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Guerrilla Vamping: *Vampyros Lesbos*, the Becoming-Woman of Women and the Unravelling of the Male Gaze

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Horror fiction teems with transformations. Kindly, handsome doctors quaff potions and become hideous, murderous madmen. Sweet, young, virginal women become voracious vampires. Sweet, young, virginal men become predatory werewolves. Misguided scientists turn into flies, cosmetics tycoons turn into wasps, insurance clerks turn into fish, and hillbillies turn into Elder Gods.¹ Most of these transformations are monstrous, but that does not mean they are necessarily evil (though they frequently are) or even undesired.

Desired or not, benign or malignant, the transformation that creates monsters disrupts categorization and gridding. The creature is interstitial (neither fly nor man, neither wasp nor woman), and its actions conflict with, or destroy, the social order in which it erupts. By bringing forth monsters, transformation imposes a sleep of reason.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari talk not so much about transformation as *becoming*. Becoming is, for them, one of the most important and necessary means of resistance against the tyranny of majoritarian, hierarchical structures. In illustrating and demonstrating the concept of becoming, they have recourse to the transforming characters of horror fiction. Vampires, werewolves, demons and sorcerers populate their book's Plateau 10 ("1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible ..."). The Plateau's very first example of becoming is taken from horror: the becoming-rat of *Willard* (1971). And the Plateau's year comes from the fact that from "1730 to 1735, all we hear about are vampires" (237).²

There are arguments that becoming is not as liberatory as Deleuze and Guattari maintain it is, and this is especially true of becoming-woman. The ambivalences and skepticism of horror fiction make it an

¹ In, respectively, George Langelaan's "The Fly" (1957, and its film versions in 1958 and 1986), *The Wasp Woman* (1959, remade 1996), and H.P. Lovecraft's "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" (1931) and "The Dunwich Horror" (1928).

² The word "vampire" first appears in print in English in 1734. During the period mentioned by Deleuze and Guattari, reports of vampirism proliferated in Hungary.

excellent medium for exploring becoming and seeing just how far one wants to go with it, or what exactly one might want to make of it. To that end, I propose to examine the idea of becoming-woman in tandem with Jesús Franco's film *Vampyros Lesbos* (1970), with the film commenting on the concept, and vice versa.

Deleuze and Guattari define becoming in these terms:

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.... 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. (272–3; emphasis theirs)

The zone of proximity consists of the region where the boundary between what one is and what one is becoming has become indiscernible. Becoming takes place in a block, i.e., there is always us, and the thing we are becoming, which also becomes (as we shall see is the case in *Vampyros Lesbos*). The description of the process in terms of "particles" emphasizes the fact that becoming is a molecular, as opposed to molar, process. Molarity, according to Ronald Bogue, involves an "aggregate level of organization" (93). It operates at the macro level. Molar politics, for example, involve political parties and other large movements of collected individuals. Molecular politics, or micropolitics, operate at the local, individual level. The same distinction applies to individual subjects. Recognizing oneself as a molecular multiplicity is to acknowledge that one is not a unified whole.

The importance of becoming-woman, particularly the becoming-woman of women, comes from the nature of patriarchal society, which establishes the white male as the standard by which all other subjects are judged and found wanting. Deleuze and Guattari write that "[i]t 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" (291). There is no becoming-man because "man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas all becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian" (291). A becoming-man would simply be a reaffirmation of the dominant status quo. This becoming is impossible by the terms of the definition, and

pointless by any other measure. Given this male standard, the most immediately created minority is female, and thus here is the primary need for liberation, and thus logically the first place for resistance. Any supposedly subversive or liberatory strategy that ignores the conditions that exist for women, and does not in some way share in their needs and their struggle, is necessarily going to be of limited success and value (at best). This is why Deleuze and Guattari claim that becoming-woman "is the key to all other becomings" (277). If the other becomings do not pass through becoming-woman, they are incomplete.

