

(Re)Thinking Bodies: Deleuze and Guattari's *becoming-woman*

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Abstract

(Re)thinking Bodies: Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-woman seeks to explore the notion of becoming-woman, as put forth by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their collaborative 1982 text, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and as received by such prominent feminist theorists as Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz. Arguing that the fairly decisive repudiation of this concept by some feminist theorists has been based on a critical misunderstanding, this project endeavors to clarify becoming-woman by exploring various conceptions of the body put forth by Baruch de Spinoza, Friedrich Nietzsche and Simone de Beauvoir. These conceptions of the body are indispensable to an appreciation of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a body lived on both an immanent and transcendent plane, which, in turn, is indispensable to an appreciation of the concept of becoming (and, in particular, the concept of becoming-woman) as intended by Deleuze and Guattari.

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Abbreviations

The titles of the following works are abbreviated throughout the text. Full citations can be found in the Bibliography.

E	<i>The Essential Spinoza: Ethics and Related Writings.</i>
GC	<i>Gender in Canada</i> (Second Edition).
LN	<i>Friedrich Nietzsche: Writings from the Late Notebooks.</i>
NP	<i>Nietzsche and Philosophy.</i>
NS	<i>Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory.</i>
PP	<i>Spinoza: Practical Philosophy.</i>
SA	<i>The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics.</i>
SE	<i>Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Spinoza and the Ethics.</i>
SS	<i>The Second Sex.</i>
STP	<i>Space, Time, and Perversion.</i>
TP	<i>A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.</i>
VB	<i>Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism.</i>

(Re)thinking Bodies: An Introduction

Thought is a consequence of the provocation of an encounter. Thought is what confronts us from the outside, unexpectedly: "Something in the world forces us to think" (Deleuze, 1994a: 139). What confronts us necessarily from outside the concepts we already have, from outside the subjectivities we already are, from outside the material realities we already know is the problem. The problem provokes thought... Thought-events...are singularities that mix with and have effects on other materialities, with other political [and] cultural...events.

Grosz, 1995: pp.128-9

In 1987, the English translation of Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative work, *Mille Plateaus*, volume 2 of *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie* was published and found its audience in the world of Western academia. It is in this work – an accompaniment to their 1972 text *L'Anti-Oedipe* – that Deleuze and Guattari present the phenomenon of becoming as transpiring through a series of segments. Unique among these segments of becoming is that which has been termed by our authors, "becoming-woman." And, while the readership that *A Thousand Plateaus* has occasioned among scholars and within academic institutions has, thus far, been highly selective and relatively minute, this particular concept has been met with a resounding sense of hesitation or caution, if not outright repudiation, in discourses and circles of feminist philosophy (with few but notable exceptions such as Elizabeth Grosz).¹

Alarming due to the sex of its creators and the question of propriety surrounding their having taken up an issue which is widely understood as most detrimentally affecting women, this concept is controversial and, I will argue, largely misunderstood within those circles in which it has been met with the greatest distain.² Becoming-woman has been understood by prominent feminist philosophers such as Rosi Braidotti as a strategy to be employed in the production of a particular type of social subject, a tactic taken up in

the creation of a new stake on the spectrum of subject positions availed to sexed bodies. But becoming-woman, I will argue, is neither of these things.

Becoming-woman is an occurrence in which the poles constituted of the dualism and enforced by dualistic thought no longer serve to determine a body's experience of itself. It is an occurrence wherein a body's experience of itself is no longer determined as proceeding in accordance with either of the two sexes (or correlative gendered developmental trajectories) to which it has been assigned. It is an experience, however, that will not arise through the movements of one body alone. Becomings-woman (as becomings of any sort) can occur only through an encounter between bodies, an encounter that affects a transition of both (or all) bodies from one state to another. And becoming is precisely this – the passage, the inbetween of different embodied states – with becomings-woman constituting the passage from the state of a body (once again) formed by dualistic conceptualizations to the state of a body no longer sufficiently formed in accordance with such.

Insofar as the project of feminist philosophers can be characterized as one which endeavors to re-imagine and rethink bodies outside of the terms and poles established by processes of dualistic conceptualization, I would argue that becoming-woman is to be regarded as a valuable conceptual contribution. Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-woman is a particularly viable conceptual contribution with respect to projects of this sort as it recognizes and appreciates the force of dualistic conceptualizations of sex and does not seek to minimize, mask or transcend the historical or contemporary implications of such – but neither does it attempt to speak from locations which its authors have not occupied. And although this notion, in itself, is not to be taken as a strategy or tactic to be employed

to a specific end, it is an experience (or *affection*) which has the potential to act as the impetus for (re)thinking bodies such that the concepts through which we live them undergo significant transformations. It is not unlikely that these transformations will have political and empirical consequences, but any transformations that might arise of conceptual shifts inspired by becomings-woman are to be regarded as open ended – open, that is, to the endless possibilities of becoming other (other than what (one) has been, other than what (one) presently is, other than what (one) might come to be). These transformations are neither predetermined nor predictable.

Engaging in projects which enable us to become other than either of the two poles constituted of the dualism of sex – in this instance, a project of exploration of becomings-woman – is of great importance because we are the inheritors of bodies thought dualistically. That is to say, every presently existent body has been produced (and inhabits a subject position or oscillates between subject positions that has/have been produced) through, and/or in relation to, processes and traditions of conceptualization which conceive of bodies as dualities, oppositions, antitheses. Inner/outer, male/female, masculine/feminine, man/woman – conceptualizations of this sort produce and inscribe bodies as dichotomies, as polarities. And conceptualizations of this sort underlie and buttress the dominant tradition of philosophical thought, both historically and presently.

Thinking bodies only through or by way of dualistic conceptualizations is problematic in that it delimits the range of potentiality which a body understands and often experiences as being availed to it. That is, thinking bodies as dualistic is problematic to the extent that it hinders or restricts the potentialities of bodies to become other than the predetermined subject or body type to which they have been assigned. Our

problem, then, becomes: How can we (re)think bodies outside of the bounds which have been constituted and imposed of a dominant (or major) historical tradition of thinking it only by way of the dualism? *How might we (re)think a body conceptualized and inscribed as dualistic?*

In order to address this problem we must explore alternative ways in which a body might be thought. But the complexity and importance of this task of (re)thinking bodies cannot be understated. As Grosz asserts, for Deleuze:

Thought is active force, positive desire, thought which *makes* a difference, whether in the image-form in the visual and cinematic arts...or in the concept-form in philosophy. Deleuze's project thus involves the re-energization of thought, the affirmation of life and change, and the attempt to work around those forces of anti-production that aim to restrict innovation and prevent change: to free lines, points, concepts, events from the structures and constraints which bind them to the same, to the one, to the self-identical. (STP, 129)

Following from Grosz's analysis of Deleuze's project as "to think *as* doing" (STP, 127), it is critical to note that this endeavor to (re)think bodies will not be confined to a strictly mental or theoretical act, as any process of thought, for Deleuze, is inescapably interwoven with a process of production, a process of life. This project of (re)thinking bodies, therefore, is simultaneously to be a project of experimentation, a project of exploring previously un- or under-explored ways of *(re)producing* this body, of *(re)living* it.³

In order to convey the significance of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *becoming-woman* in relation to the problem of (re)thinking bodies, it will be necessary to proceed first through a number of detours into philosophical conceptual creations which have arisen in historical moments other than the one in which we presently find ourselves, but which, nevertheless, are indispensable to the explication of *becoming-woman* that I

intend to disclose. These are creations emerging from diverse “conceptual personae” (*personnages conceptuels*) to whom the problem of (re)thinking bodies has not been lost. These are creations which, although spanning vast spatial locations and temporal durations, share as common the recognition of this most urgent need of the body to be (re)thought, to be (re)produced, to be (re)lived.

We will begin, in the first chapter with a reflection on the human body and conceptualizations of such. This analysis will utilize those writings of Friedrich Nietzsche which have been collected posthumously in a text entitled *Friedrich Nietzsche: Writings from the Late Notebooks*, in order to investigate and demonstrate assumptions implicit in perspectives which consider the human body to be a temporally stable and strictly bound entity. In this chapter, we will explore Nietzsche’s critical re-evaluation of the Subject, and provide a conception of the human body as a multiplicity of force.

The second chapter will be centered upon the idea of the body as becoming and will take as its guiding framework the writings of Baruch de Spinoza in the *Ethics*. The insights provided by Spinoza will act, in this analysis, to buttress our attempt to challenge the idea that the human being can exist or become apart from the interactions and exchanges it enters into with and alongside other bodies. In this chapter, we will provide a conception of the body as a particular yet variable relation of parts, prone to continuous (re)composition through encounter.

The third chapter will take as its focus dualistic conceptualizations of human bodies and their historical and contemporary implications. In this analysis, we will incorporate assertions contained in Simone de Beauvoir’s seminal text, *The Second Sex*, in order to illuminate the relevance of the Subject/Other distinction as it pertains to

bodies subjectified as Woman. We shall conclude, applying insights contained in Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies*, with an inquiry into the possibility of creating new ways of thinking, producing and living bodies through this concept.

Following from this, the fourth chapter will present a detailed analysis of becoming-woman, focusing on a selection of excerpts from Deleuze and Guattari's, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. In this chapter, the unique and significant contribution of the conceptual creation becoming-woman shall be clarified and elucidated in relation to the problem of (re)thinking bodies. We shall also examine the three-pronged critique of becoming-woman put forth by Rosi Braidotti in her 1994 text, *Nomadic Subjects*, arguing that her criticisms are founded upon a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept itself (as well as the intention with which it has been put forth), and the conclusions she draws therefore require reevaluation and revision.

In order to cultivate a greater understanding of the experience of a body becoming-woman, it is necessary to cultivate a greater understanding of the body as it has been conceived by Deleuze and Guattari. It is for this reason that I have elected to incorporate Spinoza, Nietzsche and Beauvoir as the primary theorists upon whom I draw in preparing to elucidate the concept of becoming-woman. Through our examination of the works of Spinoza and Nietzsche, we will come to a fuller understanding of the notion of a body that can be experienced or lived as unformed – a body, that is, which is constituted of variable quantities of force and defined as a rate of motion, a body which can *become* (in accordance with the conception put forth by Deleuze and Guattari) – while, through the writings of Beauvoir, we will come to a fuller understanding of the notion of a body that can be experienced or lived as woman – a body, that is, which can

be formed and form itself as that subjectivity of woman, which can both occupy and alter this subject position. Thus, the conceptions of the body put forth by Nietzsche and Spinoza will illuminate Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a body-becoming, while the conception of woman put forth by Beauvoir will illuminate the particular relevance of this subjectivity to that segment of becoming which has been termed by Deleuze and Guattari "becoming-woman."

As we prepare to engage the project outlined above, it should be noted that my intention in this thesis is not to suggest that the body should be lived apart from processes of conceptualization or that it might be better off striving to do so, and neither is it to suggest that we might locate or uncover a somehow more natural body or bodies beneath the concepts which inscribe and produce them, in all of their particularities, as such. My objective in this thesis is to demonstrate that there are many ways in which we might conceive of and conceptualize bodies and to explore a select few of the ways in which bodies, in the history of philosophy, have been thought outside of dualistic conceptualizations. It is my objective, furthermore, to suggest that moving outside of the terms and poles engendered and enforced by dualistic conceptualizations would/will enable (all) bodies to proliferate and augment their potentialities and forces of existing.

(Re)thinking Bodies – Chapter One:
The Female Body, the Body without Organs, and the Body as Force

In a piece titled “What is Existentialism?”, written in the early summer of 1947 for the weekly newspaper *France-Amerique*, Simone de Beauvoir asserts:

A philosophical theory, like a physics or mathematical theory, is accessible only to the initiated. Indeed, it is indispensable to be familiar with the long tradition upon which it rests if one wants to grasp both the foundations and originality of the new doctrine.⁴

It is with this assertion in mind that we begin our analysis of the notion of becoming-woman, as put forth by Deleuze and Guattari in their collaborative 1987 work, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. This analysis will include numerous detours and passageways into the historical lineage of immanent philosophies of becoming, with the intention that, as Beauvoir has suggested, our efforts to become initiated within this tradition will assist us in gaining a fuller appreciation of both the foundations and striking originality of the words and thought of Deleuze and Guattari.

We shall commence, in this chapter, with an examination of the human body and the objective of exploring various conceptions of such. More specifically, we will examine the Body without Organs, as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari, and the body as multiplicity of force, as conceived by Nietzsche, as ways of thinking the body which challenge the conceptualization of the human being as an autonomous and stable Subject. In order to support this exercise, we will be (re)turning with new eyes to Nietzsche’s *Writings from the Late Notebooks*. In addition to this, a selection from *A Thousand Plateaus* will serve to compliment and illuminate as we endeavor to (re)think the body and become familiar with the idea of becoming-woman.

Becoming-woman. This phrase, once issued, hangs in the atmosphere – confounding, astounding, perhaps eliciting contention and dismay: *What is it to become-woman?*

We shall begin by presenting the following point of clarification: Becoming-woman does *not* describe an attempt to reconfigure the appearance or parts of one's physical body. Nor can it be described exclusively as a process of empathizing with, or gaining a greater understanding of, the experience of Woman – although, the experiences of women are not unrelated to instances of this particular sort of becoming. And while gaining insight into the historical and contemporary locations of women might aid one in transitioning into existential states more susceptible or available to becoming-woman, it is not through this (alone) that becoming transpires.

Let us delve first into the assertion that becoming-woman does not describe an attempt to model one's physical body upon that which is understood as the female body. Becoming-woman is not an endeavor premised upon a specific image or idea of the female body, as there is no single female body. But despite the fact that it shall be firmly maintained, here, that there is no single body which corresponds to the term 'female', it is fitting that we would begin this analysis with an examination of the human body and various conceptions of such. Thus, although the phrase remains: *becoming-woman* – not *becoming-female* – we begin, nevertheless, with the body.

In the third chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*: '10,000 B.C.: The Geology of Morals (Who Does the Earth Think It Is?)', Deleuze and Guattari introduce what is conceived by them to be the Body without Organs.⁵ In this section, a narrative unfolds

and through this narrative it is explained that the dark prince and Danish Spinozist, Hjelmslev, further allying himself with the Challenger, “used the term *matter* for the plane of consistency or Body without Organs, [which could be described] in other words [as], the unformed, unorganized, nonstratified, or destratified body and all its flows: subatomic and submolecular particles, pure intensities, prevital and prephysical singularities” (TP, 43).

When describing the functioning of a human body, the Body without Organs can be understood as a perpetually disorganized configuration of parts without (or free(d) from) name and designation.⁶ It is, or at any given moment may be, constituted of various collections of force and force-centers, provisional assemblages of simple and non-compounding bodies. It is a varying and variable constellation of energetic emanations and interlinking micro-machines. This Body is an asymmetrically assembled chorus of humming parts, buzzing and thumping: vibration, pulsation, oscillation – intensity, speed and movement. Coursing through this Body, one might find a patchwork assemblage of textures and spaces, flesh and flows, intersecting without intentionality and not regulated by a conscious willing. Stoppages give rise to innumerable breakdowns and breakthroughs; they are occurring at every moment. But this Body is movement without end; venturing toward growth or demise, *this body is alive*.

The Body without Organs is not simply disorganized, it is that which repels organization and that which, in its encounters and exchanges, threatens with the latent risk of contamination through disorganization. It is infectious. It has the capacity to disarm and undo, as it is a ceaseless coming-undone, unbound. This Body is all that is beyond and exceeding containment.

Yet, we must ask: If the “[Body without Organs] is made in such a way that it can be occupied, populated only by intensities [and only] intensities pass and circulate [here]” (TP, 153), what particular trait, part, or function could make a segment, or *area*, of the Body without Organs come to be discernable as the body of a female? This inquiry is both valid and pressing and, as we proceed with the explication of a response, let us examine the following questions regarding the constitution of that body deemed to be female:

Is it the slow curve of the abdomen which makes the body of a female?

Is it the cavernous abyss and soft folds of the genitalia?

Is it the womb from whence springs forth new life?

Is it the swell of the breast which sustains the child?

Is it these traits and capabilities united which makes the body of the female?

Is, then, something besides these traits and capabilities the body of the female?⁷

Throughout history, “the female” body has been conflated with dominant ideals of feminine beauty and acceptability, as well as with the capacity to bring forth and sustain life. The body of “the female”, however, is not to be found in any one of these traits or capabilities. It is not the reproductive organs or the ability to bear and rear children that makes one female. Nor is it the traditionally defining physical characteristics historically associated with the ideal of feminine beauty. Female bodies cannot be reduced to any single trait or capability (or any combination of such), as there are countless bodies yoked beneath the designation ‘female’ which do not exemplify the characteristics traditionally associated with feminine physiology or which may not participate in (or have the capacity to carry out) the reproductive functions historically associated with “the female”,

just as there are countless individuals who may embody these characteristics or capabilities, yet do not experience themselves as (and thereby do not wish to be identified as) female.

If it is to be said that female bodies exist, then it must be acknowledged that they exist in too great an assortment and diversity to be understood or referenced as monolithic. These bodies are those which evade simplistic categorization. These bodies are those which challenge and often threaten reductionistic paradigms and systems of thought.

There is no female body, *only female bodies*. And it is not a particular trait, part, or function which makes (an area of) the Body without Organs become (or become recognizable as) a female body, nor is it any combination of traits, parts or functions which makes this so. On an immanent plane, there are only provisional assemblages of a Body without Organs, and “[t]his body without organs is permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles” (TP, 40). *However*, applied to – and inscribed upon – these bodies are ideas, instructions, commands and “order-words” (TP, 110), identifications, subjectifications and expectations. The Body without Organs, Deleuze and Guattari (through the guise of Hjelmslev) contend, is subjected to endless impositions and applications of stratification.

Strata are Layers, Belts. They consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy, of producing upon the body of the earth molecules large and small and organizing them into molar aggregates. Strata are acts of capture, they are like “black holes” or occlusions striving to seize whatever comes within their reach. (TP, 40)

This is “[t]he problem of the organism – how to “make” the body an organism – [and it] is once again a problem of articulation, of the articulatory relation” (TP, 41). This is an act of capture, an act that bears down upon an unbalanced and unfixed constellation of singularities and flows and, in some instances, makes (that is, forms) out of it the body of “the female” and that subjectivity of Woman. This is how Woman comes to be – but *not* how Deleuze and Guattari conceive of *becoming-woman*. This is, rather, how one comes to transform a Body without Organs into a static and ossified subject type; it is how a body comes to be “operate[d on] by coding and territorialization...[as stratification] proceed[s] simultaneously by code and by territoriality” (TP, 40). The “making” of Woman necessarily requires two components: the matter of a body recognizable as female⁸ – i.e., the *territory* of “the female” body – and the inscription of that which is constructed and understood to be “the feminine” (specific to cultural context, geographical location, and historical moment) onto that body – i.e., the *code* of “the female” body.

This is how the Body without Organs comes to be formed into an organed-body – *an organism* – bound and stratified, sexed and gendered, territorialized, categorized and contained, and, finally, nearly entirely subsumable and available for location and consumption on the grid of the axiom. But “the body without organs...constantly eludes that judgment, flees and becomes destratified, decoded, deterritorialized” (TP, 40). And it is by traversing this line of flight, as we shall see in the chapters to follow, that one might find oneself engaged in what can only be described as a *becoming-woman*.

Furthermore, according to the account provided by Deleuze and Guattari, Hjelmslev “used the term *content* for formed matters, which would now have to be

considered from two points of view: substance, insofar as these matters are “chosen,” and form, insofar as they are chosen in a certain order (*substance and form of content*)” (TP, 43). Following from this, I would argue that Woman is a form which takes as its matter “the female” body, thereby producing (and reproducing) specific sequences of content: specified configurations of parts and bodily functions, united and conflated with the historical force of the *mythos* of these parts and functions. This is how Woman comes to be, but there is no (single) female body, *only female bodies* and, on the plane of immanence, a Body without Organs. And: “The [Body without Organs] is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole” (TP, 151).

From Nietzsche’s *Writings from the Late Notebooks*,⁹ we can piece together a conception of the human body that illuminates and contributes additional insight into the process of transformation elucidated above. That is, the transformation of (an area of) the Body without Organs into an organism and, in some instances, into the body of a female and the subjectivity of Woman. Deleuze and Guattari have argued that the Body without Organs becomes an organism by a process through which a form is inscribed and takes upon a specified sequence of content, thereby producing repetitive, predictable orders and arrangements of matter and opportunities for the conceptualization of such. This notion finds substantial parallels in Nietzsche’s understanding of the process through which the human body is ordered and regulated by the fictitious idea of the Subject. For Nietzsche, the form imprinted upon the body is that of language and the occasion for

conceptualization it provides, resulting in the perpetuation of an erroneous belief in the 'I'.

As conceived by Nietzsche, the human being "is a multiplicity of forces" (LN, 8), forces which, at any moment, might consist of a diverse assortment of energies, impulses, drives, appetites, and passions. It is of these forces that the human body is composed, and there is no body that can be said to exist apart from the forces of which it consists. The multiplicity of forces which constitute a human being remain in a state of ongoing tension and contest, and consequently "stand in an order of rank" (LN, 8). It is not, however, the body through which they pass, or within which they move, that regulates or controls the rank assumed by these various forces. To the contrary, it is only *in* and *through* their own interactions that these forces are able to determine their position and status in relation to one another. And, indeed, it is the states that arise and temporarily endure on the basis of the innumerable collisions and constant discord of these multiplicitous forces which determine the condition (and continually modify the previously established condition) of the body they compose.¹⁰

Among the forces which constitute a human body, "there are those which command [and those which obey], but what commands, too, must provide for those which obey everything they need to preserve themselves, and is thus itself *conditioned* by their existence" (LN, 8). Commanding and obeying are understood by Nietzsche to be relative, mutually conditioned and impermanent positions determined by the strength or intensity with which the forces exert themselves, whilst locating and enacting their rank in relation to one another: "At a particular moment of a force, an absolute conditionality of the redistribution of all its forces is given: it cannot stand still" (LN, 21).

Further elucidating the nature of the relationship of the multiplicitous forces, Nietzsche argues that they all “must be related in kind, otherwise they could not serve and obey one another like this: what serves must, in some sense, also be an obeyer, and in more delicate cases the roles must temporarily switch so that what otherwise commands must...obey” (LN, 8). In this passage, Nietzsche aligns commanding with serving and contrasts this role with that which is assumed by those forces which obey. Interestingly, it seems then that, for Nietzsche, the commanding executed by selective forces is not to be interpreted as a dictatorial act, but instead should be viewed as an affective consequence of an abundance or excess of power that, through its emanation as force, is able to function as service. To be clear, however, the commanding role of certain forces in relation to others (reconceived as simultaneously enacting a service) is not analogous to an act of charity or generosity. It is, rather, the strength of those particular commanding forces which enables them a greater expenditure of power and freedom of exercise, and it is the quanta of energy released through/by their movements that the weaker, obeying forces depend for their preservation.¹¹

A transformative assemblage of force is characterized by the strength or intensity of the engaging forces and their distribution and proximity (or relative distance) in a shared space.¹² Nietzsche writes: “The weaker pushes its way to the stronger...it wants...to become *one* with it. Conversely, the stronger repulses the weaker, it does not want to perish this way; instead as it grows it splits into two or more” (LN, 25). It becomes apparent here that, for Nietzsche, an essential attribute of a strong, healthy (and continually strengthening) force is the movement toward a “self”-amplification of power; and, in this ongoing movement, the drive towards heterogeneity and diversity is

proportionately linked to, and indicative of, the strength of a force. In striving to increase its power, a strong force freely divides and multiplies *of itself*, promoting and allowing “internal” disassembly and fragmentation. A force diversifies *in order* to strengthen itself and the stronger it becomes, the more it is able to amplify this tendency toward diversification and “self”-division/multiplication. In addition to this, Nietzsche maintains that efforts to consolidate, hold fast to, and stagnate power are symptomatic of a weak or unhealthy condition and of a correlating decline in (and declining) force, writing: “The greater the urge to unity, the more one may infer weakness; the more there is an urge to variety, differentiation, inner fragmentation, the more force is present” (LN, 25).

Thus, if we ask, as Deleuze has: “What is the body?” (NP, 39). Or, otherwise phrased: How are we to define a body if we are Nietzschean? We find our answer as follows: If we are Nietzschean,

[w]e do not define it by saying that it is a field of forces, a nutrient medium fought over by a plurality of forces. For in fact there is no “medium”, no field of forces or battle. There is no quantity of reality, all reality is already quantity of force. There are nothing but quantities of force in mutual “relations of tension” (VP II 373/WP 635). Every force is related to others and it either obeys or commands. What defines a body is this relationship between dominant and dominated forces. (NP, 39-40)

For Nietzsche, the human body is envisaged as a constellation of force and force-centers remaining in a state of continual interchange, whose composition is both temporarily maintained and inevitably reoriented by the strife which characterizes any space wherein a multiplicity of forces collide, converge, and coexist. It is not the body constituted of these forces that defines their assembled composition or order. It is, instead, the interactions of the forces themselves which define the force-assemblage of a given duration and it is this force-assemblage which defines the state of the entity which

it is constitutive of. In a passage from Notebook 7, using terminology that is strikingly analogous to that of Deleuze and Guattari, Nietzsche reconceives “[t]he individual itself as a struggle between its parts (for food, space, etc.): its evolution dependent on some parts conquering, prevailing, and the others withering, ‘becoming organs’” (LN, 135).

