



## Conceptual Personae and Aesthetic Figures of Becoming-Woman

Why are there so many becomings of man, but no becoming-man? First because man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian. . . . 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.<sup>1</sup>

It is well known that for Deleuze and Guattari “becoming,” as opposed to “being,” is important in the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they discuss many types of becoming: “becoming-intense, becoming-animal, becoming-imperceptible . . .”<sup>2</sup> Becoming is always a molecular process that involves a becoming-minoritarian. All becomings seem to be initiated by a becoming-woman. As recent feminists have discussed, however, this becoming-woman should not be seen as a molar becoming a woman or as an end in itself.<sup>3</sup> Every becoming is a process and an attempt to think differently, to see or feel something new in experience by entering into a zone of proximity with somebody or something else: “[Becoming] constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernibility, a no-man’s land, a nonlocalizable relation sweeping up the two distant or contiguous points, carrying one into the proximity of the other.”<sup>4</sup>

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In his book *Deleuzism*, Ian Buchanan discusses becoming-woman in relation to the world-historical. He sees Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming-woman as part of the utopian vocation of their concepts:

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From a certain point of view, the most deeply utopian texts are not those that propose or depict a better society, but those that carry out the most thoroughgoing destruction of the present society. For Deleuze, however, simply seeing/transgressing the limit is not enough to release us from perceptibility because it preserves the idea of a limit. One must do more, but what? The answer is becoming-woman, where becoming-woman is the basis of a total critique.<sup>5</sup>

Buchanan then refers to Deleuze's *Essays Critical and Clinical*, in which he shows that becoming-woman is in the first instance a procedure that allows one to live freely; otherwise one is paralyzed. "This freedom to live is not of course the same freedom enjoyed by people mercifully free of psychosis, it is rather the freedom of someone who has moved into an alternate universe where things are measured differently, valued differently and generally held together by an entirely fresh set of rules."<sup>6</sup> Becoming-woman, like schizophrenia, can have its clinical psychotic form (like schizophrenia, becoming-woman is taken from psychoanalysis; Freud diagnoses his patient Schreber as suffering from becoming-woman), but it also has a critical/artistic form in which becoming-woman becomes something capable of inducing an effect (on readers or spectators). It is in this latter form that becoming-woman is no longer a diagnosis but an indictment, as Buchanan argues.

To look at some forms of artistic becoming-woman that have an effect, I use a "conceptual persona" that will shift gradually from the plane of immanence of philosophy to the plane of composition (no less immanent) of art and thus become an aesthetic figure. As Deleuze and Guattari argue in *What is Philosophy?*, philosophy and art need intercessors:

The conceptual persona is not the philosopher's representative but, rather, the reverse: the philosopher is only the envelope of his principal conceptual persona and of all the other personae who are intercessors, the real subject of his philosophy. . . . The difference between the conceptual personae and aesthetic figures consists first of all in this: the former are the powers of concepts, and the latter are the powers of affects and percepts. The former take effect on a plane of immanence that is an image of Thought-Being (noumenon), and the latter take effect on a plane of composition as image of a Universe (phenomenon). . . . Art thinks no less than philosophy, but it thinks through affects and percepts.<sup>7</sup>

Now, what conceptual persona/aesthetic figure other than Alice in Wonderland could be "someone who has moved into an alternate universe where things are measured differently?" Therefore, in this chapter, I take—**S**  
Lewis Carroll's figure as my guide through the world of becoming-woman.—**N**  
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First, I investigate in what way Alice in Wonderland could be seen as a conceptual persona of becoming in general and becoming-woman in particular: What happens when Alice grows smaller and larger? What does her body tell? Does she have a Body without Organs (BwO)? Is she becoming-woman? Then I look at the possible significance of this little girl as a conceptual persona for feminism. "Only recently and reluctantly have feminists taken a positive turn in the direction of Gilles Deleuze," writes Verena Conley in her article "Becoming-Woman Now."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, especially the concept of becoming-woman has met with serious critiques from female theorists. Is Alice indeed naive and a poor example for women, or could she be seen differently? Is she a cyborg *avant-la-lettre*? To find some answers to these questions, I finally look at Alice as an aesthetic figure in modern cinema. In films like Marguerite Duras' *Aurélia Steiner* (1979), Sally Potter's *Orlando* (1992), and Jean Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro's *The City of Lost Children* (1995), Alice appears to have many contemporary avatars as powerful film figures. I end by looking at Lars von Trier's "Goldenheart Trilogy" of *Breaking the Waves* (1996), *The Idiots* (1998), and *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). When focusing on *Dancer in the Dark*, I argue that Von Trier's heroines too can be seen as aesthetic figures of becoming-woman.<sup>9</sup>

## The Philosopher Meets Alice in Wonderland

*Alice's Growing Larger and Smaller: Which Way?*

In *The Logic of Sense*, Gilles Deleuze has many encounters with Lewis Carroll's Alice's *Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*.<sup>10</sup> According to Deleuze, Alice's growing smaller and larger are events of pure becoming. The concept of becoming is central to Deleuze's philosophy: it is related to many other ideas, such as the uncertainty about fixed identities, the BwO, and a concept of time and duration that is always invaded by the past and the future, which is particularly important for his cinema books, especially *The Time-Image*. The paradox of becoming is that there are always two things happening at the same time: when Alice grows larger, she simultaneously becomes larger than she was and smaller than she will be (when she grows smaller, she is simultaneously smaller than she was and

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\_\_\_\_\_larger than she will be). As Deleuze concludes, all movements of becoming  
\_\_\_\_\_move and pull in both directions at once: Alice does not grow without  
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shrinking and vice versa. This affirmation of both senses and directions at the same time is a paradox. It is a logic of sense that counters good sense in which there is always a determinable sense or direction. Alice demonstrates her confusion about, and fascination for, these adventurous becomings. As Deleuze puts it:

The paradox of this pure becoming, with its capacity to elude the present, is the paradox of infinite identity (the infinite identity of both directions or senses at the same time—of future and past, of the day before and the day after, of more and less, of too much and not enough, of active and passive, and of cause and effect. . . .) “Which way, which way?” asks Alice, sensing that it is always in both directions at the same time, so that for once she stays the same, through an optical illusion; the reversal of the day before and the day after, the present always being eluded—“jam tomorrow and jam yesterday, but never jam *to-day*”; the reversal of more and less: five nights are five times hotter than a single one, “but they must be five times colder for the same reason”; the reversal of active and passive: “do cats eat bats?” is as good as “do bats eat cats?”; the reversal of cause and effect: to be punished before having committed a fault, to cry before having pricked oneself, to serve before having divided up the servings.<sup>11</sup>

All these paradoxical movements of becoming also undermine the fixed personal identity—hence Alice’s doubts about her own name. Paradox not only destroys good sense as the only direction; it also destroys common sense as the assignation of fixed identities. A subject in the paradoxical situation of becoming is a subject that questions its identity. It is a subject with a Spinozistic body. In *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, Deleuze describes the elasticity of the body in the following way: “One may almost say that a mode changes its body or relation in leaving behind childhood, or entering old age. Growth, aging, and illness: we can hardly recognize the same individual. And is it really indeed the same individual?”<sup>12</sup> In the previous chapters, I discussed how Spinoza defines bodies in terms of what they are capable of instead of what they are. It now can be understood that his claim that “we do not know what a body can do” relates to the process of becomings in which the subject constantly finds himself or herself. It also implies that its meaning and capacities will vary according to context. This elastic conception of the body also provides useful new perspectives in feminist debates, as I discuss in the following section. A “Deleuzian feminism” seems to be gaining territory, going beyond the often-heard feminist critiques on the concept of becoming-woman that

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are due to an implicit traditional concept of the body (including the mind–body split).

*Molar and Molecular Levels of the Subject*

Like the Spinozian body, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the BwO is a body that challenges or resists single and fixed identities. In Chapter 2, I discussed the BwO in relation to Fassbinder's BwOs and how in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari define the full BwO as a body populated with intensities (life) and multiplicities. The BwO does not oppose the organs: it opposes the *limits* of the organism and makes multiple connections that go beyond the organism's organization as it is traditionally defined. The organism is one of the great organizing principles, situated on the molar or segmental level of the world, which Deleuze and Guattari call the strata. Deleuze and Guattari are concerned with three great strata: the organism, significance, and subjectification: "You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body—otherwise you're just depraved. You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted—otherwise you're just deviant. You will be a subject, nailed down as one, a subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement—otherwise you are just a tramp."<sup>13</sup>

The BwO opposes the strata and is part of the political lines as distinguished by Deleuze and Guattari, which also were discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. All becomings and the BwOs are lines of flight situated on a molecular level. One could say that the BwO is the zero degree of the body, where every body part has its potential: "a thousand tiny sexes" that on a molecular level can make infinite connections and combinations. These combinations can be made not only between different human bodies but also in relation to plants, animals, and other "bodies": becoming-plant, becoming-animal, becoming-wind, becoming-music. The BwO is not an easy thing to achieve, and Deleuze and Guattari see the dangers of this creative act. In Fassbinder's *In a Year of Thirteen Moons*, for instance, the BwO is missed. Instead of a full and rich BwO through which many intensities can pass, an emptied BwO is also possible: the body of the drug addict, the masochist, and the hypochondriac are such bodies that cannot produce any intensities and flows but disappear in a black hole. This is also the reason it is necessary to keep some elements of the organism, some forms of

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the strata. “You do not reach the BwO, and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying,” say Deleuze and Guattari. One must keep enough (small) rations of subjectivity to respond to dominant reality. Because dominant categories in reality probably will never disappear, it is important to confront those categories and to deal with them; but processes of becoming happen in that same reality: they slip through and in-between the categories. It is therefore important to consider construction of the subject both on the molar level of strata (identities, segments, and categories) and the molecular level of becomings (the “breaking” or “opening up” of the subject).

