

Towards Minoritarian Genderqueer Politics:
Potentials of Deleuzoguattarian Molecular Genderqueer Subjectivities and Bodies

by

Kelsie (Daley) Laing
Bachelors of Arts, University of Alberta, 2007

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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There is great potential for the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in the realm of queer theory, and specifically discussions of gender variance. Their critique of psychiatry, capitalism and the unitary subject in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) fits well within the current discussions surrounding transgender and genderqueer experiences including Gender Identity Disorder classifications, the commodification of queer culture, and the challenges put forth to our the "modern subject" by the fluidity of genderqueer. Yet strangely, there has not yet been an explicit, in-depth Deleuzoguattarian ontological reading of genderqueer. This thesis helps to foster such discussions by focusing on Deleuzoguattarian understandings of subjectivity, bodies and politics and how they relate to both gender and genderqueer. Through a method of involution, gender is transformed into molecular gender, into a productive, immanently relational, multiplicitous gender that has substantial implications for gender(queer) politics and activism.

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An Introduction: The Emergence of the Potentials of a Deleuzoguattarian Reading of Genderqueer

My flesh was thrown into this world on the Fourth of July, to the bellowing echo of “It’s a Girl!” and the subsequent reiterations that followed. Before I could even dress myself, before I had access to an understanding of agency and action, I was parceled under the umbrella of female, girl, meek, submissive, in my pink snowsuit with “oh so adorable” rabbit ears. As time passed, this world I was offered, these constrictions on the possibilities of my being constantly infuriated me, enraged me, sending pulses of anger and disdain racing through my well demarcated “female body”.

This project arises out of my lived experiences, out of the gendered terrain I have traversed; from the lives I have tried to live, the bodies I have attempted to embody, the coherence of being I have thought for so long as essential to my life. I have emerged from a world dictated by modernist understandings of subjects, bodies and epic myths of progress, a battered body, a wounded subject, a confederate of selves, some strong, some weak, the majority worse for wear. These selves, these bodies, are contingent, fluid, interconnected, incoherent, and co-constituted while still being heavily sedimented in the history of bodies and being. These selves are genderqueer.

Desiring-machines, partial objects, pure multiplicity, rhizomes and production: the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari is overflowing with concepts that resonate with my experiences of genderqueer. Their orientation to potential, to a (unconscious) level of multiplicity and creativity resonate with the issues of genderqueer practices and bodies that I have been living and exploring. Emerging within transgender and queer communities, the term genderqueer is difficult to define. This difficulty of definition

itself might be the best definition I can produce. Often the term means very different things to different people, groups and larger communities across time and space, and as such, I shall define my own understanding of genderqueer as the following: *gendered practices that are fluid, in process, in-flux and challenge the reification, mutual exclusion and determinism of binary (male and female) conceptions of gender*. This definition is based on practices, and the affectivity of such practices, and is both temporary and tactical. In relation to other concepts used in the gender variance literature, my intention is to not set genderqueer apart from such notions as transgender, queer, transsexual and others, but rather, to argue that all of these identities have the possibility of being genderqueer if their actions fit within the above definition of practice. It is a focus on what certain bodies and subjectivities do, not what they are, which allows genderqueer to move across categories. Strangely to me, when I went to the literature, there was little work done in the realm of genderqueer, let alone Deleuze and Guattari and genderqueer. The most relevant work was theory concerned with Deleuze and queer theory. These works tended to focus on sexuality, an important aspect of genderqueer, but did not address gender. In contrast, this thesis takes up the theory of Deleuze and Guattari (in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987)) in order to generate new ways of theorizing genderqueer practices.

I see great potential for Deleuze and Guattari's work in the realm of gender and queer theory. Their critique of psychiatry, capitalism and the unitary subject in *Anti-Oedipus* fits well within the discussions already occurring about transgender and genderqueer experiences including Gender Identity Disorder classifications, the commodification of queer culture, and the challenges put forth to our understandings of

the modern subject by the fluidity shown in genderqueer. Also, their call for an embodied form of theory, one that recognizes the materiality of subjectivity and becoming, also speaks to the very embodied experiences of genderqueer and the role that the body plays in the incoherence that is so central to the genderqueer realm of intelligibility. Deleuze and Guattari's orientation to the affirmative is a breath of fresh air in the often heavily negative realm of queer politics. This is not to deny that there is a great deal of oppression and domination of genderqueer individuals in current societies, and I do not advocate dropping the numerous political projects with which so many are involved. I am simply pointing to the way Deleuze and Guattari can be used to recognize the realm of potentiality, of creativity and production; realms that can be used to fuel political action.

Therefore, I have begun to explore my own genderqueer experiences and community in relation to the work of Deleuze and Guattari. This thesis focuses on a Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer, and as such, it is necessary that I lay out a brief explanation of their work in order to better elucidate the course this thesis shall take.

Deleuze and Guattari: An Affirmative Critique of Psychoanalysis

Deleuze and Guattari's work in both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* has many different concepts and theories that are useful in exploring genderqueer practices. Central to their work is the *rejection of lack*; of the formative loss assumed in psychoanalytical theories of the subject. This psychoanalytic concept states that the subject is produced by the constant attempt to fill a lack that is produced when one first realizes their separation from their mother. As such, subjectivity arises from a constant melancholia that attempts to fill the void, to internalize the loss, producing the subject. Deleuze and Guattari argue that *production*, not lack, is the foundation of existence. No

longer is desire tied to an unspeakable loss but instead “there is a joy that is immanent to desire as though desire were filled by itself and its contemplations, a joy that implies no lack or impossibility” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 155). In discussing the notion of production, Deleuze and Guattari use the term *machine*, a term that is better defined in terms of what it does rather than what it is. To think of a machine is to think of how it is involved in production: “every machine functions as a break in the flow in relation to the machine to which it is connected but at the same time is also a flow itself, the production of a flow, in relation to the machine connected to it” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 36). A machine is not defined by what it is, but instead by this picking up of a previous machine’s flows and the production of new flows that will be picked up by subsequent machines. For Deleuze and Guattari “everything is a machine” (Ibid., p. 2) and it is these machines and their desiring productions that can be seen as the foundation of existence. An example of a machine, often used in Deleuze and Guattari is the breast, which produces a flow of milk which is then picked up by a mouth (also a machine) which in turn transforms the flow of milk. As to what exactly a *flow* is, once again it is more useful to ask what a flow does. Flows can be thought of as movement, not movement from A to B, but movement more generally and not dependent on the assumptions of stable structures that A and B would require. These movements are productive, allowing for the production of future movement and potentials. This notion of machines, and of the flows between machines, places affectivity (the ability to affect or be affected) as a central concept in Deleuzoguattarian ontology, and affectivity infuses inquiries into genders and bodies with the potential to explore more productive, positive, affirmative understandings.

As seen above, in the process of challenging the concept of lack, Deleuze and Guattari redefine what is meant by desire and production. Production is no longer about producing to fill a void, to refuse a fundamental loss, or to attempt to create a whole. In refusing lack, the very concept of totality is challenged. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari give us *partial objects*. Here the term “partial” does not refer to a part of a whole but must be understood differently: “not partial in the sense of extensive parts, but rather partial like the intensities under which a unit of matter always fills space in varying degrees” (Ibid., p. 309). As such, partial does not refer to being a part of a predetermined whole, but instead is complete in and of itself. And this partial object cannot lack because it is multiple, productive and “where everything is possible, without exclusiveness or negation, syntheses operating without a plan” (Ibid., p.309). These objects are partial in that they do not determine the future of the process of production but are part of this process, and do not represent a form of universal but only one singularity in the realm of potentials. The production, and simultaneous breakdown, of these partial objects is not oriented to producing a coherent relation of parts that can be subsumed in an integrated whole. The production of partial objects is not the breakdown of an original totality, but is itself the interruption of already partial flows and energies. There is no implied lost unity, nor a totality to come. As there is no lack, there is no need to attempt to fill that lack by producing parts that fit together to form a whole. Each partial object, each flow of intensity, is itself complete in the sense that it lacks nothing while at the same time refusing the notion of totality.

Important in this shift away from lack, and subsequently unity and totality, is Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of difference. Instead of a negative understanding

of difference, one in which difference is considered a relational quality based on what a thing is not, Deleuzoguattarian ontology conceptualizes difference as positive, *pure difference*¹. This way of thinking of difference is explicitly tied to the underlying ontology of Deleuze and Guattari, what is often termed the *univocity of matter*. Traditionally, univocity refers to having only one meaning or interpretation, but in the context of Deleuzoguattarian ontology, it refers to the singularity of the real, to the common material “essence” of all existence. Univocity of matter exposes Deleuze and Guattari’s Spinozist roots; they consider Baruch Spinoza’s approach to materiality and existence as radical and describe it as such:

Arrive at elements that no longer have either form or function, that are abstract in this/ sense even though they are perfectly real. They are distinguished solely by movement and rest, slowness and speed. They are not atoms, in other words, finite elements still endowed with form. Nor are they indefinitely divisible. They are infinitely small, ultimate parts of an actual infinity, laid out on the same plane of consistency or composition. (1987, pp. 253-4)

As such, all matter shares a common orientation to movement, and it is this movement, this speed that defines the difference of a specific partial object, not the difference between partial objects, but the pure, non-relational, difference of a singular partial object. Unlike negative difference, which is based on relational differences and often sets up oppositional binaristic relations between different things, pure difference refuses dualistic thought, allowing for the difference of an object or subject to be based strictly on its singularity.

¹ Here, I would like to acknowledge that Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the term pure is problematic as the term carries connotations of not only racist notions of purity but assumes that processes such as contagion are of lesser value, an assumption that cannot be maintained in the context of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of becoming through contagion.

In shifting to the concepts of partial objects, pure difference, and univocality of matter - a shift produced by the refusal of both lack and totality - it is necessary to think about how we can begin to describe production. For Deleuze and Guattari, the rejection of totality and loss lead to the idea of *pure multiplicity*. In their theory of desiring production:

it is only this category of multiplicity used as a substantive and going beyond both the One and the many, beyond the predicative relation of the One and the many, that can account for desiring production: desiring production is pure multiplicity, that is to say, an affirmation that is irreducible to any sort of unity. (1983, p. 42)

This notion of multiplicity, founded in the refusal of unity, must not be confused with the modernist notion of pluralism that is often discussed in reference to identities and bodies. Pure multiplicity is not a proliferation of coherent, finite subjects and objects. Rather, it disrupts organization, resists definitions, and refuses stable identities. It is a multiplicity of constantly flowing, changing, circulating partial objects, all in simultaneous states of *becoming*² and breakdown. This multiplicity links different desiring machines and partial objects, at the same time that these linkages themselves are lines of flight, moments of breakdown, interruption, and deterritorialization. This multiplicity is *rhizomatic* in that it is “an acentered, non-hierarchical, non-signifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automation, defined solely by a circulation of states” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 21). Desiring production, as multiplicity, cannot be seen as producing finite, total, unified objects, let alone subjects.

Finally, it is useful to understand Deleuze and Guattari’s distinction between molar and molecular. In the most basic way, the distinction can be thought of in terms of

² Becomings are molecular processes of relation, processes of alliance, of immanent connections between particles based on a common speed, movement of vibration at a specific moment (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). In short, becomings are immanent, in-process relations of multiplicities of particles.

physics in its distinction between “the molar direction that goes toward the large numbers and the mass phenomena and the molecular direction that, on the contrary, penetrates into singularities” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 240). As such, the molar can be considered the structural aggregates that attempt to organize and regularize, that attempt to create codes and axiomatics³. It is the realm of signification and subjectification. The molar is best seen as an attempt to reduce multiplicity into unities, reducing complexity into integrated, coherently regulated parts. The molecular, on the other hand, is about the production of multiplicities of singularities, about the breaking down of the codes and axiomatics established by the molar, and the production of new flows, new singularities by refusing organization and coherence. These terms will be useful throughout the discussion of genderqueer, especially in relation to how genderqueer can be considered a form of molecular gender.

Deleuze and Guattari, in challenging the psychoanalytic conception of fundamental lack, and subsequently de-centering the subject, produce incredibly useful theoretical concepts for discussing genderqueer practices. Their ontology has a substantial influence on how one can understand issues of subjectivity, the body/bodies, and politics. In short, unitary subjectivity is refused in the name of multiple becomings; bodies shift from the realm of biological organisms to the interaction of intensities; and politics becomes a struggle to decode current systems of meaning, deterritorialize structures of signification and subjectification and enable the production of new, singular potentials. These shifts are useful for discussing gender, and more specifically

³ An axiomatic refers to a truth that is evident without proof or argument.

genderqueer experiences. As such, this project will focus on exploring these shifts in relation to genderqueer practices and experiences.

A Brief Excursion into Process

Before entering into an explicit discussion of my research question, I think it is necessary to discuss more explicitly how I plan on approaching this project. Specifically, I wish to highlight the Deleuzoguattarian affirmative approach I am using. Claire Colebrook makes a clear distinction between affirmative or active and reactive thought:

a thought is active or affirmative if it avows its status as creative and if it realizes itself as the formation of concepts and as an event of life. A thought is reactive, however, if it pretends to be the mere adherence, representation, replication or faithful copy of some prior truth or meaning. (2000, p. 8)

As such, this project does not intend to find some “truth” about subjectivity, the body and politics with respect to genderqueer practices but instead sees its theoretical exploration as a force itself, as a creative force that can produce and do. As such, I am not interested so much in whether this project is right or wrong in positivist terms, as measured by an existing state of affairs, or if it is successful at capturing some essential meaning, but instead, I am interested in what this theoretical process does, what it is capable of producing, thinking, creating.

In working on this project, as someone engaged in genderqueer practices, I think it is necessary to challenge the dominant academic systems and their approach to theoretical and philosophical thought. Drawing on Patricia MacCormack’s discussion of hybrid philosophies, particularly “feminist philosophy without organs” I see significant limitations in traditional approaches to theoretical inquiry, approaches MacCormack refers to as “traditionally made from chronocentric regulations, phantasies about being

pure and sufficient, and alterations are not unfolding potentialities but ‘add-ons’ which reflect history as a series of selected, demarcated accumulated ‘organs’ of the philosophical body” (2009, p. 90). I do not wish to simply “add-on” to the current theoretical debates but to also think differently, think creatively, actively and affirmatively about genderqueer practices. As such, I am focused on the process, the movement, of this project, not solely the end result. I am asking not what answers my thesis can bring to theoretical problems, not what ends will be produced, but rather “What can this thesis do?”

As part of this attempt to think creatively and productively about Deleuzoguattarian theory and genderqueer practices, I have decided to include narratives as part of this thesis. These narratives are intended to infuse everyday lived experiences of genderqueer into the theoretical discussions of subjectivity and bodies in chapters two and three. These narratives are my own, and stem from the experiences I have had participating in genderqueer practices. Keeping with my affirmative approach to this theory, these narratives do not claim to represent a “faithful copy” of my experiences, or to be generalizable to all genderqueer experience. Rather, they are included in hopes of instigating creative thinking practices in the reader, to produce a flow of ideas and experiences that can be used by the reader to engage with the theoretical foci. While pulling on these narratives as examples within the theoretical discussion, I will avoid dictating what each narrative “means” by explaining it in depth, and rather, will allow the reader to use the narrative as they wish. In doing so, I hope to foster multiple readings of my work and contribute to a philosophical method of involution and creativity.