A dynamic constellation of force, however, is never something which remains strictly internal to any body. That is, its affective capabilities do not remain encased within the material borders established and enacted by the individual body which it constitutes. In accordance with this particularly significant component of the depiction detailed by Nietzsche, it should become evident that the human being can no longer be understood as a fixed entity, distinct from and closed to the issuing force and influence of the environment typically understood as being “external” to it. In fact, the collection of forces which constitutes a body for a particular temporal duration cannot really even be said, in any strict sense, to be *of* the body that it composes.

The human body is at once constituted of forces and drives which might be thought to originate therein and those which have been introduced or produced through this body’s contact with, and sensory and perceptual experience of, bodies that it has encountered. Yet, even those forces which seem to be rooted in a particular body, having this body as their cause, are the product of (or have been *affected by*) an interaction that has previously taken place. Thus, even those forces which seem to be more intimately associated with, or more firmly anchored in, a particular body are the residual effects, resulting affective states and perhaps more enduring conditions remaining of the interchange between human and non-human bodies in motion, of the interchange between

a body and the planes between and across which it moves. It is through an intermingling of bodies that a constellation of force continuously assembles and reassembles itself.

The relation of forces composing a particular constellation, and the rank continually (re-)established through this relation, cannot be static insofar as the body of which it is constitutive engages in a movement through the environments which envelop and condition it. By way of encounters with bodies not contained within the borders established by its material frame an unremitting stream of foreign force is introduced, intermingling with the forces already present and throwing the previously established configuration into disarray, making necessary an ongoing reorientation and creating (the possibility of) a new position and function for those forces already acting therein. Thus, the development of a body, conceived as force relations and constellations, is never complete and never predictable; it is open and ongoing so long as that body is engaged within an extensive environment which shifts alongside and affects the ongoing reconstitution of the force-assemblage of which it is composed. And, as Nietzsche maintains, not a single body can exist apart from this connection: “The concept of the ‘individual’ is false. In isolation, these beings do not exist” (LN, 8).

In accordance with Nietzsche’s conception, the notion of the human body as an entity strictly bound and distinct from its “external” environment falls away. A body cannot exist apart from its connection to the bodies with which it interacts. The ongoing reconstitution of any single body is not a process which can take place by this body alone, as even that which transpires within the body is the residual effect of a previous interchange of force, the product of an encounter between bodies. These are forces, then,

whose origins remain undetermined and of mixed blood, emanating and implicating themselves from all places and, yet, from no single, definable source.

It is the dynamism of force which ensures the variable constitution of bodies, which exist as singular materializations and manifestations of an all-encompassing drive for increased power, understood to be underlying and motivating all of Nature. In a passage from Notebook 34 (April-June 1885), Nietzsche contends that “it is the will to power which guides the inorganic world as well [as the organic world], or rather...there is no inorganic world” (LN, 15).¹³ And further, in aphorism 9[91] (Notebook 9), Nietzsche describes “[a]ll that happens, all movement, all becoming as a determining of relations of degree and force” (LN, 155). By reconceiving all relations as relations of force, and all physiological processes as expressions of the will to power, Nietzsche calls into question the conceptual divisions imposed between bodies: between the human body and its objects, between human life and non-human life, between all of those “internal” and “external” spaces. And when we acknowledge the dissolution of these conceptual divisions, “what remains are not things but dynamic quanta in a relationship of tension with all other dynamic quanta, whose essence consists in their relation to all other quanta, in their ‘effects’ on these” (LN, 247). Thus, from the portrait we can piece together from the fragmentary writings of his late notebooks, it becomes clear that, for Nietzsche, force moves between bodies and across environments. This is particularly clear in aphorism 36[22] (Notebook 36), wherein Nietzsche describes the movements of force as extending between all forms of life, writing: “The connection of the inorganic and the organic must lie in the force of repulsion which every atom of force exerts. Life should be defined as an enduring form of the process of testing force” (LN, 25).

But, according to Nietzsche, the realization that life should be defined as an inherently unstable trial and transformation of force creates or heightens any previously existing sense of existential instability and insecurity.¹⁴ These feelings of uncertainty act as impetus for the creation and perpetuation of conceptual constructs which lend an appearance (and, therefore, *a sense*) of stability, continuity and predictability to what, in actuality, is a boundless current of movement that can never quite be grasped or fixed. Thus, we impose order and uniformity onto and into a world that is constituted of infinite, infinitesimal and often undetectable transitions, or *becomings*, with the application of linguistic forms and conceptual syntheses. It is these conceptual constructs which enable us to feel as though we have located something of or within entities and objects that we might believe to be stable and enduring, and it is through them that we endeavor to emphasize those elements of existence which reassure us of its orderliness and constancy. As Nietzsche explains:

Just as there are many things a general doesn't want to know, and must not know if he is to keep hold of his overall view, so in our conscious mind there must be above all a drive to exclude, to chase away, a selecting drive – which allows only certain facts to be presented to it...A concept is an invention which nothing corresponds to wholly but many things slightly. (LN, 9)

For Nietzsche, in a world that remains in a state of transition, even the appearance of orderliness and constancy conceals an ever-fluctuating expression of force: “The *fundamental prejudice* is, though, that it is inherent to the *true being* of things to be ordered, easy to survey, systematic” (LN, 42). Thus, rather than expressing those aspects of reality which are permanent, the concept instead represents or indicates the incision of a fabricated synthesis into fluctuating “constellations of force” (LN, 252), and *not* to any cohesive character of those bodies or contents to which it has been applied. And:

...with this invented and rigid world of concepts and numbers, man gains a means of seizing by signs, as it were, huge quantities of facts and inscribing them in his memory. This apparatus of signs is man's superiority, precisely because it is at the furthest possible distance from the individual facts...[T]his sign-world, is pure 'illusion and deception'.... (LN, 10)

Nietzsche's belief that there is a feeling of existential insecurity inspired or magnified by the realization that everything which we perceive as *being*, in fact, is engaged in a *becoming* without end or predetermined destination is correlative to his belief that the faculties of perception of a living organism adapt to its environment to an extent that will enable its self-preservation and continued existence. For instance, he writes:

For a particular species to survive – and grow in power – its conception of reality must be able to encompass enough of what's calculable and constant to construct on this basis a schema for its behavior. *Usefulness for preservation*...is what motivates the development of the organs of knowledge...they develop in such a way that their capacity to observe suffices for our preservation. (LN, 258)¹⁵

These illusory and deceptive concepts, therefore, "take a connected whole of falsifications as the basis for preserving a certain kind of living things" (LN, 50), and "[allow] the human species to assert itself" (LN, 51). "But...a belief, however necessary it is in order to preserve a being, has nothing to do with the truth" (LN, 140). And according to Nietzsche, the minute and innumerable relations of force of which everything in this world is composed are largely imperceptible to the cognitive and sensory capacities with which the human being is endowed. In fact, we remain largely unaware of even those occurrences which transpire in the bodies we hold to be our own: "In the tremendous multiplicity of what happens within the organism, the part we become conscious of is merely a little corner" (LN, 214).

Thus, in order to survive in a world of perpetual motion – and escape the anxiety which arises on the basis of an understanding that “[t]his world is a world that becomes” (LN, 141) – the human being formulates and employs conceptual syntheses which unite, beneath a single name and fixed identity, the series of movements – the expressions of force – of which all bodies are constituted.¹⁶ Nietzsche writes: “A world of becoming could not, in the strict sense, be ‘grasped’, be ‘known’...[therefore] the ‘grasping’ and ‘knowing’ intellect finds an already created, crude world, cobbled together out of deceptions but having become solid...[and, yet,] this kind of illusion has preserved life” (LN, 26). And, furthermore:

The whole of the organic world is the threading together of beings with little fabricated worlds around them; by their projecting, as they experience, their strength, their desires, their habits outside themselves, as their *external world*. The capacity to create (fashion, fabricate, invent) is their fundamental capacity: naturally, their idea of themselves is likewise only a false, fabricated, simplified one. (LN, 15)

The “invention of the ‘subject’, of the ‘I’” (LN, 97) is one such conceptual synthesis which, Nietzsche maintains, reflects and betrays human efforts to locate (or impose the appearance of) an ordered and reasoned Being and world. This concept is chief among the falsifying fabrications, as it is applied to the continually unfolding and multiplicitous processes of which the human body is constituted in an effort to form it into a consistent and comprehensible entity. And it is this very idea of the ‘I’ that Nietzsche so vehemently critiques, stating:

I don’t concede that the ‘I’ is what thinks. Instead, I take the *I itself to be a construction of thinking*...to be only a *regulative fiction* with the help of which a kind of constancy and thus ‘knowability’ is inserted into, invented into, a world of becoming...[But h]owever habituated and indispensable this fiction may now be, that in no way disproves its having been invented: something can be a condition of life and *nevertheless be false*. (LN, 21)

The human being is endlessly becoming as it encounters bodies traversing the plane across which it moves, and these “continual transitions do not permit us to speak of the ‘individual’, etc.; the ‘number’ of beings is itself in flux” (LN, 25). Nietzsche maintains, however, that by imposing the concept of the subject upon the ceaselessly transforming constellation of force that is the human being, we have effectively created and instilled a fiction – *a myth* – of a rational, predictable being endowed with free will. And it is this conceptual fiction that allows us to regulate what is essentially a myriad of minute and often indiscernible processes of transformation with the *idea* of an enduring and cohesive subject, with that *belief* in “the little word ‘I’” (LN, 96). Yet, Nietzsche does not waiver in his certainty that “our concept of ‘I’ guarantees nothing in the way of a real unity” (LN, 246).¹⁷

Those who uphold the concept of the subject, and faithfully believe in this word ‘I’, endeavor (and, to a certain extent, effectively function) to make out of the untold workings of the body a reasoned, ordered and unified organism. But recognizing that, in actuality, there is nothing which corresponds to this idea of a stable and temporally continuous ‘I’, Nietzsche understands this idea to be a “regulative fiction” (LN, 50), a “synthesising fiction” (LN, 60), a “*perspectival falsification*” (LN, 51) – the product of erroneous, yet deeply engrained and habitual, systems of belief and conceptualization. He writes: “*Subject*: that is the terminology of our belief in a unity among all the diverse elements” (LN, 179). However, this belief is deceptive, as “[t]he ‘I’...is, after all, only a conceptual synthesis” (LN, 61), and, in fact, “a multitude of persons seems to participate in all thinking” (LN, 34).¹⁸ Nietzsche contends, therefore, that “[t]he assumption of the *single subject* is perhaps unnecessary; perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a

multiplicity of subjects on whose interplay and struggle our thinking and our consciousness in general is based?" (LN, 46).

Bringing to mind Deleuze and Guattari's description of "[t]he problem of...how to 'make' the body an organism...[as] a problem of articulation, of the articulatory relation" (TP, 41), Nietzsche asserts that "the means of expression that language offers are of no use to express becoming; it's part of our inescapable need for preservation that we constantly posit a cruder world of the permanent, of 'things', etc." (LN, 213). Furthermore, it could be argued that Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the application of form to specific sequences of matter has affinities with Nietzsche's insight that "things...do not effect at all: because they do not exist at all...a 'thing' is a sum of its effects, synthetically bound together by a concept, an image" (LN, 252). Nietzsche's commentary also illuminates the fact that the imposition of a conceptually constructed subjectivity onto specific arrangements of bodily matter, onto a female body, might result in what is ultimately a perspectival falsification – Woman – "a *fiction added* by us, out of the needs of logic, thus for the purpose of designation, communication" (LN, 206).

Nietzsche argues that: "We have borrowed the concept of unity from our concept of 'I' – our oldest article of faith. If we didn't consider ourselves to be unities, we would never have created the concept of 'thing'" (LN, 246). And, further:

If our 'I' is our only *being*, on the basis of which we make everything *be* or understand it to *be*, fine! Then it becomes very fair to doubt whether there isn't a perspectival *illusion* here – the illusory unity in which, as in a horizon, everything converges. Along the guiding thread of the body we find a tremendous multiplicity...[and realize, finally,] that everything is becoming. (LN, 77)

As we shall see in our third chapter, the notion of a static and stable Subject critiqued and refuted by Nietzsche bears striking resemblances to constructed binaries of sex and dichotomous conceptualizations of gender. This is evident insofar as each of these conceptual syntheses reflect (distinct, but perhaps not altogether unrelated) efforts to simplify, reduce, and deny the complexity inherent to the reality of becoming which, as Nietzsche has argued, “is the *only* reality” (LN, 218). “Everything which enters consciousness as ‘unity’ is already tremendously complicated: we only ever have a *semblance of unity*” (LN, 113). And, let us note well Deleuze and Guattari’s remark that: “The unity of language is fundamentally political” (TP, 101).

Yet, as the writings of Deleuze and Guattari make increasingly apparent, employing conceptual syntheses in an attempt to reduce or deny the complexity of a reality of becoming is an effort inevitably proven to have been in vain, as “the body without organs...constantly eludes that judgment, flees and becomes destratified, decoded, deterritorialized” (TP, 40). The Body without Organs always escapes, always evades applications of stratification and apparatus of capture precisely because “[y]ou never reach the Body without Organs, you can’t reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit” (TP, 150). This limit is not a state of being that can be permanently attained or sustained and *for this very reason* it remains an inexhaustible potential.

“The [Body without Organs] is a component of passage” (TP, 158). It is the experience of a body no longer formed, no longer subjectified, momentarily and perhaps increasingly unbound. (Re)territorialization cannot be other than an impermanent enclosure, as “the [Body without Organs] is always swinging between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free” (TP, 161). Movements of deterritorialization and

reterritorialization chase one another, snapping at heels, slipping from beneath, from within, yet always eager to overcome. “[W]e haven’t found our [Body without Organs] yet, [if and because] we haven’t sufficiently dismantled our self” (TP, 151). To experience the Body without Organs is to experience the self *sufficiently*, yet not entirely or permanently, dismantled.

Before we proceed, let us reflect for a moment on what may appear to be (and is often accepted as) this inherent human need, this continual and constantly endeavored escapism into a world of fixed entities, unchanging bodies and simplistic beings, and ask ourselves: *What is it from which we are trying so desperately hard to escape? Is the Body without Organs really such a threat?*

(Re)thinking Bodies – Chapter Two:
Variable Motion and the Force of Existing

How are we to define a body? This question frequently resurfaces throughout Deleuze's writings on Spinoza in his text, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. In response to this vital inquiry, Deleuze contends: "[I]f we are Spinozists...[a] body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea; it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity" (PP, 127). *A body can be anything*. But how can this be so?

In the previous chapter, we began our investigation into the body with an exploration of Nietzsche's conception of the body as a constellation of force, alongside what has been termed by Deleuze and Guattari the 'Body without Organs'. Yet, there remains a great deal to be said and clarified regarding this notion of the body as multiplicity of force. The objective of this chapter, therefore, will be to delve further into this examination and re-conception of the body, while enumerating in greater detail the processes through which its ceaseless transformations transpire.

In order to guide and support this exercise, we will incorporate pertinent components of the account of the body put forth by Baruch de Spinoza in the *Ethics*, so that we may arrive a fuller understanding of what is entailed in viewing, as well as *living*, the body as becoming. It is to be argued, in this chapter, that Spinoza provides a way of (re)thinking bodies which relies neither on the form nor type in or through which they exist. Spinoza provides an account of the body which enables us to conceive of it as a variable affective capability and force of existing, and this way of thinking the body is indispensable to this project, as it provides an alternative to understanding capabilities as being the product of dualistically conceptualized physical forms and/or subject types.¹⁹

More specifically, this way of thinking the body is indispensable to our efforts of cultivating a greater appreciation of becoming-woman, which likewise can be understood as an alternative to a body's experience of itself as dualistic.

How are we to begin the task of reacquainting ourselves with the body? A body which may, now, seem unknown and perhaps foreign to us, as we depart from our conventional understandings and endeavor to apprehend it as it has been presented to us in this new light: reconceived as a dynamic assemblage of force remaining in a state of continual interchange?

As conceived by Spinoza in the *Ethics*, *every existing body is a composite of many bodies* (E, 38: Part II, Prop 13, Definition). And as Deleuze elucidates, these many bodies, at the most unformed level, are composed of "what Spinoza calls "the simplest bodies." They have neither number nor form nor figure, but are infinitely small and always exist as infinites. The only bodies having form are the composite bodies, to which the simple bodies belong according to a particular relation" (PP, 127). The composite body, therefore, is understood by Spinoza as having form. But it has form only in the sense that it is composed of innumerable simple and non-composite bodies whose proximity to one another configures a particular arrangement and, thus, takes on a particular shape. The form of a composite body is a fashioned yet fluid constellation of the non-composite bodies of which it is composed, and for as long as these simple and non-composite bodies participate in the relation characterizing this composite body, they can be said to belong to it (E, 39: Part II, Prop 13: Proof).

But in order to conceive of the body as a Spinozist, we must reflect critically on our tendency to perceive the indeterminable and continuously unfolding processes of

which it is constituted as the developmental realization of a fixed form – a form belonging to a clearly demarcated species, group or type and defined by essential traits, characteristics and functions. In order to conceive of the body as a Spinozist, we must cease perceiving the material and functions of which it is constituted as the incidental matter and activities through or upon which an external “plan of organization or development” (PP, 128) comes to fruition. However, it will be argued here, following Deleuze, that there are two distinct ways in which one might conceive of a body in relation to the notion of the plan, as the word “plan” lends itself to “two very contrary conceptions” (PP, 128).

The first conception of the word “plan” evokes any “organization that comes from above and refers to a transcendence...[that is, any] plan of transcendence that directs forms as well as subjects” (PP, 128). A plan of this type “can be called a theological plan: a design in the mind of a god, but also [can be called] an evolution in the supposed depths of nature, or a society’s organization of power” (PP, 128). Despite the variety of names under which the plan of transcendence operates, it gives rise only to plans of organization and development.²⁰ The plan of transcendence has worn many faces, each unique to the conceptual construct through which it is operating, but in spite of the specificities and nuances of the concepts it underlies, a plan of this type can always be discerned by a single trait: the positing of an objective, universal conceptual structure or systematization that necessarily exists external to the bodies in which it becomes material, but through which the movements of these bodies come to be developed into forms and in accordance with which its formed subjects are measured and evaluated.²¹

This type of plan always involves *forms* and *subjects* or, as Deleuze writes, “forms and their developments, subjects and their formations. Development of forms and formation of subjects: this is the basic feature of this first type of plan. Thus is it a plan of organization or development” (PP, 128). A transcendent plan can be understood as a plan of organization or development in the sense that it operates to give form to bodies and/or to produce bodies as forms – that is, in the sense that it organizes the unformed materials and unpredictable movements of bodies in accordance with specified, preformed types (for instance, species or genus types, sexed and gendered types). When conceptualized (and lived) through a plan of transcendence, a body is expected to develop in accordance with the form to which it has been assigned, as which it is being produced. A transcendent plan can be understood as a plan of organization or development also in the sense that it operates in the formation of bodies as subjects – that is, in the sense that it subjectifies bodies by conceptualizing them through a predetermined set or spectrum of subject types. When conceptualized (and lived) through a plan of transcendence, a body is expected to develop in accordance with the subject position to which it has been assigned, to develop through the processes of subjectification which will realize the formation of the subject type as which it is being produced.

We could argue therefore, that a transcendent plan operates through a dual movement. It operates, on the one hand, to organize bodies by classifying or categorizing them on the basis of the type as which they have been formed. On the other hand, it operates to form subjects by assigning to each (formed) body type a predetermined developmental teleology, a predefined progression in accordance with which all bodily movements are expected to comply. It is a plan which operates in the organization of

forms and the development of subjects, but more incisively, it is a plan which forms bodies and produces formed subjects that can be organized in accordance with developmental schemas which necessarily come from outside, or above, the movements of which bodies are composed.

A plan of transcendence is always present in the forms it develops and in the subjects it forms. But this first type of plan – as an immaterial conceptual construct that remains juxtaposed to, and inverted against, the movements and processes of life – never gives or avails itself to sight. It can be discerned only in those bodies and subjectivities which it has formed; it forms bodies and subjects and only then can be read in that which it has formed. It stays hidden, yet it “directs forms as well as subjects...[and then] can only be divined, induced, inferred from what it gives” (PP, 128). A plan of transcendence does not arise and is not produced of the unfolding movements of a body. It exists apart from the movements of which a body consists, directing and informing them but not transforming with or through them. Nevertheless, a plan of this type is incarnated in the bodies it has formed and in the formed subjects through which it has been realized.

But to conceive of the body as a Spinozist is to conceive of a plane of existence on which “[t]here is no longer a form, but only relations of velocity between infinitesimal particles of an unformed material. There is no longer a subject, but only individuating affective states of an anonymous force” (PP, 128). To conceive of a body as existing on this plane is to have arrived at the second conception of the word “plan”, a conception wherein the plan remains inseparable from the movements of which a body consists. This is a *plan(e) of immanence* – immanent, that is, to the movements of which a body is constituted. And this plan can be understood as a *plan of composition* – that is, a plan

which is produced of and through that which is composed of the movements of the body, a plan, therefore, which is prone to change and transform through the changeable and transformative movements of the body. Thinking the body through a plan of this type, “the process of composition must be apprehended for itself, through that which it gives, in that which it gives. It is a plan of composition, not a plan of organization or development” (PP, 128).

The two different conceptions of the word “plan” – the plan of transcendence and the plan(e) of immanence – do not simply represent two different ways of *understanding* the body but, additionally, two different ways of *living* it. Living the body through a plan(e) of immanence, one lives *inside of* the movements and processes of which one’s body consists rather than ascribing them to, and evaluating them in relation to, a totalizing progression or universal conceptual construct that exists external to or above them. And when the body is (re)conceived in this way, those processes by which a subject is formed must also be reconsidered as a phenomenon inseparable from its movements. Thus, in his writings on Spinoza, Negri asserts: “The subject is the product of the physical accumulation of movements... Subjectivity is a composition, first physical and then historical. The theory of the subject is a theory of composition” (SA, 226).

If we are to think as Spinozists, each composite body in itself must be considered a “process of composition” (PP, 128) – a *process* without a point of destination, without graded successive stages, and without vertical ascent (E, 26: Part 1, Appendix) – a *composition* that is engendered by the movements of a body as it is assembled and continually reassembled through and of itself.²² It is precisely because the body is a

process of composition that it must be apprehended for and through itself, as the activity of creating a composition can only be apprehended by that body whose movements are composing it. A composition *is* a movement – whether individual or collective – which cannot be known from the outside, but only experienced as it is unfolding, through and in that which it produces. The composition does not unfold and is not constructed in accordance with the conditions of a transcendent rule or schema. To the contrary, that which is given or produced of the composition is produced through the never previously determined or foreseeable processes which compose it. All that can be apprehended of processes of composition must be apprehended through these processes themselves; nothing external to the act of composing can facilitate or enable the apprehension of a composition.

This second type of plan, therefore, is a plan of composition and is conceived as generating a plane of immanence: “Here the plan is concerned only with motions and rests, with dynamic affective charges. It will be perceived with that which it makes perceptible to us, as we proceed” (PP, 128). On an immanent plane, there is nothing to be perceived apart from that which is made perceptible to us by and through the movements and transformations of our own bodies. It is the movements and transformations of individual and collective bodies that create compositions which continuously compose and recompose themselves, and it is these interactions and variable compositions that produce and constitute “the plane of immanence or consistency, which [therefore is also] always variable and...constantly being altered, composed and recomposed” (PP, 128).

The plane of immanence is not existent apart from or outside of the bodies through which it is continually (re)composed. It is not comprised of periods or epochs

but, rather, of local areas and immediate experiences. It is comprised of the spontaneous movements and chance interminglings of matter without form and infinitesimal particles of various speeds of motion. It is a boundless, oceanic set of connections. It is the network *weaving through* and *woven of* the intersections of innumerable non-composite and simple bodies, unformed bodies belonging neither to species nor class nor type. These are bodies constituted of “affective states of an anonymous force” (PP, 128), a force which, although anonymous, is “individuating” (PP, 128) in that the specificities of its exertion through particular constellations create limitless singularity.

The plane of immanence is constituted of the movements of unformed bodies and the force erupting at the points at which these bodies connect, the force produced of (and either amplified or diminished in) their encounters and compounds. The plane of immanence does not form or implement hierarchies. It consists only of lines traversing and generating a level surface without gradation, succession or end. And if the plane of immanence has a history, it is not one of evolution, but one of ruptures and discontinuities which nevertheless exist alongside or inside fusions, amalgamations and strengthening linkages. Deleuze has argued that it is through a plan(e) of immanence that Spinoza composes his map of the body (PP, 128), and for as long as a body exists on this plane it is “made up of the lived transitions that define its affects, constant passages to greater or lesser perfections, continual variations of [its] power of acting” (PP, 63). It is for this reason, as we shall see, that to think the body as a Spinozist is to “think in terms of speeds and slownesses, of frozen catatonias and accelerated movements, unformed elements, [and] nonsubjectified affects” (PP, 129).

So let us return to the body as conceived by Spinoza, as there remains a great deal to be said on this matter. We have acknowledged that, in a certain sense, Spinoza's 'simplest bodies' come to be formed as, or more precisely, are the elements which participate in the formation of, composite bodies which are understood as being formed or as having form. Yet, it would seem that this statement is incompatible with the assertion that only unformed materials traverse and compose the plan(e) of immanence, which we have argued, following Deleuze, is the conception of the word "plan" through which Spinoza has composed his map of the body. In order to clarify this apparent contradiction, we must closely examine this notion of the composite body, as the only body that is understood by Spinoza as having form.