*Alice’s Becoming-Woman*

After explaining that all becomings take place at a molecular level, Deleuze and Guattari state that all becomings start with becoming-woman. This is an intriguing remark, one that has given rise to many questions. I will look again at some of these questions that have been asked by feminists through the figure of Alice. Apart from the notion of pure becoming, Alice also shows us more specifically what becoming-woman could mean. Deleuze and Guattari see becoming-woman as a process of microfemininity that can take place in both female and male bodies (as well as in all other sorts of bodies). Becoming-woman is basically a question of the body: the body that is stolen in order to give it a fixed organization of the organs. Because it is first of all the body of the *girl* (Alice is seven years and six months old) that is stolen, it is also through her body that it has to be regained:

The question is not, or not only, that of the organism, history, and subject of enunciation that opposes masculine to feminine in the great dualism machines. The question is fundamentally that of the body—the body they steal from us in order to fabricate opposable organisms. This body is stolen first from a girl: stop behaving like that, you’re not a 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. The girl is the first victim, but she must also serve as an example and a trap. That is why, conversely, the reconstruction of the body as a Body without Organs, the anorganism of the body, is inseparable from a becoming—**S**  
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woman, or the production of a molecular woman.<sup>14</sup>

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Deleuze and Guattari see becoming-woman not as the growing of the girl into a woman, the apprehension of the girl about what it is to be a “woman” according to the segmental categories that are imposed. On the contrary, it is not the girl who becomes woman, but it is “the becoming-woman that produces the universal girl.” Besides, Alice’s in-between status (between a child and a woman, no longer a little girl, not yet a woman) makes her the perfect figure to reveal the possibilities of becoming.<sup>15</sup> Becoming-woman is fundamentally a question of transforming and liberating the body and desire in multiple ways; it is the beginning of the creation of BwOs.

Félix Guattari explains in an interview the concept of becoming-woman as a struggle in relation to their bodies that women share with male homosexuals and transvestites. He says about the relation to the body that woman has preserved the surfaces of the body, a bodily pleasure much greater than that of man, who has concentrated on his phallic libido:

[Man] has concentrated his libido on—one can’t even say his penis—on domination, on rupture of ejaculation: “I possessed you,” “I had you.” Look at all the expressions like these used by men: “I screwed you,” “I made her.” It is no longer the totality of the body’s surfaces that counts, it’s just this sign of power: “I dominated you,” “I marked you.” This obsession with power is such that man ultimately denies himself all sexuality. On the other hand, in order to exist as body he is obliged to beg his sexual partner to transform him a bit into a woman or a homosexual.<sup>16</sup>

Guattari does not want to say that homosexuals are women. He wants to indicate a common situation in respect to the body, which he (and Deleuze) indicates with the term *becoming-woman*. Seen in this way, becoming-woman means something very different from Simone de Beauvoir’s famous claim that one is not born a woman but becomes a woman.

### Becoming-Woman in Feminism: Alice Doesn’t?

#### *Molar Anxiety*

The becoming of woman in a Beauvoirian sense means the construction of woman according to social, patriarchal standards. In this respect, De Beauvoir represents the constructionist pole in feminism, which

**S** — states that all differences between men and women are socially imposed,  
**N** — even though they are basically equal and neutral at birth. The opposite  
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position in feminism is to argue that one is born as a woman, which often, although not necessarily, leads to essentialist views. This binary distinction between essential femaleness and constructed femininity also is formulated as the distinction between sex and gender, which also has been discussed at length in feminism. Although the current debates are complex and contain many nuances, these two poles still represent traps that feminism finds hard to avoid. Segmental and binary thought is difficult to give up, but because most feminist struggles take place on the segmental lines of the strata, it is sensible and even necessary to confront binaries and inequalities. Another reason binary ideas about the body persist is that, despite their molar *political* struggles for the female body, as Moira Gatens argues in her book *Imaginary Bodies*, feminists have not done much work on a conceptual level: "In the absence of such theory it is culturally dominant conceptions of the body that, unconsciously, many feminists work with."<sup>17</sup> Gatens, too, suggests going back to Spinoza to start this conceptual work on the body. Before looking at some of her proposals, it is useful to address a recurrent feminist suspicion about the concept of becoming-woman, as also expressed by Dorothea Olkowski in *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*.<sup>18</sup>

Rosi Braidotti and Elisabeth Grosz, two of the first feminists to show interest in Deleuze, demonstrate that rhizomatics, cartographies, and other Deleuzian strategies are useful to feminists; but the concept of becoming-woman often is seen as a masculine appropriation of the feminist struggle. As Braidotti states, "Deleuze gets caught in the contradiction of postulating a general 'becoming-woman' that fails to take into account the historical and epistemological specificity of the female feminist standpoint. A theory of difference that fails to take into account sexual difference leaves me, as a feminist critic, in a state of skeptical perplexity."<sup>19</sup> The greatest anxiety expressed by these feminists concerning the notion of becoming-woman is fear of the disappearance of "woman" in favor of the larger category, "man." In the conclusion of her article on becoming-woman, Elisabeth Grosz is particularly wary of the masculine appropriation of the feminist cause. This suspicion is due to the culturally dominant conceptions of the body mentioned by Moira Gatens. When Rosi Braidotti says, "I am not willing to relinquish the signifier," and when Elisabeth Grosz sees the becoming-woman as "merely a stage or stepping stone in a broader struggle" that would obliterate woman's struggle, they are reasoning within



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the culturally dominant theories of the body that indeed have proved to be unfriendly to women or to any other minority.<sup>20</sup> It is now recognized, however, that Deleuze fully supports women's struggle on the level of molar politics; that is, he does not want to erase "woman" as a segmental category (after all, small portions of segments are quite necessary).<sup>21</sup> On the segmental line, difference can be conceived only in binary oppositions (to which sexual difference belongs as well), which is precisely the kind of difference beyond which Deleuze wants to go. To liberate desire, and to liberate the whole body, sexual difference should be overcome and desire should not be conceived in terms of lack and objects of desire (like in psychoanalysis) but in terms of positive connections that can be made with every part of the body.

Deleuze does stress the importance of creating the basic conditions for a positive desire: "Those whose lack is real have no possible plane of consistence which would allow them to desire. . . . Even individually, the construction of the plane is a politics, it necessarily involves a 'collective,' collective assemblages, a set of social becomings."<sup>22</sup> Clearly, the segmental political feminist struggle is necessary to create conditions for the creation of desire, for actualizations of becomings. Nevertheless, when Deleuze speaks about becoming-woman, he does not think about bodies in terms of signifier and signified, nor does he speak about stages that follow in succession. Rather, Deleuze's Spinozian concept of the body allows more fluid adaptations and encounters of forces that differ from context to context. At every moment, multiple political lines are in play. Becoming-woman is situated on a molecular level, which allows many connections and encounters that go beyond any sexual, racial, or other distinction and that slip through segmental categories:

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 cross right through. The only way to get outside dualism is to be between, to pass between, the intermezzo. . . . The girl is like a block of becoming that remains contemporaneous to each opposable term, man, woman, child, adult. . . . It is thus necessary to conceive of a molecular woman's politics that slips into molar confrontations, and passes under or through them.<sup>23</sup>

**S** — One could say that Deleuze wants to prevent feminists from getting  
**N** — blocked in a "new" (albeit more positively or powerfully evaluated) segment,  
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for segments impose “fixities” and do not allow flexible intensities and flows. Constructionism and essentialism seem to be precisely such (un-conscious) blockings.