It is entirely *possible* for one to engage in becoming-animal (or anything else) directly, without passing through a becoming-woman, but it is not necessarily *desirable* that this should happen. Becoming-woman is the most important form of becoming, even if it is not actually necessary to trigger all the other forms. Particularly when the initial subject is male, we have to ask ourselves if the becoming-other is accomplishing anything worthwhile. In examining becomings, Deleuze and Guattari tell us that "[c]ase by case, we can tell whether the line [of flight] is consistent, in other words, whether the heterogeneities effectively function in a multiplicity of symbiosis, whether the multiplicities are effectively transformed through the becomings of passage" (250). We cannot make general rules; we must examine each situation on its own, and on its own terms. It is not impossible that a becoming of the male that does not pass through a becoming-woman produces a productive result. But careful scrutiny is required.

The becoming-woman of women, it must be clearly understood, is only one strategy among many in combatting the power structures of the patriarchy. For all that molarity is generally regarded with suspicion by Deleuze and Guattari, it is in and of itself not a universal evil. Deleuze and Guattari state that "[i]t is, of course, indispensable for women to conduct a molar politics, with a view to winning back their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity" (276). My emphasis here is on the molecular becoming-woman, partly because (obviously) it is not my place to suggest what a molar definition of woman should be (that is for women to decide),³ but also because it is at the molecular level that I think horror fiction presents the most interesting possibilities.

³ Since the molar woman is a male construction, and can therefore be assumed not to exist (except through coerced creation), then we are left with the conclusion that not only are women to escape their molar construction by playing with that molar construction, but also that they do not yet exist as women. This is hardly a palatable (or, for that matter, tenable) position. What I would prefer is to recognize the molar woman as both an oppressive and powerful construction, still pandemically widespread, still doing incalculable harm, and desperately in need of dismantling (as an integral part of the patriarchal regime). Thus, it is not that

I feel that horror fiction's possible interventions at the molar level are much more limited, and quite possibly undesirable.⁴ This is not to say that art should not be politically engaged. I mean simply that I am deeply suspicious of any work, whatever its intentions might be, that is designed to shape large movements.

While doubtful of the particular strategies Deleuze and Guattari describe for becoming-woman (strategies that could lead to the co-opting of women's struggles and their redirection to the service of a male project), Dianne Chisholm still argues that "it is certain that *feminism must create an avant garde of its own*" (223; emphasis hers), leaving open the possibility of a becoming-woman in the service of this project. Ideally, that is the form becoming-woman should take: one where women make the first move, and the move has nothing to do with the dictates of a male project. Therefore, without presuming to speak to the nature of that first move, I propose the following use of the *concept* of becoming-woman: that it be considered as a molecular process, defined by women, which escapes control of the majority, and in so doing can work with, rather than against, the formation of a molar identity for women.

Rosi Braidotti, who is also leery of the risks becoming-woman presents, suggests one of the ways in which becoming-woman can productively work against the patriarchal molar definition of woman: "[a] great number of contemporary feminist performers offer perfect examples of counterrepresentations of affirmations of denaturalized, deessentialized bodies, which they turn into fields of alternative signification" (170). Horror fiction, with its many transformed and alien bodies, can be the site of very similar operations. As a general rule, any sort of becoming in horror (not just becoming-woman) can present the opportunity that Braidotti describes. Of course, the bloody rampages and tragic ends that are so common to horror fiction mean that each case must be examined on its own. Affirmations of these unnatural (denaturalized) bodies are not automatic, but neither does destruction necessarily imply denigration, given how frequently it is an unsympathetic "normal" world that attacks the monster first. In the case of becoming-woman, one of horror fiction's most effective

women do not exist, but that they are being prevented from living as if they do, and so the construction of their own molar definition of woman is also an emphatic reminder of their own existence (emphasis on "own").

⁴ Undesirable both politically and artistically. If one attempts to produce art that has effects on the molar level, the result, it seems to me, would be didactic agit-prop at best. The one example that springs to mind of artistically successful molar art is *Triumph of the Will*. We do not need more art of this kind.

strategies consists first in denaturalizing elements of the molar woman, and then affirming these molecular elements in opposition to molarity.