Let us begin by stating that the simple or non-composite bodies do not migrate to fill spaces or assume roles which are hollowed out as pre-existing sites of lack within a scaffolding or frame-like structure of the composed body. The form of the composite body is not a skeletal structure of vacant spaces and yet-to-be performed, but nonetheless defined, tasks. In fact, the form of the composite body does not exist in any manner whatsoever prior to the intersection of non-composite bodies whose particular relations come to compose it. The composite body has form only in the sense that the simple bodies of which it is composed are defined by their particular, yet fluid, proximities in relation to one another. It is the relative distances and closenesses of the simple bodies which shape a particular assemblage, and it is this assemblage which gives form to the composite body they compose.

Simple bodies, as conceived by Spinoza, are the innumerable and infinitesimal particles of an unformed matter or material. *But how are bodies such as this* – bodies

which are unformed and uncounted – *to be defined*? There are two ways in which a simple body is to be defined. In the first sense, a simple body is to be defined as an *intensity*. By intensity, we understand the degree of force as (and therefore with) which a body exists; that is, its force of existing, which is constituted of its capacity to affect and be affected. This notion of affect requires further explication; however, we will reserve this elaboration for further in this analysis, in order to focus, at this time, on the second sense in which a simple body is to be defined. In the second sense, a simple body is to be defined as a *velocity*. By velocity, we understand rate of motion, that is, the speeds and slownesses as (and therefore at) which a body moves.

These simplest of bodies are engaged in ceaseless alternations and variations of motion and rest, and insofar as these bodies are continually transforming, so too are their relations to one another and the assemblages which their particular relations form. Therefore, if the composite body can be described as having form, this form is not to be mistaken for that which is stable or fixed, or that which precedes the matter of which it consists. The composite body is a immanent *form(ation)*, rather than a definitive form, and is subject to ongoing de- and/or re-formation as it transforms with and through each of the minute and unremitting movements of the non-composite bodies which belong to it in a particular relation. The composite body is an open-ended and continuous (re)formation, formed only through the unpredictable movements of its simple bodies, whereas a body formed in accordance with a transcendent plan is predetermined and fixed and, therefore, operates to determine and fix its simple bodies, allowing them only a limited range of motion, ensuring their movements serve to realize the developmental telos to which they have been assigned.

But there remains an issue which, until this point, has not been rendered entirely clear: Exactly *how*, or *through which processes*, do these infinitesimal unformed elements (traveling at variable speeds and slownesses) come to be assembled in or *as* a particular relation, namely the relation that forms a composite body? We can state, very briefly, that a composite body is formed through encounter. But what is meant, here, by 'encounter'? In the writings of Spinoza, the word 'encounter' refers not only to the meeting of two (or more) composite bodies, but denotes also the intermingling of the non-composite or simple bodies which belong in a particular relation to each singular, composite body. As noted above, simple or non-composite bodies exist only as infinities, and it is through their spontaneous and unpredictable encounters that composite bodies come to be formed.

As a simple or non-composite body generates and moves across its plane of immanence, it will inevitably encounter another simple or non-composite body, also generating and moving across an immanent plane. An encounter is the intersection of two bodies in motion, the juncture or meeting point at which two distinct trajectories collide and intersect one another. Each simple body remains engaged in an endless succession of encounters with an extensive corpus of other simple bodies. Therefore, the trajectory of every simple or non-composite body is marked (and potentially redirected) by a multitude of points of intersection, with each point at which two simple bodies have met not marking the limit or exhausting the potentiality of possible encounters which might transpire therein. In fact, the entire network of lines and configurations (that is, the rhizomatic patterns) which characterize the trajectory of a simple body have been defined and contoured by the encounters in which this body has engaged.

The trajectories of simple bodies collide with, and branch off from, one another; they overlap and weave, merge and break forth, fragment and multiply. The encounter of two bodies can occasion a stoppage or amplification in either or both of the trajectories which are being traversed, but the stoppage of one trajectory will give rise to a new movement, engaged by other bodies. In this way, the relations of simple bodies assemble chains and networks of relatively greater or lesser complexity and diversity. Some bodies will be unable to form little more than sparsely populated linear chains, but others will move in such a way that their particular relation of parts will remain intact while a great number of other bodies come to be incorporated therein. Thus, in these networks, certain sites will become more densely populated than others. These sites are centers of force, which are constituted as the points of intersection of a great number of non-composite bodies.

The trajectory of a simple body is not something which is merely disrupted or extended by the encounters which intersect, and either diverge from or merge with, it. Rather, *the trajectory of a simple body is a series of encounters*. It is the range and route of movement, the cobbled path which has opened out and been assembled of the non-cumulative succession of encounters in which the simple body has engaged. It is the necessarily selective actualization of the limitless potentiality of encounters which possibly could have occurred (i.e. chance; the dice throw²³). The trajectory of a simple body, therefore, is defined by the local and particular character of the encounters into which it has entered, and the residual effects (and resulting affective states) of these encounters on the velocity and force of those bodies engaging one another therein.

It is the (varying and variable) lethargy or rapidity of a simple or non-composite body – i.e., the “deceleration and acceleration of [its] particles” (PP, 123) – which constitutes the velocity of this body. Spinoza writes: “So far we have been discussing the simplest bodies, those which are distinguished from one another solely by motion-and-rest, quicknesses and slownesses. Now let us advance to composite bodies” (E, 38: Part II, Prop 13: Axiom 2). Correspondingly, then, it is the collective (yet still varying and variable) quicknesses and slownesses *of the relations* of the non-composite bodies which belong to a composite body which define the velocity of this composite body. Thus, the term *velocity* can be employed in two simultaneous ways. In the first place, it can be used to describe the *rate of speed* at which a simple or non-composite body moves in relation to the other simple or non-composite bodies with which it has compounded or alongside which it travels in a shared space. Secondly, the term “velocity” can be used to designate the *rate of speed* at which a composite body moves – a rate of motion which is constituted of the relations of velocity of the non-composite bodies which belong to it in a particular relation (E, 37: Ethics, Part II, Prop 13: Axiom 1 – Lemma 3).

In addition to this, every simple or non-composite body is a particle or cluster of particles of an unformed material through which a charge, or specific quantum of force, exerts – a body which is, thus, imbued with a (variable yet characteristic) *degree of intensity*. The *degree of intensity*, or force, of a simple body is defined by its capacity to enter into relations with simple bodies that belong to composite bodies other than the one to which it belongs. Two factors are relevant in the constitution of a simple body’s degree of intensity. On the one hand, its intensity is constituted of its capacity to compound with other simple or non-composite bodies without becoming immobilized. And, on the other

hand, its intensity is constituted of its capacity to exist within or move through these combinations without threatening or diminishing the range of motion of the bodies with which it is compounding.

Thus, the *degree of intensity*, or force, of a simple body is defined by the extent to which it can persevere in its existence through its encounters with other simple bodies. But just as the relations of velocity of the simple bodies forming a composite body define the velocity of this composite body, so too do the intensities – or “dynamic affective charges” (PP, 128) – of the simple bodies forming a composite body define the degree of intensity, or force, occupying this composite body. We are left then with the question: What determines the force or charge of a formed or composite body? Or, otherwise phrased: *Of what is the force or charge of a composite body constituted?*²⁴

Deleuze writes:

[I]f we are Spinozists we will not define a thing by its form, nor by its organs and its functions, nor as a substance or a subject. Borrowing terms from the Middle Ages, or from geography, we will define it by *longitude* and *latitude*... We call longitude of a body the set of relations of speed and slowness, of motion and rest, between particles that compose it from this point of view, that is, between *unformed elements*. We call longitude the set of affects that occupy a body at each moment, that is, the intensive state of an *anonymous force* (force for existing, capacity for being affected). (PP, 127-128)

Spinoza, therefore, defines a body in two ways or, rather, as having two simultaneously defining qualities. In the first sense, bodies are defined as “composition[s] of speeds and slownesses on a plane of immanence” (PP, 123); while in the second sense, bodies are defined as “capacities for affecting and being affected” (PP, 124). And for Spinoza, a body’s capacity for being affected is precisely what constitutes its force of or for existing.

But what exactly is meant by this phrase ‘force for existing,’ which could alternately be described as the degree intensity of the anonymous force occupying an existent body? And how does this force relate to the *longitude* of a body – i.e. “the set of affects that occupy [it]” (PP, 127) at any given moment? How are we to interpret Spinoza’s assertion regarding these capacities “for affecting and being affected” (PP, 124) as defining qualities of the composite body?

In order to proceed in the explication of a response, we must delineate the difference between *affection* and *affect* as understood by Spinoza. When thinking the body as Spinozists, we call *affection* (*affectio*) a state of the body which is being affected by an external body. The body’s affection, therefore, implies the presence of an external, affecting body and involves the nature of this external, affecting body (PP, 49). The affections designate the transformative effects experienced by, or occasioned within, the affected body as it is engaged in an encounter with a body external to it (E, 38: Part II, Axiom 1). The affections “designate that which happens to the [body], the modifications of the [body], the effects of other [bodies] on it. These affections are therefore images or corporeal traces first of all (Ethics, II, post. 5; II, 17, schol.; III, post. 2)” (PP, 48).

When thinking the body as Spinozists, we call *affect* (*affectus*) the altered state of that body which has been affected by an external body (E, 62: Part III, Prop 1: Definitions 3). Affect involves the charge or force produced by the encounter of bodies which have compounded with one another; it involves the resultant force of existing occupying the assemblage which their intermingling has inspired or which their combination has composed. Affect “involve[s] a variation of the power of acting, an increase or a diminution” (PP, 39-40); it “involves an increase or decrease in the power of

acting, for the body and mind alike” (PP, 49). Affect “refers to the passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies” (PP, 49).

On the basis of this analysis, we can state that when the characteristic relation of parts assembling one body intersects the characteristic relation of parts assembling another body, the parts of these two bodies combine or compound with one another. An encounter is always accompanied by a combination of this sort: by an intermingling of bodies, a compounding of parts. However, an encounter is a phenomenon that can be experienced by a body in two very different ways because, as Deleuze explains, “[w]hen a body “encounters” another body...it happens that the two relations sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other, destroying the cohesion of its parts” (PP, 19). Thus, depending on the nature of the bodies entering into the encounter and their mutual affection therein, this compounding of parts can affect either body such that its particular relation of parts is strengthened or disassembled. An encounter does not necessarily affect both (or all) bodies whose parts are intermingling in the same way – a single encounter may simultaneously be experienced by one compounding body as strengthening and another compounding body as destructive or detrimental.

In an instance where the intermingling of two bodies combines to form a more powerful whole, the parts of the first body are understood by Spinoza as having *directly compounded* with the parts of the second. An encounter of this type – i.e., one that produces a direct compound – is conceived as that which is *good* (PP, 22). For Spinoza, an encounter is good insofar as it strengthens the relation of parts of those bodies compounding therein. A good encounter is an especially interesting phenomenon,

however, as in order to directly compound our parts with those of a body external to our own, we must connect with this external body in such a way that, through the combination of our parts, a more powerful whole is produced. But the production of this more powerful whole does not require our parts to disintegrate or disassemble the particular relation by which they are defined. In fact, in order to directly compound, the particular relation of parts which defines (and forms) our body must *not* be decomposed.

An encounter is said to be *bad* for our body when it inhibits the motion and/or affects the disassembly of the particular relation of parts of which our body is composed (E, 123: Part IV, Prop 39). That is, an encounter is bad when it “decomposes our body’s relation” (PP, 22). To be clear, however, in a bad encounter there is still a combination of parts, which is to say, in an encounter that is experienced as bad by a particular body, the parts of this body still combine with the parts of the external body whose relation ultimately proves detrimental or destructive to it. In this instance, however, the relations of parts distinctly composing the intersecting bodies are incompatible with one another and, thus, are unable to directly compound. That encounter is bad, therefore, which occurs “between two bodies whose characteristic relations are not compatible” (PP, 22); or, rather, which occurs between my body and an external body that “*will determine the parts of [my] body...to enter into new relations that no longer accord with [my] essence*” (PP, 22).

The essence of a body is constituted of the particular yet fluid relation of parts of which it is composed. Once the parts of our body have combined with the parts of an external body whose relation does “not correspond to our essence” (PP, 22), our body can be affected in one of two general ways. In the first case, the relation of our parts is

negatively affected such that the velocity of the simple bodies of which these parts consist is restricted, but to an extent that enables the particular relation of parts to persevere, albeit in a diminished or constrained capacity. The second case occurs when the relation of parts of the body we are encountering is disproportionately stronger as well as incompatible with our own and, in this case, the relation of parts which forms our body is decomposed (i.e. death; the decomposition of a particular (*our* particular) relation of parts²⁵).

Nothing external to the encounter can determine or decide whether the encounter is good or bad. There can be no morality in encounter; that is, it cannot be judged as good or evil by any body or standard external to it, but only *experienced* as either good or bad for and by those bodies engaging therein. Thus, as Deleuze explains, for Spinoza:

There is no Good or Evil, but there is good and bad. “Beyond Good and Evil, at least this *does not* mean: beyond good and bad.” The good is when a body directly compounds its relation with ours, and...[f]or us, the bad is when a body decomposes our body’s relation...in ways that do not correspond to our essence...Hence good and bad have a primary, objective meaning, but one that is relative and partial: that which agrees with our nature or does not agree with it. (PP, 22)

Spinoza maintains that we designate as Evil all of the phenomena that cause the parts of our body to enter into new relations that no longer accord with our essence, that is, which decompose the particular relations of which our body is composed (for instance, illness and death (PP, 22)). “But Ethics overthrows the system of judgement. The opposition of values (Good-Evil) is supplanted by the qualitative difference of modes of existence (good-bad)” (PP, 23).

Thus, the distinction between good and bad is an objective distinction, as “everything that is bad is measured by a decrease of the power of acting...everything that

is good, by an increase of this same power” (PP, 72). Yet, the distinction between that which is good and that which is bad can be made only in the context of a specific encounter (E, 132: Part IV, Prop 59: Another Proof), as it comes to be experienced as such by a particular body, as that which either directly compounds with or decomposes the relation of parts characterizing it. “In this way, Ethics...[as] a typology of immanent modes of existence, replaces Morality, which always refers existence to transcendent values. Morality is the judgment of God, the *system of Judgement*” (PP, 23). Lloyd, further elucidating this point, writes: “Spinoza’s version of ethics, in contrast to a morality, does not refer existence to transcendental values. Rather it explores the possibilities for strengthening the powers of bodies through composition” (SE, 134).

Every occasion in which the parts of a body intersect the parts of another, every encounter in which there is a combination of parts, acts as a new and unique test to the strength of this body, the strength of its relation of parts. In this sense, therefore, “existence is a test. But it is a physical or chemical test, an experimentation, the contrary of a Judgment...In reality, [when we think the body in this way,] we are never judged except by ourselves and according to our states” (PP, 40).

It should be sufficiently clear, at this point in our analysis, that for Spinoza an encounter is good for a body when the parts of this body combine in such a way that their characteristic relation is not diminished or decomposed therein. But the following question remains unanswered: *Why is a direct compound experienced as good by that body whose parts have combined therein?* Or, a variation of this very same question: Why is it not preferable for a particular body to strive to subsume the parts of another, or

to disassemble them in order to appropriate that which may be of use or benefit to its own assemblage?

We can discern a response to this inquiry in Deleuze's analysis of the encounter as conceived by Spinoza. He writes:

An existing [body] is defined by a certain capacity for being affected (III, post. 1 and 2). When it encounters another [body], it can happen that this [body] is "good" for it, that is, enters into composition with it, or on the contrary decomposes it and is "bad" for it. In the first case, the existing [body] passes to a greater perfection; in the second case, to a lesser perfection. Accordingly, it will be said that its power of acting or force of existing increases or diminishes, since the power of the other [body] is added to it, or on the contrary is withdrawn from it, immobilizing and restraining it (IV, 18 dem.). (PP, 49-50)

When a body directly compounds its relations with ours, this is good; and as this occurs, this body, "with all or part of its power, increases ours" (PP, 22). This is precisely why combining our relation of parts in a direct compound with the relation of parts of an external body is good for our body, because as its power is added to our power, our power of acting is augmented or increased. We need not lose anything of ourselves in compounding with another body, and neither is it in our best interest to immobilize or restrain anything of that body whose parts are combining with our own. As Lloyd writes: "For [Spinoza], we do not gain our true selves by withdrawing behind our frontiers. We become most ourselves by opening out to the rest of nature. Our lack of insulation from the world is the source both of our vulnerability to alien [bodies] and of the power we gain from joining forces with congenial ones" (SE, 95).

It seems fair to surmise, therefore, that to harm the body directly compounding with our body would be simultaneously to harm our own body, as a component of the composite which is being produced. Combining the parts of our body in an amalgam with another, we become stronger in and of ourselves, as our force of existing is amplified.

And, as our force of existing is amplified through encounters, so too is augmented our capacity to be affected by a greater number and diversity of bodies. This is reflected in Deleuze's contention that:

Objectively, then, everything that increases or enhances our power of acting is good, and that which diminishes or restrains it is bad... Since the power of acting is what opens the capacity for being affected to the greatest number of things, a thing is good "which so disposes the body that it can be affected in a greater number of ways" (IV, 38); or which preserves the relation of motion and rest that characterize the body (IV, 39). (PP, 71)

Encounters are not limited to only two types: those which do and do not affect a decomposition. Spinoza maintains that "[t]he human body can be affected in many ways by which its power of activity is increased or diminished; and also in many other ways which neither increase nor diminish its power of activity" (E, 62: Part III, Prop 1: Postulates 1). There are as many variations of the encounter as there are bodies which enter into them. The compound occasioned by a particular encounter can prove detrimental to a body without necessarily decomposing the relation of parts by which it is characterized (i.e. without causing its death). But, objectively speaking, that which is bad for a body is bad insofar as it diminishes this body's capacity to act, or depletes the force as or with which it exists.

Conversely, then, that which is good for a body is good insofar as it increases this body's capacity to act, or augments the force as or with which it exists (E, 104: Part IV, Preface). And, since the power of acting is related in direct proportion to (and occasions any expansion of) the capacity for being affected by a great and diverse number of things and, likewise, since being affected by an increasingly greater number of things is what strengthens or augments the power of acting, we can deduce that *a body is only as powerful as it is capable of encountering difference*.²⁶ Furthermore, since the power of a

body is tied to its affective capacities, the capacity to be affected can be understood as the extent to which a body (“within the limits of [its] capability” (PP, 27)) can continue to exist (i.e., persevere as the relation of parts particular to it) when encountering or confronted with difference (i.e., when intersecting and compounding with bodies whose relations of parts are dissimilar to – yet not necessarily, due to this dissimilarity, incompatible with – its own). Correspondingly, the capacity to affect can be understood as the extent to which, when moving through these encounters, a body can affect bodies external and dissimilar to its own in such a way that it not be injurious to them because, as we discovered above, a direct compound (i.e. an encounter that is good) requires that the particular relation of both bodies remains intact. We can conclude, therefore, that to think as Spinozists is to define bodies “by a capacity for being affected, by the affectations of which they are “capable,” by the excitations to which they react within the limits of their capability” (PP, 27).

But how are we to know the limits of our own capability? How are we to know which encounters (and with which external bodies) will exceed our capacity to be affected and, thereby, bring about the decomposition of our relation of parts?

If we are to think bodies as Spinozists, we are to concede that this is something which we can never know. It can never be known what the body can do (E, 63: Part III, Prop 2: Schol). This renowned adage warns us that it is not possible to know – that is, to predict with any certainty – what the body might be capable of, how it will act, interact or react in an encounter with a body foreign to it. This is to say, we can never know, prior to an intermingling of parts, the affections that will be occasioned therein: “That is why Spinoza calls out to us in the way that he does: you don’t know beforehand what good or

bad you are capable of; you do not know beforehand what a body or mind can do, in a given encounter, a given arrangement, a given combination” (PP, 125).²⁷ There is always risk involved in encounter. Relations might prove hazardous, even fatal, and there is no assurance of safety to be found, as we can never be certain which mixtures will decompose the particular relation of our parts and bring death to us: “[T]he accidental nature of the encounters means that we always risk encountering something more powerful that will destroy us...[and] even in the most favorable instances, we will encounter other modes under their discordant and hostile aspects (IV, 32, 33, 34)” (PP, 102-103).

At this point, one final question emerges: *Why participate in encounters at all? Why not avoid these uncertain and potentially toxic corruptions?* The response to this seemingly complicated question is surprisingly simple. In the first place, to a certain extent, there is no choice with respect to encounter. Simple bodies exist only as infinities, ones which could not survive in isolation, because to exist is to move and to move is to intersect and to intersect is to encounter. But, certainly, it is in our power (within the limits of our capabilities), as composite bodies, to be as selective as possible with regard to the combinations into which we enter with other composite bodies existing external to us in a shared environment. But should this be the intention with which we live: to be as cautious and selective as possible with regard to the bodies we encounter and the compounds into which we enter?

On the basis of the analysis presented above, we can conclude that although there is certainly much to be lost in encounter, there is perhaps even more to be gained in embracing this risk. This is particularly evident given the fact that the greater the number

of encounters in which a body participates whereby a direct compound is produced, the stronger this body becomes – as with each good encounter, a body's power of acting is increased, its force of existing intensified (E, 108: Part IV, Prop 8: Proof). *This is the risk of living life to one's fullest capacity.* It very well may be the case that there is no other risk more worthwhile to assume.

To think the body as a Spinozist is to conceive of it neither as a fixed form nor a progression. The body, for Spinoza, is a transformative force of existing, a capacity to affect and be affected. It is a site of interaction of variable active and interactive parts, a relational assemblage of intensities and velocities. The various parts of a human body are not held together by a mutual encasement in a single subject. Rather, the variable parts of the human body form a complex and, at times, fragile and susceptible constellation – a constellation that remains open to the “external” world, porous to the infinitesimal and infinite simple bodies of which the entire world is composed, and likewise porous to the multitude of non-composite bodies whose particular relations form every existent human and non-human body (E, 39: Part II, Prop 13: Schol). “[H]ere ideas of borders or limits – of what lies ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ the self – operate differently” (SE, 85). And as we conclude this chapter and look toward the next, we realize that, thinking the body as Spinozists, the question then becomes: “How can a being take another being into its world, but while preserving or respecting the other's own relations and world?...Now we are concerned...[with] the composition of a world that is increasingly wide and intense” (PP, 126).

(Re)thinking Bodies – Chapter Three:
Dichotomous Thought and the Question of Otherness

How are we to define woman? On this question, Simone de Beauvoir writes:

The human species is forever in a state of change, forever becoming...[Thus, w]oman is not a completed reality, but rather a becoming, and it is in her becoming that...her *possibilities* should be defined. What gives rise to much of the debate is the tendency to reduce her to what she has been, to what she is today, in raising the question of her capabilities; for the fact is that capabilities are clearly manifested only when they have been realized—but the fact is also that when we have to do with a being whose nature is [endless self-overcoming], we can never close the books. (SS, 33-34)

For Beauvoir, woman is a ceaseless becoming which should be defined only by or *as* potentiality; but how are we to understand that instance of *becoming* with which *woman* has been implicated? And how does a body, (re)conceived as an assemblage of simple bodies and a force of existing, come to be formed as that subjectivity Woman?

In this chapter, we shall explore Woman as a concept through which bodies can be subjectified, that is, as a concept through which bodies can be formed as subjects. We shall explore, more specifically, some of the ways in which this concept has operated to subjectify female bodies in the context of the Euro-Western social milieu. In order to inform and support this exercise, we will utilize pertinent components of the account of Woman put forth by Simone de Beauvoir in her seminal text, *The Second Sex*. Our purpose in this chapter will be to demonstrate that historically the concept Woman has been inextricably linked with dualistic conceptions of sex and gender and, through this linkage, has operated to diminish or restrict the capacities of female bodies to think, live and produce themselves outside of the terms and poles enacted and enforced thereby. We shall conclude, applying the insights contained in Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, with an inquiry into the possibility of creating new ways

of thinking, producing and living bodies through the concept Woman. We will ask, more precisely: Are the potentialities with which this concept is or may be imbued depleted due to its historical association with the dualism or, to the contrary, have we only just begun to discover the potentialities of this concept outside of the terms and poles enforced by the dualisms to which it has been historically fettered?

As observed in our first chapter, becoming-woman is not to be interpreted as taking place through the efforts of an individual to gain a greater understanding of the experience of woman. There is no *woman*, only *women*, and even they, when closely examined, are found to be complex, often ambiguous intersections of concept and matter. In addition to this, becoming-woman is not to be interpreted as the attempt to be (or become, for any temporal duration) a woman, or the attempt to be (or become, for any temporal duration) *like* a woman. Becoming-woman is not an attempt to model one's performance of self upon that entity which one believes woman to be, nor does it take place through the transformation of one's body into that body which throughout history has been associated exclusively with the concept Woman.

Yet, despite the fact that becoming does not occur through understanding, and likewise will not occur through mimesis, gaining insight into a thread of commonality woven through the diverse locations and experiences of women will prove indispensable to this endeavor to fully comprehend and appreciate the significance of becoming-woman, as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari. This thread of commonality is the identification as Other which characterizes and, without exception, accompanies the existence of those bodies subjectified as Woman. It is this inherent feature of the body

subjectified as Woman which causes the experiences of women, even through their differences and in their irreducibility to one another, to share striking resemblances.