Finally, in keeping with the focus on affirmative, creative work, it is necessary to explain why I am using the term gender in relations to the practices of genderqueer, and more generally in relation to bodies and subjectivities. I have chosen to use the word gender in order to maintain its orientation to potential. Unlike the term sex, which is most often associated with static biological definitions of bodies as either male or female, gender is most often associated with social construction, with the possibilities of culture to create new and different gendered positions, at times outside of the binary of man and woman. I appreciate this aspect of the term gender and see it as useful in my discussions of subjectivity and bodies. What is different in my use of gender is that it is not considered solely a socially constructed category but also has an embodied state. As such, bodies can have a certain form of specificity, a certain speed or resonance that can be considered gendered. Gender is not a social overlay applied to bodies, but is itself produced through a relationship of forces and movements, including bodies and subjectivities. In short, I look to the term gender for its fluidity, its proximity to discussions of potential and creativity, but I am infusing it with the materiality most often associated with sex. As such, in this work, gender will be considered in part a molecular materiality that is oriented to production, potential and creativity.

Outlining the Project: A Flow of Genderqueer-Machines

This project takes on the exploration of Deleuzoguattarian understandings of genderqueer through a four-step process. The first chapter is a critical literature review, that intends not only situate to this project within the current literature, but to learn from both the literature's strengths and weaknesses. Building on this critical literature review, the second chapter will explore genderqueer practices through the lens of the decentering

project of Deleuzoguattarian subjectivity. Specifically, this chapter will explore genderqueer in relation to notions of partial objects, becoming, and multiplicity, all of which are founded on the shift of desire from lack to production. In doing so, the intent of this chapter will be to produce a way of speaking genderqueer experience outside of the framework of unitary stable identity and to discuss the outcomes of such a shift for how we understand gender more broadly. The third chapter, building on the first and second, will engage with genderqueer practices with regards to Deleuzoguattarian understandings of bodies. The intention is not only to engage with notions of materiality and embodiment but also to explore how certain concepts within Deleuze and Guattari, specifically the body as material becoming and the Body without Organs, relate to genderqueer practice. Finally, picking up the flow of genderqueer subjectivities and bodies produced in the previous two chapters, the final chapter will explore Deleuzoguattarian genderqueer in relation to social change and gender politics. Specifically, the focus will be on how a Deleuzoguattarian notion of minoritarian politics can contribute to the current political debates surrounding gender. This chapter is important as it will speak to a dominant current throughout the literature concerning gender and gender variance: a concern with transgressing the dominant normative systems. Throughout these chapters, my intention is to take both a critical and creative stance in relation to both Deleuzoguattarian ontology and genderqueer practice.

If thought of in a Deleuzoguattarian sense, the first chapter can be considered a desiring machine that produces a certain type of flow concerning the contextual and historical explorations of genderqueer and Deleuzoguattarian theory, and the second chapter will be another desiring machine, this time concerned with subjectivity, which

will pick up the previous flow and begin to produce a new genderqueer flow of subjectivities. The third chapter will pick up this genderqueer flow of subjectivity to produce a new flow concerned with genderqueer bodies. Finally, the fourth chapter will pick up this Deleuzoguattarian genderqueer bodily flow and begin to produce a flow concerned with material genderqueer politics. Each chapter is in itself significant, and at the same time important to an ongoing process of production, with each chapter picking up the previous flow and transforming it into a new flow of ideas that can be in turn picked up by new and different desiring machines.

The intention of this thesis is to start a flow, to create a line of flight from more dominant forms of gender studies that focus on the unitary subject, on gender as an identity, and normative gender practices. In critically and creatively exploring genderqueer practices through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari my intention is to begin an important discussion about how to engage with non-normative gender practices outside of unitary subjectivity and identity politics. This thesis makes no claim to totality, to some previously established “Truth”, but instead is an attempt to create a new flows, new potentials, and new possibilities for theory and for practice.

Chapter 1: A Critical Exploration of the Current Literature: Discussions of Gender Variance and Deleuzoguattarian Queer and Gender Theory

Based on the potentials and possibilities of Deleuze and Guattari in the realm of genderqueer discussed in the introduction, it is important to explore the different areas in which Deleuze and Guattari have been used in relation to gender theory. Additionally, it is important to explore the current literature surrounding genderqueer. As such, this opening chapter will explore three different areas of literature in order to situate my project of a Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer and illustrate the current gap in the literature. The areas I will explore are as follows: literature concerning gender variance, and more specifically genderqueer; literature using Deleuze and Guattari in the context of “queer”; and feminist and gender studies literature working with Deleuze and Guattari.

Gender Variance in Academia: Exploring Concepts and Limitations

Genderqueer is a relatively new term in the context of gender variance (Kerry, 2009). As previously discussed, the term genderqueer is difficult to define and emerges out of a complicated history of “transgender” community, politics and academia. Therefore, I will explore how my project not only fits within with the small area of literature concerning genderqueer but also within the larger context of “trans studies”⁴.

⁴ Susan Stryker (2004) explores the emergence of Transgender Studies and its relationship to queer theory and highlights the importance of transgender studies as “a point of departure for a lively conversation, involving many speakers from many locations, about the mutability and specificity of human lives and loves. There remains in that emerging dialogue a radical queer potential to realize” (p. 215). As such, transgender studies are incredibly important to a project such as this one that is attempting to explore queer politics and its potentials.

Trans Politics: The Limitations of Identity

This project, by engaging with non-normative bodies, practices and genders which have historically been the object of systemic oppression and domination, is inherently political, a quality it shares with trans literature. Therefore, to situate this project, I find it very useful to think about it in relation to Katrina Roen's work which maps the distinctions produced between transsexual and transgender political positions.

For Roen:

Transgenderism may be understood as referring to a political positioning that draws from post-modern notions of fluidity (for both bodies and genders). Transsexuality may be understood, in more modernist terms, as a (psychiatrically defined) state of being that assumes the preexistence of two sexes between which one may transition. (2002, pp. 501-2)

She refers to these two positions as “both/neither” and “either/or”. The both/neither position refers to “a transgender position of refusing to fit within categories of woman and man” (Ibid., p. 505). This both/neither position is associated with notions of transgression and transformation of social norms concerning gender. Either/or refers to “a transsexual imperative to pass convincingly as either a man or a woman” (Ibid., p. 505). This would most often be associated with the “wrong body” hypothesis that argues that gender variant individuals are simply men “stuck” in women's bodies or women “stuck” in men's bodies. This either/or stance is often associated with maintaining normative, binary understandings of gender and failing to create a space for gender ambiguity and the process of transition itself. It can be thought of as an end-oriented political position. For Roen, the either/or position is seen in transsexual communities, while the both/neither position is most often seen in transgender communities. Importantly, Roen argues that these two positions are not mutually exclusive but do make assumptions about each other and establish certain hierarchies concerning gender variances:

Two hierarchies are established through transsexual and transgender discourses. Transgenderism (the both/neither stance) exalts outness, fluidity and transgression. Therefore, who counts (as a gender outlaw) depends on how possible it is to be out. Who counts as transsexual (in the sense of the either/or stance) rests on who can pass, which depends partially on who has access to reassignment technologies, and is therefore influenced by class, race, education, and so on. This suggests that the both/neither position and the either/or position are problematic in terms of exclusivity and their failure to account for socioeconomic factors. (Ibid., p. 511)

In addition, Roen also highlights a hierarchy that often arises in transgender (both/neither) politics, and subsequently infiltrates transgender and queer theory: the assumption that crossing is more trendy, more radical, more exciting and more politically worthy of merit than passing (Ibid., 503). This is an assumption I wish to avoid in my work. Rather than engaging in this debate, I will shift the focus to how genderqueer practices may have the potential for helping us to redefine the body, subjectivity and politics in a Deleuzoguattarian fashion.

Using Roen's dualist mapping of gender variant political positions, it would seem logical to associate genderqueer with the both/neither position. Genderqueer can be associated with challenging the normative gender system of male and female and a focus on gender ambiguity. For the most part, I would agree with this association of genderqueer and both/neither positions but I am hesitant to limit genderqueer to the transgender position for a number of reasons. Firstly, the both/neither model of gender variant politics is still heavily embedded in a unitary subject, in a concept of coherent identities that are capable of rational choice and political will. While I am not refusing the agency of those participating in gender variant practices, part of my project of reading genderqueer through a Deleuzoguattarian framework is to challenge the unitary subject

and the understandings of agency and identity politics that follow from it. Also, I am hesitant to maintain a dualistic system for understanding gender variance that is heavily dependent on an understanding of difference as negative difference, as *difference from*, instead of a more Deleuzoguattarian understanding of difference as pure or positive difference. The gender variant communities Roen explores operate with a negative understanding of difference that sets up an “us versus them” mentality and leads to processes of exclusion and hierarchical organization. While I acknowledge that, from my own experiences, this “us versus them” phenomenon often occurs, I do not wish to maintain it in my project, a project that is attempting to think of new ways of understanding gender, and to engage with some of the limitations that are currently found in the literature. In order to do so, I think it is important to look at explicitly genderqueer literature to better illustrate the limitations of the current identity-based model of genderqueer.

“The Genderqueer”: An Identity Politic

A key text within the small area of genderqueer literature is *GenderQueer: voices from beyond the gender binary* (Nestle et al., 2002). An edited anthology of genderqueer narratives, this book surveys different approaches to understanding genderqueer. The explicitly theoretical piece of this anthology is four chapters written by Riki Wilchins, who draws on Judith Butler’s understanding of gender as performativity. Wilchins argues that gender is a process of doing rather than being and that all gender presentation is an act of drag (2002). She defines genderqueer as “people for whom some link in the feeling/expressing/being-perceived fails” (Wilchins, 2002, p. 28). Critically engaging

with notions of identity, Wilchins argues that “identification is always an act, a repetition, a name we give to a collection of discrete traits, behaviours, urges and empathies” (Ibid., p. 25). As such, Wilchins problematizes stable identity, while maintaining the importance of identities for gender variant individuals. She sees two main problems that are produced through a politics of identity: boundaries and hierarchies. These two problems are used by Wilchins to critique transgenderism, which she understands as an identity-based model of gender variance that confines the dialogue on gender to one identity that relieves society from examining its own history of transcending and transgressing gender norms (Ibid., p. 15). Wilchins charges transgenderism (much like what we see in Roen’s argument) with creating an “us versus them” scenario that makes gender variance into an identifiable and intelligible “Other” while at the same time, by excluding gender variance from the norm, reinforces the binary gender system. Counter to this notion of transgender, Wilchins defines genderqueerness as that which “will not stay put in any one community... an issue that transcends boundaries and identities, if only because the boundaries and identities at issue are themselves gender-based” (Ibid., p. 15). Implicit in this reading of genderqueer is the refusal of universal “Truths” concerning gender and identities. Instead, in an insightful passage concerning the complexity of gender, and its intersections with other aspects of existence such as sexuality, Wilchins argues that gender is about lots of little truths:

The way you understand your hips, our chest, your hair. How you feel when your lover holds you, gets on top, makes you come. The rush when you dress up, dress down, put on silk or leather. These are immensely small and private experiences. They are among our most intimate experiences of ourselves in the world. And they are precisely what is lost when we propound and pursue singular and monolithic Truths about bodies, gender and desire. (Ibid., p. 37)

As such, Wilchins' understanding of genderqueer shares some commonalities with my Deleuzoguattarian understanding of genderqueer. However, further exploration of her work in the context of the political highlights Wilchins' support of identity politics based on a notion of human rights.

Wilchins can be read within the framework of plurality, emphasizing the need for the expansion of the number of legitimate identities within society. While Wilchins recognizes that using identities is problematic as it establishes boundaries and hierarchies, she focuses on the need for civil rights for genderqueer individuals. Wilchins is critical of the binary gender system and how it refuses to acknowledge or engage with experiences "that cannot be said or understood or repeated" (Ibid., p. 46) while maintaining a very humanist understanding of what is to be done. Wilchins focuses on a politics of human rights, a political expansion of what is to be considered human when it comes to identity⁵. In doing so, Wilchins makes an argument that each of us has a "true" inner self and that the definition of humanity should be expanded to include all of these selves. Wilchins focuses on how common language erases these "true" selves through the production of societal norms. Genderqueerness and gender variance become issues of self-expression, of having the right to act in a certain way (that is "true" to yourself) without the need to signify in the dominant system. As such, Wilchins understanding of genderqueer refuses issues of relationality, of affectivity and the role of the body in gender processes. Wilchins does not explore the ways in which genderqueer practices might not only be challenging binary gender, but larger structures of identity, the body and politics. She

⁵ This is a focus that she shares with Judith Butler in her book "Undoing Gender" (2004)

loses the ability to speak of the potentials and possibilities of genderqueer outside of structures of identity and unitary subjectivity.

Deleuzoguattarian Undercurrents in Gender Variance Literature

As seen in Roen and Wilchins, the concept of identity and how it may impact practices is important within work concerning gender variant communities. This is one reason that I am looking towards a Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer that challenges unitary identity. I am not the first to challenge unitary identity with regards to gender variance. There is some scholarship that is exploring gender variance in ways that could be read as Deleuzoguattarian, including the work of Bobby J. Noble and Judith Halberstam.

In his work concerning transgender, Noble uses concepts such as becoming, which could be easily read through a Deleuzoguattarian lens (Noble, 2005, 2006). Noble's understanding of trans, which he reinterprets as "tranz"⁶ can be read within a Deleuzoguattarian notion of production and movement. Instead of tranz being understood as a movement from "A" to "B," as is often associated with notions of transsexuality, Noble understands tranz as "descriptive and intersectional, marking politics lived across, against or despite, always already engendered, sexed, national and racialized bodies" (2005, p. 164). In such a description, Noble understands tranz as not only a type of force, moving across and against, but also as a movement that is inherently embodied and

⁶ Noble defines "tranz" as "occupying the permanent space of not just becoming; that is, it is a permanent place of modulation of what came before by what comes after, never fully accomplishing either as an essentialist stable "reality" but also of permanent in-coherence if I am to matter as a political subject at all. But it also means rendering bodies and subject positions as in-coherent as possible to refuse to let power work through bodies the way it needs to. (2005, p. 165)

affected by other modes of becoming and embodiment. While Noble does not explicitly cite the work of Deleuze and Guattari, similarities are apparent. Specifically, Noble's understanding of "tranz" is compatible with a Deleuzoguattarian notion of becoming, and the movements or speeds associated with it. This Deleuzoguattarian affinity is also expressed in Noble's critical definition of identity politics as a politics "where a singular privileged subject position is offered as the ground zero of a social movement" (2006, p. 126). This is very similar to the Deleuzoguattarian notion of majoritarian politics (to be discussed at length in final chapter). Noble states that identity politics are ineffectual, arguing for a "critical practice of resistance that refuses to allow power to articulate across and through coherent bodies, especially intersectional bodies, reducing them to one axis of identity" (Ibid., p. 126). While his specific recommendation for politics is not inherently Deleuzoguattarian, Noble's argument against unitary identity politics makes his work resonate with Deleuze and Guattari.