How does this process work? The man-standard creates the molar construction of woman as it is experienced in patriarchal society. This is the male definition of woman, the categorical set that the dominant, majoritarian force expects women to conform to. It is the collection of stereotypes and clichés with which we are all-too-familiar. Brian Massumi writes that becoming-woman

... involves carrying the indeterminacy, movement, and paradox of the female stereotype past the point at which it is recuperable by the socius as it presently functions, over the limit beyond which lack of definition becomes the positive power to select a trajectory (the leap from the realm of possibility into the virtual—breaking away). This necessarily involves a redefinition of the category by and for those it traditionally targets: "fickleness" translated into a political refusal on the part of women to remain fixed within the confines of the home or other constrictive arenas of work ... "flightiness" made to soar to heights of versatility in artistic creation.... From a dismissive category to increased degrees of collective freedom; from value judgment to reevaluation. (87–8)

Massumi describes this process as something that can be enacted by "bodies of either biological sex" (87), with the male strategies thus ranging from transvestism to transsexualism to adopting (in either gay or straight scenarios) the clichéd roles assigned to women in relationships.⁵ Overall, there seems to be a rather ironic process at work, since all of the appropriation is coming from the molar construction of woman.⁶ Becoming-woman thus means becoming what one would not want to be in order to transform it into something other than what *it*

⁵ The physical act of transvestism alone does not constitute becoming—by itself, it is merely imitation. But imitation does not rule out becoming. It may, in fact, be an indication that becoming is taking place. It is not, however, a full and sufficient condition.

⁶ This being the case, Massumi is right to wonder why Deleuze and Guattari do not provide for "the possibility of a similarly revolutionary becoming-man that would push the masculine stereotype beyond *its* threshold of recuperation (following, for example, strategies of the kind employed by some segments of the gay and lesbian S/M communities who theatricalize 'masculinity' in order to take it to a deconstructive extreme)" (89). The masculine ideal is, after all, an inhuman construct that any real person is doomed to fall short of. Molar man cannot really exist (though one has to admit that there are plenty of frighteningly close approximations). A monolithic gender identity being discounted, men must therefore form some sort of minority (though still clearly in a position of majority in relation

wants to be, and thus escape from being forced into being something that *others* want one to be. Becoming-woman uses the molar definition of woman against itself.⁷ I feel that some of the clearest instances of this process at work in horror fiction are to be found in stories and films concerning the lesbian vampire. And this brings me to *Vampyros Lesbos* (1970).

I choose *Vampyros Lesbos* because of its disreputable roots (it is very much a product of the exploitation world of filmmaking) and its male creator and target audience. Let there be no mistake here: the explosion of lesbian vampire films that occurred at the beginning of the 70s was not, as far as I can determine, the result of any conscious efforts of sexual radicalism (unless we think in the vaguest and most generous terms possible), but rather the result of filmmakers taking advantage of relaxing censorship to tap a known market quantity. These are films made by and for heterosexual males. The sex scenes of *Vampyros Lesbos* are the result of a male gaze,⁸ and are created for the pleasure of the same. And this is precisely why I find the film so useful to the subject at hand. There are other films that might, on the surface, be more useful to a liberatory project, films consciously created for the purpose of furthering a feminist agenda. One such is Isiling Mack-Nataf's *The Mark of Lilith* (1986), whose plot Pam Keesey describes as follows: "Lilia, a white bisexual vampire, meets up with a black lesbian researcher whose perspectives jolt her out of a blindness caused by patriarchy" (239). However, judging by the description, I would venture to guess that this would in fact be an example of a vampire film that is not a horror film (there seems to be no attempt to frighten the audience here). Furthermore, I have been unable to track this film down, which suggests to me an *extremely* limited distribution. *The Mark of Lilith* is an exception. There are proportionately very, very few horror films directed by women. Horror film audiences are much more likely to stumble across something like *Vampyros Lesbos*.⁹ My feeling is that if

to all other minorities) with respect to their own unattainable ideal, and some sort of becoming, perhaps limited, but nonetheless real, should be possible after all.

⁷ This symbiotic relationship between the molecular becoming and the molar definition will change as the struggle for a molar re-definition progresses. As women establish their own molar woman, becoming no longer need be a struggle against the male molar definition, but can be a non-parodic move toward a female-directed project.

⁸ And Franco's most especially. The ubiquity of lesbianism in his films points not so much to an interest as an obsession.