In order to engage this investigation into the Otherness of Woman, however, it is necessary that we first elucidate a few points of clarification in order to address any concerns that may have arisen on the basis of the statements put forth in our first chapter or those with which this chapter commenced. As, at this point, a number of questions might be raised. For instance: What exactly is the motivation underlying the statement that there is no single female body? What is the difference between (and relation of) woman, female, and the feminine? And finally, exactly how, or in what way(s), is Woman to be understood as a concept operative in the formation of subjects?

We will begin with the following: The term ‘female’ is employed in reference to a particular configuration of bodily matter, to certain bodies under the assumption of these bodies being endowed with certain capabilities. To be more precise, the designation ‘female’ is intended and operates to denote the sex of a body and, correlative with this determination of sex, to indicate (among other, perhaps less consequential, things) this body’s reproductive capabilities. Yet this, in itself, is already a matter of great complexity insofar as the general and essentially reductionistic character of the designation ‘female’ renders it inadequate to its task, as it is often unable to sufficiently convey the diversity of those bodies which it purports to represent.

In addition to this, the notion of a single female body can be recognized as being especially problematic when viewed in light of the fact that this body (or formed body type) constitutes one pole of a constructed hierarchical dualism – the male/female dichotomy of sex – and the position created for and assigned to it therein constitutes an

underside, an inversion or negation, a deviation. As Grosz writes: “Dualism is the belief that there are two mutually exclusive types of “thing,” ...that compose the universe in general and subjectivity in particular” (VB, vii), and:

Dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart. The subordinated term is merely the negation or denial, the absence or privation of the primary term, its fall from grace. (VB, 3)

Thus, when human bodies are thought through a dualism of sex, certain aggregates are formed as “the female.” These aggregates are then thought (and often lived and produced) as the subordinated counterpart of the body formed as male, as the denial or privation of male as the primary term.

But there is an additional problem, a problem whose seed resides in the very idea – and the centrality of this idea as a widely accepted *belief* – that there is an invariable, “naturally” occurring and perpetually reoccurring body signified by the term ‘female.’ This second problem is rooted in the belief that human bodies are born and develop in accordance with one of only two possible classifications of sex, but it manifests in its fullest expression as this *belief* is translated into an *expectation* and issued as a *command*.²⁸ The dualism of sex is not used simply to convey or communicate an opposition already existent in human bodies. It is inscribed into these bodies in order to create and recreate them in predictable, repetitious, malleable patterns – to produce and form (*develop* and *organize*) them as either of the two poles of which it is constituted.

This is evidenced, I would argue, in the medical practices surrounding the phenomenon of the body born intersex.²⁹ I have in mind here those surgical procedures through which bodies are formed in accordance with a dualistic conception of sex, as it is *literally* carved into or grafted onto infants who have only just entered this world with the

“disfigurement” of being born with ambiguous genitalia, those bodies whose physical difference is potentially disruptive in that it supersedes and thus challenges the allowances of this manufactured opposition. It should be clearly stated at the outset of this discussion, however, that I do not mean to suggest that there is anything inherently problematic or wrong with medical procedures which alter or affect an alteration of human bodies. Rather, the purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate, following Grosz, that “the guiding assumptions and prevailing methods used by [medical] disciplines...have tangible effects on the bodies studied” (VB, xi), and, extending this line of reasoning, to argue that in some instances these effects are potentially harmful due in large part to the assumptions which inform, and often provide justification for, them.

Nelson and Robinson report that “infants born with ambiguous (not clearly male or female) genital configurations (estimated to be 2 to 3 percent of all infants; Abu-Laban et al., 1994: 231) are assigned to one sex or the other, based upon the decisions of an attending medical team. These decisions usually result in surgical alteration of the child’s genitals” (GC, 21).³⁰ In the case of the intersex body, therefore, it becomes clear that, at present, the assumption guiding medical practices and methodologies is one that upholds sex as dualistic, and these practices and methodologies therefore operate to form bodies in accordance with this assumption. It could be argued, furthermore, that when considering these assumptions and practices in terms of the tangible effects they have upon those bodies which require surgical intervention in order to be formed in accordance with the sex dualism, we must conclude that they are, at best, questionable and, at worst, potentially quite damaging.

The decision to surgically alter a child's genitals is an especially poignant illustration of the power of guiding assumptions regarding sex, as it is upheld even in instances where the state of genital ambiguity does not pose a risk to the child's physical well being:

Being born with ambiguous genitalia is rarely, in itself, harmful to a person's physical health...[and] some societies have accepted persons with ambiguous genitalia as integral members of their communities. Within our own society, [however,] persons born with ambiguous genitalia are considered to possess a problematic condition that can, and should, be "remedied" medically. Several factors besides biological ones assist physicians in determining, assigning, and announcing the sex of an infant including "ultimately...cultural understandings of [sex and] gender" (Kessler, 1990/1995: 8). The most important of these understandings is the belief that only two genders and two biological sexes exist and should be allowed to exist; "physicians hold an incorrigible belief in and insistence upon female and male as the only 'natural' options" (Kessler, 1990/1995: 8). (GC, 22).

And while it might be argued that an intersex body would likely pose a risk to a maturing individual's mental and/or emotional well being, I would contend that this risk is constituted largely if not solely by the prevalence of the assumption of sex as dualistic, which thereby provides a self-supporting rationale to the decisions of medical teams to perform surgery. It becomes evident, therefore, that the practice of assigning bodies to either of the two poles of the sex dualism via surgical alteration is justified in large part by the assumption or belief that bodies must be formed dualistically. This can be seen in the research of Kessler (1990/1995: 16), who has observed that:

[D]octors claim to "reconstruct," not construct, the genitals of intersexed children. They perceive their actions as being objective and involving only the surgical alteration of genitals to conform more accurately to what was already there. In this way, they maintain their illusion that subjective beliefs [surrounding sex and gender] do not play a role in the decision-making process. Yet, the assumption that surgical intervention is necessary reflects cultural beliefs about the dichotomous nature of sex. Ambiguous genitals are perceived to be unnatural, and surgical alteration is believed necessary to create genitals that conform to either a

male or female state, thereby removing challenges to the belief system and reinforcing the power of the sex dichotomy. (GC, 23)

Thus, following Nelson and Robinson, I would argue that the power of thinking bodies dualistically is illustrated most forcefully “regarding the phenomenon of sex (re)assignment” (GC, 21). It is here that dualistic conceptions of sex give rise to expectations and beliefs that “ultimately shape biological sex...[And it is here that] we have the opportunity...to observe the power of [guiding assumptions or] beliefs in constraining and limiting the available options” (GC, 21).

The conceptualization of sex as dualistic operates to the end that there is a drastic reduction in difference itself, that is, in the degree and frequency of the difference produced of human bodies. And, on the basis of this analysis, it should become evident that there is nothing natural about “the female” body. The idea of a single female body is a product of a conceptual synthesis, the consequence of a falsifying regime. As Grosz contends: “Indeed, there is no body as such: there are only bodies” (VB, 19), and among these bodies are female bodies constituted of differences which “insist on the irreducible specificity of women’s bodies, the [irreducible specificity of the] bodies of *all* women, independent of class, race, and history” (VB, 207). And, given that the objective of this project is to think bodies such that their capacity to affect and be affected – that is, such that their *force of existing* – is to be strengthened as far as possible, it would perhaps be more viable to think them, rather than dualistically, as bodies of endless and irreducible difference, difference, it would seem, that most persistently makes itself known in and through those diverse bodies of females.

Female bodies are especially problematic insofar as they cannot (or seemingly will not) avail or readily produce themselves in accordance with the terms established

and enforced by regimes of dualistic thought which operate in the formation of bodies as dualistic. These bodies, in every epoch and in some form or another, have evaded the powers and thus challenged the appearance of naturalism of those belief systems which uphold a dualistic conception of sex (and, as we shall see, gender) and, on this basis, they inspire fear, these bodies of terror. As Beauvoir conjectures: "The source of those terrors lies in the fact that in the Other, quite beyond reach, alterity, otherness, abides. [Even in] patriarchal societies woman retains many of the disquieting powers she possessed in primitive societies" (SS, 169). "[W]oman evades the rules of society, she... looses uncontrollable...forces in the collective midst" (SS, 190).

"The female" body, however, is not synonymous with the body subjectified as Woman; but we may be getting ahead of ourselves, here, and so we shall return to the matter at hand. It should be sufficiently clear at this point in our analysis that the degree of femaleness or maleness of a human body is the quality that determines the sex to which it is assigned, as which it is formed. Yet, even in academic discourses, this feature of the body – its status as either male or female – is often mistakenly referenced as its *gender*. It seems appropriate, therefore, to digress briefly in order to delineate the distinction between sex and gender – an exercise that will prove quite valuable to our later examination of becoming-woman.

Concisely stated, gender is a constructed site of self-identity. It is "the social role of the individual [subjectified either] as a man or a woman"³¹. It is one of the ways in which (or processes by which) one comes to form, and continually modify, the identity through which one expresses one's self (or which one holds to be representative of an inner essence thereof). This is to say, the identity which one takes to be one's own

becomes gendered by way of a distinctive facet of one's performance of self. And this particular expression of self – gender-identity – transpires in accordance with (or, at the very least and inevitably, *in relation to*) a predetermined schema that orders and classifies the entire range of possible expressions of the human body into the mutually exclusive binary of masculine and feminine.

The term 'feminine', therefore, may be employed to denote any feature or element of a strictly defined series of behaviors, characteristics, traits and often mannerisms and appearances that can be adopted or embodied in the formation and ongoing practice of gender-identity. And, in turn, these behaviors and traits are generally understood as being indicative or representative of that identity which one is performing or forming. Thus, *feminine* is a designation assigned to certain attributes which exist as components of a process of gender-identification, while an expression of femininity occurs as a body assumes or displays those behaviors or traits which have been constructed as feminine. It is through, or in relation to, standardized roles and behaviors defined as either masculine or feminine that a body expresses its gender-identity.³²

The behaviors and characteristics that have been constructed as feminine have specificities that are unique to epoch and milieu; but nevertheless, there are striking resemblances among them and, in addition to this, one factor remains constant throughout time and setting: the roles and traits which have been designated as feminine have been tied in an exclusive association with the body formed as female. As such, these roles and traits likewise form the underside of a hierarchical dualism – the masculine/feminine dichotomy of gender – wherein that which is recognized as or associated with the masculine is privileged and valued, while that which is recognized as or associated with

the feminine is viewed as existing in opposition thereto, as an inversion thereof, and thus is denigrated and devalued.

When considering the implications of thinking bodies dualistically, the masculine/feminine dichotomy of gender cannot be extricated from its interconnection with the male/female dichotomy of sex. In a related effort, these dualistic conceptions fetter the (idea of a single) female body to the (manufactured axiomatic of the) feminine and relegate both to a subordinate status, while assigning to them an identity of Otherness – Other, that is, to that which is produced or formed as the primary term (i.e., the male, the masculine). These hierarchical dualisms act as one another's impetus and realization, instituting and perpetuating a self-supporting and sustaining logic that is woven tightly within a complex matrix of intersecting historical, physiological, social and cultural factors. As elucidated by Eaton and Lorentzen:

Euro-western cultures developed ideas about a world divided hierarchically and dualistically. Dualistic conceptual structures identify women with femininity, the body, sexuality, earth or nature and materiality; and men with masculinity, the mind, heaven, the supernatural, and disembodied spirit. Dualisms such as reason/emotion, mind/body, culture/nature, heaven/earth, and man/woman give priority to the first over the second. Ecofeminists refer to these pairings as hierarchical dualisms and claim they point to a logic of domination that is entrenched in Euro-western history and worldviews. Religion, philosophy, science and cultural symbols reinforce this worldview, making male power over both women and nature appear "natural" and thus justified. Social patterns, including sexual norms, education, governance, and economic control, reflect this logic of domination.³³

On the basis of this analysis, we can conclude that with the conceptually constructed dualism of sex, the endless difference of human bodies has been reduced to a stark dichotomy (male *or* female – with anything other being conceived as a correctable error of the inbetween). While, in a related movement, with the conceptually constructed dualism of gender, the endlessly diverse range of expressions available to human beings

(notably, the possibilities of self-identification) have been partitioned by a dichotomy whose components are perceived as being antithetical to one another (feminine *or* masculine).³⁴ And as observed above, the reduction of the diversity of human lives and bodies is not the only issue which is to be considered here. The division and compartmentization of bodies and identities into oppositional, dichotomous categories has been accompanied by the introduction of a value judgment, an addition whereby every body that is recognized as female, and every characteristic and expression with which this body is, and has been, associated is made *and therefore found* to be inferior.

It is in relation to bodies thought and formed through dualistic conceptualizations of sex and gender that Woman emerges. But it is critical that “the female” body not be conflated with that subjectivity Woman with which it has been associated and for which it provides the requisite matter. Woman is something which cannot be reduced to, or subsumed within, the notion of the female body or an expression of femininity. Woman remains at once distinct from and yet wholly embroiled in the manufactured dichotomies of sex and gender.

What, then, is Woman? Woman is a concept through which bodies come to be formed as subjects. More precisely, Woman is a concept that historically has operated primarily in the subjectification of female bodies and, due to its inextricable association with dualistic conceptions of sex and gender, it is a concept which has been operative in the reduction of the potentialities of these bodies to think (live and produce) themselves outside of the terms and poles that these dualistic conceptions enact and enforce. Thus far, that is to say, historically and presently, the body subjectified as Woman constitutes the site at which the idea of a single female body and the expectation of the feminine

unite and are inscribed into flesh. As we proceed in this analysis, we shall contemplate whether or not this will continue, of necessity, to be the case; however, at present, we shall turn our attention to Beauvoir's account of Woman, in order to delve further into what has been conceived by her to be this mythical conceptual construct defined wholly by its relation to the primary term "man" (SS, 143).

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir provides an extensive analysis of the subordinate status of women in the social order of the patriarchy, detailing the mechanisms and systems of thought through which their enforced inferiority, and identification as Other (SS, 198), has been instituted and ensured. Her investigation extends throughout and beyond the (so-divided and constructed) public and private spheres of the milieu in which she existed. The scope of this text is really quite remarkable. It takes as its objects of study the human and non-human world (and the relation of differently sexed bodies therein), charts the historical evolution of modes of production and the implications of such on the organization of the social world, documents accounts of the experiences of women of every age, and weighs the validity of the popular literature and predominant economic and psychoanalytic theories of her day (namely, "socialist ideologies" (SS, 142) and those doctrines extracted of the postulates of Freud).

Central to and consistent throughout this broad spectrum of analyses, however, is the notion that it is the particularities of the female body – specifically, those powers of menstruation, ovulation and lactation; the capacity to carry, bring forth, and sustain life unique to (many) female bodies – which are seized and appropriated in the production of justification for the inequitable treatment of women. Beauvoir's analysis brings to light,

in other words, the ways in which “women’s corporeal specificity is used to explain and justify the different (read: unequal) social positions...of the two sexes” (VB, 14), the ways in which “[w]omen have been objectified and alienated as social subjects partly through the denigration and containment of the female body” (VB, xiv).

More precisely, however, the theme that presents itself as central to *The Second Sex* is Beauvoir’s conviction that it is *not* the sites of difference which distinguish female bodies from male bodies, in themselves, that are the cause of women’s inferiority.³⁵ To the contrary, Beauvoir contends, it is the ways in which these differences have been perceived, and the conceptualizations and paradigms which have been created on the basis of these (mis)perceptions, that buttress, lend rationale to, and enable the perpetuation of the subordinate status of women. *The Second Sex*, therefore, was of such immense value and consequence because it enabled many Euro-Western women to draw and recognize the distinction between *the female body* and *woman as social construct*, and to begin to comprehend the mechanisms by which the particularities of a body can be transfigured into a monolithic social subjectivity. It contributed greatly to our understanding of the historical conditions through which it became possible that female bodies could be formed, through the myth of Woman, into subjectivities of Otherness.

According to the account put forth by Beauvoir, man’s relation to woman is rooted in his relation to the organic, non-human world. More specifically stated, the conceptualization of woman as Other has its origins in the historical tension between human males and the environments in which they lived and, as Beauvoir’s analysis further conjectures, it was man’s historical struggle with and eventual dominion over the

natural world that prompted him to recognize and posit himself as Subject and, on this basis, to establish the social order of the patriarchy:

The discovery of bronze enabled man, in the experience of hard and productive labor, to discover himself as creator; dominating nature, he was no longer afraid of it, and in the fact of obstacles overcome he found courage to see himself as an autonomous active force, to achieve self-fulfillment as an individual...[T]he subject shapes and masters himself in shaping and mastering the land. (SS, 56)

Following from this, it is the contention of Beauvoir that once male humans had established themselves as Subjects – that is, as the centers and rulers of the social world – they sought entities and beings onto which they might project their beliefs and perceptions of themselves, and in which they could find the image of their own constructed conceptualizations of self and world reflected back.³⁶ They sought, therefore, an inessential Other, and found the materials out of which this Other was to be fashioned in the substances of the earth and the bodies of human females. And while these figures of Otherness were meant to provide human males with validation for their existence, they were strictly prohibited from challenging or threatening man's exclusive claim to Subjectivity.

It is the creation of an inessential Other out of the body of the female that provided the ideological rationale for the institution of the social order of the patriarchy. Female bodies, according to Beauvoir, are formed into figures of Otherness through the concept or myth of Woman. But it is precisely this idea of an inherent character of Otherness that, for Beauvoir, is mythical. Thus, in describing Woman as a myth, Beauvoir is not intending to dispute the actual and lived implications of subjectifying bodies in this way. She is intending, rather, to call attention to the fact that any existent character of Otherness has been produced of a particular regime, the implications of

which extend well beyond the realm of the mythical or imaginary. In fact, Beauvoir maintains that the myth of Woman is a powerful apparatus through which it becomes possible that the patriarchal order may be perpetuated and enforced:

The epochs and the social classes that have been marked by the leisure to dream have been the ones to set up the images, black and white, of femininity. But along with luxury there was utility; these dreams were irresistibly guided by interests...But going beyond experience toward the transcendent Idea was deliberately used by patriarchal society for purposes of self-justification; through the myths this society imposed its laws and customs upon individuals in a picturesque, effective manner; it is under a mythical form that the group-imperative is indoctrinated into each conscience. (SS, 260)

She concludes, therefore, that “[w]e can see now that the myth is in large part explained by its usefulness to man” (SS, 260),³⁷ as “[f]ew myths have been more advantageous to the ruling caste than the myth of woman: it justifies all privileges and even authorizes their abuse” (SS, 255).³⁸

Yet, Beauvoir’s analysis of Woman as Other is more than a statement about the secondary status of women in the social order of the patriarchate, although she clearly recognizes this too as a matter of great concern. At base, however, it is a statement about what Beauvoir perceives to be the tendency of man to seek to escape his awareness of the inherent limitations of his existence as a mortal being (SS, 142). In constructing the myth of Woman, man has created a receptacle onto which is projected everything which he fears, loathes and, therefore, wishes to deny most *about himself*, about his Being, and the conditions or constraints imposed upon him by his all-too-human existence: “This, then, is the reason why woman has a double and deceptive visage...she is the source and origin of all man’s reflection on his existence and of whatever expression he is able to give to it; and yet she works to divert him from himself, to make him sink down in silence and in death” (SS, 197).³⁹

Furthermore, according to Beauvoir, the quality of man that is most difficult for him to reconcile within himself is his own corporality, the materiality of his own bodily existence. Everything, therefore, which is associated with or reminiscent of the flesh, of the body, has been projected onto woman and made into a matter of disgust, of defilement, of abjection. Grosz, elaborating on this theme, writes:

Patriarchal oppression...justifies itself, at least in part, by connecting women much more closely than men to the body and, through this identification, restricting women's social and economic roles to (pseudo) biological terms. Relying on essentialism, naturalism and biologism, misogynist thought confines women to the biological requirements of reproduction...The hostility that misogynist thought directs toward women and femininity has been commonly rationalized through the depreciation and derision of women's bodies. (VB, 14)

Thus motivated by their unease in their own corporeality, to the mind of the male human the distinctive capabilities of the female body became magnified and grotesque, and were looked upon with great apprehension, inspiring fear and mistrust. For instance, as Beauvoir elucidates, it was not the shedding of menses blood that was the occasion for distress in man; rather, it was the distress itself, which was already present in man that led him to view menstrual blood with such trepidation and distain: "The blood, indeed, does not make woman impure; it is rather a sign of her impurity. It concerns generation, it flows from the parts where the fetus develops. Through menstrual blood is expressed the horror inspired in man by woman's fecundity" (SS, 150).

The perception of the female body as gaping, leaking, and unruly – as especially threatening due to its fluidity and ostensible inability to contain itself or be contained – is illuminated most vividly in the writings of Beauvoir when viewed in contrast to the venerated image of the Virgin. Beauvoir remarks: "The Virgin is fecundity, dew, wellspring of life...she is not creative, but she fructifies" (SS, 180). And yet: "The body

of the Virgin remained closed. Since the Middle Ages the fact of having a body has been considered, in woman, an ignominy. Even science has long been paralyzed by this disgust” (SS, 168). In addition to this, even the revered role of the mother in patriarchal society could not excuse woman of the seemingly unseemly and reprehensible business of pregnancy and childbirth. Beauvoir declares: “With all the respect thrown around it by society, the function of gestation still inspires a spontaneous feeling of revulsion...[and the] uncleanness of birth is reflected upon the mother” (SS, 146). Echoing and supporting Beauvoir’s sentiments on this matter, Grosz argues that “in the West, in our time, the female body has been constructed not only as a lack or absence but...as a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as formless flow; as viscosity, entrapping, secreting; as lacking not so much or simply the phallus but self-containment...[as] a disorder that threatens all order” (VB, 203).

Following from Beauvoir’s analysis, we can conclude that it is *this* body – the female body now riddled with and adorned by man’s misplaced and self-interested perceptions and conceptions – which is the material appropriated and utilized in the construction of the myth of Woman. But, as Beauvoir rather incisively observes: “It is always difficult to describe a myth; it cannot be grasped or encompassed; it haunts the human consciousness without ever appearing before it in fixed form. The myth [of Woman] is so various, so contradictory, that at first its unity is not discerned” (SS, 143). It is at once elusive and pervasive, rarely availed to description and, yet, of this myth there are quite a few things that must be said. The myth of Woman is an irreconcilable contradiction because, in it, man’s perception of the female body as abject coalesces with the assembly of standardized and idealized figures conjured up of his imagination. This

myth, therefore, is obscure and complex yet falsely simplistic, at odds with itself and constantly transforming yet predetermined and closely regulated.

The myth of Woman is a mask of two faces, with each face expressing either of two contradictory poles. Presenting one side of this dual visage, woman incarnates “the form of the devoted Mother...faithful fiancée, patient wife” (SS, 192). But when this head turns on its axis, and the underside of that face appears, “she incarnates the Femininity that masculine society has not sanctified and that remains charged with harmful powers...[she] incarnates evil, shame, disease, damnation [and] inspires fear and disgust” (SS, 193). Furthermore: “Between [the] clearly fixed poles [of the myth of Woman] can be discerned a multitude of ambiguous figures, pitiable, hateful, sinful, victimized, coquettish, weak, angelic, devilish” (SS, 192). Yet, despite the apparent variety of figures comprising this spectrum, they remain just that: *figures* – tracings, images, fictions – plots on a grid, stakes of the axiom, pre-established, fixed forms – forms which falsify, mask, and endeavor to contain the multitude of expressions or affects of which the female body is capable.

Thus, Beauvoir contends: “The myth is one of those snares of false objectivity into which the man who depends on ready-made valuations rushes headlong...For an authentic relation with an autonomous existent, the myth of Woman substitutes the fixed contemplation of a mirage” (SS, 261). In the order of the patriarchy, it is only *as* or *through* (inescapably, that is, *in relation to*) these mythical constructs that the female body can be known (both to self and other) – it cannot disentangle itself from them; they precede her, encase her, and operate to constrain her. And this gives rise to the tenuous position of women within patriarchy, a system which, in its disempowerment of the

female body, issues an invitation to it: the temptation of submission, of compliance with the myth of woman and the identity of Other, and of the wealth of deceptive, but none the less *felt*, glorification this can afford. It is often argued, and indeed true, that the image of the female body and the idea(l) of Woman is commonly glorified within the system of the patriarchy. But to be clear: “she will be glorified only in accepting the subordinate role assigned to her...This is the supreme masculine victory...it is the rehabilitation of woman through the accomplishment of her defeat” (SS, 171).

The actual (i.e. lived) realities and capabilities of female bodies shall remain unknown to bodies of every sex insofar as they can be viewed only through the skewing kaleidoscope of mythical constructs and falsifying concepts which contort them. But is this not the very purpose of the myth, and the intention with which it is preserved: to keep hidden, unknown and, thus, *unrealized* the potentialities which underlie (or move, albeit in a restricted capacity, between and through) it? Beauvoir argues that the myth of Woman comes from not recognizing the value of the self-experiences and self-definitions of women, defining them instead through conceptual constructs which have been produced by men (SS, 143): “For if woman is not the...*Other* [that is, does not experience herself as Other], it remains none the less true that she is always defined as the Other” (SS, 143). Beauvoir is unwavering in her position, however, that in spite of the character of Otherness seemingly inherent to the body subjectified as Woman, and in spite of any apparent resignation to or acceptance of this subject position, the powers of female bodies are never entirely suppressed or eliminated, because “to play at being woman is also a delusion: to be a woman would mean to be the object, the Other—and the Other nevertheless remains subject in the midst of her resignation” (SS, 51).