Teresa de Lauretis is one of the feminists who have defended the constructionist paradigm.<sup>24</sup> In her book *Alice Doesn't*, she argues against the power of the paternalistic master language, which she sees as represented by the figure of Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking-Glass*. On a molecular level of becomings (which is the level where Alice's adventures take place), however, when Alice meets grumpy Humpty Dumpty, she does not meet her master, as de Lauretis suggests. Would a master look like an egg (“The egg got larger and larger, and more and more human . . . Alice saw clearly that it was Humpty Dumpty himself”)? Would a master take seriously playful words like “Jabberwocky,” “twas brillig” and “borogove”? Would he propose playful ideas like “un-birthday presents”? Rather, Humpty Dumpty is a BwO. His remark that, if he were Alice, he would have left off at the age of seven, is an “invitation” to her becoming-woman as Deleuze understands it, not an erasure of femininity as a category.<sup>25</sup> On a molar political level, De Lauretis is right to struggle against “the master's language,” and in that sense Alice's refusal to accept dominant language is necessary. Humpty Dumpty, however, does not represent this language. De Lauretis also presents an interesting strategy for undertaking this refusal of dominant language. Her proposal to look at lived experience and Peircian semiotics, thus providing room for concepts such as *habitas* and dynamic changes in those habits mediated through the body, is useful. First, it is necessary to reconsider the body itself. De Lauretis' strategy in *Technologies of Gender* of distinguishing sex and gender is based on a dualistic conception of the body: the body seen as a neutral surface that can be inscribed with all kinds of historically different discourses presupposes an ahistorical mind/body split.

*Imaginary Bodies: Spinoza's Situated Bodies*

In *Imaginary Bodies*, Moira Gatens criticizes the sex/gender distinction in feminist discourse; however, she does not fall back into an essentialism that sees the human subject determined by biology, nor does she want to efface the influence of social and political environments. Instead, Gatens argues for recognition of at least two kinds of bodies: the male and the female.<sup>26</sup> Different bodies have quite different personal and social significance

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when acted out by the male subject on the one hand and the female on the other, says Gatens. With this statement, however, Gatens is not claiming any commitment to a fixity or essence of the social significance of bodily functions. To understand this apparent paradox, Gatens, inspired by Foucault, proposes the concept of the lived body situated in a network of specific and historical discourses about the body: the “imaginary body.” It is not a question of either/or but of a simultaneous understanding of the biological and the imaginary and historical body: “I would suggest that ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ correspond at the level of the imaginary body to ‘male’ and ‘female’ at the level of biology. It bears repetition that this statement does not imply a fixed essence to ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ but rather a historical specificity.”<sup>27</sup> It is important to see that historical specificity is not regarded as a determining factor (as in constructionist feminism, which also found inspiration in Foucault), but as a set of conditions for certain ideas about the body to be actualized.

On a conceptual level, Gatens argues for a Spinozian account of the body and its relation to social life, politics, and ethics that does not depend on the dualism that has dominated traditional modern Western philosophy. Because this Spinozian body is in constant interchange with its environment and is radically open to its surroundings, it never can be viewed as a finished product. With the help of Spinoza, Gatens creates a conceptual framework for the body that looks differently at bodies and human subjects on a segmental level. It should be clear that, if Gatens has “updated” Spinoza to understand the political and ethical situation of the (female) body in a nondualistic manner, Deleuze proposes in a different way a contemporary Spinozistic view: the BwO as a resisting body, a body that escapes from any segmental politics.

Thus, there is a shifting of attention from macro/molar bodies (Gatens’ sexed and situated bodies) to more micro/molecular bodies (Deleuze’s BwOs). The two bodies thus are located on different political lines. One could say that the macrobody creates the conditions for the microbody to become. The one cannot do without the other, although Deleuze does argue that the microbody and molecular politics will be increasingly important.<sup>28</sup> Gatens emphasizes a double strategy. In her article “Through a Spinozist Lens: Ethology, Difference, Power” she states: “We

**S** \_\_\_\_\_ need to engage with the sexual norms of our culture on two fronts: the  
**N** \_\_\_\_\_ macropolitical *and* the micropolitical. We need to address both the plane  
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which organizes our possibilities into molar political realities *and* experiment with micropolitical possibilities that may be created on the plane of immanence. We do not have to choose between either this or that: we may say feminist politics is this *and* that.”<sup>29</sup>

Gatens uses the term *ethology* for the ethics of the molecular, the micropolitics concerned with the “in-between” of subjects, manifesting itself in a range of becomings. Ethology, according to Spinoza, is the study of the relations of speed and slowness, of the capacities for affecting and being affected that characterize each thing. Seen from an ethologic perspective, (molar) political questions can be put in a different light. Gatens gives the example of the violence of rape. “On an ethological reading, no individual is *essentially* penetrable or *essentially* impenetrable. The power of one body to dominate another through penetration is dependent on the total context of both. . . . Masculinity and femininity may be read as clusters of specific affects and powers of bodies which are organized around an exclusive binary form (male/female) through various complex assemblages: legal, medical, linguistic and so on.”<sup>30</sup> In Chapter 2, I mentioned how Gatens creates, for instance, an ethologic analysis of rape where rape can be seen as a specific “technique” whereby sexual difference is created and maintained through violence and through a sexualized female body defined as “wound.” “Rape script” does not need to be an eternal prescription, however. It would be possible to “rewrite the script” perhaps by refusing to take it seriously and treating it as a farce, perhaps by resisting the physical passivity that it directs us to adopt.<sup>31</sup>

*Cyborg Alice's Body Without Organs*

The increasingly technologic and audiovisual environment of the late twentieth century certainly has its effects on the human body. To understand better why Deleuze thinks that microbodies and politics will become increasingly important, it is useful to look at the work of Donna Haraway, who deals specifically with the “new world order”: issues of a technoscientific nature.<sup>32</sup> Her work displays considerable insight into how science and technology serve as cultural discourses that are strongly related to both our lived and imaginary bodies. Although Haraway does not philosophize the body (nor desire) as such, and looks from a scientific and feminist perspective on the human body in contemporary culture, her ideas could be

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defined as Spinozian, and the image of the hybrid cyborg she proposes is close to Deleuze's BwO in its denial of traditional borders of the subject (between man/woman, culture/nature, human/animal, human/machine, and visible/invisible).<sup>33</sup> One could consider the cyborg as a critical pair of eyes (or should we say a rhizomatic brain?) that looks in many directions at the same time, trying to negotiate between multiplicities and to live with paradoxes.

One of these paradoxes is raised by Haraway's own concept of the cyborg in respect to sexual difference. The fact that Haraway has a feminist agenda seems to be in contradiction to the very idea of the cyborg, which defies all traditional boundaries, including the boundaries between the sexes. Toward the end of her manifesto, she states that "cyborgs might consider more seriously the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment. Gender might not be global identity after all, even if it has profound historical breadth and depth." On the other hand, Haraway declares on several occasions that the cyborg is clearly feminine: "My cyborg is a girl."<sup>34</sup> Now that we have learned from Alice's adventurous becomings in Wonderland that paradoxes are always both directions at the same time, it is also possible to understand the paradox of the cyborg. The cyborg is situated precisely at the point where Gatens' imaginary sexed body and Deleuze's BwO meet and are both true simultaneously.

Haraway's cyborg is a girl, not a woman, and this of course reminds us again of Alice. Haraway herself raises the figure of "cyborg Alice" when she talks about the boundary-transgression between the physical and non-physical, the visible and the invisible in respect to technology and machines that have become so small we hardly notice them:

The new machines are so clean and light. Their engineers are sun worshippers mediating a new scientific revolution associated with the night dream of post-industrial society. The diseases evoked by these clean machines are "no more" than the minuscule coding changes of an antigen in the immune system, "no more" than the experience of stress. The nimble fingers of "Oriental" women, the old fascination of little Anglo-Saxon Victorian girls with doll's houses, women's enforced attention to the small take on quite new dimensions in this world. There might be a cyborg Alice taking account of these new dimensions.<sup>35</sup>

**S** ——— Microscopic images, nanotechnology, and the molecular are, for Haraway,  
**N** ——— increasingly important. The renewed interest in women's traditional atten-  
**L** ——— tion to the micro and invisible dimensions of the world is in her view an

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important strategy to develop for grasping the possible dangers of new machines and techniques of segmentation and domination. Like Alice, the cyborg is situated on a molecular level, creating becomings, connections, and affinity groups (the cyborg chooses on the basis of affinity, not on the basis of identity and origin, which is anyway undermined in politics of becomings). On the other hand, the cyborg also can act at a segmental political level as a tool in concrete political situations, creating a “war machine” or a “line of flight.” Haraway gives the example of the spiral dancing in Santa Rita jail (linking guards and arrested antinuclear demonstrators in the Alameda County jail in California in the early 1980s).

On a segmental political level, however, both Haraway and Deleuze show an extreme wariness of modern technoscientific society. On the one hand, this society makes molecular and minority movements increasingly possible, concrete, and even necessary. On the other hand, both thinkers see the spectral return of old molar structures that are (re)gaining more and more power. Therefore, Haraway distinguishes two types of cyborgs: first, the cyborgs that act in the name of universal defense and peace, impose a final grid of control on the planet (“the Star Wars apocalypse”), and lead to the final appropriation of women’s bodies; from another perspective, cyborgs can create a world of lived social and bodily reality “in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints.”<sup>36</sup> Haraway’s informatics of domination and Deleuze’s control society are concepts that indicate how, within these molecular environments, information and control form the “new” molar systems, boundaries, and hierarchies of our society.<sup>37</sup> The cyborg (on the molar and molecular levels) and the BwO (on the line of flight but not unaware of the molar segments) are tools for resisting too much control, too singular and dogmatic visions. They are concepts that allow negotiation between old and new possibilities and old and new dangers in respect to a late capitalist technoscientific world order.