⁹ Already a cult film, its recent DVD release has made it available to a much larger audience, one whose interest has likely been piqued by the surprising success of the soundtrack re-release.

my suggestions for the liberatory applications of the becoming-woman in horror fiction have any validity at all, they *must* be applicable to a wide variety of films, and not just an exceptional few. Furthermore, *Vampyros Lesbos*, as a product of a male-oriented system, can demonstrate how such products can be turned against the very system they apparently support.

A disorienting, fragmentary collection of scenes and almost random montage, insisting that we look at the totally irrelevant (a Labrador frolicking in the waves) as well as at the crucial (a drop of blood on white curtains), *Vampyros Lesbos* tells the story of the transformation of Linda Westinghouse (Ewa Stroemberg). Linda is beset by strange, erotic dreams of a mysterious woman. Dr. Steiner (Paul Muller), her psychiatrist, recommends that she take a lover. Sent by her office to an island off the coast of Turkey, Linda discovers not only both the location and the woman of her dreams, but that those dreams were in fact fragmentary precognitions. Nadine Carody (Soledad Miranda), a vampire, seduces her, and gradually initiates her into the world of vampirism. Meanwhile, the various men in the plot—from Linda's boyfriend Omar (Victor Feldman) to Dr. Steiner to the vampire-obsessed Dr. Seward (Dennis Price) to the homicidal misogynist Memmet (Franco)—struggle fruitlessly to re-establish their control over the women.

We see two forms of becoming-woman in the film. One is Linda's trajectory toward Nadine (where becoming-woman is equated with becoming-vampire). The other is Nadine's becoming-woman, which is very much the form of becoming-woman described by Massumi above. Nadine's becoming is the more straightforward of the two, and I shall look at it first.

Like almost every other female vampire, Nadine is also the vamp. We first see her performing in a nightclub. She dances around a naked woman posing as a mannequin, and gradually transfers her clothing to the other woman, mirroring the relationship of contagion she will establish with Linda. Her clothes (when she is wearing any at all) consist of diaphanous lingerie and high heels—typical male fantasy accessories. And while Nadine is obviously presented in this way for the enjoyment of the male viewer, on the narrative level, her vamping is for Linda, not for Omar. Nadine is, as Massumi suggests, taking a feminine stereotype about as far as it can go, but divorcing it from the structure it is supposed to support. The hundreds of men in the strip club where she performs can watch and desire all they want, but they are locked out of the circuit of desire that is running from Nadine to Linda and back again. Why Omar has brought Linda to the club is unclear (perhaps as some misguided attempt at seduction), but whatever his motivations;

whatever his desires, his action backfires, giving instead to Nadine the opportunity to act on *her* desire. Thus, Nadine takes the stereotypical seduction elements from the molar definition of woman and embodies them, but in a way that transforms these elements. The way in which those elements now function (toward the seduction of Linda) takes them away from male control. Linda enjoys the show all right, but in precisely the opposite way that Omar could have intended. It comes as no surprise, then, that the representatives of the male order (Omar, Steiner, Seward) seek Nadine's destruction.

At the end of the film, Linda frees Nadine of vampirism by drinking her blood and then stabbing her through the eye. Omar and Steiner, two steps behind, arrive to find Linda, but all evidence that Nadine ever existed, with the exception of a red scarf, is gone. The disappearance of Nadine's body leaves us with the interesting possibility that the entire film is really Linda's fantasy (though a mysteriously contagious one, since Omar seems to share it). Exactly where reality ends and dream begins is not clear, and this helps propel Linda's becoming-woman, in that whether or not events happened is not as important as the effect they had on Linda. The film opens with Linda and Omar in a strip club, watching Nadine. We then move immediately into Linda's dream. Oddly, though she recognizes the dancer as the woman of her dreams, she later does not recognize Nadine as the dancer. Omar returns to the club toward the end of the film, where he witnesses Nadine vampirize another dancer—before an enthusiastic public, no less, which might lead us to wonder about the reality of what Omar thinks he saw. Desperate to explain away the events of the film, Omar says, in his last lines of the film: "It was a bad dream, Linda. Nothing more." But Linda gets the last word: "No, it wasn't a dream ... unbelievable as it may seem. Even if there is no explanation. The pain will fade in time, but the memory will remain ... for as long as I live." These final lines of dialogue are crucial. On the one hand, we see that Omar *needs* to believe that Nadine was not real, that the woman who stole his girlfriend can be banished through psychological rationalizations. And now that there is no further evidence of the vampire's existence (if he ignores the scarf), Linda will return to the norm of their relationship. The thunderstruck look on Linda's face in the first strip club scene is certainly not the sort of consequence Omar had in mind when he took her there. She has taken his fantasy, made it her own, and cut him out of it. Her reply makes it clear that the question of distinguishing between dream and reality is moot. Whether (or to what degree) Nadine existed in the "real" world is irrelevant, because the change she has caused in Linda is real. Linda may be beside Omar