Elizabeth Grosz, in a text published over 40 years after the original publication of *The Second Sex*, reiterates the sentiment put forth by Beauvoir in the paragraph above and reaffirms it as being relevant in the present day, as she writes:

Women's bodies and sexualities have been structured and lived in terms that not only differentiate them from men's but also attempt, not always or even usually entirely successfully, to position them in a relation of passive dependence and secondariness to men's. This is not to say that women necessarily experience [themselves] in this way but rather that the only socially recognized and validated representations of women's [bodies and] sexuality are those which conform to and accord with the expectations and desires of a certain heterosexual structuring of male desire. (VB, 202)

And further:

All knowledges and social practices have thus far represented the energies and interests of [I would add, a certain faction of] one sex alone. [This is not to suggest] that women have had no input into cultural production—quite the contrary. Women's contributions have never been acknowledged or represented in the terms chosen by women themselves. (VB, xi)

In Beauvoir's statements above and in these passages from Grosz, three themes present themselves as common. The first theme is as follows: there is an unavoidable and inescapable quality of Otherness (or, in Grosz's terms, an essentialized difference and "secondariness") accompanying the lived body of the female subjectified as Woman. The second theme is discernable in the notion that this identity of Otherness can never entirely contain or determine the experiences of female bodies, even whilst they are defining and representing themselves through the subjectivity of Woman. The third theme can be located in the acknowledgment on the part of both philosophers that when (*not if*) the experiences of female bodies identified and/or identifying as women are incongruous or incompatible with (and thereby threatening to) the cohesion and operations of the conceptual construction of Woman through which they have been subjectified, these experiences are masked, rendered unseen or invisible (that is, un- or underrepresented in

dominant or major discourses), and/or denied (a tactic that can take many forms, for instance, such as Grosz has suggested, through social invalidation or lack of recognition).

On the basis of this analysis, we can formulate the following series of inquiries: Is it inevitable that female bodies subjectified as women are to be defined as Other? Is this quality of Otherness inseparable from the subject position of Woman? Can 'woman', as a category of identification or subjectification, and/or as a method of (self-)expression or representation, be extricated or disengaged from the historical force of an enforced Otherness? Can it be redefined by women – that is, defined for the first time by women on and in their own terms? And finally: Is it possible or desirable to endeavor to altogether abandon Woman as a conceptual construct employed and operative in the subjectification of female bodies?

While engaging a process of redefining or (re)imagining the potentialities of female bodies with regard to self-expression and representation, it may be tempting to seek to abandon Woman as a concept which historically has conformed to and accorded with "the expectations and desires of a certain heterosexual structuring of male desire" (VB, 202). This concept, due to its association with dualistic conceptions of gender and sex, can at times seem beyond recuperation and thus striving to eradicate or abandon it might appear to be the most effective strategy, especially in light of Beauvoir's stringent critique of (the myth of) Woman enumerated above. We cannot, however, erase or escape our shared history of enforced Otherness, but neither are we destined to endlessly reproduce and relive it. Thus, following Grosz, I would argue that: "In dissolving oppositional categories we cannot simply ignore them, vowing never to speak in their terms again. This is neither historically possible nor even desirable insofar as these

categories must be engaged with in order to be succeeded. But new terms and different conceptual frameworks must also be devised to be able to talk of the body outside...of binary pairs" (VB, 24).

So the question remains: How are we (women) to begin and further the project of experiencing and representing our own bodies? How can we begin to know – or, rather, to *think* – female bodies, in all of their diversity, *outside of* the idea of a single female body, *outside of* Woman as a monolithic subjectivity? How are we to develop conceptions of subjectivity which remain focused on bodies and committed to an ongoing awareness of their singularity and irreducible differences, conceptions that "will readily acknowledge the centrality of the problematic of sexual difference" (VB, 210), while nevertheless refusing to conceive of sexual identities in terms of "the notion of two absolutely separate types of entity, men and women" (VB, 208)?

The scope of a project such as this is immense, immeasurable. It will require the creation and formation of conceptual contributions put forth from infinitely diverse (and likely, at times, incompatible) perspectives. And, it is for this reason that we cannot "give an alternative account [here, which] provides materials directly useful for women's self-representation" (VB, 188); because, as Grosz explains:

To do so would involve knowing in advance, preempting, the developments of women's self-understandings which are now in the process of being formulated regarding what the best terms are for representing women as intellectual, social, moral, and sexual agents. It would involve producing new discourses and knowledges, new modes of art and new forms of representational practice outside of the patriarchal frameworks which have thus far ensured the impossibility of women's autonomous self-representations...No one yet knows what the conditions are for developing knowledges, representations, models, programs, which provide women with nonpatriarchal terms for representing themselves and the world from women's interests and points of view. (VB, 188)

But we must begin somewhere and perhaps the only viable point of departure is the location in which we presently find ourselves. Thus, as we transition to our final chapter, in an effort to create the space in which new theoretical and conceptual models may be developed, we shall once again engage the task of (re)thinking bodies as a project of engendering the greatest potentialities for discovering and creating new ways in which they might be (re)produced, (re)lived. The theories of Deleuze and Guattari will be of use in this endeavor because, “as a critique of binarism...a Deleuzian framework poses a striking alternative: rather than the either-or choice imposed by binarisms, they posit a both-and relation” (VB, 181).

Deleuze and Guattari have argued that we cannot reach the outside of a dualistic conceptualization of human bodies simply by seeking to transcend or bypass it. They contend: “The only way to get outside the dualism is to be-between, to pass between, the *intermezzo*” (TP, 277). We do not *get past* or *move beyond* the dualism. This is not a successive stage of progression. The dualism is a conceptual event whose historical and contemporary activity gives rise to consequences that cannot be invalidated or ignored. Thus, the situation is not such that we put the dualism behind us, move on or forward as if unaffected. The only place to go, to move, if we are to get outside the dualism is *between*: “one must pass...through binaries, not in order to reproduce them but to find terms and modes that befuddle their operations, connections that demonstrate the impossibility of their binarization, terms, relations, and practices that link the binarily opposed terms” (VB, 181).

It is the fixed nature of the dualism which enables it to operate with such efficacy. It acts such that the identities and subjectivities we form in relation thereto remain fixed.

We do not get beyond the dualism by moving past it, we get outside of it – by whatever line of flight and for whatever temporal duration – by passing between. *We do not get beyond, we get outside. We do not move past, we pass between. We be-between the terms employed and the poles upheld.* The passage between renders the dualism ineffective; being between, living as a continuous passage between, we rid it of its force. Or, rather, we live our bodies in a way such that they are inscribed by this force differently⁴⁰ – we live our bodies in the inbetween, *as intermezzo* – not so that sexual differences, sexualities and gender identities become neutralized, but such that the subjectivities as or through which we live do not operate to diminish the affective capabilities of our bodies, so that the irreducible *specificity and fluidity* of sexed bodies not be lost. Contributing a preliminary suggestion as to how we might go about living our bodies in this way, I would conjecture that we must insist upon the primacy of the (self-)experiences of bodies. We must insist that the concepts through which we live our bodies do not precede and operate (as a plan of transcendence) to determine our experiences as the realization of a pre-established schema or developmental trajectory, but rather that our self-conceptualizations are available to transform through a body experienced as transformative (i.e., a body lived as a plan of composition). And, concluding with terminology akin to that of Deleuze of Guattari, Grosz observes that the task ahead involves “exploring and experimenting with as many of these models as we may need and find useful for the various infinite contexts in which the question of bodies, their powers and differences, arises...It involves not a death of man or of God but the generation of a new productivity *between* and of the two sexes” (VB, 210; emphasis mine).

(Re)thinking Bodies – Chapter Four:
Becoming-woman

The girl...do[es] not become; it is becoming itself that is a girl. The...[girl does not become a woman]; the girl is the becoming woman of each sex...Knowing how to love does not mean remaining a man or a woman; it means extracting from one's sex the particles, the speeds and slownesses, the flows, the *n* sexes that constitute the girl of *that* sexuality...Sexuality, any sexuality, is a becoming-woman, in other words, a girl. A Thousand Plateaus, 1987: 277

In this chapter we will return to the plane of immanence, but only very briefly and only so that we may create the environment necessary to an enumeration of becoming, as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari in their 1987 work, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Following from this, we will present a detailed explication of becoming-woman, also as conceived in this work. In this explication, we will examine the three-pronged critique of becoming-woman put forth by Rosi Braidotti in her 1994 text, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, arguing that her criticisms are founded upon a fundamental misunderstanding of the notion itself and the intention with which it has been put forth, and her conclusions therefore require reexamination and revision. We shall find, however, that this discussion will be unable to move very far from the immanent plane through which it emerged and, so, as our conclusion, we shall return here once again.

How shall we find our way to becoming, and further still, to a becoming that is woman? If becoming has a definition it is without a doubt rhizomatic, consisting of a multiplicity of flat surfaces and lines that exist only in plurality, tangled, interwoven, at once impermanent and impossible to contain. But can a definition be plural, bivocal, and subject to endless alterations and variations, innumerable contingencies and specificities?

Perhaps when approaching becoming, it would be prudent not to seek a definition, but rather signposts, words of guidance or direction, that may (as much as anything possibly can) assist us in *understanding* from an *outside* that which, in truth, can be *experienced* only from *within*. As we draw nearer to becoming, there will be signposts, suggestions, and guidelines to be discerned, but the observances which are to be made with regard to such, if general, are extracted carefully of the particular situations from which they have been deduced and in which they remain rooted; as there is a character of particularity to all statements about becoming which can be neither minimized nor ignored. There are so many points of entry, so many spaces of the inbetween into which we might slip, enter and descend. It matters not where we start, but instead the destinations to which we are swept by the lines we traverse.

We shall begin with a return to the issue of imitation. It has been observed at numerous points in the chapters preceding this one that becoming is not to be mistaken for an imitative performance; yet, the issue of imitation remains critical to a discussion of becomings of any sort. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that “[a] becoming is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification” (TP, 237). It is sufficiently clear that the notions of identification, imitation, resemblance, and correspondence are of little assistance when seeking to gain insight into those relations which constitute becomings, or into those bodies whose movements constitute the relations which constitute becomings. *But why is this so?*

The notion of resemblance has meaning only when bodies are conceived through a plan(e) of transcendence. That is to say, it has meaning only so long as bodies are understood as being formed on the basis of organ, subjectified on the basis of function,

and ordered according to species or genus. Resemblances are conceivable only between organed and subjectified bodies – bodies which have been made vertical, graduated and hierarchized by “series [or] structure” (TP, 234) – bodies, therefore, which are conceived through a “plane of development or organization” (TP, 269). Likewise, the idea of imitation can operate only within and through conceptions of this type. As when we contemplate the idea of imitation, we find that a body can be understood as imitating another body only when it mirrors or mimes the form or function of this other body, the form or function characteristic of the species or genus type to which it has been assigned.

The notion of resemblance operates through a transcendent plane; it implies the body as formed by conceptual constructs existing external to the movements of which it is composed. It is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari assert: “there is a becoming...not content to proceed by resemblance and for which resemblance, on the contrary, would present an obstacle or stoppage” (TP, 233). If you are trying to become on the basis of a perceived resemblance, you are operating still through a plane of transcendence – viewing bodies as forms and perceiving only this. Becoming cannot occur on a plane of transcendence. Yet, our departure from this plane does not imply a venture into the theoretical, hypothetical or imaginary. Our departure from the plane of transcendence renders becoming no less actual, no less real. Let us use, as an example, the instance of becoming-animal. Deleuze and Guattari write:

To become is not to progress or regress along a series. Above all, becoming does not occur in the imagination...Becomings-animal are neither dream nor phantasies. They are perfectly real. But which reality is at issue here? For if becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not “really” become an animal any more than the animal “really” becomes something else. (TP, 238)

The necessity of making a distinction between that which becomes and that which “really” becomes is rooted in our tendency to ascribe to the series and structures operative in the formation of bodies the status of reality, that is, the status of “real” reality. “Serialism and structuralism either graduate characteristics according to their resemblances, or order them according to their differences” (TP, 239), and we consider that being or phenomenon “real” that has been formed in accordance with these schemas. So, in one sense: “Becoming produces nothing other than itself” (TP, 238), as it does not affect a metamorphosis or transmutation of the form of those bodies engaging therein. It does not reshape the configuration of parts of a body so that this body would become recognizable as a form different from that as which it was recognized hitherto. Becoming does not affect a departure from genus or species. The body becoming may very well *appear* unchanged, that is, if it is perceived only through the transcendent classificatory schemas through which similarities are graduated and differences ordered.

However, “[w]e fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are” (TP, 238); which is to say, we fall into false alternative if we accept that you can become other only by *imitating* the form of another body or by *assuming* the form of another body. “What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes” (TP, 238). What is real is the affective force produced of becoming, not the fixed terms which operate to form and differentiate the bodies whose encounter produces the block by which becoming proceeds. In this sense, therefore, the productive potentiality of becoming is as extensive as the affective capabilities of the bodies engaging therein, and it could not be more real, despite the fact (or, perhaps, due in large part to the fact) that it permeates and

moves through or across the terms which are employed to differentiate and designate bodies of all kind.

Following from this, it could be argued that we would be remiss to assume that the body of a human being cannot become, for instance, animal without assuming the form by which the animal is recognized, without becoming recognizable as the form of that animal termed: "Becoming can and should be qualified as becoming-animal even in the absence of a term that would be the animal become" (TP, 238). As Deleuze and Guattari further elucidate:

These are not phantasies...it is not a question of imitating a horse, "playing" horse, identifying with one, or even experiencing feelings of pity or sympathy. Neither does it have to do with an objective analogy between assemblages. The question is whether [you] can endow [your] own elements with the relations of movement and rest, the affects, that would make it become horse, forms and subjects aside. Is there an as yet unknown assemblage that would be neither [yours] nor the horse's, but that of the becoming-horse of [you]? (TP, 258)

Furthermore, given that a block of becoming can be produced of the encounter between a composite human body and an ideal or mental body (TP, xvi), it is quite possible that a human body might become animal even in the absence of any physical body formed as such. And while there remains a great deal to be clarified with regard to the notion of becoming, in order to prepare for this further explication, we must return at present to the body and the planes through which it might be lived and conceived.

The body is a terrain that can be lived in many ways. In our second chapter, we presented the plan(e) of immanence and the plan(e) of transcendence as two distinct ways in which a body might be lived. Spinoza descended from the plane of transcendence in order to compose a map of the body as a relation of motion and rest, defined by varying

and variable degrees of intensity and affective capability. Nietzsche, too, descended from this plane, envisaging the human being as a constellation of force and force-centers, a constellation constantly moving, constantly transforming. Similarly, Beauvoir understood the human being as an entity which could be defined only through a plan(e) of composition, that is, only through or as its own movements and the potentialities engendered thereby. Deleuze and Guattari analogously indicate their location, as they write: “In the same way that we avoided defining a body by its organs and functions, we will avoid defining it by Species or Genus characteristics; instead we will seek to count its affects” (TP, 257).

Defining a body by the affects of which it is capable, we conceive of this body through the plan(e) of immanence, as a plan of composition, and this “plan(e) is infinite, you can start it in a thousand different ways; you will always find something that comes too late or too early, forcing you to recompose all of your relations of speed and slowness, all of your affects, and to rearrange the overall assemblage. An infinite undertaking” (TP, 259). Conceiving a body as the affective capability particular to its relation of parts, we have arrived once again at the plane(e) of immanence, and this is a plane of experimentation not organization, a plane of dissolution not development of forms: “It is thus a plan of proliferation, peopling, contagion; but this proliferation of material has nothing to do with an evolution, the development of a form or the filiation of forms...It is on the contrary an *involution*, in which form is constantly being dissolved, freeing times and speeds” (TP, 267). A body is formed through applications of strata operating through a plan of organization or development, and is destratified as these forms dissolve on an immanent plane:

The plane of organization or development effectively covers what we have called stratification: Forms and subjects, organs and functions, as “strata” or relations between strata. The plane of consistency or immanence, on the other hand, implies a destratification of all of Nature...The plane of consistency is the body without organs. Pure relations of speed and slowness between particles imply movements of deterritorialization. Moreover, the plane of consistency does not preexist the movements of deterritorialization that unravel it, the lines of flight that draw it and cause it to rise to the surface, the becomings that compose it. (TP, 269-270)

In this passage, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the plane of immanence is unraveled by movements of deterritorialization, drawn by lines of flight, and composed of becomings. Lines of flight draw the plane of immanence. *But what is a line of flight?*

A line of flight is the trajectory of a particle (or particles) loosed by the introduction or emergence of a specific force or intensity. The terrain across which this trajectory stretches is affected in a manner such that any forms which may have solidified thereon will undergo a (relative and variable) coming-undone. A line of flight is the path of a particle loosed by an intensity traversing the assemblage of parts of which a body is composed, an intensity which breaks through or, rather, which *moves between* (and thereby *disassembles*) solidified masses and hardened accumulations. Lines of flight cause the Body without Organs (which *is* the plane of immanence) to rise to the surface, insofar as they cause unnamed, unformed particles to wrench themselves from the hardened accumulations in which they had amassed and circulate or move through the constellations and relations of parts composing the body to which they belong according to a particular relation. But as we proceed in this analysis, we must bear in mind that “[n]o one can say where the line of flight shall pass” (TP, 250).

This phenomenon of a formed body coming-undone – or, rather, of areas or sites of crystallization formed of a composite body coming-undone – is understood by Deleuze

and Guattari to be a movement of deterritorialization, as it is through movements of this sort that a territory of the formed body is transformed (again) into the pure relations of speed and slowness of which it is constituted (TP, 270). It is a movement which affects a hastening of the particles of which a solidified mass within a composite body is composed, a movement by which these particles accelerate to a rate of speed which causes them to break free from the forms to which they had hitherto belonged in a particular relation, and move so as to find new relations into which they may enter.

Presented in contrast to movements of deterritorialization, Deleuze and Guattari understand movements of reterritorialization to be those movements by which the “pure relations of speed and slowness between [the] particles” (TP, 270) which constitute a body come to be formed, movements by which these particles are compelled to arrange themselves in defined configurations. The terrain across which a movement of reterritorialization passes is affected such that the motion of the particles which assemble constellations thereon is decelerated to an extent that causes the constellations which are formed of their relations to become (to a certain, relative and variable extent) stagnant or fixed. A movement of reterritorialization is a movement which affects a cohesion or crystallization of particles, and it is movements of this type which affect the organization of a formed body, the development of a subjectivity or subject type.

Reterritorializations are those movements by which molar entities, or “molar species” (TP, 275), are formed. What Deleuze and Guattari term a “molar entity” is the entity “as defined by [its] form, endowed with organs and functions and assigned as a subject” (TP, 275). But the formed quality or character of the molar entity must be vigorously maintained and thus it must be continually reformed by movements of this

sort, as the sites of sedimentation or solidification of which it is comprised require continual reassembly after undergoing (relative and partial) disassembly by the movements of deterritorialization that move across them, as lines of flight stretch as fractures through them. Movements of reterritorialization are those operations by which the spontaneous and dynamic relations of particles are transformed into solidified masses, the operations by which layered sedimentary strata are laid as crystallized constellations come to rest against one another. These are the affects of a transcendent plan(e) or, more precisely, they are the operations which develop the forms as which the body is lived in accordance with a plan(e) of this type.

Plans of organization and development operate through movements of reterritorialization and raise the body to a plane of transcendence. But lines of flight draw the plane of immanence, they return the body to the immanent plane through and upon which its movements transpire, the plane composed of its becomings. These lines extend as fissures across the strata which are developed as so many hardened accumulations and sedimentary layers of the formed body. And as remarked above, a line of flight is the trajectory of a particle loosed by the introduction or emergence of a specific force or intensity. *But which intensity? An intensity produced of what?*

We have arrived at becoming. And let us restate our first fragment in an unordered series of insights which, when assembled, will produce a mosaic through which this intricate concept shall be illuminated: It is of becomings that the plane of immanence is composed. Lines of flight concern and imply the trajectories of loosed particles. Deterritorialization concerns and implies movements; more specifically, the

movements by which particles are loosed. Becomings imply and concern forces and intensities – intensities which have the capacity to give rise to movements of deterritorialization which loose particles, intensities which have the capacity to loose particles which undo territories in movements of deterritorialization. It is of particles, relations of speed and slowness, and variable degrees of intensity that the plane of immanence is composed. But there remains, still, a great deal to be said. We will proceed through five points of departure.

First: Becoming implies an encounter between bodies. It implies the encounter of a particle which belongs, in a particular relation, to the assemblage which composes one (formed or stratified) body with a particle which belongs, in a particular relation, to the assemblage composing another (formed or stratified) body. A becoming, therefore, always occurs on the molecular level – that is, through and as an intermingling of unformed particles – however, it also implies the presence of (at least) two bodies, to which the intermingling particles belong in a particular relation.

Second: Becoming implies a production of force or a generation of intensity. As each particle is characterized by the rate of speed at which it travels (i.e. velocity) and the specific quanta of force with which it is imbued (i.e. intensity), when two particles move so as to intersect one another, this intersection generates an intensity that is entirely unique to this encounter of particles. Additionally, as each particle in motion belongs to a body in a particular relation, the assemblages it forms are continually reconstituting themselves and, therefore, the relation of parts composing a body remains in a state of continual (re)composition. Just as the state of a body entering into a becoming is unique to that specific instant, so too is the intensity generated of the becoming. It is not merely

the case that the combination of any two (formed) bodies generates an intensity unique to these two (formed) bodies. Rather, at every instant (due to the continual movement of the particles of which it is composed) any singular (formed) body is in the process of becoming a body different from that which it was only an instant before. So, at every instant, the body becoming alongside and with another body generates an intensity that is entirely unique both to (the parts of) this body at this moment, and to (the parts of) this body in relation to (the parts of) the other body (which is also uniquely composed) at this moment. We cannot reproduce becoming. An instance of becoming between bodies cannot be duplicated, not even in the instance of a second (or third, fourth, etc.) intermingling of parts belonging to two formed or composite bodies whose characteristic relations have remained intact.

Third: Becoming begins with and proceeds by a block – *not* a stoppage or blockage: a *block* – a block that is produced by an intermingling of particles belonging to the characteristic relation of different bodies; a block which, then, proceeds to engulf both bodies and sweep them into an irresistible movement that is beyond the control of either body respectively and both bodies collectively. A block can be produced of the encounter of any two bodies – human bodies, animal bodies, ideal bodies, elemental bodies – at any point of intersection of those simplest infinitesimal particles of which the world is composed. For instance, Deleuze and Guattari write:

There is a block of becoming that snaps up the wasp and the orchid, but from which no wasp-orchid can ever descend. There is a block of becoming that takes hold of the cat and baboon, the alliance between which is effected by a C virus. There is a block of becoming between young roots and certain microorganisms, the alliance between which is affected by the materials synthesized in the leaves (rhizosphere). (TP, 238)

The block by which becoming proceeds exists or runs *between* the intermingling yet distinctly composed bodies: it “runs its own line “between” the terms in play and beneath assignable relations” (TP, 239).

Fourth: Becoming is affect. Or, rather: “Affects are becomings” (TP, 256).

Becoming is an experience of the intensity that has been generated by the movement of particles encountering one another in a block. But each of the particles (or assemblage of particles) which have encountered one another in a block belongs in a particular relation to either of the bodies between which this block runs, and this intensity is experienced uniquely by each of these bodies.

Becoming implies the presence of (at least) two bodies. It is particles belonging to these bodies whose intermingling produces a block, which generates an intensity specific to this intermingling: the “intensities come from external parts or from the individual’s own parts” (TP, 256). However, the intensity generated is issued and reverberates beyond the block that runs between the intermingling bodies and traverses the assemblages and territories of which these bodies are constituted. The intensity generated by an encounter of particles in the production of a block is experienced differently by each body to which these particles belong and between which this block runs. The experience of this intensity is unique to each body because each body is uniquely defined by the affects of which it is capable, that is, by its capacity to affect and be affected by the intensities which are generated by the blocks into which its particles enter. Finally, the effects or implications of a becoming also vary according to each body engaging therein. This is the case even though both bodies become through their experience of the intensity generated of an

intermingling of particles in the production of the block which passes between them. But this is to be explored in greater detail as we proceed.