Similar connections could be made between the work of Judith Halberstam, who explores notions of female masculinity, and the work of Deleuze and Guattari. Like Noble, Halberstam does not explicitly cite the work of Deleuze and Guattari (they show up once in a footnote in *Female Masculinity* (1998)) but does share an affinity with Deleuzoguattarian theory. Halberstam's arguments concerning gender variance, and specifically female masculinities, are of particular interest because she is looking at gender variance as being an aspect of all people's experiences, as practices that all "subjects" engage with:

We all pass or we don't, we all wear our drag, and we all derive a different degree of pleasure—sexual or otherwise—from our costumes. It is just that for some of us our costumes are made of fabric or material, while for

others they are made of skin; for some an outfit can be changed; for others skin must be resewn. (1994, p. 212)

As such, she speaks to the problem of defining a genderqueer “identity” and the limitations of asking “who is a genderqueer?” rather than “what does genderqueer do?” In this manner, she shares Deleuze and Guattari’s focus on affect, on what an object or subject does rather than what it is. This aspect of Halberstam’s work is useful to my project as it highlights the necessity of not narrowly defining genderqueer as a specific identity. This prevents the reification of binary gender practices as normal, or central, and the subsequent restriction of genderqueer to only those occurrences outside of this binary. As such, Halberstam highlights the artificiality of the division between the centre and the margins and shows that all experiences of gender can be thought of in a critical, or genderqueer way. Halberstam recommends:

We examine the strangeness of all gendered bodies, not only the transsexualized ones and that we rewrite the cultural fiction that divides a sex from a transsex, a gender from a transgender. All gender should be transgender, all desire is transgendered, *movement is all.*” (Ibid., p. 226)

Halberstam’s discussion of bodies explores movement and how most bodies express many different genders and sexualities, a concept that could be associated with the Deleuzoguattarian notions of becoming and flows of desiring production. While her work is not explicitly Deleuzoguattarian, Halberstam’s work can be read in such a way and, as such, can contribute to a Deleuzoguattarian theory of genderqueer.

This project can be situated amongst the work of Noble and Halberstam, heeding their warnings considering identity categories and politics. At the same time, neither Noble nor Halberstam focus on an explicit Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer, leaving a gap in the literature. Therefore, this project contributes a more explicit

Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer to the literature, allowing for the expansion of the discussion of non-unitary subjects, bodies and politics in the context of gender.

Having situated my project in relation to gender theorists who have affiliations with Deleuzoguattarian thought, it is necessary to situate this project in relation to Deleuzoguattarian “queer theory.”

Deleuze and Queer: A Focus on Methodology and Sexuality

The intent of this section is to situate my work in relation to uses of Deleuze and Guattari in “queer theory”. It is difficult to define exactly what can be considered queer theory, as like the concept of genderqueer, it is the subject of ongoing debate. In order to focus my discussion, I have decided to use the work of authors who self-identify as queer theorists. Within this literature there are two main areas that I wish to explore: discussions of the definition and purpose of queer theory and discussions regarding “queer practices”. I will begin with the Deleuzoguattarian discussion of queer theory’s methodology.

Deleuzoguattarian Methodologies in Queer Theory

The work of Deleuze and Guattari has been used to discuss the foundations of queer theory, including its understandings of epistemology and ontology and how it should orient to its topics of study. One such text is Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr’s introductory chapter to the anthology *Deleuze and Queer Theory* (2009). In this chapter, Nigianni and Storr argue that in the majority of queer theory, “queer” is always defined “in response to a dominant heterosexual matrix: a solely reactive force of re-signification, mockery, disrespect to the dominance of heterosexuality” (2009, p. 4). Queer theory is predominantly conceived as a form of transformation from within, as a form of critique

of binary gender that is dependent on the binary's existence. This definition of queer fails to fit with a Deleuzoguattarian understanding of theory as affirmative, creative and productive, and gets stuck within the realm of reactive theory. As such, Nigianni and Storr offer up a new queer methodology which draws on Deleuzoguattarian philosophy.

Nigianni and Storr begin their discussion of Deleuzoguattarian methodology with the substantial claim that "Deleuzoguattarian thinking is inherently queer" (Ibid., p. 2). This claim is based on Deleuze and Guattari's rejection of representational thinking that claims to be reproducing *a priori* truths. For Deleuze and Guattari, language is not seen as paramount to the production of ideas. They emphasize the importance of non-linguistic forces and how they can produce new becomings and experiences. As such, Deleuze and Guattari are different than the likes of Judith Butler in that they underline a need to look at the productive forces beyond linguistic signification. This, for Nigianni and Storr, makes Deleuze and Guattari inherently queer. Building on this argument, Nigianni and Storr present a new understanding of queer methodology that focuses on positive forces and affirmative actions, a methodology focused on "the affirmation of an ontology of becoming, a sense of 'rhizomatic relatedness' as well as of an open futurity, in terms of virtualities and not mere possibilities" (Ibid., p. 8). This understanding of queer theory fits well with this project's focus on becoming and affirmative, creative approaches to theory.

Nigianni and Storr's integration of Deleuzoguattarian ontology into queer methodologies is not the only attempt to think Deleuze and Guattari in relation to queer theory. Clare Colebrook, in her article "On the Very Possibility of Queer Theory" (2009) is also looking at the ways Deleuze and Guattari can inform queer theory. Colebrook

engages with current discourses concerning the “correct” methodology for queer theory, which she associates with Judith Butler. For Colebrook, Butler’s queer theory maintains the founding values of modern theory, valuing the role of recognition and performance in relation to subjectivity (2009, p. 14). Like Nigianni and Storr, Colebrook focuses her critique of Butlerian queer theory on the reactivity of their definition of queer. Colebrook argues that for Butler, queer is defined by its dependence on the norm, on its relation to notions of humanity and a coherent subject. Colebrook argues that in its current state:

queer is not radically outside or beyond recognition and selfhood: it is that which makes a claim to be heard as human – within the norms of speech, gender, the polity and the symbolic – at the same time as it perverts the normative matrix. (Ibid., p. 15)

Queer becomes an attempt to gain recognition from the dominant system⁷, while at the same time transforming that system. What remains through it all is the call for a recognition of a certain unitary subject, a “human” that is worthy of a place within discourse and society. As such, Colebrook sees Butlerian approaches to queer theory as reinforcing and maintaining normative structures of gender and subjectivity, and subsequently identity politics.

Colebrook challenges this understanding of queer as reactive, arguing that a Deleuzoguattarian understanding of subjectivity and difference would greatly change the nature of queer theory, and allow for a shift beyond unitary subjectivity and its shadow identity politics. In a Deleuzoguattarian framework of positive difference, Colebrook argues:

queer politics would involve neither recognition of the self , nor a refusal of normativity, but the affirmation of the prepersonal. Rather than assessing political problems according to their meaning and convention –

⁷A majoritarian approach to politics according to Deleuze and Guattari.

or the relations that organize certain affects and desires – we need to think desires according to virtual series, all the encounters that are potential or not yet actualized. (Ibid., p. 21)

As with Nigianni and Storr’s Deleuzoguattarian queer methodology, Colebrook’s understanding of queer focuses on the affirmative, refusing the common queer critique of the norm. For Colebrook, Deleuze and Guattari can help engage with that which is beyond the norm, with the potentials of queer that are not established in relation to the norm. This orientation to potentials guides my work, and enables an exploration of genderqueer outside of the limits of identity politics.

Practical Applications: Deleuze and Guattari and Sexuality

In addition to methodological issues, it is important to examine queer theory that is using Deleuzoguattarian concepts. Such work can be found in Nigianni and Storr’s edited anthology and also the Deleuzian-focused journal *Rhizomes*, which published an issue specifically focusing on Deleuze and Guattari and queer (2005/2006). While these publications create a space where this thesis may be engaged with, they are rather limited in that they tend to focus on sexuality not gender. A representative example of such literature is Kitty Millet’s “A Thousand Queer Plateaus: Deleuze’s Imperceptibility as a Liberated Mapping of Desire” (2005/2006). In this article, Millet explores the question of Deleuze’s sexuality and the theoretical underpinnings of his refusal to answer the question as to whether or not he was gay. Building on ideas of becoming and his refusal of unitary subjectivity, Millet explores how identifying as a “gay man” does not fit within Deleuze’s ontology (2005/2006). One cannot be a gay man as it maintains notions of static identity and reduces sexuality to an identity politic. While Millet is focusing on the

issue of sexuality not gender, she does present some useful discussions of issues surrounding “queer” and Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of imperceptibility⁸. She argues:

by associating “queerness” with imperceptibility, Deleuze engenders a “queerness” that cannot be tethered to the phenomenal aspect of preference because it freely connects and disconnects as it so desires. Thus “queer desire” becomes for Deleuze linked to the movement of the rhizome. (Ibid., p. 23)

Therefore, Deleuze and Guattari are shown to be useful for opening up the notion of queer to the multiplicity of desire and refusing the limits that are placed on it by categorical approaches including identity politics. By coupling imperceptibility with queerness, queerness becomes associated with desire that is constantly “in a state of becoming so that multiplicities constantly emerge and dissipate” (Ibid., p. 24). So, as in Nigianni and Storr’s and Colebrook’s work, Deleuze and Guattari are being used to open up “queer” to discussions beyond identity politics, to a focus on creativity and production. It is this opening up of the potentials of bodies and politics that I find Deleuzoguattarian theories of queer can attribute to my project of discussing the Deleuzoguattarian potentials of gender. In addition, I think it would be problematic to make a clear split between the notions of sexuality/queer and gender/genderqueer as the two areas of discussion are explicitly linked. Teasing out the “queer” or the “gender” from the genderqueer is impossible. As such, the above discussions of Deleuzoguattarian queer theory greatly contribute to my thesis.

So far, I have situated my Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer in reference to both transgender and genderqueer literature, and Deleuzoguattarian queer theory

⁸Imperceptibility is best defined in relation to the process of becoming-imperceptible which Deleuze and Guattari defines as “to reduce oneself to an abstract line, a trait, in order to find one’s zone of indiscernibility with other traits, and in this way enter the haecceity and impersonality of the creator” (1987, p. 280).

discussions of methodology and sexuality. From this exploration, a need for a more rigorous engagement between Deleuze and Guattari's theories and gender has emerged. As such, I will now explore the explicitly Deleuzoguattarian literature that is focused on gender.

Deleuzoguattarian Gender Theory: Sexual Difference

To begin to look at the Deleuzoguattarian gender theory, I will examine Deleuzoguattarian feminist thought, most specifically the theorists often referred to as the Australian Corporeal or Sexual Difference Feminists. These theorists include the likes of Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz, and Moira Gatens. In reviewing the literature produced by and concerned with the Australian Corporeal Feminists, my intention is threefold: to examine the aspects of Australian Corporeal Feminism that can be useful to a Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer; to show the limitations of such theories; and finally, to contribute to this chapter's larger project of recognizing a gap within the literature concerning Deleuzoguattarian theory and genderqueer. I will begin with the areas of Australian Corporeal Feminism that resonate with my Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer.

Corporeal Feminism and Affirmative Approaches to Theory

The first area in which the work of the Australian Corporeal Feminists contributes to my theoretical project concerns methodology. Both the Australian Corporeal Feminists and I share a strong affiliation with the affirmative, positive approach to theory put forth by Deleuze and Guattari. Instead of producing a negative or reactive form of theory, one which would take on the sole project of critiquing other existing projects, Australian

Corporeal Feminists make explicit attempts at producing new ideas, new ways of thinking. This is not to say that they are simply producing theory in a void, with no reference to the work that has come before them. Their work is clearly influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, along with Baruch Spinoza and Luce Irigaray, but instead of necessitating allegiance to all aspects of their work, they support what Braidotti refers to as a “joyfully disrespectful affirmation of positive and multiple differences” (2002, p. 68). This is reminiscent of Lee Edelman’s understanding of queer theory as existing through “the gesture whereby it refuses itself, resists itself, perceives that it is always somewhere else, operating as a force of displacement, of disappropriation” (1995, p. 345). Both the Corporeal Feminists and queer theory share an aversion for more traditional approaches to theory that are “made from chronocentric regulations, phantasies about being pure and sufficient, and alterations are not unfolding potentialities but ‘add-ons’ which reflect history as a series of selected, demarcated accumulated ‘organs’ of the philosophical body” (MacCormack, 2009, p. 90).

It is this creativity, and Australian Corporeal Feminists’ emphasis on it, that draws me to their theoretical work. I feel a strong affiliation with Braidotti when she argues for *conceptual creativity*:

At such a time [the accelerating times of postmodernity] more conceptual creativity is necessary: a theoretical effort is needed in order to bring about the conceptual leap across inertia, nostalgia, aporia and other forms of critical *stasis* induced by the postmodern historical condition. (2002, p. 3)

Not only do I see this creativity in the work of queer theorists, I can easily think of it in relation to my genderqueer experiences and the political activism with which I am involved. This breakdown of static concepts and understandings is what genderqueer practices aspire to do: they attempt to break down the static notions of binary gender at

the same time as producing new and creative forms of gendered bodies and subjectivities. The practice of gender-bending/blending/queering shares the Corporeal Feminists call for creativity, for affirmative becomings of new ideas, new practices and new ways of being.

This creativity and affirmative methodological approach is supported by the Australian Corporeal Feminists' attempts to overcome dualist thought practices, an approach they share with Deleuze and Guattari. This refusal of dualistic thought is explained by two important distinctions that Braidotti makes between Corporeal Feminist theoretical approaches and more Hegelian or dialectical theories: a focus on process instead of concept, and a redefinition of difference as pure difference. Firstly, Braidotti argues that the current challenge for theory is to learn to think about processes instead of concepts (Ibid., p. 1). Concepts are not able to deal with the fluidity, the flow of information, subjectivities and bodies that Braidotti understands to be essential to understanding life. Also, they fail to be able to constantly adapt to the creative production of new thoughts, bodies and forms of identity and instead tend to become static, nostalgic and immobile, all things Braidotti finds detrimental to theory. Concepts reduce the complexity of life and allow for the establishment of dualistic thought & binary categorizations. Instead, Braidotti advocates for a focus on process, which changes the very questions that are asked. It is no longer about "what things are" but "what things do", "what things become", and "how things change", a common shift in focus across the Australian Corporeal Feminists and Deleuze and Guattari.

The second step away from dualism towards multiplicitous thought is to challenge difference as a relationship of negativity. In a very Deleuzoguattarian fashion, Braidotti

takes difference into the realm of the affirmative, arguing against what she refers to as the persistent habit of:

...dealing with differences in pejorative terms, that is to say, to represent them negatively. Hence my leading question, which has become a sort of red thread through all my books: how can one free difference from the negative charge which it seems to have built into it? (Ibid., pp. 3-4)

Difference can be thought of in terms of what it produces, the changes, transformations and mutations it creates, instead of focusing on what difference excludes. This fits well with the shift to process as one can no longer define what one is by listing the concepts one is not. Rather, difference, and subsequently meaning, must refer to what something does. This emphasis on pure, positive difference ripples throughout Australian Corporeal Feminism, supporting their critique of dualism, emphasis on creativity and subsequent understandings of materiality, subjectivity and political practice.

Corporeal Feminisms and Becoming

The Australian Corporeal Feminists' affirmative methodology greatly informs how they understand subjectivity. Australian Corporeal Feminism is best understood as posthuman in that it rejects the unitary subject of modernist humanism, and instead, focuses on the ways in which the rational, singular, coherent subject has been challenged by the work of both Deleuze and Guattari and Irigaray. Explicit in these understandings of subjectivity is the role of the body. As such, the descriptor of embodied must be added to the label of posthuman: Australian Corporeal Feminism is an embodied posthumanism.

