what is God in all of this? For Leibniz, God is the supreme being who presides over the possible, who chooses between the infinity of incompossible possible worlds, and, being God, chooses only “the best.” One day, however, not long after Leibniz’s own death, this God died. The effects of his demise were felt early in philosophy (Nietzsche, in particular, presenting us with a world, with multiple worlds, which flow from the simple roll of a dice) and eventually in literature, preeminently, for Deleuze, in Borges’s short story “The Garden of Forking Paths,” effectively his “reply to Leibniz,” “a baroque labyrinth whose infinite series converge or diverge, embracing all possibilities.” Within the labyrinth book of Ts’ui Pên around and in which the story circles, a stranger arrives unexpectedly at Fang’s door; in one possible past the stranger is Fang’s enemy, in another his friend, and so the encounter can result in the death of one, or neither, of them—and so on through an interminable series of possible permutations. “The line... forks and keeps on forking,” passing through innumerable incompossible presents. In the Garden of Forking Paths, unlike the Garden of Eden, incompossible worlds actualize promiscuously, diverge infinitely. Virtuality displaces divinity, in short, rendering the latter redundant or “dead.” As we noted earlier, when actualization of the virtual amounts to counter-actualization of the present, such actualization qualifies as queer. The virtual dead God, then, is a revivified divine force ripe with queer potential.

And so we are returned to Queer Mark’s not-quite-empty tomb, which is the tomb both of Jesus and of God in this narrative. For God is already dead, or might as well be, in the closing scenes of the Markan drama. God was last heard from in the transfiguration episode (9:7): since then God has gone ominously silent, inaudibility compounding invisibility. So one-sided does Jesus’s conversation with God in that other garden, Gethsemane, feel—so like an anguished plea projected into the void (14:33-36)—that a subsequent redactor of Mark (whether the writer we call Luke or a subsequent copyist) anxiously inserted an unequivocal sign that the distraught prayer has not dropped into an indifferent abyss: “Then an angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him” (Luke 22:43). And in the Markan crucifixion scene,

---

79 Deleuze, The Fold, 60.
80 Deleuze, The Fold, 67.
82 Deleuze, The Fold, 62. Elsewhere Deleuze says of Borges’s short story: “On [the] question of the game of repetition and difference..., no one has gone further than Borges, throughout [this] astonishing work” (Difference and Repetition, 116).
84 Deleuze, Cinema 2, 131.
the dying Jesus apparently feels the absence of God so acutely as to cause him to scream aloud in abject misery, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (15:34). Or, to put it more succinctly, “The BwO howls.” It is suspended on its cross, stretched between two countervailing forces, “the surfaces of stratification,” on the one hand, that paralyze and delimit it, and “the plane of consistency,” on the other, “in which it unfurls and opens to experimentation.”

Second, God is dying or already dead, becoming more and other than he was, than they were, in the closing scenes of the Markan narrative, because a confluence of details unique to it conspire to de-supernaturalize it as it hastens toward its precipitous (non)ending. The long path that leads to the tomb in Mark passes through, or threads, the “natural” and the “supernatural” in intricate twists and turns that create a zone of indiscernibility or undecidability between them.

Most obviously, no resurrected body is displayed in Mark. Moreover, the character stationed in the empty tomb to announce to the women that the crucified corpse they have come for “is not here” (16:6) is oddly ordinary. He might be an angel; then, again, he might not. The narrative describes him as a neaniskos, a “young man” (16:5). The only other character labeled a neaniskos in Mark was the unnamed Jesus-follower who fled naked from Gethsemane on the night of Jesus’s arrest (14:51-52), opening up the possibility that they are one and the same neaniskos, the young man who fled in shame 1) having recovered sufficiently to “follow at a distance,” like Peter (14:54)—but all the way to Golgotha, unlike Peter; 2) having seen the place “where the body was laid,” like the female witnesses (15:47); and 3) having arriving at the tomb ahead of these women. What the women, and the wider audience, are hearing, then, in 16:6-7, and on this elaboration of the plot, is the young man’s theological construal of the enigmatic datum of the empty tomb: “He has been raised” (16:6). A path forks and forks again within the narrative universe,