It is precisely because each body uniquely experiences the intensity generated that Deleuze and Guattari have termed becoming an “*aparallel evolution*” (TP, 10). By ‘evolution,’ here, we understand the transition from one embodied state to another, a transition which can be understood as being ‘aparallel’ in the sense that when a block is formed between two bodies, the intensity generated affects these bodies such that both simultaneously undergo a transition, but the transitions that occur, while simultaneous, are likely to be experienced quite differently by each body whose parts are intermingling. Thus, when a block is produced between two bodies, the affective experience of each body constitutes a becoming, and

the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further. There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on a line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying. Remy Chauvin expresses it well: “the *aparallel evolution* of two beings that have absolutely nothing to do with each other.” (TP, 10)

Fifth: Becoming is at once a becoming-imperceptible and a becoming-perceptible. “There is no contradiction in this” (TP, 281). All becomings, insofar as they are becomings-molecular, are becomings-imperceptible of that which is created of the plan of organization and development, the plane of transcendence. They are, therefore, becomings-imperceptible of the molar entity formed as such. Deleuze and Guattari assert: “Movements, becomings, in other words, pure relations of speed and slowness, pure affects, are below and above the threshold of perception” (TP, 281). We understand ‘the threshold of perception,’ here, to refer to the limits of perception as defined when

operating through a plan of organization or development. It is at this point that the body becomes imperceptible to itself as form and subject:

The Pink Panther imitates nothing, it reproduces nothing, it paints the world its color, pink on pink; this is its becoming-world, carried out in such a way that *it becomes imperceptible to itself*, asignifying, makes its rupture, its own line of flight, follows its “aparallel evolution” through to the end. (TP, 11; emphasis mine)

It is not the case, however, that becomings cannot be perceived. Becomings are imperceptible only in the sense that they cannot be perceived through the conceptual constructs by which the body is raised to a transcendent plane, a plane bifurcated against the pure relations of speed and slowness characterizing the particles of which the body is composed. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari qualify their previous assertion, adding that they “are obliged to make an immediate correction: [as becoming] also “must” be perceived, it cannot but be perceived” (TP, 281). Becomings are perceptible only through a plan of composition, on an immanent plane; thus: “the imperceptible itself becomes necessarily perceived at the same time as perception becomes necessarily molecular” (TP, 282). And, as Deleuze writes in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*: “*at the same time as reaction to traces becomes perceptible, reaction ceases to be acted*” (NP, 114).

To become is to experience the relation of parts composing one’s body in a different way, that is, differently than this relation is to be experienced through schemas which exist external to it. In this sense, it is quite likely that a becoming may affect a becoming-imperceptible to oneself, as one has known and experienced oneself hitherto. Thus, the body becomes imperceptible (i.e., “anorganic” (TP, 279)), indiscernible (i.e., “asignifying” (TP, 279)), and impersonal (i.e., “asubjective” (TP, 279)), only in order so that it can become perceptible as variable motion and velocity, as “pure relations of speed

and slowness, pure affects” (TP, 281). But the becoming-perceptible of a body as movement and force can transpire only through an intermingling of particles, through the production of a block which generates an intensity which traverses a body such that its becoming is effectuated.

No sooner than we present these points, does an additional complication present itself: Becoming implies an encounter of bodies, but not every bodily encounter gives rise to becoming. We are left, then, with the question: *Of what encounters are becomings occasioned?* And our answer is to be found in Deleuze and Guattari’s contention that “becoming is not...an evolution by...filiation. Becoming produces nothing by filiation; all filiation is imaginary. Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. *It concerns alliance*” (TP, 238; emphasis mine). Becoming concerns alliance. And we can state, further still, that a block of becoming can be produced *only* between two bodies whose particular intermingling founds an alliance. But what is meant by alliance? An alliance of what sort?

Alliance, as conceived here, is a *particular proximity*, a *molecular nearness*. It implies a particle or element experienced as common by two bodies, each characterized by its own distinctive relation of parts. The particle or element experienced as common is not, of necessity, *shared* between those bodies whose encounter will produce a block, which is to say, this particle may not *appear* or manifest identically or even similarly within the bodies with regard to form or function. Instead, alliance is a nearness between certain of the particles belonging to either body in a particular relation, an elemental nearness which acts as a point of exchange, a passage or channel of interchange.

As understood by Deleuze and Guattari, the alliance by which a block is produced is *an alliance between particles*, an alliance which constitutes the condition of possibility through which a block might be produced, by which a becoming will inevitably proceed. An alliance acts a channel which constitutes the potentiality of the exchange, a channel through which a particular intermingling can occur. Alliance is a fiber strung across borderlines, a strand extending across those lines which constitute borders and, thereby, passing *between* the bodily forms of which these borders are drawn. And “[a] fiber strung across borderlines constitutes a line of flight or of deterritorialization” (TP, 249).

Becoming is concerned with alliance because alliance is a connection between bodies that occurs and is discernable only at a molecular level. It is a connection founded on an elemental proximity. And every becoming is a becoming-molecular insofar as it gives rise to a movement of deterritorialization that affects a (relative and variable) coming undone of (particular solidified masses within) the molar entity. This, then, is how becoming proceeds: through a molecular nearness or particular proximity, an alliance on the molecular level, an alliance perceptible only on an immanent plane, and through the spontaneous generation of a block into which are swept those bodies whose particles found an alliance. “This principle of proximity or approximation is entirely particular and reintroduces no analogy whatsoever. It indicates as rigorously as possible a *zone of proximity or copresence* of a particle, the movement into which any particle that enters the zone is drawn” (TP, 272-273).

This, then, is what is produced of a block of becoming: a *zone of proximity* between bodies which emerges on the basis of an alliance. A block, or zone of proximity, is a “zone of indetermination or uncertainty, “something shared or indiscernible,” a

proximity “that makes it impossible to say where the boundary lies” (TP, 273). The copresent particle is a particle extracted of different bodies which establishes the relation of parts unique to each body that is closest between them. It is this closeness which provides the condition of possibility of the production of a block through which the becoming of both bodies occurs. “We could also put it this way: Becoming is to emit particles that take on certain relations of movement and rest because they enter a particular zone of proximity. Or, it is to emit particles that enter that zone because they take on those relations” (TP, 273).

While it is abundantly clear, at this point in our analysis, that becoming cannot occur on the basis of a perceived resemblance, it is not the case that the specificities of a body with respect to how it has been conceived through a plan of organization or development – that is, the specificities of a body as formed on the basis of organ and as subjectified on the basis of function – are irrelevant in becoming. To the contrary, these are factors which inevitably contribute to the constitution of the affective capabilities of the particular relation of parts composing any given body. Thus, Deleuze and Guattari assert: “Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfills, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are *closest* to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes” (TP, 272).

It is this noteworthy passage that, in my view, very effectively clarifies Deleuze’s position with regard to the third prong of the three-pronged critique put forth by Rosi Braidotti. Following in the tradition of the critique mounted against Deleuze by feminist

philosopher Irigaray (NS, 116; 119), Braidotti contends that “in a feminist perspective, there are three sets of interrelated problems with Deleuze’s position...[the third being] an assumption of symmetry in the speaking stances of the two sexes” (NS, 117), and further: “Deleuze proceeds as if there were a clear equivalence in the speaking positions of the two sexes...[when in fact] there is no symmetry between the sexes” (NS, 118). The contention, however, that Deleuze assumes a symmetry or equivalence between the subject positions assigned (with varying degrees of efficacy) to differently sexed bodies is simply unfounded. As Deleuze clearly observes in the passage referenced above, specificities with respect to the form, subject, organ and functions of a body are *never* irrelevant in becoming. Thus, rather than assuming an equivalence, I would argue that Deleuze in fact assumes that the lack of symmetry traditionally imposed between the sexes is likely to be highly influential in becomings. Furthermore, it will become increasingly evident as we proceed with this analysis that, in his acknowledgment of the special situation of women in relation to the man standard, and in his insistence upon the possibility of women occupying a privileged position in relation to becomings-woman, Deleuze demonstrates himself to be well aware of the dissymmetry in the speaking positions of the two sexes.

We must keep in mind, as we return to the notion of becoming as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari, that the body which becomes is the same body which, on a different plane, is lived as form and subject. It is true that becoming is not concerned with similarities or dissimilarities of form, subject position, organ or function. It is concerned only with proximities, with relative distances and those particular or molecular closenesses which pass through the form and subject to which a body has been assigned.

But this does not equate to a claim that similarities or dissimilarities with respect to form and subject position are without significance to the body becoming.

It is not, however, the form or subject as which a body begins that determines the intensities which are to be generated as its particles find alliances with the particles of another body in the production of a block. And so we must inquire: If there is no direct causality between the forms and subjectivities of those bodies whose particles have allied and the intensities which are generated of their interminglings, how can we speak of different types of becoming – particularly as the typology of becomings seems to be premised precisely upon the forms and subjectivities to which bodies may be assigned? Or, more specifically, the question which is to be of greatest concern in the discussion to follow: *How can we speak of a becoming-woman?*

The very words, *becoming-woman*, upon first observation, are likely to seem inconsistent with all that we have just explained at great length regarding becoming and the plane of immanence; namely as becoming has been conceived as something which can occur only on an immanent plane, while woman is a subjectivity operating through a plane of transcendence. We may additionally inquire, therefore: On a plane where becoming might occur – a plane, that is, populated only by speeds and slowness and varying degrees of intensity, where formed bodies dissolve into an infinity of affective capabilities – how can there remain a woman to become?

Deleuze and Guattari write: “A kind of order or apparent progression can be established for the segments of becomings in which we find ourselves; becoming-woman, becoming-child; becoming-animal, -vegetable, or –mineral; becomings-molecular of all kinds, becomings-particles” (TP, 272). And: “Fibers lead us from one [segment] to the

other, transform one into the other as they pass through doors and across thresholds” (TP, 272). So, although we began earlier in this chapter with the instance of becoming-animal, this becoming is to be understood as only one among others, and “[e]xclusive importance should not be attached to [it]” (TP, 248). Rather, becomings-animal “are segments occupying a median region. On the near side we encounter becomings-woman, becomings-child...On the far side, we find becomings-elementary, -cellular, -molecular, and even becomings-imperceptible” (TP, 248).

But if all distances and closenesses are relative, how is it possible to conceive of certain segments of becoming as near and others as far? *On the near side of what, or of whom, are becomings-woman to be encountered?* The nearness of becoming-woman is a relative proximity; and it will be argued here that the becomings which constitute this segment are to be found on the near side of “man.” As Deleuze and Guattari contend:

[M]an is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian. When we say majoritarian, we are referring not to a greater relative quantity...[Rather, m]ajority implies a state of domination, not the reverse. It is not a question of knowing whether there are more mosquitoes or flies than men, but of knowing how “man” constituted a standard in the universe in relation to which men necessarily...form a majority. (TP, 291)

In defining man as majoritarian par excellence, Deleuze and Guattari are not describing a state of affairs in which male bodies necessarily outnumber female bodies and by this greater quantity form a majority and thus exist in a state of domination; and neither are they describing a state of affairs in which the number of bodies subjectified as men is necessarily greater than those subjectified as women. In defining man as majoritarian par excellence, our authors are describing a state of affairs in which man (as the assumed, rational human subject) constitutes the privileged primary term in relation

to which all else is defined and formed as a subordinated counterpart, as “the negation or denial, the absence or privation of [this] primary term” (VB, 3).

But we mustn’t confuse “majoritarian,” as a process or movement of reterritorialization, with a “majority,” as “a state of domination” (TP, 291) or an aggregate or body identified with such a state. And caution of the same measure is required in order that we not mistake or conflate ““minoritarian,” as a becoming or process, with a “minority,” as an aggregate or a state” (TP, 291). To define or form oneself in accordance with a particular subject type – even when that subject type is one of the minority – is to reterritorialize oneself or to “allow oneself to be reterritorialized” (TP, 291). But “in a becoming one is deterritorialized” (TP, 291). So we must not assume that the state of a body defined as minority is a state deterritorialized, as any state that has been defined or formed in accordance with a pre-existing subject type is a state (re)territorialized; and, therefore, even a state that is defined and/or identifiable as a state of minority is a state not (yet) deterritorialized.

For the moment, let us return to the nearness of becoming-woman, because even if we are to accept this conception of man as majoritarian par excellence, this does not explain why becoming-woman must be conceived as nearest thereto. Deleuze and Guattari assert:

[T]he majority in the universe assumes as pre-given the right and power of man. In this sense women, children, but also animals, plants, and molecules, are minoritarian. It is perhaps the special situation of women in relation to the man standard that accounts for the fact that becomings, being minoritarian, always pass through a becoming-woman. (TP, 291)

With this fragment, we have introduced an additional insight into becoming-woman: Not only is it that becoming which is to be found on the near side of man, it is

also that becoming through which all others must pass. And it is “perhaps the special situation of women in relation to the man standard that accounts for [this] fact” (TP, 291). But what is the “special situation” of women relative to the man standard, and might this also lend insight into the nearness of becoming-woman to man as the majoritarian par excellence?

As conceived here, “man” is a standard, the standard of the majoritarian par excellence, and it is in relation to this standard that all bodies are defined. In relation to this standard, male bodies subjectified as men necessarily form a majority and female bodies subjectified as women necessarily form a minority. But it is *not* as a state of minority in relation to man that woman constitutes a becoming. Nevertheless, Deleuze and Guattari have argued that due to the organs and functions of that body formed as female, on the basis of which it is subjectified as woman in relation to the man standard, it is *possible* for the female body subjectified as woman to occupy a privileged position in relation to becomings-woman (TP, 275). But despite being defined as a minority in relation to the man standard, woman remains a molar-entity within a molar species (TP, 275). The body subjectified as woman is conceived by Deleuze and Guattari to be a molar-entity insofar as “the woman [is] defined by her form, endowed with organs and functions and assigned as a subject” (TP, 275). And, therefore, as every becoming is a becoming-molecular, even “the woman as a molar entity *has to become-woman*” (TP, 275). That is to say, even the form of a body subjectified as woman is prone to dissolution as this body becomes-woman.

This matter will become clearer as we examine, in greater detail, the segment of becoming constituted of becomings-woman. At present, let it suffice to say that the

situation of woman is unique or “special” such that it is the situation of a body simultaneously assigned and defined both as a necessary minority and a molar entity. The formation of a minority requires no less the development of a form on the basis of organ and the organization of a subjectivity on the basis of function; thus, the “special situation” of women in relation to the man standard is the unique situation of those bodies at once (necessarily) minority and molar. A complex situation indeed. I would contend, furthermore, that the “special situation” of woman is intersected once more, complicated further still, by virtue of the fact that it is also the situation of a body that is of the same species as that body which is formed necessarily as a majority in relation to the man standard. It is of the same species as the male body, which necessarily exists in a state of domination due to its relation to the standard of the majoritarian par excellence, yet, in relation to this very same standard, this body – the female body – is necessarily formed and subjectified as a minority, as the Anomalous.

It is this anomalous character of the subjectivity woman which offers our first insight into the conception of becoming-woman as that becoming through which all others must pass. Deleuze and Guattari write: “becoming-woman, more than any other becoming, possesses a special introductory power; it is not so much that women are witches, but that sorcery proceeds by way of this becoming-woman” (TP, 248). This assertion is quite strange. For what has witchcraft, or sorcery, to do with becoming? And why is it so closely associated with becomings-woman? The assertion is perhaps less strange when we consider what has been written by Deleuze and Guattari on the persona of the sorcerer: “Sorcerers have always held the anomalous position, at the edge of the fields or woods. They haunt the fringes... The important thing is their affinity with

alliance...which gives them a status opposed to that of filiation. The relation of alliance with the demon as the power of the anomalous" (TP, 246).

Woman is not an embodiment of the persona of the sorcerer. Rather, sorcery proceeds through and indeed is a veritable becoming-woman: Woman the anomaly, woman that nearest Other, woman who inhabits the edge, haunting the fringe, that internal outside, that space of the margin. Becoming is concerned with alliance and the relation of alliance carries forth, here, the power of the anomalous. Furthermore: "It is evident that the Anomalous, the Outsider...not only [is] the precondition for the alliance necessary to becoming, but...also carries the transformations of becomings...always farther down the line of flight" (TP, 249). In defining itself as majoritarian par excellence, the standard of man defines all that exists in relation thereto, that is, all of its Others (woman, child, animal and so forth), as Anomalous. Man (as a movement of reterritorialization) constitutes the majoritarian, and as all becomings are minoritarian and as all that is not man is Anomalous, the Anomalous can be understood as the precondition for the alliance by which becomings proceed.

It is not that becoming-woman has a privileged status or more significant role in relation to the other segments of becoming, that is, those toward which it compels us ever-farther. Rather, woman, as the inverse of the primary term "man", is that indeterminate zone through which all becomings must pass. Woman is the anomaly of the human type. And it could be argued, furthermore, that it is a passage through the anomalous of one's own type which opens up the potentiality of becoming to all of those becomings-non-human and becomings-unformed or -molecular. Becoming is a movement venturing ever-nearer toward "the ultimate regions of a Continuum inhabited

by unnamable waves and unfindable particles” (TP, 248), in that it is a movement that raises the Body without Organs to the surface through the dissolution of forms on an immanent plane. As Grosz writes: “This line of flight...is the breakdown or shrinkage of all identities, molar and molecular, majoritarian and minoritarian, the freeing of infinitely microscopic lines, a process whose end is achieved only with complete dissolution” (VB, 178). It seems fair to surmise that we must compound our parts with the anomalous of our type, of our species, before we can compound our parts in the infinitesimal sea of unnamed and unformed particles into which all forms dissolve upon entering or being returned to these farthest and ultimate regions of this immanent plane.

The line drawn between man and woman is the first line drawn to differentiate and define man as majoritarian par excellence. It is the line that constitutes and enacts the first dualism. *It is the first line drawn to distance that which is closest.* Thus, it is between this line that we all must pass in order to proceed through the different segments of becoming, and it is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari maintain: “all becomings begin with and pass through becoming-woman. It is the key to all the other becomings” (TP, 291).⁴¹

It is in relation to the man standard that the female body is formed and subjectified.⁴² But what is at issue, here, is not (the possibility of) man’s capacity to understand the experiences of female bodies formed in accordance with the order-word of femininity, subjectified necessarily as a minority: “The question is not, or not only, that of the organism, history, and subject of enunciation that oppose masculine to feminine in the great dualistic machines. The question is fundamentally that of the body—the body

they steal from us in order to fabricate opposable organisms” (TP, 276); and it is the female body into which the dualism is first inscribed. When the great dualistic machines of dichotomous thought undertake to steal bodies, to subject and subjectify them, *the first body stolen is the body of the girl*. As Deleuze and Guattari write:

The body is stolen first from the girl: Stop behaving like that, you’re not a little girl anymore, you’re not a tomboy, etc. The girl’s becoming is stolen first, in order to impose a history, or prehistory, upon her. The boy’s turn comes next, but it is by using the girl as an example, by pointing to the girl as the object of his desire, that an opposed organism, a dominant history is fabricated for him too. (TP, 276)

Dichotomous thought steals the becoming of all bodies. The becoming of the girl is stolen first, stolen in order to impose a history of the minority upon her. Thus, women are defined in relation to the standard of man, but so too are men. And the becoming of the boy is stolen next, stolen in order to inscribe into him this opposition, in order to impose upon him a history of the majority, the history of a state of domination necessarily implied by his relation to the man standard, that standard by which he too shall be subjectified and formed.

But becoming-woman is not concerned with assisting bodies that do not identify as female in gaining a greater understanding of the experience of women in relation to the man standard.⁴³ Neither is it concerned with implementing an increased acceptance of the denigrated undersides of those hierarchical dualisms implemented by the great dualistic machines of dichotomous thought (and most certainly *not* as these aggregates have been defined thereby).⁴⁴ Becoming-woman is not an exercise in encouraging men to sympathize with the history of the state of minority imposed first upon the girl; although it will be argued, and has historically been the case, that the implications of being defined in relation to the man standard are incomparably more detrimental as experienced by the

female body than by the male. Deleuze recognized this, but he recognized also that the great dualistic machines steal the becoming of *all* bodies, he recognized also that thinking bodies dichotomously constrains the capacity of all bodies to affect and be affected. And, with this, we have arrived at the heart of becoming-woman.

Deleuze and Guattari have argued that becoming-woman is not “a function...[of] imitating or assuming the female form, but [instead of] emitting particles that enter the relation of movement and rest, or the zone of proximity...that produce in us a molecular woman” (TP, 275). The term ‘molecular woman,’ in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, is synonymous with the term ‘becoming-woman’; and the molecular woman, they argue, is the girl herself (TP, 276). But what is meant by this assertion that the girl herself is becoming-woman, the assertion that “the girl is the becoming-woman of each sex” (TP, 277)? As conceived here, the girl is defined neither by a particular configuration of bodily matter nor a specific age. As conceived here, the girl is “defined by a relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness, by a combination of atoms, an emission of particles” (TP, 276). *The girl is that terrain – that relation of particles – not (yet or not yet again) subjected to, or subjectified by, the dualism of sex.*⁴⁵

Becoming-woman is that becoming through which all others must pass because it is the becoming-imperceptible of the dualism: “The girl is like the block of becoming that remains contemporaneous to each opposable term, man, woman, child, adult” (TP, 277). Becoming-woman gives rise to a movement of deterritorialization that affects a disassembly of the body formed and conceived as dualistic; most notably, it affects a disassembly of that dualism by which sex is made oppositional. More precisely, becoming-woman is an affect that gives rise to a movement of deterritorialization which

looses particles that move across the terrain of a body such that particular masses solidified on the basis of a dualism of sex – on the basis of an opposition that polarizes and hierarchizes bodies on the basis of sex organ and function – will undergo a (relative and variable) dissolution. The dualism must be dissolved in order for becomings of any sort to proceed because the dualism operates to form a molar-entity and all becomings are molecular, compel us ever-farther toward becoming-molecular, as they venture ever-nearer toward the regions of that plane composed only of pure relations of motion and rest between molecules. Thus, before we can arrive at an unformed molecular multiplicity, that is, before we can enter into a block of becoming that affects the dissolution of our form, we must pass between the dualism.

The condition of possibility of becomings-woman is the encounter of two bodies (of any sex) whose intermingling particles found an alliance by which a block is produced. This block then generates an intensity which affects both bodies such that they are (distinctly, yet only by producing an assemblage with one another) swept into a co-transpiring movement of deterritorialization which looses the particles which constitute the molecular woman of each body, the girl of each sex:

[The girl] is an abstract line, or a line of flight. Thus girls do not belong to an age group, sex, order, or kingdom: they slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes; they produce *n* molecular sexes on the line of flight in relation to the dualism machines they cut right through. The only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo. (TP, 277)

The movement of deterritorialization occasioned by a becoming-woman affects a coming-undone of the sex-based dualism; it passes between the oppositions created of sex organ and function. And the body formed as female and subjectified as woman, despite the state of minority necessarily implied, is equally (re)territorialized by the

dualism of sex, equally as stratified by this constructed opposition. Thus, “[e]ven women must become-woman” (TP, 291) because, as Grosz elucidates: “For women as much as for men, the processes of becoming-woman involve the destabilization of molar, or feminine, identity. If one *is* a woman, it remains necessary to become-woman as a way of putting into question the coagulations, rigidifications, and impositions required by patriarchal...power relations” (VB, 176).⁴⁶

Deleuze and Guattari have contended that: “Sexuality is the production of a thousand tiny sexes” (TP, 278), and I would argue that it is becomings-woman which loose these sexes from the strata which order and contain them. These are sexes which are neither conjugal, familial, nor Oedipal, and they will not be interpreted as such. These are sexes which (may) have nothing to do with organs; sexes which are not concerned with the formed body or the subjectivity through which a body has been formed; sexes which will not be bound to genital organ or reproductive function. These sexes are pure flows, desires which know no lack, infinite speeds and slownesses and variations of such. The material of human and non-human bodies constitutes a boundless and expansive sea of intersecting parts. And *who is to say how these parts might link, might connect, and what particles and intensities might come to pass?*

To become-woman is not to experience one’s body lived as woman. Rather, it is to experience the relation of parts composing one’s body as these parts spontaneously, provisionally assemble with the relation of parts composing another body; it is to be altered by the intensities generated of this assemblage. But in this assembled composition, the borders which differentiate the parts which belong (in a particular

relation) to one body from the parts which belong (in a particular relation) to the other fall away, become-imperceptible, making each body become other than what it had been hitherto. In the eleventh chapter of *Space, Time, and Perversion* (1995), Grosz describes this phenomenon, writing:

One “thing” transmutes into another, becomes something else through its connections with something or someone outside... This is precisely what the Deleuzian notion of “becoming” entails, entry into an arrangement, an assemblage of other fragments, other things, becoming bound up in some other production, forming part of a machine, a component in a series of flows and breaks, of varying speeds and intensities... It is not a question of being (-animal, -woman, -lesbian), of attaining a definite status as a thing... nor of clinging to, having an identity, but of moving, changing, being swept beyond one singular position into a multiplicity of flows, or what Deleuze and Guattari have described as “a thousand tiny sexes”: to liberate the myriad of flows, to proliferate connections, to intensify. (STP, 184)⁴⁷

Becomings-woman can transpire only through an intermingling of particles belonging to distinct bodies. But although the intensity which comes to pass of a particular intermingling could not have been generated except by this intermingling, the experience of this intensity is specific to each body, to each relation of parts to which the intermingling particles belong. The intensities generated in a becoming-woman are those by which a dissolution of the particular accumulations hardened by the (sex) dualism is affected: “Thus, if the division or the binary opposition of sexes ... can be considered as molar lines, then traversing and interrupting them and transforming, breaking them down is what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the processes of “becoming-woman” (VB, 173). However, the same intensity can traverse two different bodies in two very different ways, having very different implications. Nothing, therefore, can be definitively stated about the state of a body become-woman. It may open out onto those multiplicitous sexes which have been loosed, enabling them to pass through and alter the relations of which it is

constituted. On the other hand, the sexes loosed may prompt a movement of reterritorialization that solidifies the strata which have come undone with a force unmatched hitherto, reassembling the dualisms which have been disassembled (and thereby reforming the body) more concretely than ever before. And although the following passage refers specifically to becomings-animal, it holds true for becomings-woman: In becoming, the body is returned to an immanent plane, but there is always “another plan(e) [which] returns full force, breaking the becoming-animal, folding the animal back onto the animal and the person onto the person, recognizing only resemblances between elements and analogies between relations” (TP, 259).