Essential to Corporeal Feminism's understanding of becoming is what Braidotti refers to as "enfleshed materialism" (Ibid., p. 13). This refers to the central role that the body, the flesh, plays in non-unitary subjectivity. Braidotti defines the body as:

...the complex interplay of highly constructed social and symbolic forces: it is not an essence, let alone a biological substance, but a play of forces, a surface of intensities, pure simulacra without originals... I see it... as a transformer and a relay point for the flow of energies: a surface of intensities. (Ibid., p. 21)

The body, like the subject, is never quite reducible to merely a “thing” nor does it, in the realm of signification, rise above the status of a “thing”. Bodies are like no other things because “they are the centers of perspective, insight, reflection, desire, agency... Bodies are not inert; they function interactively and productively” (Grosz, 1994, p. xi). This interplay of energies is a site in which the multiple productions and breakdowns of the non-unitary subject occur. Therefore, Braidotti refers to the subject as always an *embodied subject*, which is itself “a process of intersecting forces (affects) and spatio-temporal variables (connections)” (2002, p. 21). The body and the subject are inseparable in that the body is essential to the processes of subjectivity, while at the same time the becomings of the subject impact its bodily forms and its future affectivity and connections. Keeping with Corporeal Feminism’s emphasis on process, the embodied subject is always a form of event, a type of practice and is always changing, transforming, metamorphosizing. One could say that the subject is always wandering, always moving, in a constant string of becomings.

Important to the Australian Corporeal Feminist’s embodied subject is its relation to the mind or psyche. Critical of psychoanalytic literature, Corporeal Feminism attempts to “displace the centrality of mind, the psyche, interior, or consciousness (and even the unconscious) in conceptions of the subject through a reconfiguration of the body” (Grosz, 1994, p. vii). In turn, the dualism of mind and body begins to break down and the body is seen as central to subjectivity. This fits well with a Deleuzoguattarian methodology

(refusal of negative difference) and with my project of exploring genderqueer practices. In refusing Cartesian dualism, Australian Corporeal Feminism sets a precedent for explorations of the body and subjectivity that are not oppositional, a precedent that is extremely important for genderqueer practices that are centered around bodies and subjectivities simultaneously.

Stemming from their refusal of the centrality of the psyche in subjectivity, the Australian Corporeal Feminists are very critical of the notion of lack that is associated with the production of the psyche. This psychoanalytic concept implies that the subject is produced by the constant attempt to fill a lack that is produced when one first realizes their separation from their mother. As such, subjectivity arises from a constant melancholia that attempts to fill the void, to internalize the loss. The Corporeal Feminists share their critique of lack with Deleuze and Guattari; neither is willing to theorize subjectivity through a process of lack. Subjectivity as a process of becoming lacks nothing as it is a process not a totality. If the subject is never to be considered complete or total, it cannot be considered to be missing anything. For Deleuze and Guattari, desire can no longer be considered tied to an unspeakable loss but instead “there is a joy that is immanent to desire as though desire were filled by itself and its contemplations, a joy that implies no lack or impossibility” (1987, p. 155). Australian Corporeal Feminism shares this notion of desire, and embeds it deep in the processes of embodied non-unitary subjectivity. This reading of desire as production and embodied non-unitary subjectivity is an important aspect of Deleuzoguattarian ontology, one that has the possibility of speaking not only to the Australian Corporeal Feminists’ projects but also to a Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer.

Corporeal Feminism and Gender

So far in my discussion of Australian Corporeal Feminism there have been a number of concepts that resonate with my project of a Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer including affirmative methodology, becoming, and embodied non-unitary subjectivity. In these areas the Australian Corporeal Feminists are very Deleuzoguattarian in their ontology. However, these commonalities occur around more general concepts such as subjectivity and methodology, and not within the specific realm of gender. Gender is central to my project and an area where the Australian Corporeal Feminists are decidedly not Deleuzoguattarian. Therefore, there is a need to explore how the Australian Corporeal Feminists understand gender (or in their terms, sexual difference) and how their conceptualization of gender is Irigararian in nature.

In an attempt to move beyond reactivity and negativity, I think it is important to emphasize what Australian Corporeal Feminists can contribute to my genderqueer project with regards to sex, gender and sexuality. Central here is their belief in the importance of sexed bodies in the becoming of subjectivities and in the larger (what Deleuze and Guattari would refer to as molar) social structures of societies. Sex/Gender isn't nothing; it is incredibly important to social theory and especially to embodied philosophy. Corporeal feminism's emphasis on sex and gender is an important contribution to the construction of a Deleuzoguattarian perspective on genderqueer. Within my genderqueer community, the practices of gender and the bodies of its participants are central to how our communities are produced and function. Gender matters politically, emotionally, personally and socially. It is historically embedded and does not simply disappear if one wishes it to. As Braidotti argues:

Feminists cannot hope therefore merely to cast off their sexual identity like an old garment. Discursive practices, imaginary identifications or ideological beliefs are tattooed on bodies and thus are constitutive of embodied subjectivities. Thus, women who yearn for change cannot shed their old skins like snakes. (2002, p. 26)

Neither the Corporeal Feminists nor myself have the intention of “doing away” with gender. Unfortunately, we do not agree specifically on how gender/sex should be understood in relation to materiality, subjectivity and becoming. What it comes down to is the discussion of sexual specificity in the process of becoming and, more specifically, if that sexual specificity should be considered binary or multiplicitous.

Sexual Difference Theory: Traces of Irigaray

In order to best understand Australian Corporeal Feminists’ position with regards to sex, gender and sexuality, a focus is needed on their connections to, and use of, sexual difference theory. As important as their connections to the work of Deleuze and Guattari is their connection to Luce Irigaray and sexual difference. Australian Corporeal Feminism is a “critical exegesis of Deleuze's theory of becoming and Irigaray's theory of sexual difference” (Braidotti, 2002, p. 5) Luce Irigaray is a French feminist philosopher whose work draws greatly on the tradition of psychoanalysis including Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan along with the Deconstruction movement most often associated with Jacques Derrida. Her work focuses on the feminine and specifically on challenging notions of the primacy of the Phallus in signification and theories of subjectivity (see Irigaray, 1984). Australian Corporeal Feminism is an interesting combination of Irigaray, a psychoanalytic thinker, and Deleuze and Guattari, very vocal critics of psychoanalysis.

However, if one takes into account the philosophical nomadism⁹ advocated by the likes of Braidotti, one does not have to remain faithful to the theorists one works with, and definitely is not required to use their theories in their entirety. As such, Australian Corporeal Feminism couples Irigararian sexual difference with Deleuzoguattarian subjectivity.

Sexual difference is central to the Australian Corporeal Feminists ontology. It is argued “sex cannot be simply reduced to and contained by one’s primary and secondary sexual characteristics, because one’s sex makes a difference to *every* function, biological, social, cultural” (Grosz, 1994, p. 22). Therefore, sex is integral to all processes of becoming. Also, sexual specificity cannot be reduced to the realm of signification, to processes of inscription and codification, but must be considered a “pre-ontological terrain” that makes existence possible (Grosz, 1994, p. 209). The Australian Corporeal Feminists “cannot fathom a subject position outside of sexuality” (Braidotti, 2002, p. 244). Important here is to recognize that each of the Corporeal Feminists define binary sexual difference differently. Therefore, I will explore the specific understandings of sexual difference put forth by Braidotti, Grosz and Gatens and how they relate to a Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer practices.

Braidotti’s “Strategic Essentialism”: Back to the Binary

Rosi Braidotti’s position in relation to sex is often contradictory and takes on forms that I have trouble reconciling. For example, Braidotti argues that the feminism of sexual difference “posits as radically other a female, sexed, thinking subject, who stands

⁹ The use of the term nomadism in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, and subsequently theorists using their work such as Braidotti, is problematic. Caren Kaplan (1996), in her engagement with Deleuze and Guattari’s use of nomadism, cautions against “critical practices that romanticize or mystify regions or figures that can only be represented through the lens of colonial discourse” (p. 66).

in an asymmetrical relationship with the masculine” (Ibid., p. 26) and this radical female other must learn to speak the feminine, to actively participate in the processes of “becoming-woman”. However, Braidotti also argues that she is in “favour of nomadizing [the female subject] and making it complex, multiple and internally contradictory” (Ibid., p. 244). While I understand that the feminine that she advocates in the first definition of sexual difference does not negate the multiplicity in the second, I find them terribly difficult to hold in tandem within the larger context of Braidotti’s “strategic essentialism” (Ibid., p. 46). For Braidotti, strategic essentialism boils down to a binary understanding of sexed bodies and refuses gender multiplicity as a form of “femino-phobia” (Ibid., p. 29).

While arguing for multiplicity, complexity and creativity with regards to subjectivity and philosophy, Braidotti problematically falls back on her euphemistically named “strategic essentialism” when dealing with sex, gender and sexuality. Here, she makes a substantial leap from the significance of sex/gender in the process of becoming (something we share) to the significance of *binary* sex/gender in becoming. It is this leap that does not fit with a Deleuzoguattarian understanding of subjectivity. It contradicts her call for overcoming dualistic thought, shifting from concept to process, and her focus on multiplicity, change and transformation. This is a focus she clearly states in her prologue to *Metamorphoses* (Ibid., p. 38). In holding on to a binary understanding of sex, Braidotti greatly limits the potential for transformations and metamorphoses.

What enables Braidotti’s leap from sexed to binary sexed becomings, is her conceptualization of gender multiplicity, which allows her to maintain her dualistic position in two ways. Firstly, Braidotti considers the practices of multiplying genders/sexes to only be a “quantitative shift”, in that it maintains the notion of a unitary

subject while simply multiplying the subject positions available (Ibid., p. 38). Secondly, Braidotti conflates gender multiplicity with a desire for “undoing gender” or going “beyond gender”. She uses this conflation to argue against gender multiplicity, stating: “philosophical nomadism seems to be functioning like a magnet that attracts a relatively broad range of queer, perverse, in-between positions which coalesce around the project of destroying, overcoming or abolishing the gender system” (Ibid., p. 103). Braidotti is not justified in making either of these arguments. From my own experiences in genderqueer communities, the very notion of unitary identity is constantly challenged by the practices of gender-bending, and it is increasingly recognized that identities are not static, singular, nor universal. Also, it seems naïve to argue that quantitative shifts in identity positions do not impact the qualitative way we go about understanding subjectivity; they are not mutually exclusive processes. In addition, Braidotti’s conflation of gender multiplicity with overcoming gender is problematic. Pushing the limits of gender as to produce new becomings, new forms of transformation, is not the same as calling for its eradication. Multiplicity is not the dissolution of gender but rather the dissolution of only two gendered positions, male and female. Because Braidotti understands sexual difference as a binary difference that necessitates male and female in order to exist, she equates the existence of gender to the existence of binary gender. In contrast, this thesis will argue that there are gendered experiences and bodies beyond the binary of male and female, experiences of genderqueer that not only continue to be of importance but also make the role of gender in becoming even more significant.

While I would agree with Braidotti’s fear of undoing gender and the possibility of maintaining a humanist universal subject in doing so (2003, p. 44), her understanding of

sexed embodiment is limited. Common to Australian Corporeal feminism's use of sexual difference, Braidotti commits another serious conflation of concepts. In resting embodiment on the necessity of binary sex, she is equating an embodied and embedded subjectivity with a binary sexed subjectivity. She is dependent on this binary in order to make sex and gender "real" and significant to becomings and subjectivities. I argue that the gender binary is not necessary to make gendered becomings embodied, let alone significant. In necessitating this sexual binary, Braidotti ignores the diversity of morphologies and material bodies (on a very basic level consider intersexed bodies), on top of whitewashing over other important enfolded and embodied aspects of becoming including race, ability, and age (to name a few). By necessitating binary sexed morphologies and adamantly arguing against the gender multiplicity of Deleuze and Guattari, Braidotti builds a very Irigarayan model of sex that is embedded in heterosexual signification and very limited readings of sexed materiality.

Grosz and Sexual Specificity: A Glimpse of Transformation

The sexual difference of Elizabeth Grosz can also be closely associated with Irigaray and fits well with Braidotti's strategic essentialism. Grosz tends to focus on challenging dualisms and specifically the dualism of sex and gender that she sees as prevalent in gender theory. She is critical of the assumption that sex is an essentialist category and gender is a constructionist category, and aims to undermine this dichotomy through the use of sexual specificity. For Grosz, sexual specificity means that "the body codes the meanings projected on it in sexually determinate ways" (1994, 18). As such, sexual difference cannot be considered purely a matter of inscription and codification. The sexual specificity of materiality translates into a certain level of determinateness to

the body and plays an important role in the process of becoming, as it exerts resistance and recalcitrance to the processes of inscription (Ibid., p.190). Grosz believes that this pre-ontological sexual specificity of bodies is binary and that it produces the inscription of bodies as male and female. Grosz's understanding of sexual specificity and embodied subjectivity is very difficult to reconcile with Deleuzoguattarian ideas of becoming and gender as multiplicitous forces.

Grosz also attempts to discuss radical gender practices. Unlike Braidotti's explicit rejection of such practices, Grosz is inconsistent with her exploration, sometimes embracing queer practices, while at other times being much more critical. Some of her opposition to queer practices stems from her fear that queer will be a generalizing force (Dale, 1999) that produces and enforces a universalism that refuses sexual differentiation, a fear she shares with Braidotti. Grosz's response is to return to a "strategic" form of essentialism, especially with reference to transgendered practices:

Men, contrary to the fantasy of the transsexual, can never, even with surgical intervention, feel or experience what it is to be, to live as women. At best the transsexual can live out his fantasy of femininity—a fantasy that in itself is usually disappointed with the rather crude transformations effect by surgical and chemical intervention. The transsexual may look like a woman but can never feel like or be a woman. (1994, p. 207)

Grosz maintains that there is some form of authentic female experience. Therefore, even though Grosz uses Deleuzoguattarian theory with regards to the subject and the body, it is difficult to engage in a Deleuzoguattarian fashion with the possibilities of genderqueer practices through her work.

Gatens: A Possibility for Sexual Specificity and Multiplicity

Of the Australian Corporeal Feminists, Moira Gatens comes closest to engaging with genderqueer practices. She is critical of the strategic essentialism of Braidotti and Grosz, arguing that “an insistence on ontological sexual difference leads into the *cul de sac* of essentialism, where sexual difference is privileged over all other differences” (1996, p. X). While Gatens acknowledges the important role of binary sexual difference as a “dominant organizing principle in our culture” she emphasizes the need to question *why* sexual difference is the norm and what is invested in maintaining this difference as primary (Ibid., p. 43). Gatens argues that Braidotti’s strategic essentialism prevents sexual difference theory from pursuing the economic, legal, political and ethical implications of its strategic deployments (Ibid., p. 77). Gatens is not looking to completely reject sexual difference but to critically engage with it, looking at both its benefits and limitations. While this critique opens up the possibility of a more affirmative assessment of radical gender practices, including genderqueer, Gatens’ own work focuses on understandings of the “body politic” and more abstract gendered signifying practices. Gatens gives us a critical perspective on “strategic essentialism” and opens up the possibility of maintaining the importance of gender in theory without necessitating essential binary sex.