In any case, Deleuze’s concept of becoming-woman and Haraway’s cyborgs are full of paradoxes. As Jerry Aline Flieger argues in her article “Becoming-Woman: Deleuze, Schreber and Molecular Identification,” thinking in paradoxes, or perhaps schizophrenia, as I called it in a different context in the previous chapter, may be precisely the strategy in which feminism and Deleuze can meet: “Deleuze and feminism may seem to be at odds, from the perspective of the concerns of real women. Like the orchid

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and the wasp, the relation of Deleuzian thought and feminist thought may be 'mapped' or interwoven in a kind of productive disjunction. It is perhaps neither a matter of window-dressing, masquerade and cosmetic solutions, nor of conflict and irreconcilable differences, but a matter of paradox."<sup>38</sup>

In Chapter 2, I discussed Carol Clover's observations of how in horror cinema (the bodies of) men "open-up" and change in a rezoning process where both men and women move toward each other, both changing and moving to a zone of proximity at the end. Clover also demonstrated that it is through the extreme behavior of the female body that men can rezone their own bodies. It is now possible to conclude that this can be related to the concept of becoming-woman. Clover's occult and slasher heroines perhaps could be considered "Alices" in cinematic horror land. Shifting now from Alice as a conceptual persona of becoming-woman to an aesthetic figure, my next question is whether it is possible to find any other paradoxical "cyborg Alices" in modern cinema?

### Alice in Cinematic Wonderland

#### *Aurélia's Becoming-Imperceptible*

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, BwOs and processes of becoming are related to a concept of time that is invaded by both past and future at once. So to find cyborg Alices in cinema, I must return to the concept of time. It is known that in his cinema books Deleuze distinguishes two ways of expressing time: *indirectly* as a representation, through the movement-image, and directly as a presentation, through the time-image. Another way to define these two concepts of time can be found in *The Logic of Sense*, where Deleuze also conceptualizes two forms of time: Chronos and Aion. The movement-image constitutes time in its empiric form, the course of time: "a successive present in an extrinsic relation of before and after, so that the past is a former present, and the future a present to come."<sup>39</sup> This time coincides exactly with Deleuze's description of Chronos, the time of interlocking presents of past, present, and future. Time also can be "out of joint," as in the time-image of modern cinema and in the time described as Aion. In Aion, and in the time-image,

**S** \_\_\_\_\_ Chronos is sick: the present is constantly invaded and eclipsed by other  
**N** \_\_\_\_\_ layers of time, past or future. It is a time of becoming, which does not so  
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much follow empiric reality as have a profound connection with thought: the time-image forces one to think the unthinkable, the impossible, the illogical, and the irrational. Deleuze demonstrated at length how these time-images have come about and what different shapes these images can take. Because Alice's body is a body of becoming confused by the experience of time, it is logical that an encounter with her audiovisual sisters is likely to take place in a modern time-image.

As I mentioned before, one of the characteristics indicating a crisis of the movement-image is that the characters no longer respond to their situations according to sensorimotor schemata. Instead, they become more like spectators themselves, seers and observers that wander about, not wanting or unable to be fixed in a certain place. In this sense, Wim Wender's *Alice in the Cities* (1974) presents us clearly with a time-image in which journalist Philip Winter is helped in his "becoming-woman" by the little girl Alice, with whom he travels through Holland and Germany to find the girl's grandmother. The entire film is invaded by a fear of losing one's identity (and by the "fear of this fear"). Alice, who has not found her identity yet, and the journalist, who has lost his identity, are in the process of "becoming-woman," opening up to new experiences through traveling. The film has an open ending (the man and the girl lean happily out of the open window of a fast-moving train), and there is some hope of (re)finding their identity (finding again one's mother or home country). It remains ambiguous whether this (re)found identity would put a hold on the liberating process of "becoming-woman." We cannot be sure whether this Alice will stay an "eternal girl" or nevertheless will grow up as a woman. In fact, emphasis on the importance of (molar) identity and the fear of losing it entail that we probably should see *Alice in the Cities* as a temporary sickness of Chronos. Different visions on the time of becoming and becoming-woman are presented in Marguerite Duras' *Aurélia Steiner* films and in Sally Potter's cinematic version of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*.

The most extreme expression of the time-image in respect to absolute and pure becoming is perhaps Duras' *Aurélia Steiner* films. All the films of Marguerite Duras are time-images full of becomings where no character seems to be sure of its own identity. In her films, image and sound autonomously invade each other's space, making everything undecidable and moving in many directions at the same time. Duras thus achieves the characteristic undecidability of the time-image (between actual and virtual,

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real and imaginary, true and false) by separating sound and image, giving them a free, indirect relationship. Deleuze indicates that in the beginning of her cinematic work Duras was a great filmmaker of the house, “not simply because women ‘inhabit’ houses in every sense, but because passions ‘inhabit’ women.”<sup>40</sup> Clearly, Deleuze is referring here to woman’s relationship to her body, which in her own house she can experience more freely than in public and society life.

*Nathalie Granger*, discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the class of violence, is certainly one of the most beautiful examples of Duras’ “house-ground” films. Duras, however, leaves the relative safety of the house and goes to the beach and the sea to find other dimensions of becomings: the personal becomes increasingly impersonal and universal in Duras’ “any-space-whatevers.” Starting with *La Femme du Gange* (1973) and *India Song* (1974), her films also become less and less inhabited by visible and recognizable characters.<sup>41</sup> Aurélia Steiner is no more than a shadow on a bridge over the Seine or just a rock in the ocean. She is an aesthetic figure that expresses a becoming-woman to the point of becoming-imperceptible.

*Aurélia Steiner* has three written versions: *Aurélia Steiner (Melbourne)*, *Aurélia Steiner (Vancouver)*, and *Aurélia Steiner (Paris)*.<sup>42</sup> The first two versions have been made into films. Aurélia Steiner is a fictive (but ever so real) Jewish girl who has a diasporic body (living in Melbourne, Vancouver, and Paris). She is always the same age: eighteen years old (still a girl), although Aurélia Paris is seven years old (like Alice). Aurélia Steiner could be seen as the sad sister of Alice in Wonderland. Whereas *Alice in Wonderland* marks a beginning of new ways of conceiving the world (love and life) and of making connections, Aurélia Steiner reaches pure impossibility (love and death). The film *Aurélia Steiner (Vancouver)* reaches the limits of expressing becomings. Here it is clear how the becoming-woman can lead to becoming-imperceptible: the images contain no more bodies; they have all evaporated into empty spaces of rocks, sand, and water. Although Duras’ voice-over reads her written texts, the writer/filmmaker becomes Aurélia, and Aurélia becomes imperceptible and impersonal, which is precisely the point of becoming. As Jerry Aline Flieger explains:

**S** ——— For Deleuze, it is a change in ways of being and thinking that will effect a true  
**N** ——— “becoming,” rather than perpetuating habits of thought that support “majoritar-  
**L** ——— ian” business as usual. Deleuze asserts that “Man constitutes himself as a gigantic

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memory, through the position of a central point,” a monument to his own centrality, while the minoritarian or molecular is anti-memory. Thus the point of any becoming is, in a sense, to lose face, to become imperceptible, in order to counteract the very notion of individual stature.<sup>43</sup>

With the figure of Aurélia Steiner, Duras presents a molecular counter-memory. She creates and at the same time “effaces” Aurélia by describing the sea: its movements, its play with the changing light and colors evoke the image, the name and the “H/history” of Aurélia. Through visionary observing and describing, she (Duras/Aurélia) expresses the incomprehensible pain of wars (the horror of the holocaust: Aurélia’s parents died in a camp) and at the same time pays a deep respect to life and love (Aurélia was born; Aurélia has an anonymous lover whom she desires with all her body). Because Aurélia Steiner has this capacity of becoming other than herself, she can be granted cyborg *avant-la-lettre* quality. Aurélia Steiner’s “body” is certainly a BwO, but Aurélia Steiner also shows the way in which becoming-woman is “world-historical” and not so much a case of individual psychology. *Aurélia Steiner* is therefore also an example of fabulation in the modern political film: through her stories, Aurélia Steiner/Marguerite Duras helps to invent a people (in this case the Jewish people that are “missing” because of the diaspora), paradoxically by becoming-imperceptible.<sup>44</sup> *Aurélia Steiner* demonstrates that the point of molecular becoming-woman is to open up and to “lose face” in favor of an impersonal counter-memory. The feeling of impossibility prevails in *Aurélia Steiner*. As Duras herself states: “The film *Aurélia Steiner Vancouver* was impossible. It was made. The film is admirable because it does not even try to correct that impossibility. It accompanies that impossibility, it walks by its side.”<sup>45</sup> Again, we see here a paradox: centered on the aesthetic figure of Aurélia Steiner, the film was impossible, and yet it was possible—it was made.