The way in which a body experiences and reacts to the intensities generated in a becoming-woman is unique to the relation of parts of which it is composed and is dependent upon its affective capabilities. So the question, therefore, becomes: What degree of this intensity can a body withstand while maintaining its characteristic relation of parts? Or will these relations be altered: crystallizations come-undone, bodily terrains deterritorialized? And, then, by what movements will these terrains be (re)taken, as fissures creep across those sedimentary strata?

Becomings-woman act as lines of flight which extend as innumerable fractures across solidified strata, across the molar entity as formed by organ and as subjectified by function – notably, in this instance, across the molar entity made oppositional as it is formed by *sex* organ and subjectified by *reproductive* function. These lines extend with a potentiality as diverse and extensive as the affective capabilities of those bodies across and through which they run. There is no telling where this line of flight shall pass. Becomings are inescapably spontaneous and unpredictable. And the terrains across which

they affect deterritorializations never remain undone, unformed. This matter is complicated further still by the fact that movements of reterritorialization are not always introduced from an outside. It is often we who return ourselves with such rapidity and force to a plane of transcendence, to those forms and subjectivities through which we live these bodies. How many sexes can we withstand being loosed? No terrain remains deterritorialized, but how will the terrain of your body be (re)formed?

Until this point we have presented the plane of immanence and the plane of transcendence as mutually exclusive: you either live your body (as affective capability and particular relations of speed and slowness) on the plane of immanence (i.e., as a plan of composition or constitution) *or* you live your body (as form and subjectivity) through a plane of transcendence (i.e., through a plan of organization and development). However, although the way one lives the body differs greatly according to plane, the body cannot be lived entirely on either one or the other. We live our bodies, according to Deleuze and Guattari, on and through *both* planes. And neither is to be idealized. Thus, our authors inquire:

Why does the opposition between the two kinds of planes lead to a still more abstract hypothesis? Because one continually passes from one to the other, by unnoticeable degrees and without being aware of it, or one becomes aware of it only afterward. Because one continually reconstitutes one plane atop the other, or extricates one from the other. (TP, 269) The plane of organization is constantly working away at the plane of consistency, always trying to plug the lines of flight, stop or interrupt the movements of deterritorialization...restratify them, reconstitute forms and subjects in a dimension of depth. Conversely, the plane of consistency is constantly extricating itself from the plane of organization, causing particles to spin off the strata, scrambling forms by dint of speed or slowness, breaking down functions by means of assemblages or microassemblages. (TP, 270)

It is this most critical point that Braidotti seemingly overlooks in formulating the second prong of her three-pronged critique, contending that Deleuze seeks “the reduction of sexual difference to one variable among many, which can and should be dissolved into a generalized and gender-free becoming” (NS, 117). Deleuze is quite clear, however, in noting the distinction between the plane of immanence – as that plane on which becomings transpire – and the plane of organization and development – as that plane to which the body is returned as it is reformed and resubjectified (after and therefore before every instance of becoming). Yet, Braidotti goes on to write: “Deleuze’s “becoming-woman” amalgamates men and women into a new, supposedly beyond gender, sexuality; this is problematic, because it clashes with women’s sense of their own historical struggles” (NS, 120). Braidotti also, in my view rather presumptuously, reduces Deleuze’s potentiality for conceptual creation to his location as male subject, arguing that his “theory of becoming is obviously determined by his location as an embodied male subject for whom the dissolution of identities based upon the phallus results in bypassing gender all together, toward a multiple sexuality. This, however, may not be the option best suited to female embodied subjects” (NS, 122).

What is obvious, in my opinion, is that Braidotti fails to appreciate the distinction Deleuze posits between the plane of immanence and the transcendent plane of organization and development and, for this reason, misinterprets the notion of becoming-woman as giving rise to an enduring state of amalgamated, beyond-gender sexuality. Becoming is *not* a strategy aimed at the creation of non-gendered subjects. Becoming occurs on the plane of immanence. It is here that forms are disassembled and subjectivities dissolved. It is here that the body experiences itself as non-gendered and

non-sexed. However, Deleuze is well aware of the fact that the body is lived both on the plane of immanence and through plans of organization and development. He is not suggesting that the body should be lived entirely on an immanent plane and neither is he presenting a strategy that would assist in the formation of subjectivities that are beyond gender or lived in an amalgamated or gender-neutral state. There is no “should” issued by Deleuze. There is no “should” in becoming. Deleuze is concerned with the *potentialities* of the forms and subjectivities as and through which the body can be lived, *not* with ridding the world of all (sexual) forms and (gendered) subjectivities.

A body becoming is unformed and unsubjectified but the body become is inevitably reformed and resubjectified on a plane of organization and development. And, I would argue, it is here that the task of creating new paradigms through which (non-dichotomous) social subjects may be constituted and formed. It is also here that we must address the first prong in Braidotti’s critique of Deleuze, which is actually comprised of two components. The first component consists of Braidotti’s contention that Deleuze has demonstrated “an inconsistent approach to the issue of the “becoming-woman”” (NS, 117). Braidotti is insistent on the point that “Deleuze is inconsistent in thinking through the problem of the becoming-woman”” (NS, 117; 122), and on the point that there is a “systematic indecision and hesitation...mark[ing] his discussion of [this notion]” (NS, 122). I do not agree with this characterization and I do not believe it is accurate. The second component consists in Braidotti again aligning herself with the perspective of Irigaray (NS, 116; 119), in order to posit a “confrontation between Deleuze’s theories of multiplicity and becoming-minority [sic] and feminist theories of sexual difference and of becoming subject of women” (NS, 115).⁴⁸ In order to demonstrate that the positing of a

“confrontation” between Deleuzian and feminist theory on these grounds is unwarranted, I will endeavor to show that Braidotti’s understanding and subsequent characterization of becoming-woman is inaccurate and even irresponsible, as it manufactures conflict on grounds that are unsubstantiated.

Returning to the first component: As far as I can tell, the contradiction that Braidotti discerns (or, arguably, creates) is that between Deleuze’s recognition and acknowledgment of the significance of women’s self-assertion as social subjects (for instance, he writes: “it is...indispensable for women to conduct a molar politics, with a view to winning back their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity” (TP, 276)) and what she interprets to be taking place through becomings-woman – namely that subjects “should be dissolved into a generalized and gender-free becoming” (NS, 117), resulting in an “amalgamat[ion of] men and women into a new, [undifferentiated,] supposedly beyond gender, sexuality” (NS, 120). Braidotti assumes that Deleuze’s acknowledgment of the need for women to assert themselves as social subjects constitutes an acknowledgement on his part of an inconsistency in the concept of becoming-woman. However, this assumption is unwarranted, and Braidotti’s critique misplaced for two primary reasons. Firstly, because, as I have elucidated above, she fails to appreciate the distinction Deleuze posits between the plane of immanence and the plans of organization and development. Secondly, Braidotti fails to appreciate the fact that becoming, as put forth by Deleuze, is not intended, in and of itself, to be a strategy for social activism – and most certainly *not* one that purports to address the monumental concern Braidotti has outlined as being primary among feminists: namely the “process of reclaiming political subjectivity for women” (NS, 122). Braidotti’s assumption of

becoming-woman as a political or social strategy is evident in her comment that: “Irigaray [is]...politically opposed to [Deleuze’s] proposal of “becoming” as a way of overcoming sexual bipolarization. Where they differ...is in the political priority that must be granted to the elaboration of adequate systems of representation for an alternative female subject” (NS, 119). It is clear that Braidotti’s comparison (of the notion of becoming-woman and the project of reclaiming women’s political subjectivity) assumes, as given, the fact that both are intended as strategies aimed at the formation of particular sorts of social subjects. I do not believe that this is true in the case of becoming-woman. And I would argue, furthermore, that Braidotti’s characterization of becoming as a proposal presented and intended by Deleuze “as a way of overcoming sexual bipolarization” is inaccurate.

It is on the basis of the perceived inconsistency outlined above that Braidotti formulates the most crucial, second component of this prong in her critique, contending that becoming-woman actually undermines the “process of reclaiming a political subjectivity for women” (NS, 122). Once again using Irigaray’s critique of Deleuze as her point of departure, Braidotti writes: “Irigaray’s critique of Deleuze is radical, she points out that the dispersal of sexuality into a generalized “becoming” results in undermining the feminist claims to a redefinition of the female subject” (NS, 116). And goes on to ask: “How can Deleuze fail to see that his neutralization of sexual differences can only damage the process of reclaiming political subjectivity for women?” (NS, 122). I would inquire, in turn: How can Braidotti fail to see that Deleuze – a philosopher so aptly described by Grosz as “the great theorist of difference” (STP, 129) – would never seek the neutralization of sexual difference? This is *not* what becoming-woman is, nor is

it what becomings of any sort are concerned with. *Becomings are affects*. It is true that in becoming-woman the body *does* experience the dissolution of sex and gender-based dualisms. *However*, at the risk of becoming repetitive, the body is not lived purely on the plane of immanence and, thus, the body deterritorialized in a becoming-woman does not remain in an undifferentiated state. It is always returned once again to a plane of transcendence and reformed as a subject. It is here that projects addressing the political and social status of women can be founded and pursued. Thus, although the body becoming-woman experiences the dissolution of dualisms formed on the basis of sex and gender, this is *not* to suggest that this unsexed and ungendered state endures permanently. And neither is it to suggest that this could be a panacea for the many, highly complex problems surrounding women's reclaiming of political subjectivity. This would indeed have been very naïve (see Braidotti's charge regarding Deleuze's apparent "naïveté about sexual difference" (NS, 121)) *if* it was, in fact, what Deleuze had been stating. I likely do not need to explicitly express my position that it is not. And, to borrow a phrase, "[m]ay I...be so bold as to suggest" (NS, 122) that far from being antithetical or detrimental to the project of women's self-assertion as subjects, an experience of becoming-woman might give way to a recognition (in the once again reformed, re-subjectified body) of the necessity of such a project?

Only in the instance that Deleuze had presented becoming-woman as a strategy aimed at the formation of undifferentiated or gender-free subjects and *only* if this, in fact, constituted his "proposal of "becoming" as way of overcoming sexual bipolarization" (NS, 119), would an inconsistency or ambivalence in his position be conceivable. But, as I have demonstrated, neither of these characterizations is accurate, and thus neither is

Braidotti's critique on this matter. I feel equally the urgency of Braidotti's concerns regarding the self-assertion of embodied female subjects, however, I firmly believe that it is a misinterpretation of becoming-woman that gives rise to her perception of Deleuze as being inconsistent and ambivalent on this issue: she cannot understand how (what she has taken to be) a process of becoming permanently or enduringly ungendered could possibly be compatible with a process of the self-assertion of a gendered subject. But, to repeat, becoming-woman is not intended as a strategy aimed at addressing the issue of women's self-assertion as political subjects. And the becoming-ungendered experienced by the body becoming-woman is not a state that endures. However, becoming-woman *is* an affective experience that has the capacity to alter the way in which a body is reformed and resubjectified, which is precisely why I have argued that it might act as the impetus to the types of political projects that Braidotti has outlined and, unfortunately, depicted as being incompatible with the theories of Deleuze.

To conclude our exploration of *A Thousand Plateaus*: it is clear that the plane of immanence is composed of becomings. It *is* the Body without Organs. And "the reconstruction of the body as a Body without Organs...is inseparable from a becoming-woman" (TP, 276), as it is becomings-woman which affect the dissolution of forms solidified on the basis of the dualism, it is through this dissolution of these forms that the body is returned to a state of particular or molecular velocity and intensity, and it is of these infinitesimal particles and molecules that the plane of immanence (i.e., the Body without Organs) is composed. But living the body on a plane of immanence can be dangerous, as force becomes anonymous and speeds uncontrollably accelerate. That is

why “so much caution is needed to prevent the plane of consistency from becoming a pure plane of abolition or death, to prevent the involution from turning into a regression to the undifferentiated” (TP, 270). Great caution is needed as we lose control, as those forms to which ‘control’ has meaning are lost, dissolved. This is evidenced further in Grosz assertion that “becomings are not simply a matter of choice, not simply a decision, but always involve a substantial remaking of the subject, a major risk to the subject’s integration and social functioning. One cannot become-animal at will and then cease and function normally. It is not something that can be put on or taken off like a cloak” (VB, 174).

But living the body as dualistic can be dangerous as well, and that is why so much caution is needed to prevent the forms and subjects as which we live from becoming a hindrance to our affective capabilities, our forces of existing. And so we must ask: “Is it not necessary to retain a minimum of strata, a minimum of forms and functions, a minimal subject from which to extract materials, affects, and assemblages?” (TP, 270). And answer, in short: yes. It *is* from strata, forms, and subjects that we extract materials, affects, and assemblages; it *is* by moving through and between these formed solidifications, these hardened accumulations that we become. Thus, following Grosz, we can conclude that: “There must, it seems, be a minimal level of cohesion and integration in the BwO in order to prevent its obliteration; there must be small pockets of subjectivity and signification left in order for the BwOs to survive in the face of the onslaughts of power and reality” (VB, 171). But the body formed and subjectified through the dualism is *not* a body *minimally* formed or *minimally* subjectified.

The body is a terrain that can be lived in many ways. The possibilities of the subjectivities as which the body can be lived are infinite. Organs and functions need not be constructed and lived as oppositional. To live the body in this way is an unnecessary violence. A violence enforced from without and a violence enforced from within. And if this project can be said to have a message, it is as follows: *Let us examine the ways in which we live our bodies*. But there is to be no proscription here. It is the task of each of us, as we compound at those innumerable points of intersection, in those provisional and unpredictable assemblages, to determine the ways in which the parts that compose our bodies might be lived so as to maximize the force with which they are imbued. And if you have arrived, you will need not be told that this is, indeed, a plane of experimentation.

(Re)thinking Bodies – Future Implications

The western European and North American feminist movement/s, in this present historical moment, is/are characterized by great dissent. But perhaps this is neither new nor specific to these contemporary and presumably postmodern times. Perhaps this character of internal heterogeneity and dissimilarity with regard to theoretical lens and emphasis in praxis is inseparable from feminism itself. Perhaps this is not such a bad thing. In my view, it is this very quality which ensures the ceaseless growth and propensity for change which I so value in a discipline, especially a discipline which remains so tightly interwoven with such a vast array of actions and practices as this feminist movement occasions.

It can be said, however, that specific to the present moment of this (western European and North American) feminist movement is the crisis with which the very idea of 'woman' is accompanied. We seem to be approaching a critical juncture with respect to this idea of 'woman'. Confronted by such questions as: Is it necessary or useful to retain 'woman' as an analytical concept? Is the identity of 'woman' required for collective feminist action aimed at affecting social change? Or, otherwise stated: What is meant by our use of the term "collectivity" and how is the identity of woman to exist in relation to (our often diverging understandings of) this notion? Is 'woman' the category, identity or subjectivity beneath which female bodies must unite in order to affect social change, or is it precisely this call for unity that inspired the essentialism and exclusivity which functioned to create divisions among feminists (of the first and second waves, and within the second wave). Or, perceived differently, could the urgent call to abandon or discard this category, identity and subjectivity of 'woman' – ostensibly common in the

postmodern feminist tradition – be functioning presently to create its own divisions and essentialisms among feminists (of the second and third waves, and within the third wave)?

Of course, I do not have the answers to these immensely complicated questions and neither do I have the time or space, here, in which to adequately address them. In view of the future implications of this particular project, however, I would like to offer the following: I firmly believe that the work of Deleuze can be of great use, insight and value in seeking to explore and contribute to the constitution of the problem of ‘woman’ – the problem of the hostilities and unproductive derisions arising due to the uncertainty surrounding the past, present and future manifestations and implications of ‘woman’ as a concept, identity and subjectivity. As presented by Deleuze in his final text, *What is Philosophy?*, this is the activity of philosophy: to contribute to the constitution of problems through the creation of concepts; and, although the concept of woman clearly already exists, I would argue that it could use (and, indeed, will require) a great deal of generous creativity, as we (bodies subjectified as women and/or invested in the lived experiences of women) strive to (re)imagine and (re)constitute its potential and multiple meanings and significances (both inside and outside of the context of the English-language academic traditions).

Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming-woman could be of particular use and value in this movement toward (re)thinking and (re)living ‘woman’ as a concept, as an identity and as a social subjectivity. This becomes increasingly evident as we contemplate this concept in view of our own experiences of becoming-woman, and come to a conception of ‘woman’ as that subjectivity which can never be wholly and

seamlessly assumed or transcended. Even when the subjectivity of woman has been identified as that through which a body is living, this subjectivity cannot successfully delimit the range of potential activities and realities this body might experience. Given the implications of this conception of 'woman', we can begin to understand (and live and act through this understanding of) woman as a subjectivity that can be both embraced and subverted by a single body. That is to say, a single body can engage in movements that contribute to the formation and development of that subjectivity as which it is living and can engage in movements that contribute to the (relative) dissolution of these developed forms and subjects. Thus, a body can live its subjectivity as woman in countless ways (specific to its affective capabilities) and, through becomings-woman, can alter and transform, challenge and change, (its experience of) this subjectivity. The concept of becoming-woman, therefore, provides new ways in which to understand and think the subjectivity of woman; and the implications and possibilities of this subjectivity remain undetermined and open-ended.

This is not to say, however, that these possibilities bear no relation to the historical realities and lived experiences of women. Becomings always transpire through an encounter between bodies, bodies which are lived (through a transcendent plane) as subjects, subjects which are inevitably located in particular (social, cultural, economic, racialized, gendered and sexed) contexts, contexts which are geographical, political and historical. Becomings are not attempts to transcend history nor are they attempts to overlook or minimize the capabilities of history to affect our present(s). It could be argued, in fact, that it is precisely Deleuze and Guattari's unwavering awareness of this (often tenuous and malleable) relationship, this interplay, between the different ways in

which we experience ourselves and between these variable experiences and the milieus in which we live, that makes their concept of becoming-woman immensely interesting.

The potentialities born of becomings-woman exist not only *in spite of* but, also, *because of* the histories of repression and violence associated with the subjectivity of woman, *because of* the force with which such histories are imbued. Channeling this force in ways that are to be productive will require a great deal of creativity and will require that we work to cultivate a resistance against the antagonism and frustration which often accompany difference and disagreement. We each arrive at this project of rethinking 'woman' from our own location and with our own perspective(s). It is precisely this plurality, this lack of (pre)determination and prescribed certainty that, in practice, lends itself to infinite complexities with regard to the task of determining which movements contribute to the solidification of 'woman' as a molar entity and which movements (and in which contexts) are to be considered subversive. This complexity is only heightened when we consider that we not only need to experiment in order to answer these questions for ourselves, but also may need to address our tendencies to (attempt to) answer them for others. This complexity is heightened further still when we consider the authoritative, disciplinary and recuperative forces with which such movements (indeed, movements of both type) may be infused, in light of and depending on the context in which they occur.

While it is important that we continue to examine the varied experiences of bodies subjectified as women in order to broaden our understandings of such, would it risk too great a naivety to suggest that we abandon those projects which endeavor to determine and designate the status or acceptability of experiences which have not been our own, as these projects too often become exercises in resentment and judgment? In any case, it

should be recognized that dissimilarity need not equate to dissonance, just as projects which explore the dissolution of 'woman' need not be engaged with an intent to destroy 'woman' as a concept, identity or subjectivity, but, instead, can be undertaken with an eye toward the creation of new spaces (for theory and thought) and new possibilities (in action and practice) that will enable us to augment, as far as possible, our affective capabilities and the forces with which we exist *as* women.

Notes

Introduction

¹ And it is Grosz who acknowledges that “Deleuze and Guattari’s status in feminist evaluations seems rather more shaky than [other male theorists of the body, such as Foucault]...And even those feminists who do engage with their writings have tended to be critical or at least suspicious of their apparent appropriations of feminist theory and politics” (VB, 160). She goes on to note, more specifically, that “[b]etween them, Jardine, Irigaray, and Braidotti voice a number of reservations that seem to chart a more general attitude on the part of many feminists toward the project Deleuze has described as rhizomatics” (VB, 163). For a succinct, yet rigorous, synopsis of the objections raised by feminist theorists regarding the works of Deleuze and Guattari, see ‘Chapter 7: Intensities and Flows’ in Grosz’s text, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994).

² This is evidenced in Rosi Braidotti’s contention that “Deleuze’s theory of becoming is obviously determined by his location as an embodied male subject for whom the dissolution of identities based on the phallus results in bypassing gender altogether, toward a multiple sexuality. This, however, may not be the best option suited to female embodied subjects” (NS, 122). In chapter four I will present a detailed analysis of Braidotti’s critique but, at present, let it suffice to say that I emphatically disagree with this assessment of Deleuze.

³ Thus, I have bracketed the ‘re’ in (re)thinking ((re)producing, (re)living) because to think the body, in accordance with Deleuze’s project of “to think *as* doing” (STP, 127), we must entertain the idea that the body, as it has been ‘thought’ by traditions of the dualism has not, in fact, been thought at all – as the conceptualizations produced in these traditions inhibit or diminish the capacity of bodies to live, to do. Thus, in this project, bodies are not to be rethought in or on the terms established by these traditions, but will be explored and thought, following Deleuze, in such a way that their capacities to live (and to do) might be maximized.

Chapter One

⁴ Simons, 2004, p.324.

⁵ It was Antonin Artaud who first problematized the organism, boldly declaring the utter uselessness of the organ, in his 1947 radio play, *To Have Done with the Judgment of God*. It is Artaud’s notion of a body without organs, also presented in this 1947 play that is taken up by Deleuze and Guattari in their conception of the Body without Organs. An English translation of *To Have Done with the Judgment of God* can be found in a collection of Artaud’s works titled, *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings* (Sontag (Ed.), 1988).

⁶ It is my understanding that the Body without Organs is not restricted to a conception of the human body, but rather describes singularities, flows, intensities and simple bodies linked in an endless matrix of intersections. And because all things intersect on this plane, it can sometimes become difficult to differentiate between which part is “mine” and which is “yours”, what is “internal and what is “external.”

⁷ These questions have been modeled on those that the venerable Nāgasena asked King Milinda regarding his (Milinda’s) chariot in the *Milindapañha* book of the teaching of the ‘The Theory of No-Soul [or Self]’ in the Hinayāna doctrines (Radhakrishnan and Moore (Eds.), 1989, pp.281-284).

⁸ And what is a “natural” female body? Is it one produced by birth or one carved by medical intervention and/or invention (via graft or reassembly) in the period immediately following birth? Or, is the most “natural” female body one which is constructed through socio-scientific/medical treatment and reassignment in adult life? Perhaps this female body isn’t so natural, after all.

⁹ Bitters explains that “it is the post-Zarathustra Nietzsche whose philosophical projects...have been gathered from the notebooks” (LN, xiii) and “this volume [*Nietzsche: Writings from the Late Notebooks*] offers a *selection* of texts dating from 1885 to 1889” (LN, xiii). Bitner adds that he does “not pretend that the collection presented...forms a whole, let alone fulfilling Nietzsche’s true intentions at any point in his life” (LN, xiii). What is found in the notebooks “are fragments, and it is fragments that the present selection consists of” (LN, xiii).

¹⁰ Pertinent to this discussion is Deleuze’s writing in the section titled ‘The Philosophy of the Will’, from his 1983 text, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Deleuze explains that, for Nietzsche, “the object itself is force, expression of force. This is why there is more of less affinity between the object and the force which takes

possession of it. There is no object (phenomenon) which is not already possessed since in itself it is not an appearance but the apparition of a force. Every force is thus essentially related to another force. The being of force is plural, it would be absolutely absurd to think about force in the singular" (NP, 6). And further: "Forces are essentially differentiated and qualified" (NP, 53).

¹¹ And let us not forget, as Nietzsche has also remarked, that even the strongest of commanding forces are *conditioned* by the existence of those forces for which they provide, and whose self-preservation they sustain. It is not the declining force of the obeying (weaker) forces which offers or contributes anything to the movement or exercise of the commanding forces. Rather, the commanding forces build upon those forces which obey them; they use them to further their strengthening and to amplify their own power. Also, it is not as though the constellation of force which constitutes a human being can be entirely composed of either commanding or obeying forces "[b]ecause in a given case we are simultaneously the commanders and the obeyers" (LN, 36). And although "[o]ne... understands 'unfree will' as meaning 'a will coerced by an alien will'... [obedience] to one's own will is not called coercion, for there is pleasure in it. That you command yourself, that is 'freedom of will'" (LN, 57); while, in relation to others, "[w]hat decides rank is the quantum of power that you are" (LN, 208).

¹² Deleuze writes: "A force is domination, but also the object on which domination is exercised. A plurality of forces acting and being affected at a distance, distance being the differential element included in each force and by which each is related to others – this is the principle of Nietzsche's philosophy of nature" (NP, 6).