In summary, the Australian Corporeal Feminists are not all doom and gloom with regards to my project. Methodologically, they emphasize affirmative writing practices and the need for creative projects that are not only looking for new concepts but new ways of relating. They establish a relation to Deleuze and Guattari that moves towards a non-unitary subject that is useful in thinking about the radical forms of subjectivities and bodies associated with genderqueer. They emphasize the importance of the body (as a

relation of forces) in subjectivity and the need to reject the dualism of mind and body in the name of embodied subjectivity. And finally, they focus on the importance of sexual specificity, of the material specificity of bodies and how they impact becomings, transformations and transgressions. Yes, for the most part this sexual specificity is coupled with a binary understanding of sexual difference that shifts their work into the realm of Irigaray instead of Deleuze and Guattari, but I believe that their work can still contribute to a Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer.

Deleuzoguattarian Gender Theory: Conceptual Foci

Within the literature concerning Deleuze and Guattari there are a small number of works that deal explicitly with gender in a Deleuzoguattarian fashion. Most often these texts focus on one specific concept in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, such as multiplicity in Stephen Linstead and Alison Pullen's article "Gender as Multiplicity: Desire, displacement, difference and dispersion" (2006), or positive difference in Abigail Bray and Claire Colebrook's article "The Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (dis)Embodiment" (1998). It is these two texts, and the ways that they take up a Deleuzoguattarian reading of gender that I will now explore.

In their article, Linstead and Pullen examine different ways that multiplicity has been thought across the disciplines of feminist, queer and Deleuzoguattarian theory. They make the Deleuzoguattarian argument that gender identity should be thought of rhizomatically as "a performance of becoming which is brought together momentarily, interrupted constantly and dispersed consistently" (Linstead and Pullen, 2006, p. 1291). Building on this rhizomatic understanding of gender, the authors focus on concepts of gender fluidity and the possibilities for gender to move towards a "becoming-

imperceptible”¹⁰. Becoming-imperceptible is considered to be an “end to multiplicity” as “no meaningful or stable means can be found to fix the ‘placeless relational mobility’” (Ibid., p.1307). For Linstead and Pullen, this end of multiplicity occurs in two ways: becoming-genderful and becoming-ungendered. To become genderful refers to a gender becoming that is “so expansive and inclusive in its myriad gender alignments that it cannot be aligned or consigned within gender limits, as these limits now contain everything else, themselves a form of gendering” (Ibid., p. 1305). As such, it is the end of gender multiplicity through an infinite multiplication of gender so that gender expands into all other forms of alignments (race, class, age) and cannot be separated out from them. Everything becomes gender; gender is everything. Becoming-ungendered is also a process of ending multiplicity through imperceptibility “where gender is dissipated, overlain by and completely absorbed into so many other alignments that it ceases to function as a category but remains a minor dimension of all experience”(Ibid., p. 1305). This can be seen as the opposite of becoming-genderful: instead of gender multiplying out into all forms of alignments or becomings, other forms of becomings multiply out into gender, rendering it a minor detail in a larger context of becoming. Both becoming-genderful and becoming-ungendered have the same affect of ending multiplicity through a shift to imperceptibility.

Linstead and Pullen’s Deleuzoguattarian reading of gender is limited in a number of ways. Firstly, in speaking of becoming-genderful and un-gendered, they transform the process of becoming into an ends focused process, failing to acknowledge the immanence of multiplicity and imperceptibility. As such, the Deleuzoguattarian idea of becoming as

¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari define becoming-imperceptible as “to reduce oneself to an abstract line, a trait, in order to find one’s zone of indiscernibility with other traits, and in this way enter the haecceity and impersonality of the creator” (1987, p. 280).

movement in the sense of not movement from “A” to “B” but movement in itself (1983) is lost. Becoming loses its orientation to potentials, and the importance of its movement is eclipsed by the focus on imperceptibility as an end point. As such, there is still a need to explore gender multiplicity and fluid gender becomings in the context of movement, outside of the assumption of a necessary movement towards imperceptibility.

Another limitation that arises in Linstead and Pullen’s understanding of becoming-imperceptible, is that they do not engage with issues of embodiment in relation to these processes of becoming. As such, the role of the body is not discussed and the possibility of the body acting as an enabling and limiting factor in gendered becomings is not explored. This is extremely problematic. By not engaging with materiality, Linstead and Pullen are able to think of a position outside of gender, to reduce gender to a signification practice and to completely divorce it from the body. Thus, they associate gender only with molar structures, with that which can and should be overcome. If the materiality of the body is not included in the process of becoming, it is easy to think of becoming as strictly a linguistic process, a production in the realm of signification. The dualism of mind and body, materiality and signification is upheld, counter to the work of Deleuze and Guattari. In ignoring the materiality of becoming, and coupling it with an ends-oriented notion of becoming, it is difficult to read Linstead and Pullen’s concept of becoming as Deleuzoguattarian.

Bray and Colebrook, in their article “The Haunted Flesh” (1998), are also looking at gender through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari, and like Linstead and Pullen, focus on certain concepts instead of a more complete ontology. They focus on how Deleuze and Guattari understand bodies, specifically notions of difference in relation to bodies.

So, unlike Linstead and Pullen, their work is very much concerned with materiality and is actively combating the dualism of mind and body. Central to their work is the “positive difference of specific bodies” which refers to how bodies are not “posited effects of representation, not an “outside” to discourse that is assumed only after the event of discourse itself” (Bray and Colebrook, 1998, p. 40). Important here is their Deleuzoguattarian redefinition of difference as positive or pure difference. This notion of difference stems from Deleuze and Guattari’s “transcendental empiricism” which Bray and Colebrook define as positing “an univocality whereby bodies, consciousness, actions, events, signs and entities are specific intensities—each with its own modality and difference” (Ibid., p. 56). As such, intensities do not require a difference *from* each other in order to exist or become, and instead are positively different in their specific singularities. Therefore, Bray and Colebrook are engaging in a Deleuzoguattarian way with two of the areas that Linstead and Pullen did not: materiality and difference.

Bray and Colebrook are not without their limitations. While they are engaged with both notions of materiality and positive difference, they are not explicitly engaging with notions of gender variance or more specifically genderqueer. Their work focuses on the role of the body and materiality in relation to women’s experiences of anorexia nervosa and how a shift towards a Deleuzoguattarian reading of such experiences can be beneficial. It is anorexia that gets read in a Deleuzoguattarian fashion, not gender. As such, there still is a need to explore Deleuze and Guattari more rigorously in relation to gender and subsequently genderqueer.

In this section I have covered two articles that attempt to explore Deleuze and Guattari in relation to gender. While both of these articles have aspects that not only

support, but inform my project (Linstead and Pullen's notions of multiplicity and Bray and Colebrook's focus on materiality and pure difference), neither is explicitly dealing with a rigorous reading of Deleuze and Guattari in relation to gender. Looking at these articles, it can be argued that Deleuzoguattarian gender theory has yet to engage with genderqueer, and more broadly, has yet to utilize a more complex Deleuzoguattarian ontology.

Intentions and Potentials for This Thesis

As seen in the above discussion, Deleuze and Guattari have been used within the realm of both queer theory and gender theory. What is also apparent is that the exploration of genderqueer practices in relation to Deleuze and Guattari has yet to occur. This project is necessary for a number of reasons. As we saw with both Roen's exploration of "trans" politics and Wilchins' critique of identity-based gender politics, the current theories guiding gender variant politics are highly problematic, tending to replicate the divisions and hierarchies they are looking to challenge. By creating Deleuzoguattarian ways of discussing gender variance that are not reliant on unitary notions of subjectivity, this project has the potential to open up spaces for discussion of politics that do not fall victim to the logic of identity politics. Also, a Deleuzoguattarian reading of genderqueer has the possibilities of embedding theoretical understandings in the material while preventing the reproduction of dualistic thought separating the mind and body. It is these potentials for gendered subjectivities and bodies that I will explore in the next two chapters.

Chapter 2: Genderqueer as Molecular Gendered Subjectivity: Residuums, Becomings, and Rhizomatic Relations

As shown in the previous chapter, there has not yet been an in-depth reading of genderqueer through Deleuzoguattarian ontology. This chapter will begin such a discussion by focusing on Deleuzoguattarian understandings of subjectivity and how they relate to both gender and genderqueer. Specifically, this chapter will examine four areas of discussion: the subject as residuum, the subject as becoming, the subject as rhizome, and the subject as subjectification. Each of these sections will complicate and expand on the concepts discussed before it. These conceptualizations of subjectivity are not mutually exclusive but rather are different ways of understanding Deleuzoguattarian subjectivity that add complexity to the discussion. Through this method of involution, this chapter will build a conceptualization of Deleuzoguattarian subjectivity and genderqueer that resonate together, that not only speak to each other but also become inseparable. Deleuzoguattarian subjectivity becoming genderqueer, genderqueer becoming gendered Deleuzoguattarian subjectivity.

The Subject as Residuum: Desiring-Production and Partial Objects

An alarm followed by numerous snooze buttons. Blankets thrashing and long-winded hesitation. Downward dog, upward dog and warrior stance held extra long. Clean socks, worn pants and favourite sweater. Fresh air, fast feet and the bus still goes by, early as usual. A string of smiles induced by dog tails and sloppy tongues. Work, lots of work. Writing, lots of writing, with brief intermissions for a stretch, a walk. Meetings in stuffy rooms: heated discussions, agreements, consensus, or not. Food, good food, followed by heavy eyelids and extended yawns. Another downward dog or two, a long warm embrace and kiss on the lips. Knees in knees and an arm that maintains the embrace. All of this is just a brief excursion into a day; a day that at moments coalesces around a gendered "I", but most often just flows from downward dog to upward dog to warrior stance.

To begin a discussion of Deleuzoguattarian subjectivity and its relation to genderqueer, it is necessary to review and expand on Deleuze and Guattari's ontology,

especially their understandings of desire and production that form the backbone of their understanding of subjectivity. The subject as residuum is a product of desire (often termed desiring-production). I will develop this conceptualization of subjectivity in a moment, but first I will expand on Deleuzoguattarian desiring-production.

As discussed in the introduction to this project, desire is a central, underlying current of existence according to Deleuze and Guattari. Unlike psychoanalytic notions of desire as a drive for something that is lacking, something that has been lost, Deleuze and Guattari understand desire as lacking nothing at all (1983, p. 26). For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is synonymous with production, as the defining characteristic of desire is its production of material existence. As everything according to Deleuze and Guattari is considered a product that in turn produces, it is important to understand the relationship of desiring-production to the “real.”¹¹ It is incorrect to understand desiring-production as a metaphor of the “real”, or to understand desire and production as solely in the realm of signification and representation. Rather, integral to a Deleuzoguattarian ontology of desiring-production is that both production and desire are “real” in themselves (Ibid., p. 32). Important to this reality of desiring-production is that it occurs at the molecular level, and can be considered a molecular process. As discussed previously, “molecular” refers to the level of the unconscious¹². It is the production of singularities, the breaking down of the codes and axiomatics established by the molar in order to produce new

¹¹ The “real” is often associated with psychoanalytic thinker Jacques Lacan and refers to that which is outside language, symbolism and social structure. The real is distinct from reality which is considered the socially, linguistically mediated world. See Lacan (1991).

¹² It is important to acknowledge that the fact that Deleuze and Guattari understand the molecular as unconscious makes any reading of a “molecular subjectivity” difficult and problematic. That being said, I think that in order to discuss the potentials of the molecular in relation to gender, some level of territorialization is necessary in the form of subjectivities. While it is problematic, it does not negate the potentials that are produced by a discussion of “molecular subjectivities”.

flows, new singularities by refusing organization and coherence. At this molecular level, Deleuze and Guattari refer to desiring-production as a *multilinear relation of machines*. A machine can be best understood in relation to what it does, in relation to its role in production. An example, pulled from the above narrative would be the alarm clock as a certain machine that in picking up a flow of electricity produces a flow of noise, which in turn is picked up by an ear (a machine), which in turn produces a flow that affects the sleeping body by waking it up. And the flows continue as such. In the realm of desiring-production, everything is a machine (Ibid., p. 2).

To understand the concept of multilinearity in relation to machines, it is necessary to understand how machines work in relation to each other. Desiring-machines are considered binary-machines in that they perform two functions: a desiring-machine picks up or consumes a flow¹³ and produces a flow. The linear nature of the machines sets up a relationality that is central to multilinearity. Every flow is produced by a machine and will be picked up by another machine which will modify the flow. As Deleuze and Guattari state “there is always a flow-producing machine, and another machine connected to it that interrupts or draws off part of this flow” (Ibid., p. 5). This is the linearity of desiring-production. What makes desiring-production multilinear is that every flow has many different parts that can be taken up by many different machines. Therefore, there is an endless potential for what may be produced by machines in desiring-production. Yes, there are linear connections between machines, but these connections are multiple and

¹³ Flows can be thought of as movement, not movement from A to B, but movement more generally and not dependent on the assumptions of stable structures that A and B would require. These movements are productive, allowing for the production of future movement and potentials.

rooted not in determinism (as seen in teleological understandings of linearity¹⁴) but in contingency and potentiality (Ibid., p. 140).

In moving this discussion of desiring-production towards a concept of subjectivity, it is important to understand the role of breakdown in desiring-production. Breaks, stops, and blockages are found all over the molecular realm of desiring-production. As well as consuming and producing flows, machines must be understood as breaks in the flows of desire (Ibid., p. 31). While machines are integral to maintaining flow, to picking up and transforming flows, they also produce a break in the flow. Here, it is crucial not to create a dualistic understanding of flow and breakdown. As discussed in the introduction, Deleuze and Guattari are very weary of oppositional, binaristic conceptualizations, and it is necessary to maintain this critical refusal of dualism with respect to flows and breakdown. Instead of positioning these two concepts in opposition, they can be considered co-constituted, in the sense that the flow requires the breaks (machines) in order to be consumed and continue to flow. At the same time the breaks (machines) require the flows in order to have something to stop, change, transform. You cannot have one without the other. As Deleuze and Guattari state "breaking down is part of the very functioning of desiring-machines" (Ibid., p. 32)

In relation to the subject, there is a certain form of break that is of particular interest: the *residual break*. This residual or subjective break is one type of break or interruption produced by the desiring-machines that produces the subject as a residuum alongside the machine (Ibid., p. 40). So, at the level of the molecular, the subject is a production of desiring-production, not the producer of desire. Important in understanding

¹⁴ Such an example being the Hegelian Dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. See Hegel (1975).

the subject as a residuum is that the subject is peripheral to the machines, while at the same time the residual subject has peripheries within itself (Ibid., pp. 40-1). This residual subject is neither central (as it is at the periphery of desiring-production) nor unitary (as it is made up of many parts, including peripheries). Each of the subjective residuum's parts may be picked up by a machine and become a flow or residuum itself made up of many parts. This is the *law of the production of production* (Ibid., pp. 36-7): each production produces the potential of more production, just as each residual subject produces the potential for more, purely different flows and residuums.