Duras’ film is a limit-image expressing the limits of becoming and perhaps even the limits of expressing in images, words, and sounds. Many contemporary films negotiate much more between movement, and time-images, between Chronos and Aion, between being woman or man and becoming (woman or other). Sally Potter’s *Orlando* is an extremely beautiful negotiating voyage, which in a way is driven by forces opposite those displayed in *Alice in the Cities*: it is not the fear of losing a fixed identity and the longing to refind home but the desire to lose identity and to leave—

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*Orlando's Becoming-Woman*

In her article "The Woman in Process," Catherine Driscoll considers the way in which both Deleuze and Kristeva discuss "the girl" in the work of Virginia Woolf:

Woolf produces this "girl" as an escape from Oedipalised territories and, as *Orlando* (1928) exemplifies, from any other fixing of the girl in relation to sexual difference concretized as a binary opposition located in either the body or identity. There is no girl in *Orlando*, only a boy who becomes a woman. While Kristeva would see this as symptomatic of the girl's traumatic struggle with the paternal symbolic, the girl might otherwise be seen, as Deleuze and Guattari infer in *A Thousand Plateaus*, as a name for *Orlando's* process of becoming-woman. . . . Gender entraps desire or, rather, claims to trap desire: a territorialisation shaping desire into a signifying and signifiable field. Becoming-woman is a deterritorialisation of the organised body precisely because it uses gender against that organising signification.<sup>46</sup>

The film *Orlando* is interesting because it makes clear that to experience the liberating forces of becoming-woman and the ways in which gender identity might escape from the codes that constitute the subject, Chronos must be confused and give way to Aion.<sup>47</sup> In cinematic terms, the movement-image must be invaded by a time-image. Because Orlando lives for such a long time (four centuries), a whole range of real and imaginary bodies are presented before she reaches her BwO, her cyborg body. In the beginning of the film, we see Orlando as a sixteen-year-old boy walking under an oak tree, and we hear a voice-over saying, "It wasn't privilege he sought, but company." Immediately, we know that Orlando wants to connect, that he is full of positive desire, that he wants to love—in short, that he wants to become. We are in the year 1610, however, and imaginary bodies are strongly divided between (male) subjects and (female) objects. So when he falls in love with the Russian Sasha, he tells her, "You are mine." When she asks why, he answers, "Because I adore you!" not knowing that this is not the best way to connect, to love, and to become. When she leaves him, he feels betrayed and has his first disappointment. In the following centuries, he will be disappointed further by poetry and by politics. He is not able to find the right connections, heavily influenced as he is by

**S** ——— historical circumstances that force him, as a man, to reduce his body to  
**N** ——— phallic power and to seek an object for his desire.  
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Then, sometime in the eighteenth century, Orlando changes his sex. For him/her, it does not make any difference: "Same person, no difference at all, just a different sex." Orlando has literally become a woman, which in this case is a first step to her "becoming-woman." Before she can really become-woman, however, some time will pass. First, Orlando will be disappointed again when she discovers that in society it makes a lot of difference whether you have a male or a female body. In the literary salon of 1750, the poets (Dryden, Swift, and Pope) give Orlando "poetic compliments," like "I consider woman to be a romantic animal who should be adorned in furs and feathers, pearls and diamonds" and "Woman is at best a contradiction, and frankly most women have no character at all." Furthermore, she faces lawsuits because as a woman she has no right to her property. The Archduke Harry offers to marry her (to save her property), but when she kindly refuses he shouts, "But I am England and you are mine. I adore you!" It is clear that in all the historical episodes of Orlando, Moira Gatens' remark about the relation between bodies and imaginary bodies is very important. Chronos imposes his weight on embodied subjects in their present, always determined by past and future. In the time of Chronos, Orlando first has to change sex to understand what it means when your body is stolen from you ("You are mine!").

Time changes, not only chronologically, but also in nature: Chronos becomes Aion, the molecular time of becoming. The film expresses this change. When Archduke Harry claims possession of Orlando as "Pink, Pearl, Perfection of her sex," she goes on the run: this literal "line of flight" leads her straight into the labyrinth in her garden. Here time also gets labyrinthically confused ("out of joint") and becomes more a time of becoming. As Deleuze remarks: "Aion is the eternal truth of time: *pure empty form of time*, which has freed itself of its present corporeal content . . . It is perhaps all the more dangerous, more labyrinthine, and more tortuous for that reason."<sup>48</sup> Because Aion and the time-image are so related to modernity, it makes perfect sense that, after escaping from the garden, Orlando literally falls into modern times: the nineteenth century, with its modern technologies and means of transport (Orlando is astonished by the railways). It is now that Orlando finds her company, her connection: Shelmerdine. Out of the blue, he enters her life as a prince on a black horse. And "Within two seconds at the utmost, they had guessed everything of any importance—

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strong that they themselves are surprised; it even makes them wonder about each other's "real" sex. Virginia Woolf puts it in her novel in the following way: "You are a woman, Shell,' she cried. 'You are a man, Orlando!,' he cried. . . . For each was so surprised at the quickness of the other's sympathy, and it was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman, that they had to put that matter to the proof at once."<sup>50</sup>

In the film, the dialogue is slightly different but boils down to the same surprise about the discovery of the nonfixity of (imaginary) bodies. Clearly, the encounter with Shelmerdine signifies for both lovers the liberation of desire and of their bodies, the escape from coded gender patterns. Sexuality is one of the ways in which molecular becomings take place, as Deleuze and Guattari stated in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Also, the image itself will slowly change from a movement-image into a time-image; from representing time and historical bodies into the capturing of something more powerful, escaping the presence of Chronos in the breathtaking last image of the film. Before coming to that, Virginia Woolf's ideas about time are worth considering as well.

Virginia Woolf's book ends in 1928, the time when she finished her novel. Throughout her work, time plays an important role. Like Deleuze she sees two different times. What she calls the "time of Big Ben" (in *Mrs. Dalloway*) is comparable to the chronologic, measurable time of Chronos. Besides that time, she experiences what she calls "the other clock"—immeasurable, undifferential time in which the passage of years seems to occupy merely a few seconds: Aion. It is this time that is always already virtually present in *Orlando* but only actualized by the end of both the book and the film. In the book Virginia Woolf writes:

. . . In that moment of darkness, when her eyelids flickered, she was relieved of the pressure of the present. There was something strange in the shadow that the flicker of her eyes cast, something which . . . is always absent from the present—whence its terror, its nondescript character—something one trembles to pin through the body with a name and call beauty, for it has no body, is as a shadow without substance or quality of its own, yet has the power to change whatever it adds itself to.<sup>51</sup>

This is clearly an experience of Aion, an experience of pure becoming. In the film, the present has been updated. First we see a pregnant Orlando walking through the battlefields of the Second World War. Given the significance of this historical fact for our experiencing and expressing of time

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in cinema, this is not insignificant, even though this particular image is still a representing movement-image. This image is a long way from expressing the becoming-imperceptible of Duras' *Aurélia Steiner*. Here the image of war and battlefields demonstrates an important historical circumstance that nonetheless has had profound influences. Then we see Orlando in the 1990s. She has lost her house; her former property has become a museum where guided tours are given. Orlando visits the house but shows no regret about this loss. Instead, she rides a motorcycle, becomes a wanderer, a seer. She also has a little daughter. In the novel, Orlando's child is a boy, but Sally Potter made this character a girl. Of course, this girl reminds us again of Alice and emphasizes the importance of becoming-woman in *Orlando*. Finally, in the last images of the film, the time-image, the time of becoming and Aion, is reached. Again, we see Orlando sitting under the oak tree, now filmed by a video camera held by her daughter. The images the girl makes are shaky and irregular; they capture first some grass and then the face of Orlando. It is like stammering, not in language but in images . . . "Why are you sad?" asks the little girl. "I am not, I am happy," answers Orlando, directing her daughter's attention to an angel in the sky, who starts singing.<sup>52</sup> Then we see Orlando's face in close-up, we hear the angel singing: "Neither woman nor a man. We are joined, we are one, with a human face. I am free of the past and the future that beckons me. I am being born and I am dying. At last I am free."