¹³ In aphorism 38[12], Nietzsche declares: "*This world is the will to power – and nothing besides!* And you yourselves too are this will to power – and nothing besides!" (LN, 39). Deleuze explains: "Nietzsche's concept of force is therefore that of a force which is related to another force: in this form force is called will. The will (will to power) is the differential element of force" (NP, 7); and, thus, "[t]he will to power is plastic, inseparable from each case in which it is determined" (NP, 85). "The will to power is not force but the differential element which simultaneously determines the relation of forces (quantity) and the respective qualities of related forces" (NP, 197). And: "In the first place... the will to power is manifested as the capacity for being affected. – It is difficult to deny the Spinozist inspiration here. Spinoza, in an extremely profound theory, wanted a capacity for being affected to correspond to every quantity of force. The more ways a body could be affected the more force it had. This capacity measures the force of a body or expresses its power" (NP, 62).

¹⁴ Nietzsche was witnessing what he believed to be radical ideological shift, manifesting in the rapidly proliferating cultural (European) realization that the systems of belief which had hitherto been upheld were erroneous and no longer tenable. He viewed this as the primary source of feelings of existential Angst and insecurity that had been increasingly widespread in the social milieu to which he addressed his writings.

¹⁵ Also relevant here is Nietzsche's comment that "[m]en and all organic creatures have done more or less the same thing: they have arranged, thought, devised the world to fit, until they could make use of it, until it could be 'reckoned' with" (LN, 45), his suggestion that "[t]he logic of our thinking is only a crude and facilitated form of the thinking needed by our organism, indeed by the particular organs of our organism" (LN, 8), and his question: "But what is truth? Perhaps a kind of belief which has become a condition of life?" (LN, 43). Thus Grosz, writing on Nietzsche, asserts that "the body necessarily generates and presumes interpretations, perspectives, partial and incomplete acquaintance, which serve its needs in the world... They enable the organism to function pragmatically in the world but do not yield truth or knowledge" (VB, 122).

¹⁶ This theme is especially clear in Nietzsche's assertion that "[t]he distinguishing feature of that 'consciousness' usually held to be the only one, the intellect, is precisely that it remains protected and closed off from the immeasurable multiplicity in the experiences of these many consciousnesses and that... it is presented only with a *selection* of experiences – experiences, furthermore, that have been simplified, made easy to survey and grasp, thus *falsified*" (LN, 30).

¹⁷ Upholding a belief in "the little word 'I'" (LN, 96), for Nietzsche, reflects one among numerous attempts to insert into an event the distinction between the doer and the deed. And we perpetuate such beliefs due to our desire to categorize and hierarchise a succession of occurrences into a cause and its effect, ultimately in order to convince and reassure ourselves of the intentional, willful efficacy of the former and the derivative, secondary nature of the latter. Nietzsche maintains, however, that "[o]ur feeling of causality is something quite crude and isolated compared to our organism's real feelings of causality. In particular, 'before' and 'after' is a great piece of naivety" (LN, 9). And: "Every judgement contains the whole, full, profound belief

in subject and predicate or in cause and effect; and the latter belief...is, in fact, a special case of the former, so that the belief which remains as the fundamental belief is: there are subjects" (LN, 74).

¹⁸ In addition to this, Nietzsche refutes traditional views which conceive of the mind as an organ distinct from the physical body (and which privilege mental activity or 'consciousness' as being superior to the functioning of the physical body), providing an alternative conception of the mind as a series of affective states unfolding in relation to internal and external stimuli, which is not considered to be a fixed entity apart from the various factors that make it up. Nietzsche argues that "becoming conscious is only one more means in life's unfolding and expansion of its power... The *fundamental mistake* always lies in our positing consciousness not as a tool and detail in the whole of life, but as... the highest value state of life." And, further: "[E]verything *we become conscious of* has first been thoroughly trimmed, simplified, schematized, interpreted – the *real* process of 'inner perception', the *causal association* between thoughts, feelings, [and] desires is... hidden from us... and may just be a figment of our imagination."

Chapter Two

¹⁹ This assertion is supported by "Gatens (1988)[, who] claims that Spinoza's work may provide a way to bypass the dualisms which dominate traditional philosophy while providing the basis for an understanding of difference (i.e., a nonoppositional notion of difference), that is useful, perhaps necessary, to reformulate male and female relations" (VB, 10).

²⁰ This plan continues to exercise in a diverse spectrum of theoretical constructions – for instance, as Deleuze has implied (PP, 128), there is a transcendent plan at work within the teleological progression of the realization of the Hegelian Spirit, the evolutionism of Darwin, and, it would seem, even in Marx's cyclically recurring dis- and replacement of the bourgeoisie.

²¹ Noteworthy, here, is Negri's contention that "[o]nly the refined bourgeois science of mystification can pretend to deny the creativity of the collective matter that acts in history and can pretend to retain the norm of domination over this matter" (SA, 196).

²² Every bodily composition is also eventually disassembled, although, in this case, not of itself. According to Spinoza, unless there has been a disturbance in the operations of a body (for instance, in the case of suicide), death always implicates itself into a body from the outside: "Although inevitable and necessary, death is always the result of an extrinsic fortuitous encounter, an encounter with a body that decomposes my relation" (PP, 71).

²³ On the dicethrow Deleuze writes: "The dicethrow affirms becoming and it affirms the being of becoming. It is not a matter of several dicethrows which, because of their number, finally reproduce the same combination. On the contrary, it is a matter of a single dicethrow which, due to the number of the combination produced, comes to reproduce itself as such... The dice which are thrown once are the affirmation of *chance*, the combination which they form on falling is the affirmation of *necessity*. Necessity is affirmed of chance in exactly the sense that being is affirmed of becoming and unity is affirmed of multiplicity" (NP, 25-26).

²⁴ From this point forth, the term *body* will be understood as referring to a composite body, and the term *parts* to the simple or non-composite bodies which belong to it in a particular relation.

²⁵ This is the only death which can occur in accordance with the conception of the body provided in the *Ethics*. See for instance, Part IV, Prop 39: Schol – "I understand a body to die when its parts are so disposed as to maintain a different proportion of motion-and-rest to one another" (E, 123). This is because, for Spinoza, the body is one among innumerable modes of a single infinite substance (see PP, 122) of which human beings apprehend only two: the body and the mind (through their respective attributes of extension and thought). Thus, the death of a body means only that *the particular relation* of parts which compose this body *is decomposed*. But the parts do not die; it is only their configuration as a particular form which can be understood as "dying" – the parts themselves assume new relations and participate in the composition of other bodies. Deleuze explains: "Doubtless all relations of motion and rest agree with one another in the mediate infinite mode; but a body can induce the parts of my body to enter into a new relation that is not directly or immediately compatible with my characteristic relation: this is what occurs in death (IV, 39). And, thus, for as long as a body exists, it strives to "to keep these parts under the characteristic relation, [that is] so long as other external causes do not determine them to be subsumed by other relations (death, IV, 39)" (PP, 67).

²⁶ By difference, here, I mean difference in form, organ, function, substance and/or subjectivity (PP, 127). These differences pertain strictly to the particularities of the physical or subjects types as which bodies are

formed, and although these differences are limitless, they do not change the fact that all bodies, for Spinoza, are expressions of a single, infinite and eternal substance (i.e. God). This is precisely why bodies cannot but engage constantly in collisions with other bodies, as all bodies are singular yet fluid compositions of one and same substance: “this point also is stressed, that matter is everywhere the same, and there are no distinct parts in it except insofar as we conceive matter as modified in various ways. Then its parts are distinct, not really, but only modally...[as] there can be no substance external to God” (E, 13: Part I, Prop 15: Schol). And: “There can be, or be conceived, no other substance but God” (E, 10: Part I, Prop 14). Following from this, Spinoza contends that: “Particular things are nothing but affections of the attributes of God, that is, modes wherein the attributes of God find expression in a definite and determinate way” (E, 18: Part I, Prop 25: Cor). The human being is to be understood as an expression of God in so far as the material body is a mode with the attribute of extension and in so far as the mind is a mode with the attribute of thought. Therefore, as Lloyd notes: “For Spinoza thought and extension are not created by God; they are attributes of God himself ...[Here, t]he divine attributes cease to be properties of a transcendent God and become instead ways in which reality is construed, articulated or expressed” (SE, 31). And, finally, Negri (quoting Deleuze) writes: “The individuation of the finite in Spinoza does not proceed from the genus or from the species to the individual, from the general to the particular; it proceeds from the infinite quality to the corresponding quantity, which is divided in irreducible, intrinsic or intensive parts” (SA, 144).

²⁷ The idea that no one knows what the body can do has a dual significance. It speaks to the unpredictable nature of the encounter but also to the fact that for the majority of human beings, the processes constantly taking place within their own bodies remain unknown to them, or to their conscious minds. This statement reevaluates the assumption that complete knowledge of the workings of the body is possible; but its purpose is not to disparage or underestimate the capacity of *thought* in relation to the activities of *the body*, but rather to acknowledge the limitations of *consciousness* in apprehending the capacities of *thought*: “It is a matter of showing that the body surpasses the consciousness that we have of it, and that *thought* likewise surpasses the consciousness that we have of it” (PP, 18). This assertion is not intended to highlight an inherent or inescapable inadequacy of human nature. To the contrary, it prepares the way for the model of body, presented by Spinoza, which enables us to “acquire a knowledge of the powers of the body in order to discover, *in a parallel fashion*, the powers of the mind that elude consciousness” (PP, 18). Deleuze writes: “In short, the model of the body, according to Spinoza, does not imply any devaluation of thought in relation to extension, but, much more important, a devaluation of consciousness in relation to thought: a discovery of an *unconscious of thought* just as profound as *the unknown of the body*” (PP, 18-19). Furthermore, the phrase “*in a parallel fashion*” (PP, 18), as employed here, is a reference to what Deleuze describes as “one of the most famous theoretical theses of Spinoza [which] is known by the name of *parallelism*” (PP, 18). Parallelism, he writes, “does not consist merely in denying any real causality between the mind and the body, it disallows any primacy of one over the other” (PP, 18). And further: “The practical significance of parallelism is manifested in the reversal of the traditional principle on which Morality was founded as an enterprise of domination of the passions by consciousness...According to the *Ethics*, on the contrary, what is an action in the mind is necessarily an action in the body as well, and what is a passion in the body is necessarily a passion in the mind” (PP, 18).

Chapter Three

²⁸ In a certain sense, therefore, the term “female” could be considered to belong among those words which have been termed by Deleuze and Guattari: “order-words” (TP, 110). These are words that do not merely serve to describe but, instead, operate to direct and produce bodies in accordance with a particular regime.

²⁹ As Nelson and Robinson elucidate: “The biological condition of children born with ambiguous genitalia has been referred to traditionally as hermaphroditism or, more recently, intersex (Kessler, 1990/1995; Money, 1988: 28). True hermaphroditism, or a true intersexed condition, is statistically very rare and occurs when an infant is born with both ovarian and testicular tissues and a genital structure that is unclear upon simple observation by the attending medical team...The more frequently occurring cases, involving ambiguous genitalia along with the presence of either two ovaries or two testes, are referred to, respectively, as female pseudohermaphroditism and male pseudohermaphroditism” (GC, 22).

³⁰ Our reader might inquire: “What are the medical decisions based upon? While tests are frequently conducted to determine the infant’s chromosomal sex, the results do not appear to play a decisive role in the ultimate genital sex assignment. Rather, the size and functionality of the real or potential penis appears

to be the deciding factor now...[Thus, e]xisting stereotypes about the importance of penis size for masculine identity and behaviour clearly form an important part of the medical decision-making process. [While the] criterion for sex assignment has shifted to one where ovaries equals female to one where penis (large) equals male" (GC, 23).

³¹ Heyes, 2007, p.138.

³² "Eyler and Wright (1997 in Cole et al., 2000: 175-176) have proposed a "Nine-Point Gender Continuum" based upon a person's sense of gender identity. Each of the points on the continuum is considered to reflect a distinct gender identity. The end-points reflect what our society has traditionally prescribed as "appropriate" gender identities...[and the] remaining intervening points on the continuum posit seven varieties of transgenderism that transcend gender as traditionally defined within our society" (GC, 457).

Although I can appreciate this attempt to broaden the dualistic conception of gender, I find this proposition problematic in that it claims to "transcend" traditional definitions of gender while working within the terms and poles enacted thereby, all in an effort to secure a few more identities or subject positions that ostensibly remain as definitive and fixed as the original two poles.

³³ Eaton and Lorentzen, 2003, p.2. Beauvoir also recognized the division of human bodies and life into hierarchical dualisms, writing: "[S]ince the coming of the patriarch, Life has worn in [the] eyes [of man] a double aspect: it is consciousness, will, transcendence, it is the spirit; and it is matter, passivity, immanence, it is the flesh" (SS, 144).

³⁴ It is significant to note that many prominent feminist theorists such as "Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Gayatri Spivak...[and] Judith Butler" (VB, 17) have begun to equate upholding a distinction between sex and gender with a conception of the human body as a passive or "neutral screen, a biological *tabula rasa* onto which masculine or feminine could be indifferently projected" (VB, 18). On this basis, among these feminists there is "a wariness of the sex/gender distinction" (VB, 18): "Instead of seeing sex as an essentialist and gender as a constructionist category" (VB, 18) – which apparently is what they believe maintaining a sex/gender distinction amounts to – "these thinkers are concerned to undermine the dichotomy" (VB, 18) – which is apparently the only way they can recognize this distinction being conceived. "These feminists thus do not evoke a precultural, presocial, or prelinguistic pure body but a body as social and discursive object, a body bound up in the order of desire, signification, and power" (VB, 18-19). And while I would not evoke "a precultural, presocial, or prelinguistic pure body", I believe that we can recognize a distinction between sex and gender while nevertheless recognizing that sex is also, at least in part, constructed and produced through and by cultural, social, and linguistic situations and conceptual and paradigmatic events.

³⁵ At this point, I must make two brief notes. Firstly: Beauvoir has been accused of harboring a poorly-veiled misogyny on more occasions than can be counted, but I believe that her conviction on this matter is quite clear "once one has looked at the tex[t] with sufficient attention" (Foucault, 1980, p.112). The problem of woman, for Beauvoir, has never been a problem inherent to the female body. I believe that this is plainly evident in the passage to follow: "If we cast a general glance over this history, we see several conclusions that stand out from it. And this one is first of all: the whole of feminine history has been man-made. Just as in America there is no Negro problem, but rather a white problem, just as "anti-semitism is not a Jewish problem: it is our problem"; so the woman problem has always been a man's problem" (SS, 128). Secondly: Beauvoir conceives of sex as dualistic. Thus, in my analysis of her position, I will maintain or use the terms that she employs in her writings.

³⁶ For a detailed account of the historical progression of this assertion as Subject see the second part of the first book of *The Second Sex* titled 'History'.

³⁷ Beauvoir also remarks that "[t]he myth of woman is a luxury" (SS, 260); however, despite the seeming contradiction, her position remains clear: the benefits experienced by men through the subordination of women are misleading and ultimately illusory. Although she clearly maintains that the secondary status of women is something imposed upon by them by men, the underlying theme of *The Second Sex* (most clearly expressed in the 'Conclusion' (SS, 716-732)) is that the subordination of woman creates a situation in which neither sex can flourish or realize their full potential. This is particularly clear in her assertion that: "Man would have nothing to lose, quite the contrary, if he gave up disguising woman as a symbol...To recognize in woman a human being is not to impoverish man's experience: this would lose none of its diversity, its richness, or its intensity if it were to occur between two subjectivities" (SS, 261). Thus, for Beauvoir, the Subject/Other distinction is something that is enforced by men (supposedly to their benefit) and thereby imposed on women (unequivocally to their detriment), yet this distinction in itself (or rather,

for Beauvoir, any inability to recognize the subjectivity of the other) is something that severely restricts the range of possible expressions of which the human body is capable. She writes: “[This] is the tragedy of the unfortunate human consciousness[:] each separate conscious being aspires to set himself up alone as a sovereign subject. Each tries to fulfill himself by reducing the other to slavery... It is possible to rise above this conflict if each individual freely recognizes the other, each regarding himself and the other simultaneously as object and as subject in a reciprocal manner” (SS, 140).

³⁸In Beauvoir’s view, the white-skinned body of the male could clearly be identified as that body whose interests were being served by the perpetuation of the myth of woman. It is of these bodies, for her, that the “ruling caste” is composed. In her ‘Introduction’ to the Vintage Edition of *The Second Sex*, Deirdre Bair elaborates that: “As Beauvoir filled in the details of her ambitious outline, the “other” became increasingly important in her vocabulary. She defines white men in Western civilizations as being the central figures in their societies, and according to this definition, not only women were “other,” but also anyone whom she considered barred from empowerment by color or sexual preference” (SS, xii). And further: “white men had succeeded in relegating both black men and all women into positions or “alterité” or “otherness” (SS, xii). Following the publication of *The Second Sex* in France and in the United States, however, we can observe a shift in discourses of feminism concerning the perception and understanding of the subordination of women – namely, a shift away from conceiving the body of the (white) male as that which is solely responsible for the situations of women, toward the realization that no single body can (with any accuracy) be held accountable for a situation of such immense complexity, and, in addition to this, toward the realization that the bodies of males are also heterogeneous. It was the second and third waves of this feminist movement that brought careful attention to the fact that the sex of a body intersects with a number of other factors, such as race, age, nationality, ethnicity, religiosity, ability, gender-identity, and sexual orientation. Notably, it is “Socialist feminists [who] draw our attention to ways sexual oppression is confounded by race, class, sexual orientation, and ability. Women are not equally oppressed; men are not equally privileged. They are critical of the white, middle-class heterosexual, western bias of mainstream liberal strategies that ignore these differences” (Mandell (Ed.), 2001, p.220).

³⁹In an interesting if unintentional parallel, Grosz too acknowledges the link between the fear of death and the construction of Woman, maintaining that “there remains a broadly common coding of the female body as a body which leaks” (VB, 204), while also observing that: “Bodily fluids attest to the permeability of the body, its necessary dependence on an outside, its liability to collapse into this outside (this is what death implies), to the perilous divisions between the body’s inside and its outside” (VB, 103).

⁴⁰Following Grosz, I believe that: “If bodies are inscribed in particular ways, if these inscriptions have thus far served to constitute women’s bodies as a lack relative to men’s fullness, a mode of incapacity in terms of men’s skills and abilities, a mode of women’s naturalness and immanence compared with men’s transcendence, then these kinds of inscription are capable of reinscription, of transformation, are capable of being lived and represented in quite different terms, terms that may grant women the capacity for independence and autonomy, which thus far have been attributed only to men” (VB, xiii).

Chapter Four

⁴¹Rosi Braidotti describes becoming-woman as “the key, the precondition, and the necessary starting point for the whole process of becoming” (NS, 114). And writes, further, that “becoming-woman is necessarily the crucial step in so far as woman is the privileged figure of otherness in Western discourse” (NS, 114). She proceeds, however, to problematize Deleuze’s conception of becoming-woman as the “key” to all other becomings, stating: “I would like to point out bluntly the kind of difficulty Deleuze gets into with his theory of the becoming woman: it is as if all becomings were equal, but some were more equal than others” (NS, 115). I would argue, however, that the inequality Braidotti perceives is one that she herself has inserted into the segments of becoming – she makes vertical, by hierarchization, differences that are presented by Deleuze as horizontal. Describing one thing as being the key to another does not, of necessity, imply that this first (or former) thing is of greater significance or value than the second (or latter). For instance, I must complete my Masters in order to proceed to my Doctoral work. In this sense, my Master’s could be termed the “key” to my future educational pursuits – in that I cannot proceed to the next phase except by and through this first stage – but this does not necessarily imply that any one phase of the education process is more significant or “more equal” than any other phase.

⁴² To be clear, I am in no way implying that this is the *only* way that female bodies can be formed as subjects. It is, however, the only way that female bodies have been subjectified historically and it continues, to a great extent, to be the way that they are made subjects today. Following Grosz (VB, 188), I believe that we (women) are only just in the preliminary stages of the project of articulating and forming ourselves as subjects (or of “self-understanding” and representing) which are not determined by a relation to the man standard. We cannot, however, undo our historical relation to the man standard and, in this sense, will always exist in relation thereto.

⁴³ Although, I suppose, this could be an effect experienced by a body of any sex reformed after becoming-woman; a welcomed effect, but one that is by no means guaranteed.

⁴⁴ This is a point of contention as conceived by Braidotti. Deleuze acknowledged the risk he perceived regarding the possibility of feminism issuing its own order-words (see Braidotti (NS, 116) for her version of Deleuze’s “critique of feminism”). What is interesting, in my view, is that Braidotti reads in Deleuze an order-word where there is not one. She contends that, for Deleuze, “women...can be revolutionary subjects only to the extent that they develop a consciousness that is not specifically feminine, dissolving “woman” into the forces that structure her. The ultimate aim is to achieve not a sex-specific identity but rather the dissolution of identity into an impersonal, multiple, machinelike subject” (NS, 116). Braidotti’s characterization of Deleuze’s position, on this matter, can be refuted on a number of bases (see 107-112 of this chapter). It is critical to note that, for Deleuze, it is not a particular identification or subjectivity that determines the capacity of a body to be revolutionary. The appearance of a body formed and the movements which can take place through this form are not to be conflated or assigned to one another in a relation of direct causality. This claim about the revolutionary female subject as one that must be non-feminine is a claim put forth by Braidotti, here, as the opinion of Deleuze, but it is a claim that has *never* been put forth by Deleuze himself. And the inaccuracy of Braidotti’s assessment of Deleuze’s position is further evidenced in Grosz’s assertion that “Deleuze and Guattari state that for women to become-woman does not mean renouncing feminist struggles for the attainment of an identity or subject-position...It is not that Deleuze and Guattari are demanding that women abandon the identities and struggles that have thus far helped define feminism as a struggle for women’s rights, power and place in cultural life. They are not demanding that we become instead of that we *be*: but rather, that feminism...must not content itself with a final goal...a point of stability or identity. Political struggles are by their nature endless and ever-changing” (VB, 177-178). Interestingly, in opposition to the position she has assigned to Deleuze, Braidotti maintains that it is absolutely necessary for women to assert the feminine, stating: “Given that there is no symmetry between the sexes, women must speak the feminine—they must think it, write it, and represent it in their terms” (NS, 118). I agree that it is necessary for there to be an assertion of the feminine by women, and I also tend to agree with Braidotti’s claim that “[t]he apparent repetition and reassertion of feminine positions is a discursive strategy that engenders difference” (NS, 118). I remain, however, greatly discomforted by Braidotti’s ease in informing women what they “must speak” (NS, 118). This feels to me like an order-word.

⁴⁵ Yet, as we have noted, the body of the girl is the first body made dualistic and, as such, as Grosz observes, it is “the site of a culture’s most intensified disinvestments and recastings of the body” (VB, 175). Furthermore, in a passage that was not intended to address the work of Deleuze and Guattari but that is nevertheless very insightful to the notion of the girl and woman in becoming, Grosz writes: “Puberty for girls marks...an entry into the reproductive reality that is presumed to be women’s prime domain...but the onset of menstruation is not an indication at all for the girl of her developing sexuality, only her coming womanhood...[which] indicates the beginning of an out-of-control status that she was led to believe ends with childhood...This necessarily marks womanhood, whatever else it may mean for particular women, as outside itself, outside its time (the time of self-contained adulthood) and place (the place definitively within its own skin, as a self-identical being), and thus a paradoxical entity, on the very border between infancy and adulthood, nature and culture, subject and object, rational being and irrational animal” (VB, 205).

⁴⁶ It is worthwhile to examine the assertions presented here, concerning the becoming-woman of woman as a molar entity, in light of Beauvoir’s often quoted assertion that: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (SS, p.267). Both authors, it would seem, have described a process of becoming that takes place in relation to (the development of the subjectivity) woman. However, despite the apparent affinity of their statements, I would argue that the way in which a body becomes a woman, as described by Beauvoir, involves the (social and cultural) processes and practices through which a body comes to be formed and subjectified as woman, as a fixed and ossified subject type, and includes those processes and practices

through which a body participates in its own formation and subjectification as such. It is precisely this body, which through applications and sedimentations of strata has been formed as a molar entity, that Deleuze maintains must become-woman in order to undergo a variable coming-undone. Thus, the body that has become a woman, in the sense intended by Beauvoir, is precisely that entity which, according to Deleuze, must participate in becomings-woman in order to affect a (relative) dissolution of this rigidified subjectivity.

⁴⁷ Grosz also borrows a passage from “one of Australia’s few postmodern lesbian writers, Mary Fallon” (STP, 183), which I think is quite insightful to this discussion. I will quote the borrowed passage, here, as follows: “...stroking my whole body all night long until your fingers became fine sprays of white flowers until they became fine silver wires electrifying my epidermis until they became delicate instruments of torture and the night wore on for too many hours and I loved you irritably as dawn reprieved us we are two live-wire women wound and sprung together we are neither of us afraid of the metamorphoses transmutations the meltings the juices squelching in the body out of body—a split fruit of woman we are neither of us afraid to sink our teeth into the peach it’s not love or sex it’s just that we are collaborating every night on a book called *The Pleasures of the Flesh Made Simple*...(Fallon:87)” (STP, 184).

⁴⁸ In this passage, Braidotti uses the phrase “becoming-minority.” This usage is quite relevant in that it demonstrates a lack of attention to detail in her reading of Deleuze. She has obviously missed the distinction between *minoritarian*, as a movement of deterritorialization that may constitute a becoming, and *minority*, as a state or aggregate of formed bodies (which clearly would not constitute a becoming).

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