as the film ends, but her voice-over suggests that this might well be only for as long as it takes for the boat to ferry them back to Istanbul.

Linda's approach to vampirism is real whether or not Nadine exists. And vampirism in this case appears to be synonymous with becoming-woman. Or, more precisely, becoming-woman is also becoming-vampire. This is because the strategies that Linda adopts that help her escape male control and establish her own identity as a woman are caught up by the vampire = vamp = woman equation that Nadine has set up in her own becoming. Nadine's courting of Linda is a combination of sexual seduction and initiation into the vampire life. So, for instance, lovemaking alternates with the ceremonial drinking of aristocratic vampire blood from a crystal goblet. The only real act of vampirism that Linda commits is on Nadine herself. Afterwards, Nadine's body vanishes. She is no longer needed to facilitate Linda's becoming. Interestingly, there is no hint after that one incident that Linda has joined the ranks of the undead. To the contrary, Linda, though clearly in love with Nadine, kills her because she does not want to be a vampire, and, furthermore, refuses to offer her blood to Nadine and thereby fall completely under her control. She has her autonomy now, and will not surrender it. We now see a woman who is both aware and in control of the different paths her sexuality can take. Her decisions and journeys are now completely independent of those that Omar (as male lover) or Dr. Steiner (as voice of male authority) might wish to impose. The import of Linda's act of bloodsucking, then, would seem to be that she has entered another phase of becoming-woman. Nadine disappears because Linda is now in an equivalent position.¹⁰ Linda can now, if she chooses, and if she finds it necessary, engage in the kind of becoming-woman that Nadine had been launched on (one where male conceptions of woman are wrested from male control). In any case, she can become-woman in the service of her own definition of molar woman. This is something that would not have been possible earlier, in that her resistance to the White Man Face could only take the form of restlessness and disturbing dreams. Only her unconscious was in rebellion then. Now she more consciously feels the restraints, and revolts against them. Her act of vampirism becomes symbolic of her new self-assertion.

The bond between Linda and Nadine is very much in line with the use to which Deleuze and Guattari put the vampire. Their interest is in the way the vampire propagates, not in the actual act of bloodsucking.

¹⁰ Equivalent, that is, with respect to Linda's particular situation as a 20th-century businesswoman, which is not the same as being a centuries-old Romanian aristocrat.

They write: "The vampire does not filiate, it infects. The difference is that contagion, epidemic, involves terms that are entirely heterogeneous: for example, a human being, an animal, and a bacterium, a virus, a molecule, a microorganism" (241-42). The important point about vampirism is not anemia but contagion. The vampirized individual becomes vampire in turn. The nature of that vampirism can be quite varied, since in the case of *Vampyros Lesbos* the contagion is not blood-sucking but sexual self-determination. Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the heterogeneity of the pair of terms in vampirism, and we see this in Linda and Nadine. They are both women, but they are (initially) utterly different with respect to their positions vis-à-vis the majority. Linda is still a victim, in standardized relationships with men as lovers and authority figures. Nadine, on the other hand, is feared by male authority (in the form of Dr. Seward) since she cannot be controlled, and transforms attempts to define her to her own ends (thus paradoxically escaping definition).