It is Aion's time that is sung, free from the past and future that beckon the present of Chronos. And the close-up of the face is an affection-image that opens up to the possibility of becoming: eternal, without feeling or expressing the burden of any codes or strata like gender, class, or race. The presence of the angel is perfectly logical given the sense of becoming of this performance, the molecular quality of the music, the voice and the images. Orlando is thirty-six years old and finally free, finding the eternal girl in herself. The history of her body is a Spinozian history, the changes in time go from Chronos to Aion, and the images turn from representation to direct presentation of what it means to become-woman and hence to become free in a Spinozian sense of the word. As Deleuze explains in *Spinoza: Philosophie Pratique*, being free, according to Spinoza, is being able to accept all the changes that occur during one's lifetime, seeing that they are necessary according to an internal logic (but not strictly according

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of our “power of acting.” It is a matter of our *conatus* being determined by adequate ideas from which active affects follow. It is having a desire that relates to what we know to be most important in life. Human beings are not born free. According to Spinoza, the way to understanding (understanding the causes of sadness) and the way to freedom are ethical undertakings, a process that is inherently incomplete.<sup>53</sup> Orlando’s story is not finished; she will continue to strive for her persistence and continue to learn, but she has discovered how to increase her power to act and to creating joyful affects. Orlando is Alice’s wise sister.

*Lost Children or Lost Innocence?*

Aurélia and Orlando could be seen as cyborg Alices *avant-la-lettre*; however, with the increasing technologic dimensions of our environment, as hinted by Haraway’s remark, the appeal of Alice in Wonderland in a cybernetic and technoscientific context seems to be growing. Not only Deleuze has been challenged by her adventures. Neurologists talk about the “Red Queen” effect in the brain and explain paradoxes through the work of Lewis Carroll. In Robert Gilmore’s *Alice in Quantumland*, Alice passes not through the looking glass but through the television screen and becomes as small as a particle. Here she learns the uncertainty principle and many other aspects of quantum physics. Also in cyberspace, Alice regularly appears on Web sites or in discussions about the digital revolution; recently, Alice met her robot sister, Celia. In Jeff Noon’s novel *Automated Alice*, nineteenth-century Alice time traveled to the end of the twentieth century and discovers how the world has changed and become increasingly impregnated with technology.<sup>54</sup> Apart from the useful knowledge that cyborg Alice can pass on to us (creating more understanding, for instance, about the invisible dimensions of the world, as Haraway saw her relevance), what else is to be learned from cyborg Alice, especially for women?

In *The City of Lost Children*, we encounter yet another contemporary sister of Alice. This time, she is called Miette (the French word for crumb, indicating again the microdimension). Miette lives in a technologic world, full of dangerous cyborgs (the kind of cyborgs that form the informatics of domination or the society of control). They are the kind of cyborgs that appear regularly in popular science fiction films: fighting machines that act

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on command. These cyborgs are cyclopes with one mechanical eye. They act on the order of Master Krank (significantly the German word for sick),



who kidnaps little children to steal their dreams. This is because Krank himself cannot dream and therefore is aging very fast; unfortunately for him, he scares all the children so much that they only have nightmares. Miette has organized herself with some other children (cyborgs are needy for connections) to escape from the cyclopes. She also becomes friends with One (meaning in English at the same time one singular person and many in general), the man whose little brother has been kidnapped by Krank and his cyclopes.<sup>55</sup> Together, they will fight the enemy and free the lost children of the city. The entire film is like a modern fairy tale, combining elements from both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and also from Carroll's Alice world and the world of cyborgs.

On the level of the presentation of technology, this combination is quite clear. On the one hand, the city seems to be a nineteenth-century city marked by the industrial revolution: all machines are still heavy and large (no nanotechnology yet), and everything squeaks and cracks. There is also the atmosphere of the fair, with attractions like the flea circus, the Siamese twins, the strong man, and One, who can break heavy chains with his chest. On the other hand, hypermodern technology is everywhere: Krank turns out to be a product of a mad scientist and was created in a test tube. This scientist has cloned himself, so seven younger specimens are running around. Furthermore, there is a brain in a sort of aquarium that functions as a real character, and there are many references to molecular biology and genetic engineering. Also, on the level of the film production itself, *The City of Lost Children* combines old and new technology. On the one hand, the film seems to belong to the "cinema of attractions" from the early film period, full of visual spectacle.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, the images are created largely created by modern digital technologies, like microscopic enlarged images (a flea, a teardrop) and morphing techniques that create distortions and changes within the image (without montage).

Miette also seems to shift between the world of *Alice in Wonderland* and the cyborg world; many references are made to Alice in Wonderland. When Miette has entered the strange world of Krank by crawling through a tiny hole (comparable to a rabbit hole), for instance, she does not know where to go: "Which way?" she asks. The main reference, however, is the reference to becoming smaller and larger. Miette often refers to the fact that children are not so small as they may seem. And vice versa: One, the big

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*The City of Lost Children* actually is replaced by a becoming younger–older. This kind of becoming is beautifully expressed in a scene where Miette enters the dream of Krank. After placing a neurotransmitter on her head, she encounters Krank in his virtual world. Very slowly, through morphing, the image itself changes: at first, almost invisibly, Miette grows and becomes older while Krank grows smaller and younger.<sup>57</sup> Here we can see a literal process of becoming, beautifully presented through a new visual technology. Finally, she is an old woman, and he is a toddler who is afraid of her. He now realizes what he does to the children and dies from this horrible insight. Miette has defeated him with his own means.

Miette's implication and participation in the technoscientific world make her a cyborg. All types of cyborgs use the same technologies, either to dominate or to resist. This also means that cyborg Alice has lost her nineteenth-century innocence. In feminist debates, this innocence often has been related to the moral superiority of the victim and the idea that the world would be a better place if it were populated only by women. This is a strategy that is radically rejected by cyborg feminism in the spirit of Haraway. Cyborgs are not innocent; they are formed by the same historical, technological, scientific, and social developments as everybody else. No one transcends this world with the possibility of moral judgment. We recognize here again the ideas on ethics beyond good and evil as expressed by Nietzsche and Spinoza. In a cyborg perspective, this ethics consists of taking responsibilities for the social connections made and the technologic tools used. Alice's Victorian context and the rules she has learned in her upbringing still suggest the possibility of moralism.<sup>58</sup>

What is liberating about *Alice in Wonderland* is that Alice discovers that the rules and good manners she has learned do not serve her at all in a world full of paradoxical becomings; but she remains at a distance from that world, observing everything in wonder. Miette learned a long time ago that she is part of the world, and to survive she steals and bribes. She has become “the leader of the pack,” the children who have found clever ways to stay out of the hands of cyclopes, which cause nothing but sad affects. In the next chapter, more will be said about packs and lines of flight in becoming-animal. For now, it is important to see that cyborg Alice has changed in certain respects from her nineteenth-century version. Aurélia

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\_\_\_\_\_ and Orlando have demonstrated that Alice has learned a lot during the last  
\_\_\_\_\_ century. With Miette, she has definitely lost her innocence. It therefore  
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comes as no surprise that Alice's twentieth century robot sister, Celia, in Jeff Noon's novel *Automated Alice* takes a gun from her mechanical leg and shoots at an enemy that was about to destroy both Alice and Celia. Alice's time travel has changed her undeniably.<sup>59</sup>

Humans have always used technologic tools. Tools were formerly extensions of our bodies. Today's technologies enter our bodies and therefore also our minds. With his books on cinema, Deleuze demonstrates how technologically mediated images force us to think, how they penetrate our bodies and minds. The time-image shows that we can think time as Aion: although there are still molar strata, and chronologic time of Chronos certainly has not disappeared, time as becoming (implying multiplicities and BwOs) will be increasingly important. As Deleuze and Gatens demonstrated, Spinoza is the philosopher who can provide us with a powerful conceptual framework for these "new" bodies of becoming. Haraway's work indicates the relevance of these new perspectives in respect of our technoscientific culture. Deleuze once compared becomings, starting with the becoming-woman, to enchanting winds (*vents de sorcière*). Spinoza and Deleuze, Haraway, Woolf, Duras, and Jeunet and Caro are perhaps witches. They have given witch's brooms to Alices, Aurélias, Orlandos, and Miettes to show the contemporary cyborg subject (both man and woman) how to become-woman and fly/flee whenever possible or necessary. They are powerful film figures that have real effects on spectators. As Michelle Langford, in her article on female film figures in New German cinema, quotes from an Alexander Kluge film, "Roswitha feels an enormous power within her, and films have taught her that this power really exists."<sup>60</sup>

I want to conclude this chapter by looking at three other paradoxically powerful contemporary film heroines who can be seen as Alice-figures: Bess, Karen, and Selma from Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves*, *The Idiots*, and *Dancer in the Dark*. In focusing on *Dancer in the Dark*, in this final section, I again make an analysis of the assemblages around the aesthetic figure of Selma/Björk, arguing that Selma's becoming-woman is part of a world-historical assemblage.