---

85 Gilles Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Continuum Impacts; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 53.
86 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 159. Cf. Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, 88: “Triumph may now be reached only through the creation of breath-words and howl-words.”
87 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 159.
88 Cf. Deleuze, Francis Bacon, 20.
89 A conjecture that first surfaced in the scholarly imagination (specifically, that of Albert Vanhoye, Robin Scroggs, Detlev Dormeyer, and John Dominic Crossan) in the early 1970s.
causing it to split into multiple incompossible worlds, some of which we shall explore below.

God is dying, already dead, or recreated so as to become unrecognizable, in the climactic scenes in Queer Mark because its author makes absolutely no attempt to prevent the narrative universe he has fashioned from fissuring in this way, massive cracks extending outward, opening up canyons, chasms as his tale ends. In having the woman “[flee] from the tomb, terrified and amazed,”

“People ask, So what is this BwO?—But you’re already on it,…running like a lunatic.”

and “[say] nothing to anyone” of what they have seen or heard (16:8), the author undercuts his own authority utterly, telling us obliquely that none of what he has just reported could actually have filtered down to him, and thereby inviting us to multiply the fissures, to cause the possible and incompossible worlds alike to proliferate.

At least we now know why the tomb is empty—or seems to be, at any rate. It is because the queer disabled Markan Messiah has succeeded in creating for himself an extraordinarily effective Body without Organs. In consequence, he has ceased to be a body as commonly understood, as ordinarily experienced, a normal, or normative, human organism, becoming instead an egg

“The BwO is the egg. But the egg is not regressive; on the contrary it is perfectly contemporary, you always carry it with you as your own milieu of experimentation.”

in which matter as yet unformed flows, circulates, and transforms. The tomb itself has become that egg. The tomb itself has become the glorious Body without Organs of the Markan Messiah.

---

90 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 150.
91 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 164.
The Tomb with a Thousand Exits

To say the same thing differently, Queer Mark’s empty tomb, at once void and infinitely full, has become a virtual portal to multiple worlds. This tomb has one entrance (“Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?”—16:3) but innumerable exits, each one opening onto a different world that is also a different time. For although the two announcements made by the neaniskos in the tomb are spatial indexes (“He is not here [hōde]. See the place [ho topos] where they laid him”; “But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you [proagei hymas] to Galilee; there [ekei] you will see him, just as he told you”—16:6-7; cf. 14:28), “it is not space but time which forks,”\(^\text{92}\) in general but most especially in the tomb. If time forks wildly within this particular tomb, womb, or egg, it is because of how the path to the tomb has been constructed, as we have seen. Where, then, does the path, do the paths, from the tomb lead? To what worlds, when, and populated by whom?

The most proximate worlds are those that have us exiting the tomb only to be faced once again with its entrance. In one of these worlds, the supernatural has reasserted itself sternly, the mysterious young man morphing into a terrifying angel, with a newly transcendent God glowering over his shoulder: “And behold there was a mighty earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow. And for terror of him the guards trembled and became like dead men” (Matt 28:2-4). Ostensibly, the angel has seemed to open the tomb; in effect, however, he has closed it, rendered passage into it and through it, and consequent metamorphosis, redundant. The world that then transpires unfolds on this side of the tomb, not on the far side of it, and begins as a markedly unqueered world,

“There are, in fact, several ways of botching the BwO: either one fails to produce it, or one produces it more or less, but nothing is produced on it, intensities do not pass or are blocked.”\(^\text{93}\)

displaying an imperial, despotic, hypermasculine Jesus being worshiped, first by submissive women (“And they took hold of his feet and worshiped him”—28:9) and then by submissive men (28:17), and demanding absolute obedience from every other human subject (“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and

\(^{\text{92}}\) Deleuze, Cinema 2, 49.