The becoming-woman that I see as occurring in *Vampyros Lesbos* is successful as long as one remembers that the creation of a new, female-determined molar woman (the woman engaged in molar politics) is part-and-parcel of the project, which should not be confined to the molecular level. With this in mind, then, I think it becomes possible to deal with the dangers that feminist scholars have pointed out exist in the Deleuzoguattarian becoming-woman. While Deleuze and Guattari do insist on the necessity of molar politics for women, they qualify this position by saying that "it is dangerous to confine oneself to such a subject, which does not function without drying up a spring or stopping a flow" (276). Rosi Braidotti is troubled by what she sees as a "Yes, but ..." approach to women's molar politics and subjectivity on the part of Deleuze and Guattari, with mere lip service being paid to everything but the becoming. Furthermore, this threat of dried-up springs and stopped flows (which is followed immediately by a mention of "the driest of women" [276]) strikes me as a good example of the "surprisingly stereotyped genderizations and images of women" that trouble Alice Jardine (47). What must be done is change the "Yes, but ..." to a "Yes, and ...". Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the importance of not committing oneself entirely to molar politics and forgetting the molecular. What we must remember is that the reverse is no better. Both aspects are indispensable and, as I mentioned earlier, if I have focused on molecular becoming here, it is because that is where horror fiction works best. Nevertheless, the becoming-woman I have found in *Vampyros Lesbos* is valid only if the importance of molarity is kept present. That is, Nadine's pushing of seductive stereotypes is

constructive only if it is considered as a strategy toward undermining the male molar definition of women, and for the purpose of aiding in the construction a female definition.

The other worrisome point that the dual emphasis on the molar and molecular should be able to help with is the idea that women should become first. According to Deleuze and Guattari, this is because

... only a minority is capable of serving as the active medium of becoming, but under such conditions that it ceases to be a definable aggregate in relation to the majority. Becoming-Jewish, becoming-woman, etc., therefore imply two simultaneous movements, one by which a term (the subject) is withdrawn from the majority, and another by which a term (the medium or agent) rises up from the minority. (291)

It stands to reason that it is the minority that should decide on the path of its becoming, since anything else would be kowtowing to the majority's will, and we are right back where we started. Also encouraging is the move to be no longer "a definable aggregate in relation to the majority." In other words, the minority breaks away from the majority's force of definition. While it may be striving to create its own molar definition of itself, it also retains the fluidity of process, avoiding stagnation and recapture by the grid. By remaining in process, the minority is, from the point of view of the majority, mercurial, perhaps unknowable, and certainly difficult to control.

But the call for women to become-women first (and Jews to become-Jewish, etc.), the withdrawal from the majority, and the idea of continuous process all carry their own set of problems. Alice Jardine writes:

... to the extent that women must "become woman" *first* (in order for men, in D + G's words, to "follow her example"), might that not mean that she must also be the *first* to disappear? Is it not possible that the process of "becoming woman" is but a new variation of an old allegory for the process of women becoming obsolete? There would remain only her simulacrum: a female figure caught in a whirling sea of male configurations. A silent, mutable, head-less, desire-less, spatial surface necessary only for *His* metamorphosis? (54; emphasis hers)

The answer to Jardine's questions must be "no" if becoming-woman is to be embraced as a valid response to the patriarchal grid. Deleuze and

Guattari certainly do open up the grim possibilities that Jardine describes, particularly if we view becoming-woman as the first necessary step in a teleologically oriented process that culminates in becoming-imperceptible.¹¹ We can avoid these dangers if we remember that becomings are not inexorably linked one to another.¹² Therefore, becoming-woman, just as it no longer absolutely *must* be gone through to access all other transformations, also no longer must itself lead to the other becomings. Becoming-woman need not be a stepping stone to becoming-imperceptible. It need not be a stepping stone at all. If there are links, not only can they be to any sort of becoming, but they can be strategic—temporary alliances that serve the needs of the transforming embodied subject (as is the case with becoming-vampire and becoming-woman in *Vampyros Lesbos*). Furthermore, by simultaneously engaging in the complementary molar project, the possibility of women disappearing is, I think, shut down.

Nevertheless, there is still a valid case to be made that putting the onus on women to become first is unfair. According to Brian Massumi,

... [i]t is "real" men, molar men, who should consent to "go first." I.e., self destruct. De-form themselves. Dissociate their bodies and desires from the apparatus of overcoding that has up to now defined them, and forced complementary definitions on others in their name. It is only when they cease to be that they will be able to become. Given the privileges that the existing social order accords them, it is unlikely that molar men will embrace this mission of self-excision with immediate enthusiasm. Their suicide may have to be assisted. Women and sexual minorities "should" not go first—but neither should they wait. (89)

For the most part, I agree with Massumi. Placing the onus on women and other minorities to become first, that men may follow, appears as more than a little unjust. There is no reason why the majority should be left happily to enjoy its privilege until such time as the minorities,

¹¹ "If becoming-woman is the first quantum, or molecular segment, with the becomings-animal that link up with it coming next, what are they all rushing toward? Without a doubt, toward becoming-imperceptible. The imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula" (Deleuze and Guattari 279).