*Resisting Bodies Without Organs in Dogma films: From  
Becoming-Woman to Becoming-Music*

When he was a small boy, Lars von Trier read in a picture book the story of Goldenheart, an uncommonly kindhearted little girl who goes out

in the woods on her own.<sup>61</sup> Along the road, she gives away everything she has. At the end of the story, she leaves the woods, completely naked and destitute. Nevertheless, she concludes that she managed all right anyway. Since Von Trier read this story, it haunted him and led to what he calls his “Goldenheart Trilogy” of *Breaking the Waves*, *The Idiots*, and *Dancer in the Dark*. In all three films, the heroine is not so much an Alice in Wonderland as a modern Jeanne d’Arc who, with a strong belief in the voice of her heart, has the courage to go against the grain of common sense. In this respect, the heroines are becoming-woman (trying to free themselves from the existing codes) and again resemble Alice. Von Trier’s films are a sort of fairy tale in which woman has the role of martyr. Thus, in the first instance, his films seem to confirm all the stereotypes of feminine passivity and female sacrifice that feminists have been fighting for decades. If one considers these films as molar representations that invite women to identify with their suffering heroines, this is indeed true.

I would argue, however, that Von Trier’s films do not invite identification with their heroines, nor can they be seen as representations and role models. Von Trier’s films are paradoxical events in which a complex assemblage of many elements together forms the strong effect of *pathos*. Possibly, Von Trier draws his inspiration from Kierkegaard’s concept of *pathos* as “suffering in favor of the idea of finiteness.”<sup>62</sup> In any case, the capacities of Von Trier’s heroines to be affected and to affect, make them very powerful Spinozian and Nietzschean film figures. In this way, they become intercessors, true aesthetic figures of becoming-woman who have moved into a universe where things are valued differently and in this way criticize the order of things. As Bodil Marie Thomsen argues in her article on *The Idiots*, Danish (and International) artists are (with or without inspiration from Kierkegaard’s concepts of *pathos*) currently concerned with an “entire way of sensing and confronting the world. The work becomes an expression of this confrontation and thus must also influence the viewer.”<sup>63</sup>

So, instead of seeing Bess in *Breaking the Waves* merely as an awful cliché of the woman who gives up her life for her husband (she literally dies because she believes she can save her husband in that way, which in the end is what actually happens), we can also consider her a BwO. Through her actions, Bess resists the severe and ascetic morals of her village

**S** ——— and through her passions affects the viewer in his or her own moral judgments. In this sense, Bess is a film figure with enormous paradoxical power  
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that delivers a critique on what Buchanan calls “the world-historical.” Frans-Willem Korsten argues in his article “Is Bess a Bike?” that by the end of the film, Bess’s face has become an image of combat.<sup>64</sup> As Deleuze stated in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, “Combat is not a judgement of God, but the way to have done with God and with judgement. . . . Combat is a powerful, nonorganic vitality that supplements force with force, and enriches whatever it takes hold of.”<sup>65</sup> The paradox in *Breaking the Waves* and in Bess as an aesthetic figure is that old values are sentimentalized while at the same time new ones are brought into existence. And “Bringing new things into existence requires a faith to break away from old ones, and a love that replaces the restrictions of judgement.”<sup>66</sup> In other words, it requires a becoming-woman.

Karen in *The Idiots* is also a figure full of pathos. She is in a state of shock over the death of her child, and even though we know this only at the end of the film, from the beginning, it is clear that she is greatly affected. She joins a group of people who act like idiots, and the moment in which she “finds the idiot in her self” is one of the most powerful moments of the film. Here it becomes clear that not only will she act like an idiot, but she actually is a true idiot who is unable to pretend. So she is the only one of the group who dares to act like an idiot, breaking the codes in front of people they know in daily life, in her case, her family, who react to her in a very cold way. Bess and Karen are both aesthetic figures who demonstrate the power of “becoming-woman” through pathos. The same is the case with Selma in *Dancer in the Dark*.

*Dancer in the Dark*’s form of content tells the melodramatic story of Selma, performed by Björk, a poor Czech immigrant in America in the 1960s who works in a metal factory. She suffers from a hereditary eye disease that gradually blinds her. To give her son an eye operation that will save him from a fate similar to hers, Selma saves all her money and takes on all kinds of extra jobs. Things take a grim turn when her neighbor Bill steals her money and she is forced to kill him. In the end, Selma even dies for her son, again the ultimate melodramatic female sacrifice. Looking at the form of content, *Dancer in the Dark* is a pure melodrama; however, Von Trier mixed the form of content of the melodrama with a form of expression of the musical. In my view, it is because of this paradoxical mix that the strongest effect of pathos is created in the assemblages of the film. Let

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A video clip by Björk, *It's Oh so Quiet*, will function as a starting point for my analysis of the musical scenes. In this clip, Björk pays homage to the classic Hollywood musicals of Fred Astair and Gene Kelly. An umbrella scene filmed from above also refers to the kaleidoscopic movements of Busby Berkeley movies. In the décor (the gas station/garage) and the props (the umbrellas) also can be sensed one of the few European musicals from the 1960s, Jacques Demy's *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg*. This self-reference of the musical is typical of the genre: many musicals are backstage stories or refer in other ways in a self-aware way to their production process. Although this video clearly has Björk touches (particularly her "Alice-like" performance and the simplicity of her dress, which is less glamorous than in the Hollywood musical), the "feeling" of this clip also corresponds with the musical genre. "It's Oh so quiet and peaceful—until . . . you fall in love, zing boom," Björk sings. It is all about love, even though there is not one particular couple like in the boy-meets-girl stories of most musicals; and it is ecstatic and happy, entertaining and utopian, as Richard Dyer once described the musical in his article "Entertainment and Utopia."<sup>67</sup> The clip has musical-like energy and intensity in its song and dance routines and also the camerawork is "classic": the camera dances with the characters, using mainly (back)tracking or crane shots.

*Slow and Fast: From Motor-Action into Optical and Sound Situation*

What is special about this clip is the cinematography, especially the slow motions when Björk sings, "It's Oh so Quiet." One could see the alternations between the slow and fast rhythms of the music and the images as a compressed reference to the alternation between the story and the song and dance routines in normal musicals. To grasp this typical musical alternation, we have to look at what Deleuze calls the "zero degree" that is typical of musicals. In *The Time-Image*, Deleuze discusses the musical as a genre in a chapter about recollections and dreams.<sup>68</sup> In musicals, there is always a moment where the normal sensory-motor actions stops (the typical action of classical cinema—the movement-image—where characters find themselves in situations to which they will respond through their actions) and where the image transforms into what Deleuze calls a purely optical and sound situation. This change takes place progressively (or can be discovered only slowly in the depths of the image). Characters' actions change accordingly. As Deleuze puts it, "Their personal actions and movements

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are transformed by dance into movement of world which goes beyond the motor situation, only to return to it, etc.”<sup>69</sup> The normal motor step becomes, sometimes imperceptibly, a dance step that goes beyond the personal action and touches on something bigger. I return to this “something bigger” in a moment, when I move from an aesthetic level to the conceptual level of *Dancer in the Dark*. The imperceptible moment between motor and dance step is what Deleuze calls a “zero degree,” like “a hesitation, a discrepancy, a making late,”<sup>70</sup> before entering into another world, a dream world in the case of the musical. In these optical and sound situations of the musical scenes, the colors, sound, and forms become intense, and the dance becomes a part of the moving elements that have a dreamlike power and open up into another world.

The clip starts with what one could call a motor situation, a rather poor and sleazy looking washing room where Björk is washing her face and the sound of the opening of the tap and the running water sounds hollow. As soon as she enters the garage, the image slows and the volume of the sound lowers. Here we get a zero degree before we enter the optical and sound situation of the dreamlike musical set, where the colors, sounds, and movements become intense. Because this is a video clip, not a feature-length musical, after the brief first scene, the sensory-motor situations are simply skipped altogether. We witness a quick series of zero degrees and dream worlds that alternate. In this video, between the slow and the fast, we go from zero to the *n*th degree of intensity and other worldliness that absorbs us (as spectators) as well. So, even without a story and normal motor situations, in a compact way, we see and feel how a traditional musical song and dance routine pull us into another world. This means that the clip has very much a “musical feeling” to it. It also has a happy feeling to it, which, as I said before, is typical of the musical. Having now had, through a video clip from Björk, this impression of the “traditional” musical, the next question is, then, what does Lars von Trier do with this cinematic form and what effects/affects does that create?

*Hot and Cold: Musical and Melodrama*

As we saw, with *Dancer in the Dark*, Von Trier transferred the musical form into the genre of melodrama, which is a genre that centers on excessive emotions (“weepies,” “tearjerkers”), family drama, forced marriages, motherly love, and impossible loves.<sup>71</sup> In melodrama, often a woman is the

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main character and the setting is a small town or the home. Although it is certainly not new to mix genres since postmodernism and television, the happiness of the musical and the drama of the melodrama are not an evident combination. Only *West Side Story* is perhaps another example, although in this tragedy—not melodrama—is combined with the musical, but there is no room to elaborate on this film here.