This residual subject can be understood through the use of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the partial object. Partial objects refer to productions of desire that are not a part of a predetermined whole, but instead are total in and of themselves. There is no lack in the partial object and therefore, if the residual subject is considered a partial object, it cannot be understood through a relationship of lack. This understanding of partial objects, as lacking nothing is referred to by Deleuze and Guattari as the *law of partial objects* (Ibid., p. 60). Rather than lack, partial objects are part of the desiring machines, and are centered on process and the relations of production. Unlike psychoanalytic understandings of desire, which require a loss that produces a desire to fill this void, desiring-production necessitates a refusal of lack. At the molecular level, there is no totality that can lose part of itself, as loss is not an unconscious phenomenon. Totality itself is immanent and does not imply a collection of parts but a singularity. In this context, partiality does not refer to a part of a total, as partial objects are themselves immanent singular totalities. They are partial in that they are not universal, but rather simply one possible production in an array of potentials. The partial object refuses the

possibility of a universal totality, transforming the very notion of totality into a singular, immanent concept. An example that relates this to subjectivity can be seen in the above narrative, which highlights moments of subjectivity that occur throughout a day. For example, a warm embrace produces a certain singular moment of subjectivity, a partial object that does not exist prior to or as an outcome of such a production. The subject is the production itself. The embrace itself is subjectivity in its totality; a subjectivity that is produced through the affects of the actions of embracing and is total in and of itself in that moment. The embrace is partial in that it is only one of an infinite number of possible subjectivities. Therefore, subjectivity, thought as a partial object, refuses the notion of a total, unitary subject, and acknowledges the productive, immanent aspects of molecular subjectivity.

If the subject as residuum can be considered a partial object, what about the dominant, molar, modernist understanding of the subject as unitary, universal and *a priori* to production? How can these two concepts be understood in relation to each other? The molecular, residual subject comes to look like the molar universal subject through a process of territorialization.¹⁵ Territorialization organizes molecular productions, artificially totalizing the residual subject that appears in the molar realm of signification as an unitary, static subject. In reality, this molar subject is still just “a part alongside other parts which it [the residuum] neither unifies nor totalizes” (Ibid., p. 43). The subject, as a molar entity, only appears as a derivative of “global persons” aka a

¹⁵ Territorialization is the processes through which the molar realm is established, the processes Deleuze and Guattari understand as the “grasping in its [the strata’s] pincers a maximum number of intensities or intensive particles over which it spreads its forms and substances, constituting determinate gradients and thresholds of resonance” (1987, p. 54)

universal subject, but is really produced from a molecular flow of desire. This territorialization of the residual subject into the molar subject is what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the *analytical fallacy of the fixed subject*. This fallacy assigns a partial object (in this discussion the subject as residuum) to the position of complete object (Ibid., p. 60). In doing so, the analytical fallacy implies a fixed subject; a static subject derived from universal man, and instates the notion of lack at the heart of this subject. This lack emerges from the establishment of a unitary, universal subject that is impossible to obtain as the flows of desire continually trouble and challenge it. The inability for individuals to attain such subjecthood creates an affect of lack, of a subject that appears to be lacking its totality or unity. The subject has no relation to lack until an artificial fixity is applied to it (Ibid., p. 26). Underneath the molar territorialization of the unitary subject there remains a partial object, a residual subjectivity that has no specificity coming from the structures of unity but only specificity based on pure difference¹⁶. Therefore, in Deleuze and Guattari, the unitary subject of the molar is refused in the name of the subject as residuum. Emerging as one of the many products of desiring-production, this subject is peripheral, multiplicitous, and in a process of constant change.

How does this discussion of the subject as a residuum of desiring production relate to genderqueer? Deleuze and Guattari's molecular understanding of subjectivity can be a useful tool for understanding gender more generally, and in turn, the specificities of genderqueer. As such, I will begin with a reading of gender as residuum and then illustrate how residual molecular gender can be understood as genderqueer.

¹⁶ Unlike negative difference, which is based relational differences and often sets up oppositional binaristic relations between different things, pure difference refuses dualistic thought, allowing for the difference of an object or subject to be based strictly on its singularity.

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of residuum or partial object can be used to discuss gender. Specifically, it is incredibly useful to think of gender as a partial object, as one of the many residuals of desiring-production. This reading of gender allows for the acknowledgment that, while at the molar level there are territorializations of gender that appear as gendered identities, essential to these territorializations, are molecular, peripheral genders that are neither fixed, unitary, nor *a priori* to production.

Based on my discussion, the first substantial shift that occurs with the redefinition of gender as residuum or partial object is the very fact that gender becomes partial. Gender is no longer a totalizing identity or subjectivity such as the normative molar categories of men and women. Gender becomes one of many peripheral productions. As such, gender cannot be considered an *a priori* category that produces certain outcomes, but instead as a product of incredibly diverse and ever-changing desiring production. Gender gains the partial object's orientation to potential and contingency. Understanding gender as a partial object allows for the acknowledgement that it is made up of many parts, and that each of these parts could be taken by a different desiring-machine and subsequently produce a plethora of new flows of gender and otherwise. Gender as a partial object becomes multiplicitous and unstable as it is not only made up of many different parts, but also leads to many different and new flows in the realm of molecular desiring-production. In addition, this multiplicitous, contingent and transforming residual understanding of gender recognizes that it is lacking nothing; it does not require a notion of or relation to lack in order to be and to matter. The importance of such a shift can be explained in relation to dominant or molar notions of femininity, which are often

theorized in relation to their “lack” of a phallus or penis.¹⁷ If gender is understood as residuum or partial object, such a claim of the centrality of lack to a particular gender is unsustainable. Gender at the molecular level as a partial object opens up the realm of potential and transformation by shifting gender towards multiplicity, production and fluidity. This shift resonates greatly with genderqueer.

As stated previously, I understand genderqueer as *gendered practices that are fluid, in-process, in-flux, and that challenge the reification, mutual exclusion, and determinism of binary gender*. This definition can be translated into the terms of gender as partial object. Firstly, gender as residuum’s refusal of a static, unitary gendered subject is synonymous with genderqueer orientations to fluidity and flux. This can easily be seen in the diversity of gender presentations and practices that many genderqueers participate in; for example, presenting as masculine one day, and feminine the next. Not only do these persons present or act differently over time with respect to gender but also participate in gendered practices that in and of themselves may be fluid and multiplicitous, and often these practices do not “pass”¹⁸ within the molar frameworks of heteronormativity. Genderqueer practices are not simply male or female, but include a complication of this binary to include presentations and practices that include both or neither masculine and feminine aspects. As Raven Kaldera comments: “not just male and female... there are also the separate countries of hormones and culture, intersex and transgender, spirituality and intellectualism, queer and transsexual and so forth. The lines

¹⁷ This is seen in the work of some psychoanalysts including Freud. See Brennan (1992).

¹⁸ To pass refers to be able to be read as normative, to fit into one of the dominant system’s categories. In the case of gender, it refers to being read as either male or female. This not a term that is needs to be strictly applied to genderqueer as Judith Halberstam argues “we all pass or we don’t, we all wear our drag, and we all derive a different degree of pleasure—sexual or otherwise—from our costumes. It is just that for some of us our costumes are made of fabric or material, while for others they are made of skin; for some an outfit can be changed; for others skin must be resewn.” (1994, p. 212)

aren't stable; they move around" (2002, p. 158). Secondly, a notion of gender as a partial object that is heavily embedded in desiring-production and is itself a product of such production fits well with genderqueer understandings of gender practices as "in-process." This builds on fluidity and explicitly acknowledges the role of action, of production, rather than maintaining gender within the realm of signification and representation. Finally, gender as residuum's refusal of lack, a lack that is integral to practices of molar territorialization, speaks to the explicit challenge stated in my genderqueer definition with respect to processes of reification, mutual exclusion (oppositional dualism) and determinism of binary gender. These processes can be understood as processes of territorialization. Therefore, based on a comparison of my definition of genderqueer (itself built out of my own experiences and observations of my community) and Deleuze and Guattari's notion of residuum or partial object, genderqueer and residual gender can be considered synonymous. Therefore, genderqueer has the potential to be understood as one instance of molecular gender. Genderqueer is gender as residuum.

The Subject as Becoming: Relationality and Immanence

This car ride is a romantic reunion. Gravel road, fields of canola and hay, and skies that make infinity seem small. Head out the window, the wind whistling in these ears and the fresh, dry prairie air rushing into these lungs. Prairie Boy. Prairie boy reunion: a feeling of home, of connection not felt on the island surrounded by salty water. Everything feels different; the open skies and sheer horizontalness of experience changes everything. The rekindling of this relationship between prairie boy and sky, prairie boy and flat land; everything seems new. Not simply new surroundings, but the newness of selves, the newness of genders, the newness of prairie boy, the newness of home.

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of subjectivity as residuum gives a great introduction to thinking about subjectivity as peripheral, non-unitary and in-process. Building on this understanding and its rejection of the static *a priori* subject, this section will focus on a complementary notion: becoming. This process of becoming occurs at the

molecular level, at the level of machines, and cannot be considered mutually exclusive from the subject as residuum. Becoming highlights the relationality and immanence of molecular subjectivity and supplements the previous discussion of subject as residuum.

In order to understand Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the subject as becoming, it is necessary to conceptualize subjectivity as a relational process. In Deleuzoguattarian ontology, the term relationality has a very specific connotation. Unlike dominant, modernist understandings of relationality, which explain relation in terms of determinate points on a grid, the relationality of becoming is an immanent principle that occurs in the essence of reality, in the very univocality of reality (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 255). As such, relationality is intrinsically related to pure difference and contributes to the essential specificity of all desiring-machines. Deleuze and Guattari argue that when considering the relationality of subjectivity as becoming, one cannot look to the notion of *filiation* (a line of descent, lineage, or heredity). Relationality does not take on this filial structure, which is often associated with the structure of a tree in Deleuze and Guattari's work. As such, the relationality of the subject cannot be understood to occur between coherent, unitary subjects that exist previous to the relations between them. As seen in the subject as partial object, these *a priori* subjects do not exist and therefore relationality needs to be understood differently. This difference in relationality is highlighted in that "becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance" (1987, p. 238).

Deleuzoguattarian relationality is better understood as *alliance* and *contagion*. In such an understanding, the relations between objects are immanent and do not rely on a history of similar relations. Alliance refers to connections between particles or subjects,

or more specifically within subjects, that are not based on heredity or a line of descent. Instead of assuming a determined history of connections, each stemming from the outcome of the last, alliance is based on immanent connection, on machines, particles, or subjectivities sharing a common speed, movement or vibration at one specific moment (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). Therefore, the relationality of the molecular subject, understood as alliance is imbedded in contingency and potential, as there is no assumed pattern to its relations. Contagion traditionally refers to the transmission of disease through physical contact, and when applied to becoming highlights it as a relational process that occurs through contact. This contact does not occur in predictable ways or between predictable particles or subjectivities. Relationality as contagion moves subjectivity beyond a limited notion of the “human” to include all the particles of the galaxy. As such, subjectivity as becoming expands what is to be considered the subject, integrating plants, animals, microorganisms etc. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 250). Here, the concept of subjectivity expands exponentially and opens up even more to potentials and contingencies. Becoming as contagion emphasizes that molecular subjects come into being through actual contact with different particles, moving at different speeds, including those considered beyond the human. Therefore, the relational immanence of the becoming subject is a process of involution¹⁹ through alliance and contagion instead of evolution (filiation) (Ibid., p. 267). Becoming-subject as a process is creative and productive, and crucial to these understandings of becoming is the notion of affect.

¹⁹ Involution refers to an act of making something intricate or complicated.

Affect is central to relational molecular becomings of subjectivity. Brian Massumi understands affect as the way in which potential is developed, and defines affect as both “the capacity to be affected, or to submit to a force... and the capacity to affect, or to release a force” (1992, p. 10). Affect emphasizes the importance of process and contact or contagion in subjectivity. A shift towards affect as a key analytic and conceptual tool means that when exploring becomings one does not look for static objects or subjects and judge their interaction based on these assumed static states. Rather, affect requires that the focus be turned to what affects or impacts a certain residual or becoming subject and how that subject (as machine) affects others. The very haecceity²⁰ of a becoming is determined by the “relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected” (Ibid., p. 261). Relationality of becoming, seen through the lens of affect moves the discussion from what these machines or subjectivities are, to what these machines or subjectivities are doing and how they work (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 109). This question will be integral to understanding the body in the next chapter, but also has a significant impact on understandings of subjectivity. Affect centers the discussion on the processes of becoming not the outcomes nor the initial machines or subjectivities involved in the process (Ibid., p. 258).

How does one discuss these interactions, these becomings? What is a becoming made up of and how does it function? The answer lies in intensities. Intensities are best defined by what they do or how they work, as waves and vibrations, migrations, thresholds and gradients that affect, augment or diminish the power of a particular instance of becoming to act and to be affected (Ibid., p. 256). In this section’s narrative

²⁰ Haecceity is the essence that makes something the kind of thing it is and makes it different from any other; the aspects of a thing that make it a particular thing

concerning the prairie boy becoming, the sky can be understood as an intensity in the becoming-prairie boy. The prairie sky contributes to the process through its ability to create a force (an affect), which leads to the production of a prairie-boy becoming. When speaking of relational affectivity and the subject as a process of becoming, the becoming-subject can be understood as a plateau of intensities. A plateau of intensities is a “continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities” (Ibid., p. 22) that creates a zone of proximity, a becoming. As such, becoming is inherently about movement: how different particles with different speeds come into contact and affect each other. Integral in becoming as a plateau of intensities is the notion of a *zone of proximity*. It returns to the fact that in a becoming-subject there is no final, unitary, coherent outcome, no singular static subject. Instead, there is a zone, an area of movement where many vibrations of many different particles come into a close proximity but are still distinct. Key here is that the subject as becoming (plateau of intensities) is in process, always moving (the reference to “self-vibrating”) but that this movement is not oriented to a “culmination point or external end” (Ibid., p. 22). It is immanent movement, stemming from alliance, from contagion, that is not a movement from point A to point B (implying filiation) but movement itself. Therefore, the becoming-subjectivity is never a production of singularity, but of singularities, always a multiple, in-process subjectivity.

In Deleuzoguattarian ontology, the subject is a relational, immanent becoming. Like the subject as residuum, becoming reinforces the impossibility of a unitary subject at the unconscious molecular level. A subject as becoming is a region or plateau of moving intensities that come together momentarily in a zone of proximity. Becoming reinforces subjectivity as embedded in contingency and potentiality. It expands beyond the

multilinearity of the subject as residuum to include a molecular immanent relationality at its productive essence. Therefore, subjectivity cannot be limited to the notion of separate, solely human individuals as all processes of becoming are relational with all the particles of the universe.

An interesting aspect of the process of becoming is its implications for molar subjects. The territorialized subjectivity of the molar realm is very much susceptible to the process of becoming through processes of deterritorialization: the breaking down of molar categories that artificially organize the molecular. In the realm of the molar, becoming always has an aspect of deterritorialization (Ibid., p. 291) as it begins to breakdown the artificial static molar subject in the name of contingency. This is because under all molar aggregates there remain the vibrations of molecular processes of production and becoming (Ibid., p. 296). Essential to these molecular processes is their orientation towards breakdown, to deterritorialization of molar aggregates in the name of imperceptibility. As such, all becomings are oriented towards *becoming-imperceptible*. Deleuze and Guattari define becoming-imperceptible as “to reduce oneself to an abstract line, a trait, in order to find one’s zone of indiscernibility with other traits, and in this way enter the haecceity and impersonality of the creator” (1987, p. 280). Therefore, becoming-imperceptible refers to the breaking down all of the molar organizations in the name of returning to a state of “pure” molecularity. All becomings have an aspect of deterritorialization and these deterritorializations have the end focus of becoming-imperceptible (Ibid., p. 279). Therefore, according to Deleuze and Guattari, all things, including subjectivity, contain a refusal of coherence, signification and representation,

and have a tendency towards the smallest particles and their pure specificity and significance.