\(^{\text{93}}\) Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 161.
make disciples of all the nations..., teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”—28:18-20).

A world equally proximate to Queer Mark’s unfolds rather differently. We are permitted to enter the tomb, as are the women, where we encounter a queer couple, “two men” (andres duo) dressed in “dazzling” outfits (en estēti astraptousē—Luke 24:4), who intone in chorus their announcement that the Body without Organs “is not here” (24:5), a message we might rephrase in terms we already considered earlier: “You never reach the Body without Organs, you can’t reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit.”

The intractable elusiveness of the Body without Organs is also the theme of the scene that follows. The risen Body without Organs is now reembodied but hidden even from former associates: “Now on that same day two of [his disciples] were journeying to a village...called Emmaus and discussing with each other everything that had happened. And it came to pass that...Jesus himself drew near and journeyed with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him [ekratounto tou mē epignōnai auton]” (24:13-16). It is not that the risen Body without Organs now cuts a dazzling figure, like the couple in the tomb; it looks perfectly ordinary,

“To no longer be anybody. To paint oneself gray on gray.”

just another “stranger” (paroikeis) who has journeyed to Jerusalem for Passover. But it is now more than the “I” that it was, which is what renders it unrecognizable: “It is not ‘my’ Body without Organs,” this altogether strange, thoroughly queer stranger might say to its two companions: “instead the ‘me’ is on it, or what remains of me....changing in form, crossing thresholds.”

It is only when the three sit at table that evening and the Body without Organs performs the ritual gesture that symbolically reenacts the bloody events that enabled his transition to a Body without Organs in the first place—“he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them” (24:30)—that the two disciples finally see the Body without Organs for what it is: “Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him” (24:31). In that same moment, however, the Body without Organs becomes “invisible to them” (autos aphantos egeneto ap’ autôn—24:31). More precisely, the Body without Organs becomes

94 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 150.
95 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 197.
96 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 161.
“imperceptible” in the Deleuzoguattarian sense, which is to say unrepresentable. And the now invisible Body without Organs declares inaudibly to its awed devotees: “I have cracked the wall of the tomb, crawled out of the egg as an unutterably glorious yet altogether mundane Body without Organs. Your eyes are now of no use to you, for they merely render back to you the face of the familiar, the image of the known, the absence of the queer. My unrepresentable body is now in constant transition, perpetual transformation, never again to be arrested, never again to be territorialized—all impossible, of course, except in principle, precisely as impossible as the Deleuzoguattarian conception of the queer as incessant counter-actualization, which is why one never attains the Body without Organs completely.

As though to illustrate the point, the risen Body without Organs itself in the very next scene, the final scene of the narrative, seems to falter, to lose its nerve, begging its disoriented disciples: “Look at my hands and feet; see that it is I myself! Touch me and see; for a ghost [pneuma] does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.... Have you anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence” (24:39-43). The Body without Organs appears to disavow its recently attained imperceptibility, to insist that it is a human organism like any other, momentarily forgetting all that it taught its disciples when it previously moved among them, namely, that the organism, enslaved by self-interest, shackled by custom, in thrall to hierarchy (e.g., 6:6-10, 20-36; 11:37-44; 13:11-17; 14:7-14; 16:19-31; 18:9-14, 18-25), “is not life” but rather “what imprisons life.”

In yet another world, more distant from Queer Mark’s, that begins to dawn on the other side of the tomb,

“To be present at the dawn of the world.” “Just as day was dawning, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know it was Jesus” (John 21:4).

the narrative fades out with a queer love triangle: “‘Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these men?’... ‘Yes, Lord, you know I love you’.... He said to him a second time,