Before looking at the melodramatic scenes and the contrast they form with the musical scenes, let me first discuss the musical scenes of this film. The first musical scene is forty-five minutes into the film, almost when you have stopped expecting it. It happens when Selma takes on a night shift at the factory and is really tired. All musical scenes start when Selma is either exhausted or terribly upset and paralyzed by the her situation, for instance, when she has killed her neighbor Bill, who stole all her savings, or when she finds herself powerless in a courtroom or prison cell. This is significant, for, as Deleuze demonstrated elaborately in *The Time-Image*, it is only when one is exhausted or “paralyzed” that the sensory-motor action gives way to pure optical and sound situations that one enters into a dream world or a visionary other worldliness (in the previous chapter, I argued similarly in respect to the main characters in *I Can't Sleep*, *Fight Club*, and, albeit in a different way, *Brothers*). Like in the video clip, each musical scene starts with a kind of zero degree, where environment sounds start to deviate from their normal functioning, where they start to group together in harmonic rhythms, and where the colors seem to become more intense and absorbent, as if a very fine layer of Technicolor sprinkles the images. The musical scenes themselves then are characterized by a subtle intensity of the colors and a rapid cutting between many camera positions (in fact, Von Trier used a hundred cameras for these shots). Whereas in the video clip *It's Oh So Quiet*, traditional musical movement is used (the camera “dances” with the characters or sees them from above), in these musical scenes, a typical MTV video clip style of fast cutting is used. This moment of intertextual translation is of course enforced because it is Björk who is Selma and who does the performing. It reinforces the effect of some kind of supra-personalization that moves Selma/Björk into “a movement of world,” as Deleuze calls this effect, a movement that goes

**S** \_\_\_\_\_ beyond the normal sensory-motor situation and carries these scenes into a  
**N** \_\_\_\_\_ different world.  
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So far, the musical scenes seem pretty much similar to traditional musical scenes. Each scene starts with a moment of “zero-degree” in which the rhythm and nature of the images start to change. These musical scenes have a completely different effect, however. Whereas in traditional musicals the song and dance scenes make you cheerful and happy, in *Dancer in the Dark* these scenes provoke precisely the strongest emotions, even more than the (melo)dramatic scenes. This has to do with the fact that within the series of alternations between the melodramatic and the musical scene, the contrast is emphasized not only by the rhythm of the images but also by the difference in “temperature” of the images: in terms of color effect, they go from cold to hot and back again. Therefore, the contrast becomes significant. Let me explain first how the contrast becomes so sharp that it creates such a strong effect.

The melodramatic part of the film is realistic in style, although it is not at all “glossy” Hollywood realism but more “raw” European realism, shot in dogma-style: shaking handheld (digital) camera, natural light, not a lot of cuts but panning and long shots. Because of the natural light, the colors are rather cold. The difference in “temperature” and style is quite significant. The contrast between the melodramatic scenes and the musical scenes, mediated by “zero-degree” moments, makes the structure of the film as a whole almost dialectic. In this way, Von Trier becomes a strange heir of Eisenstein’s “theory of attractions.” Pathos was something Eisenstein reached through montage of oppositions; pathos can be reached only when there is a contrast or change in both form and content.

In a different way (not so much between shots as between sequences), in Von Trier’s film, there is a pathetic passage of oppositions into their contrary. As Deleuze says of Eisenstein’s pathetic jumps: “From sadness to anger, from doubt to certainty, from resignation to revolt. . . . The pathetic implies a change not merely in the content of the image, but also in the form. The image must, effectively, change its power, pass to a higher power.”<sup>72</sup> Von Trier experimented with transferring and translating two different genres into each other. The effect is pathos, a new experience of both the melodrama that goes beyond its ordinary sense of tragedy and the musical that goes beyond its ordinary sense of utopian entertainment. In other words, by taking certain image types into new territories (by “deterritorializing”), images and sounds take on new di-

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without these movements of deterritorialization of forms of expression, nothing new would ever be felt or thought.

*Territorialization and Deterritorialization: Becoming-Music*

So far, I have been speaking about the formal/aesthetic aspects of *Dancer in the Dark*. I conclude by also addressing another level of the film, where art and philosophy mutually illuminate each other. How can we translate what we hear, see, and feel (especially when it is something new) into concepts that make sense, that help us to see more, deeper, and better? In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari argue that philosophy needs a nonphilosophy that comprehends it, just as art needs nonart (and science needs nonscience).<sup>73</sup> Art (cinema and music, in my example) thinks in percepts and affect, whereas philosophy thinks in concepts. Having seen and felt the percepts and affects that raised by *Dancer in the Dark* and the effects that these images and sounds (of movement and time) can have, what would be the corresponding concept that establishes a greater understanding between art and nonart, philosophy and nonphilosophy? What does this concept do? How does it function? Clearly, what we witness in the musical scenes is a “becoming-music” of Selma and of the world. Thus, Selma’s becoming-woman changes into a becoming-music. In singing, one can become, for instance, child, bird, insect, or sea.

As I argue more elaborately in the last chapter of this book, music and its content the refrain (*ritournelle*) has tremendous power: “Flags can do nothing without trumpets,” Deleuze and Guattari argue.<sup>74</sup> The power of music and the refrain is a territorial and deterritorial power: a child that sings softly in the dark creates a safe territory for itself; we create sound walls to create our environments. The difference between noise and sound is the labor of (and sensitivity to) the refrain. Music is also a deterritorialization of the voice, which becomes less and less tied to language (although it can still be part of it). Music also can open up territories, like the voices of opera singers in the movie *The Shawshank Redemption* that open up the prison walls and give the prisoners an overwhelming feeling of freedom (see Chapter 6). This is exactly what happens to Selma when groups of sounds pack together on the zero degree of aesthetic change from motor situation into optical and sound situation: here she creates a refrain, she

**S** ——— hears music, she becomes-music; and she opens up a new world, a new ter-  
**N** ——— ritory that is much safer and much vaster than the small town she lives in,  
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even though it features the same people. This force is tremendously powerful and liberating.

I will give another example. In one of the most beautiful musical scenes, Selma's boyfriend, Jeff, has just discovered that she is almost blind. They are standing on a railway, and Selma does not see a train coming. Selma throws her glasses in the water, and while the colors warm, she hesitantly starts to sing, "I've seen it all—I've seen water, it's water that's all" (zero degree). Jeff answers—entering slowly into a refrain as well: "Have you seen the Chinese wall, the Niagara Falls" and "the house you will share, your grandsons hand as he plays with your hair?" The images suggest some of the words in *Sound of Music*-like scenes that Selma and Jeff see from a train while singing; but the becoming-music of the world has an almost all embracing cosmic effect, deterritorializing the words and images, carrying them to a suprapersonal/transpersonal level that is overwhelming. Having this strong effect of territorializing and deterritorializing, the becoming-music of the images (dance) and sounds (voices and instruments) is the most powerful characteristic of *Dancer in the Dark*. In this way, the aesthetic and the philosophic translation work together in reinforcing mutual understanding rather than philosophy claiming the right to think about art, which in itself cannot think. In terms of the assemblage, we can say that on the vertical line of the assemblage, we find here territorial and deterritorial forces of crossing genre boundaries and of becoming-music that work together to create a powerful effect of pathos and a critique on injustice of the capitalist system and poverty and the system of the law.<sup>75</sup> On the horizontal axis, pathos is created in the moments where the movement-image (melodramatic scenes) passes into pure optical sound situations of the time-image (musical scenes).

I started with the quiet (silent) images of *It's Oh so Quiet* and the zero degree of the musical, where the motor action passes into the optical and sound situation of song and dance. *Dancer in the Dark* starts with an overture, a musical composition without voices, of almost four minutes over a completely dark screen with no images. Of course, this refers to Selma's blindness and the importance of music to her, but one could also say that here we have a zero degree of the image and sound in general. From here, a territory (the film) will be created and opened up (deterritorialized) on different levels. On an aesthetic level, both melodrama and the musical will

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overture could be seen as an ultimate becoming-music, with the effect of cosmic power, “Quiet” and “Dark” as zero degrees of aesthetic and conceptual translations. These translations can never be fixed but are always moving because out of the vast virtuality of “a life” (the world), it is in the ongoing movements of translations, between the incorporeal of the concepts and the corporeal of the actual images and sounds (percepts and affects), that new sensations and thoughts will keep coming into existence.

With these analyses of Von Trier’s heroines, I conclude my survey of different kinds of “modern Alices” as conceptual personae and aesthetic figures in cinema. I hope to have indicated that they are all paradoxical figures in various ways. They are all examples of the effects and affects of becoming-woman. They share the paradoxical fact that they all initiate a process of becoming by entering a zone of proximity of the historically defined subject position of women, with the effect of precisely criticizing and breaking away from traditionally defined segments and molar systems. In this respect, I agree with Donna Haraway and with Jerry Aline Flieger that paradox is what we will have to come to terms with if we want to make a rhizomatic connection between feminism and Deleuze, feminism and many contemporary films, and feminism and contemporary society.

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