Deleuze and Guattari present a very interesting immanently relational subject as becoming, and this understanding of subjectivity can be applied to gender and genderqueer. Firstly, if gender is understood as a becoming, it gains an aspect of relationality that extends beyond dominant conceptualizations of gender, such as the focus on genitalia and secondary sex characteristics often used in defining one's gender. This critique of biological determinist understandings of sex is shared with theorists such as Judith Butler, who will be discussed in-depth in the final chapter. Based on affect, if gendered subjectivity is understood through becoming, gender becomes not what one is, but rather a constantly changing relation of many different intensities defined by what they are doing. In becoming, gender as a form of subjectivity expands and becomes contaminated (relationality through contagion) with other aspects of not only subjectivity but also of the world in which the subject is situated. This immanent relationality of becoming can be understood as a molecular form of intersectionality²¹, where aspects of not only age, class, race, ethnicity and ability but also other species (plant and animal), climates etc. all intersect with gender (Ibid., p. 263). This expansion of gender to relations beyond dominant understandings of gender and the human resonates with experiences of genderqueer.

The example of a prairie boy in this section's narrative illustrates that genderqueer experiences of subjectivity are not simply based in the realm of the human. Climates, geography, flora and fauna play a distinct role in the constant processes of becoming and

²¹ Intersectionality “rather than examining gender, race, class and nation as distinctive social hierarchies,...examines how they mutually construct one another” (Collins, 1998, p. 62).

are often included in genderqueer becomings. This speaks not only to the relationality of gendered becomings, but also to their immanence. Genderqueer subjectivities fit well into a Deleuzoguattarian conception of immanence, as they are often temporary and constantly changing. Genderqueer becomings are rarely totalizing and gain their significance from their pure difference and specificity in a certain time and space. For genderqueer, gender is something that is done, and as such can be done in different ways across time and space. Finally, Deleuze and Guattari's notion of subjectivity as becoming strikes a cord with genderqueer subjectivities with respect to their notion of becoming-imperceptible. Within genderqueer experiences and communities, experiences and practices of deterritorialization often challenge the dominant binary systems of gender. These challenges are not a form of pluralism or identity politics in which more coherent, unitary, static gender identities are produced. Rather, deterritorialization is a series of ever changing movements, what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as *lines of flight or escape*²² which are oriented to a form of gender imperceptibility, towards a breakdown of all molar gender categorizations. As such, the deterritorializing and immanently relational nature of gendered subjectivity as becoming can be understood as a form of genderqueer subjectivity.

The Subject as Rhizome: Pure Multiplicity

Another pronoun battle, waged at the dinner table on Christmas day. A constant stream of "shes" flows from dad's mouth. A constant flow of feminine pronouns that erase experiences of genderqueer. No malice intent for sure, but a lack of understanding that causes a noticeable flinch each time bodies, selves and experiences are "she'd". Constantly trying to ignore this implicit attack but breaking point is reached and subtle, muddled "theys" escape into the conversation. For every "she" the "they" gets louder, more pronounced and articulated. Dad stops, frustrated by the defiant echoes in the discussion, and asks "So what then? You are a "they"? Do you think there is more than

²² A line of flight or escape can be understood as one specific instance of deterritorialization.

one of you?” Laughter erupts, Dad not knowing the very theoretical words he has spoken. Gendered subjectivity as a multiplicity, seemingly a joke to him, but a lived experience nonetheless.

So far, Deleuzoguattarian subjectivity has been explored with regard to partial objects and becomings, which highlights the molecular subject as both a product of desire and as immanently relational. Building on these notions, this section explores a third conceptualization that significantly contributes to discussions of subjectivity, the *rhizome*. A rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system of circulating states (Ibid., p. 21). A common example of the rhizome engages with its definition in botany as a “network of multiple branching roots and shoots with no central axis, no unified point of origin, and no given direction of growth” (Grosz, 1993, p. 173). The rhizome focuses the discussion of subjectivity on the importance of *pure multiplicity*. This multiplicity is a defining characteristic of the rhizome. Applied to subjectivity, the subject becomes understood as pure multiplicity itself, emphasizing the potential for change, transformation and production. Therefore it is crucial in understanding Deleuze and Guattari’s molecular subject to recognize and explore the rhizome and its pure multiplicity in relation to subjectivity,

Central to the Deleuzoguattarian concept of the rhizome is the notion of pure multiplicity. This multiplicity differs from common definitions based on a dualistic relation between “the One” and the many. Embedded in these more traditional or molar definitions is an assumption of a cohesive or static “One” to which everything else can be compared to. This “One” becomes universalizing and creates a point through which dualistic thought arises. It becomes the reference point to which the “Other” can be defined. With regards to subjectivity, this universalizing “One” produces an assumption

of a universal subject, an *a priori* subject that is stable, coherent and unitary. This traditional notion of multiplicity, stemming from the universalism of the “One” is contrary to the Deleuzoguattarian multiplicity of the rhizome. For Deleuze and Guattari, within multiplicity there is no unified point of reference, no point to which all other experiences or existences are compared (1987). As such, it is not multiplicity in comparison to the “One” but a *pure multiplicity*, much like Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of pure difference. In refusing the dualism of the “One” versus the multiple, Deleuze and Guattari are refusing to instil a dualism at the heart of the molecular subject and in turn, are moving away from psychoanalytic theories that establish a relationship of norm and abject²³ (the “One” and the Other/Multiple). This psychoanalytic dualism, taken up in such gender theory as the work of Judith Butler²⁴, not only instils dualistic logic into the subject but also reinstates lack at the center of the subject.

The dualism of psychoanalytic thought establishes lack in subjectivity by enforcing a universal position (the “One”), which can never be achieved. The subject is always lacking as it cannot become the universal “One”, a universal that enforces the assumption of unity on the subject. Multiplicity in this context becomes a fragment; its relation to the “One” (synonymous with the whole, or the total) is one of lack. Deleuze and Guattari refuse this unity of the “One” through their concept of pure multiplicity. As Keith Ansell Pearson argues “multiplicity does not, therefore, designate a combination of the one and the many, but only an organization of the heterogeneous that does not require an overarching unity in order to operate as a system” (1999, p. 156). Here, multiplicity is no longer considered a numerical fragment of lost unity (1987, p. 32). Multiplicity in the

²³ See Kristeva (1982).

²⁴ See Butler (1997).

rhizome becomes “only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature” (Ibid., p. 8). If multiplicity does not have the reference point of the “One”, it can no longer be defined as a certain number of “Ones”, such as a multiplicity of five can be considered five ones. Therefore, multiplicity is not numerical and must be understood as an immanent principle. If the subject is understood as multiple in this regard, it cannot be understood as a form of pluralism (as many coherent, unitary subjects). Pluralism of the subject still requires the reference point of the “One”, the universal subject. Pure multiplicity is a refusal of the universal subject in the name of an immanently multiplicitous subject. It is not a matter of multiple types of subjects but of *subjectivity itself as multiple*. As such, Deleuze and Guattari argue that multiplicities are *asubjective* (Ibid., p. 9) in that they refuse all attempts at creating a coherent universal subject as reference. In addition, Deleuzoguattarian ontology refuses a coherent system of signification in relation to this subject. The subject as rhizomatic multiplicity is not about representation or interpretation as it is both asubjective and asignifying (Ibid., p. 9).

Important to the pure multiplicity of the rhizome is the form that the rhizome takes. Building on the relationality of becoming, the rhizome can be understood as a system of unstructured, unorganized connections. Any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other, and necessarily must be (Ibid., p.7). As such, connection is not created through universal rules or pre-defined relationships but is based in contingency and potential. Embedded in this notion of connection is *heterogeneity*. Not only are points randomly connected, no points are the same and as such, no connections are the same. This heterogeneity stems from the fact that the rhizome, though often referred to as

a collection of points, actually consists only of lines. As Deleuze and Guattari state “there are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in structure... There are only lines” (Ibid., 8). In this sense, the rhizome can be understood as relations of movement, as lines without points that can only be understood in relation to their speed and direction. Connection in the rhizome becomes movement, change, and transformation. The rhizomatic subject also takes on this characteristic and becomes definable not as a relation of distinct points or subjectivities but as a movement, a dimension, a “direction in motion” (Ibid., p. 21). Crucial to this understanding of the rhizome and the rhizomatic subject is that it is neither divisible nor quantifiable because any split, division, or line of movement changes the very nature of the rhizome (Ibid., p. 249). As such, the immanence of the becoming-subject is reiterated as the rhizomatic, multiplicitous subject composed of lines of movement, each of which change the very nature of that subjectivity. Movement is tantamount to the rhizomatic subject as each movement produces a new subjectivity. The subject is no longer about an origin, a universal reference point. This not only opens up subjectivity to the possibility of change but also defines the subject as multiplicitous alterations, as always many movements of pure multiplicity. The rhizomatic subject expands the contingency and potential of the subject as partial object. By embedding pure positive multiplicity into the heart of the molecular subject, the rhizomatic subject is a place where “everything is possible, without exclusiveness or negation” (Ibid., p. 309).

Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of rhizomatic subjectivity as pure multiplicity can be used to think about gender at the molecular level. Most importantly, Deleuze and Guattari’s pure multiplicity refuses a relationship to a universal or a norm. This is a shift

that is not often seen in gender theory, especially work that stems from the writings of Judith Butler who maintains a norm/subject dualism in her work (1990, 1993, 1997). The multiplicity of the rhizome is immanent and central to subjectivity. Gendered subjectivity, thought of as rhizomatic, necessarily refuses the binary of male (the “One”, the universal) and female (the Other, the multiple). Gendered subjectivity as becoming highlights the immanent relationality of the subject, a relationality that does not stem from relations between coherent, distinct points, subjects, or genders. Rhizomatic gender subjectivity expands on this, defining the very immanent relationality of the subject and gender as multiplicitous. Gender becomes a relation of a “thousand tiny sexes” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 213) all in a constant state of flux and movement. Rhizomatically, a subject refuses the dualism of the “One” and the multiple. It can no longer be understood molecularly as *either* male *or* female, as male and female themselves are multiplicitous and fluid, at the same time as not being mutually exclusive from each other, nor the only markers of gender. Gender as rhizome creates a string of unlimited genders, as the very essence of subjectivity is a pure multiplicity. Gender is emphasized as movement, as lines of speed and intensity that are multiple and transformative.

Therefore, Deleuzoguattarian rhizomatic subjectivity, when applied to gender, transforms gender into an acentered, nonsignifying, nonhierarchical system of multiplicities that is in constant movement. This gendered subjectivity is creative, as each time a movement occurs in the rhizome, its gendered nature is transformed. This understanding of gender speaks to my definition of genderqueer as “challenging the reification, mutual exclusion, and determinism of binary gender.” As discussed, rhizomatic multiplicity refuses a pluralism of static unitary subjects in the name of a pure

multiplicity inherent in subjectivity itself. When thought in relation to genderqueer practices, a similar refusal of pluralism can be seen. Instead of attempting to create more gendered subject positions, as seen in the proliferation of identities over the past twenty years²⁵, genderqueer practices refuse the structure of unitary identity and produce multiplicities within individuals. As such, gendered positions are not seen as mutually exclusive but as occurring in the same individual at the same time. Such is the use of the pronoun “they” in this section’s narrative, a pronoun that is commonly used in genderqueer communities, explicitly marking the multiplicity of a subject. In addition, contradictions in these multiplicities do not negate experiences or subjectivities but rather, contribute to the constant transformation of one’s multiplicitous gender as difference is not negative but immanent. There is no universal or “right” gender to compare to as gender is transformed into lines and movements, into those “thousand tiny sexes” Deleuze and Guattari are so intrigued by. Gender as rhizome speaks to genderqueer as it refuses organization and hierarchy and necessitates gender as productive, fluid and multiple. Once again, a Deleuzoguattarian subjectivity applied to gender makes an inherently genderqueer shift towards a realm of possibility, potential, and contingency. Gendered subjectivity as rhizome is a genderqueer subjectivity.

Subjectification and the Molar

Filling out forms. A substantial frustration for experience that doesn't fit into boxes. The form is important, a crucial step in being permitted entrance into the institution, to learn, to share, to write. But at the same time, a bad sign, a clear reflection of the limits of the institution: the question of gender with only two answers, M or F. Momentary digressions fantasizing that M stood for monster, muppet, mashed potato; or F stood for farm boy, flamingo or flamboyant. The reality of the form weighs heavy, with looming erasure of life, followed by a moment of courage and transgression as the question is left unanswered. But courage and transgression are not recognized by the system. Boxes are

²⁵ See Frank and Meyer (2002).

checked without permission, a history of institutional erasure catching up. Lives and experiences are neatly organized into male and female, a favour done by the institutions to keep the personal out of the universal, to keep potential and contingency as mere fantasies.

Throughout this discussion of Deleuzoguattarian molecular subjectivity, I have made mention of the role of the molar or organizational realm. It would be very easy to think of the molecular and molar as an oppositional pair, one being the realm of production, becoming and the rhizome, the other of organization, structure and representation. Such a dualism would be artificial. Stemming from the notion of pure difference, dualistic thought is refused in Deleuzoguattarian ontology and therefore the relationship between molar and molecular must be understood differently. It is not a question of establishing a dualistic opposition between the two, as that would be no better than the dualism of the “One” and the multiple refuted in the above section on the rhizome . Instead, it must be acknowledged that the molar and the molecular both exist everywhere (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 340). In every instance there are aspects that tend towards the molecular (that of desiring-machines and multiplicity) and aspects that tend towards the molar (that of structure and organization). The molar and molecular are not mutually exclusive. Therefore it is important that discussions of molecular subjectivity also engage with the molar.

Building on this understanding of molar and molecular, there is a need to acknowledge that actions within these realms are also co-constitutive. The actions I am referring to are those of deterritorialization and (re)territorialization. According to Deleuze and Guattari, “there is no deterritorialization of the flows of schizophrenic [molecular] desire that is not accompanied by global or local reterritorializations” (Ibid., p. 316). One process cannot occur without the other. In addition, it is territorialization

that constitutes representation, thus deterritorialization requires territorialization to be representable in language. Deterritorialization can only be understood (a process that only occurs in the molar) in relation to its territorial representations (Ibid., p. 316). Moreover, the mutual dependence, or co-constitution of deterritorialization and reterritorialization speaks greatly to the current state of Western capitalist societies. Deleuze and Guattari focus much of their social commentary and analysis on the processes of capitalism. For Deleuze and Guattari, modern capitalist societies are “defined by processes of decoding and deterritorialization. But what they deterritorialize with one hand, they reterritorialize with the other” (Ibid., p. 257). Advanced capitalism illustrates the co-dependency of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, and it is the relation of the latter to subjectivity that are of interest in this section.

Reterritorialization within capitalism takes on a very specific form, that of the *axiomatic*. As a truth that is evident without proof or argument, an axiomatic blocks the lines of escape or deterritorialization that constitute becoming and rhizomatic multiplicity, and subordinates them to structural arborescent systems (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 143). An example of such an axiomatic is the biological “truth” that bodies are either male or female. Both the sexual binary, and the “truths” of scientific inquiry used to make such a claim, are assumed givens in the context of molar capitalist society. The axiomatic refuses the pure multiplicity and contingency of the molecular and enforces a structural order that creates distinct, static and unitary objects that are no longer orientated to potential or contingency. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, an axiomatic “always opposes the revolutionary potential of decoded flows with new limits” (1983: p. 246). In capitalism, axiomatics not only territorialize the molecular, they also

reterritorialize the deterritorializations that attempt to break down molar structures. What this process of reterritorialization or axiomatization produces are structural rules of representation and meaning that are taken as *a priori* and essential. These structures are referred to as strata.