---

97 See Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 232-309 passim, the “plateau” titled “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible....”
98 (Very) loose paraphrase of some sentences from Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 171.
99 Deleuze, Francis Bacon, 45.
100 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 280.
'Simon,... do you love me?'... ‘Yes, Lord, you know I love you.’ He said to him a third time, ‘Simon, do you love me?’ Peter was upset [elypēthē].... ‘Lord, you know everything; you know I love you’.... Peter... saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who had leaned on his breast.... ‘Lord, what about this man?’” (John 21:15-21). This is promisingly different from a command by an imperial Christ to his subordinates to bring every nation under his sway. What might not happen sexually in a world whose dawning moments stage this scene? Indeed, the narrative’s closing statement (actually an opening statement) is: “And there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (21:25). Or, alternatively: “And there are also countless other acts contained virtually within the risen Body without Organs; if all of them were actualized, no book could enclose all the worlds that would unfold.” No book could encompass them because of their profusion, but also because of the incompossibility of so many of them.101

In one Queer Mark satellite world, for example, we exit the tomb only to discover that the tomb has disappeared, that it has, in fact, never existed—not historically, anyway, Queer Mark having constructed it.102 To encounter the Body without Organs we would then have to retrace our steps to the cross where it still hangs decomposing. In still other worlds that have diverged less dramatically from Queer Mark’s, Mary Magdalene achieves voice, her flight from the tomb in Queer Mark becoming a Deleuzian line of flight. She bursts into the Johannine resurrection scene, but finds no release there,

“What is it which tells us that, on a line of flight, we will not rediscover everything we were fleeing?”103

being passed over for the Beloved Disciple and even the bumbling Peter (John 20:17). From there, undeterred, she eventually makes her way into the Gospel of Mary, and

101 Incompossibility, for Deleuze, denotes absolute as opposed to relative divergence. For relatively divergent worlds, one can “retrace one’s path [from the point of divergence] and find a point of convergence” (Difference and Repetition, 123). This would be the case, arguably, for the divergent Matthean and Lukan resurrection narratives that find their mutual point of convergence outside the Markan tomb, which is where this particular path forked. The next example provided above—that of a world in which the Markan tomb itself has been erased—would seem to be an example of absolute divergence. But the line between absolute and relative divergence is often blurred; consequently, deciding which worlds are incompossible and which are not is frequently an imprecise exercise.

102 That the empty tomb was a Markan creation (particularly since Paul seems to know nothing of it: see esp. 1 Cor 15:3-8) is a relatively common scholarly argument.

103 Deleuze and Parnet, “On the Superiority of Ango-American Literature,” 38. “The line of flight is a deterritorialization.... One only discovers worlds through a long, broken flight” (36).
discloses in its poignant climactic scene (9:3-9) that she, in that world at least, was the Beloved Disciple, the one whom Jesus secretly loved more than any of his male disciples.

And in yet another world, as we already saw, Jesus seems to have a nocturnal sexual tryst with a nameless young man who, like that other young man (but perhaps it is the same one) who follows Jesus to Gethsemane (Mark 14:51-52), wears a linen cloth over his naked body. The question of whether the Secret Mark fragments are authentically ancient or a modern forgery has no bearing on the question of whether Secret Mark contours a world that is absolutely divergent, or only relatively divergent, from Queer Mark’s world. Secret Mark’s young-man-loving (homo)sexually active Jesus might be said to be a plausible actualization of certain palpable virtualities in Queer Mark’s homosocial Jesus.

But that counter-actualization of the norm-anchoring Jesus of the orthodox Christian tradition, however significant, would be but a tentative first step on the path for a millisexual Jesus who, on the far side of the Markan tomb, would have embarked on his own line of flight, now forever intent on eluding the clutches of the hordes of self-proclaimed followers who would “come out to restrain him” (Mark 3:21). For a sexual line of flight is not a case of actualizing “one or even two sexes,” as we have seen, but “n sexes,” so that “making love is...becoming as a hundred thousand.” What body might be equal to such lovemaking? Not a body conceived as sexed in the standard mode. That is why the organs that the Body without Organs is without—even, or especially, the crucified and risen Body without Organs—are first and foremost sexual organs.

Bibliography


---

104 See p. 146 above.
105 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 296.