¹² "The error we must guard against is to believe that there is a kind of logical order to this string, these crossings and transformations. It is already going too far to postulate an order descending from the animal to the vegetable, then to molecules, to particles" (Deleuze and Guattari 250). Here teleology is shunned.

already by definition in a position of circumscribed power, take action. However, as Massumi says, the "suicide" of molar men may have to be assisted. (Why change when you have no incentive to do so? The law of inertia favours molarity.) And one of the ways in which that suicide can be assisted is through the becoming of the minorities. Aggregates detached from the grid, transformed beyond definition, threaten that grid, and the status quo becomes more difficult to maintain. This is one reason, at least, why minorities should not have to wait. Another, of course, is that they might well have to wait forever otherwise.

There is one more compelling reason why women should become-women first: the alternative is unthinkable. If there is to be a becoming-woman, its nature must remain in the control of women. If men were to engage in a becoming-woman on their own, without the process having first been defined by women, then they would be becoming-woman according to their own definition of woman. All we would have is the majority continuing on its merry way, making up whatever it pleases, and now fooling itself into believing that it is engaged in some sort of revolutionary (but contained) activity, that it has joined the other minorities, and is sharing their oppression, feeling their pain, and partaking of their liberation. Utter nonsense.¹³ So Deleuze and Guattari are right in saying that women must have the first move in the realm of becoming-woman, but only as long as that first move is not defined by men.

The becoming-woman of man is not the same thing as the becoming-woman of woman. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that becoming takes into account the point at which one finds oneself at the start of the process, and that is obviously not going to be the same point for a majority as for a minority. So man does not simply follow the path laid out by woman. His becoming-woman is, as Massumi suggests, more along the lines of an assisted suicide. To explore that issue would require another article, and a different film.

¹³ This option turns up in *Vampyros Lesbos* in the character of Dr. Seward, who wants to engage in a becoming-vampire, but on his own terms. Rather than obey his commands, Nadine has him killed.

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Narrative Mortality: The "Fragmegrated" Corpse of the Horror Anthology Film

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*Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great
and sudden change.* Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*, 1818)

Looming like a dark cloud, the above passage from Shelley's classic exposé of Promethean ambition and punishment is an axiom made incontestable when applied to cinema, a medium that in its classical and post-classical incarnations has endeavored to linearize time and iron out any potential disruptions that might "de-suture" a spectator from a story. As an alternative to the smooth, continuous, single-story narrative tradition, the episodic, multi-story film is the cinematic equivalent of Frankenstein's "hideous progeny": Formed out of disparate elements, the episode film is filled with bumps, dangles, gaps and ruptures. Initially emerging from the late vaudevillian era (when a vast array of discontinuous live acts and filmed short-subjects could be presented successively as modular units in 12-to-20-minute "variety brackets")¹ and persisting throughout the century in omnibus, anthology, compilation, and portmanteau guises, the episodic format represents an effort to negotiate change through a unifying structuration of narrative fragmentation. Perhaps no other group of episodic films literalizes the *pain* associated with a "sudden change" so dramatically as the horror anthology, a generic oddity richly imbricated with rhetorical discursivity thanks to its interactive and diasparactive inclinations. Risking hyperbole, I argue that the horror anthology's most significant contribution to film history lies in the subgenre's ability to reconcile antagonistic attitudes toward death through an aggressively

¹ As Fredric Jameson has pointed out, the affinity between "the operations of the comic and the episodizing logic of the various modernisms" can be accounted for once we move beyond "the meaning of laughter," beyond "some 'comic spirit' or world-view," to notice "the discontinuous structure" of the variety show or music-hall format from which, for example, Charlie Chaplin's and Buster Keaton's autonomous visual gags derive (211).