Strata are important in understanding the molar realm and how molecular lines of flight or escape become territorialized. Strata consist of “given forms to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 40). As such, strata can be considered “acts of capture” that take the contingency and multiplicity of the molecular and organize them into groupings, enforcing artificial forms, meanings and distinction between particles and intensities. Strata operate through a *double articulation*, meaning there are two territorializations that occur in the production of strata. The first articulation deducts from unstable particle flows a statistical order of connections and successions that produce forms (Ibid., p. 40). Onto this first articulation of forms, a second articulation occurs which establishes functional, compact, stable structures and “constructs the molar compounds in which these structures are simultaneously actualized” (Ibid., p. 41). Therefore, stratification of the molecular organizes particles into forms and then creates an artificial structural universal that articulates these forms as *a priori*. This false assumption of an *a priori* structuralism comes to appear as monolithic and is referred to by Deleuze and Guattari as the *plane of organization*. This plane conceals the processes of stratification and makes them appear to be essential. Through this assumption of essentialism, the plane of organization is constantly working away at the molecular realm of desiring production, “trying to plug the lines of flight, stop or interrupt the movements

of deterritorialization, weigh them down, restratify them, reconstituting forms and subjects” (Ibid., p. 276). The plane of organization consists of three different forms or strata: the organism, signification and subjectification (Ibid., p. 159). In relation to discussions of molecular subjectivity, of particular interest is the plane of subjectification.

The processes of subjectification are molar territorializations of molecular subjectivity that produce an artificial unitary subject. Stemming from the plane of organization and stratification, subjectification also occurs as a double articulation of subjectivity (Ibid., p. 129). The first articulation produces artificial forms, as it attempts to organize molecular, partial and multiplicitous subjectivity into singular subjects. This leads to a second articulation that creates stable structures of subjectivity, or what can be understood as the universal subject position. The establishment of the universal subject reflects back on the first articulation, turning the pseudo-molar subjectivities into individualizations of the universal subject. Therefore, subjectification not only produces the artificial universal subject as a reference point for molar subjectivity, but it also connects the molecular moments of subjectivity into this molar structure that labels them as individualized articulations of the Universal.

One of the most significant outcomes of the double articulation of subjectification is its induction of lack into the heart of the subject. With the production of the universal subject, a subject that is itself a myth, all other subjects, and subjectivity more generally, come to be compared to this universal. These subjectivities fail to become the universal ideal, creating a relationship of lack between the subject and the universal. This lack occurring at the level of the molar subject gets read back into the molecular subject and the productive, positive nature of molecular subjectivity is erased by a discourse of lack.

Deleuze and Guattari summarize this process: “the partial objects are referred to a totality that can appear only as that which the partial objects lack, and as that which is lacking unto itself while being lacking in them” (1983, p. 306). As such, molar notions of subjectivity arising from lack, from partial objects that are lacking (which is completely contradictory to the productivity and positivity of Deleuzoguattarian partial objects), come to dominate understandings of subjectivity as seen in psychoanalytic thought.

Notions of (re)territorialization, and specifically subjectification are important to think about in relation to gender and genderqueer. So far, my discussion has focused on molecular gender, but based on the co-constitutive nature of the molecular and the molar, it is necessary to include the molar in discussions of gendered subjectivity. In addition, gender is often central to processes of subjectification and the production of artificial unities, and gendered universals greatly impact genderqueer practices and experiences.

Dominant ideals of gender can be understood through the frame of subjectification, especially with regards to the double articulation that produces the universal alongside the individual. The first articulation of subjectification organizes molecular particles into pseudo molar aggregates. For gendered subjectivities, this can be seen through the organization of certain properties of molecular gender which groups together intensities that may be considered similar. An example of which could be grouping of mannerisms into masculine and feminine categories. The second articulation universalizes these tendencies found in the first, creating the gendered subject positions of male and female that are applied back on to the singularities, making them appear to be examples of masculinity or femininity. This looping back makes the binary gender system appear as essential and *a priori*. Based on this process of subjectification, binary

gendered subjectivities must be considered artificial as they are produced through an organization of fluid, multiplicitous and partial objects. This production of molar structures of gender has a significant impact on subjectivities, including genderqueer subjectivities.

The strata of subjectification and binary gender capture the fluidity, contingency and multiplicity of genderqueer practices and experiences. As such, genderqueer experiences are often organized by structural models and axiomatics of binary, static gender, rendering them invisible at the molar level. Molecular gendered subjectivities are captured, blocked or refused in order to maintain the universalism of the dominant system. In addition, as the universal becomes the reference point of representation, genderqueer practices can also be shut down by being understood in relation to the universal without problematizing it. JT LeRoy (2002) recalls a time when a woman “grabbed me by the shoulders and demanded ‘Are you a boy or a girl?’ She was really upset, right in my face over and over ‘*You a boy or a girl?*’” (p. 99). In the molar realm, practices are read in relation to the universal of male and female, such that a subjectivity that has been territorialized as a female may exhibit “masculine characteristics” but they are always understood as a woman “imitating” a man. As seen in the discussion of becoming, molecular subjectivity is not a form of imitation but a creative production. This creativity and productiveness is lost in the molar articulation of gendered subjectivity and erases molecular gender, an understanding of gender that I equate to genderqueer. As such, the processes of subjectification have significant impacts on genderqueer practices and experiences.

Conclusions: Deleuzoguattarian Genderqueer Subjectivities

Deleuze and Guattari present a theory of subjectivity that resonates with experiences of genderqueer in their understandings of subjectivity as residuum, becoming, and rhizome and the molar territorializations of subjectification. This chapter's understanding of molecular gendered subjectivity as genderqueer subjectivity is highly productive. Both Deleuzoguattarian subjectivity and genderqueer constantly challenge the dominant molar systems that attempt to organize them by shutting down their flows and refusing the contingency and potential inherent in both molecular and genderqueer readings of subjectivity. Deleuzoguattarian genderqueer subjectivity transforms gender into molecular gender, into potential, transformation and multiplicity. Gendered subjectivity, as Deleuzoguattarian genderqueer subjectivity, refuses the unitary subject, refuses the artificial universals of man and woman, and becomes a productive, immanently relational, multiplicitous molecular subjectivity.

Chapter 3: Genderqueer as Molecularly Gendered Bodies: The Materiality of Becoming and the Body without Organs

A significant draw of Deleuzoguattarian ontology is its orientation to materiality.

Its theories of subjectivity (as discussed in the previous chapter) are not focused on the realm of signification and representation but rather, embedded in materiality and bodies. This orientation to the materiality of existence has a great influence on definitions of subjectivity and importantly the body. In discussions of gender, bodies play a central role²⁶, and often, through biological determinism²⁷, bodies and materiality are transformed into biological truths and used to support binary, unequal static systems of gender signification. Deleuze and Guattari have a very different understanding of materiality, which is focused on its productive role and its orientation to contingency and potential, while being no less “real.” This differs substantially from a traditional notion of materiality, and specifically bodies, that materiality refers to the physical, to the determinant, static and non-changing objects in the world such as the environment and biologically described bodies that are outside human processes of construction or creation. Materiality in this sense is seen as mutually exclusive to culture, or the social. Deleuzoguattarian materiality does not establish this dualism between materiality and the social. Materiality is not considered static, as that which is beyond production, creation and construction. Rather, materiality is dependent on its fluidity, contingency and potentials for its existence. This chapter will explore these Deleuzoguattarian notions of materiality and bodies in relation to gender and genderqueer, building on the previous

²⁶ Judith Butler’ (1993), and Elizabeth Grosz (1994) are two key texts that have defined positions in debate over bodies within feminist theory, both emphasizing the importance of bodies but in very different ways.

²⁷ Biological determinism according to Richard York and Brett Clark “attempts to naturalize differences between men and women as expressions of ‘essentially biological sex differences’”(2007, p. 9)

chapter's discussion of genderqueer as a form of molecular gendered subjectivity, infusing it with an explicit materiality and embodiment.

Just as molecular subjectivity can be understood as genderqueer subjectivity, this chapter will illustrate how molecular gendered bodies can be understood as genderqueer bodies. Specifically, this chapter is composed of three interrelated discussions: bodies as material becomings, the Body without Organs, and limitations to Deleuzoguattarian bodies. All of these discussions will be centered on issues of gender and genderqueer. It is important to acknowledge that the definitions of bodies discussed in this project are some possible ways of understanding molecular bodies as material becomings, and are not meant to be totalizing or generalizing. I will begin with Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of materiality as a process of becoming and how this relates to bodies.

The Materiality of Organs: Bodies as Becomings

Laying in bed, exhausted but ecstatic. In the here and now, they are wonder-machines, making so much pleasure and joy. Looking at eyes, then them, then back to eyes, a eureka moment. "Your boobs" this mouth mutters "your boobs, they have never seemed feminine. Never thought your boobs had anything to do with your gender, at least not in the sense of male or female." You laugh then pause. They have always been important, so very real, but in relation to what they did, the way they interact with our bodies, the way they affect and are affected by different parts of our bodies. Yes they are breasts, but what they mean is not woman, not female, not mother. They are queer: queer in their relations and queer in their productions.

In beginning my discussion of the body, it is important to explain the Deleuzoguattarian understanding of materiality. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of materiality is very much related to their concept of the univocity of the real. As discussed in the introduction of this project, univocity refers to how all of the real comes from the same essence. This essence for Deleuze and Guattari is desire, or more specifically, desiring-production and is very much real and material (1987, p. 238).

Important to this understanding of materiality as univocality is that it does not allow for artificial divisions at the level of the material, one of the most common of these being between “man” and “nature.” Deleuze and Guattari make no distinction between man and nature, as both the human and the non-human share the essence of production (1983, p. 4). The material in this sense is the *inhuman* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Therefore, when speaking of the materiality of bodies, as this chapter will do, it is crucial to think of bodies in relation to all particles, all materialities that exist, and not simply as human bodies.

In discussing bodies as becomings, there is a need to put aside more dominant notions of bodies as static, bounded flesh in order and think of bodies in relation to a Deleuzoguattarian notion of materiality as production. As Grosz comments:

It is not simply that the body is represented in a variety of ways according to historical, social and cultural exigencies while it remains basically the same; these factors actively produce the body as a body of a determinate type. (1994, p. X)

In this context, Deleuze and Guattari define a body as both the “sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness” and the “sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential” (1987, p. 260). Therefore, Deleuzoguattarian bodies can be understood as having two specific aspects: a materiality of becoming and a potential for affect. Each of these aspects of bodies is essential to understanding the complexity of Deleuzoguattarian molecular bodies. First, I will discuss the materiality of becoming.

In short, becomings are real (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 283). Heavily embedded in the very material processes of production, becomings are inherently *material becomings*. And this materiality as becoming is itself a process, as it is the

becoming that is real not the supposedly fixed categories or terms through which it passes (Ibid., p. 238). For Deleuze and Guattari, bodies must be understood as examples of these material processes of becoming. The materiality of bodies is a molecular property. This connection of bodies to the materiality of desiring-production highlights the fact that the becomings of bodies are not concerned with the realm of signification or representation (Ibid., p. 32). The molar categories of male and female bodies are not material, but artificial territorializations through language and representation. Bodies, at the molecular level, are not produced in relation to the norms of representation, in relation to universal significations, as this would move bodies out of the material realm of molecular production and into the artificial realms of molar signification. Deleuze and Guattari challenge their readers to think molecularly, to think of bodies at the level of “intensities, speed, temperatures, nondecomposable variable distances” (Ibid., p. 32). It is important to remember that these intensities, speeds, etc, are very much real and material and produce a body’s *haecceity*²⁸. The distinctness, the singularity of a body emerges not from its relation to signification but its material processes of becoming. Understood in this way, it is the very materiality of becoming that produces distinct bodies, a multiplicity of bodies that are not only affected differently but also affect the realm of production in different ways.

Affect is integral to Deleuzoguattarian understandings of material bodies as becomings, and to the *haecceity* of such bodies. Contrary to notions of a unitary determinant body, a Deleuzoguattarian focus on affect shifts the discussion of bodies to practice. Discussions of the body at the molecular level are not concerned with “what it

²⁸ Haecceity is the essence that makes something the kind of thing it is and makes it different from any other.

means” (a concept that is stuck in the realm of representation) but rather with “what it can do”, “what its affects are” (Ibid., p. 257). A body is defined in relation to how it is affected and how it affects others. And importantly, affect is not separate from the material becomings of bodies, as affect plays a central role in becoming, and the processes of desiring production more generally. Therefore bodies, and materiality, must be understood as forms of affectual becoming, a material becoming that is immanently relational.

Demonstrated in the previous chapter’s discussion of the subject as becoming, becoming is a relational process. This relationality of becoming must also be applied to the material becomings of bodies. As with subjectivity, relationality does not simply refer to relations between objects or subjects that are considered “human” in the molar realm but rather, includes all the particles of the universe (Ibid., p. 250). Therefore, as mentioned in the introduction to this section, the materiality of the body as becoming cannot be limited to the “human”. The body is not simply about the molar human, but must include the possibility of relation with the entire universe, be it animal, plant, micro-organism or otherwise. This relationality also emphasizes the in-process nature of material bodies that prevents a static or unitary definition of bodies and their materiality. Because bodies are understood as a material process of becoming, they are always, at the molecular level, in process, constantly colliding with new particles and new intensities. In this context, the very materiality of bodies is concerned with relational processes, a shared speed or resonance of particles, an immanently relational becoming. It is this in-process relationality that contributes to the haecceity of specific bodies, not the artificial divisions of plant, animal, etc. If materiality in its essence is univocal, it is the

movements of these particles, the speeds and slowness through which these particles interact that contributes to the distinctness and pure difference of bodies. In short, the body as a material, molecular, relational becoming is a collection of intensities and speeds of particles not limited to the “human”. Because bodies are in-process, productive and relational while still being very much real (if not redefining the real as in-process, productive and relational), they must also be understood as multiplicitous. Bodies as material becomings are open to contingency and possibility and are constantly in a state of transformation stemming from their multiplicitous materiality. And, at the molecular level, this in-process, material, relational and multiplicitous body refuses any sense of organization or structure. Deleuzoguattarian materiality, as an inherently molecular concept that is not concerned with molar categories such as the human or the organism, has significant implications for discussions of the organism.

Such an understanding of materiality and bodies as becomings leads Deleuze and Guattari to be highly critical of the notion of the organism. The organism is the organization of the immanence, relationality, and multiplicity of molecular bodies as becomings into molar categories and axiomatics. The creation of the organism is a form of territorialization that has significant influence on bodies, especially in relation to categories that often rely on the organism as a foundation including gender, race, ability, and age. Instead of the organism, Deleuzoguattarian theory keeps the discussion of bodies focused on the molecular level, on organs instead of organisms. Organs can be understood as molecular machines that connect with other machines or organs. As such, organs can be understood in the context of desiring-production. Deleuze and Guattari define an organ as “exactly what its elements make it according to their relation of

movement and rest [becoming] and the way in which this relation combines with or splits off from that of neighbouring elements [affect]” (Ibid., p. 256). They use the example of the breast as an organ that produces a flow of milk, which is then picked up by another organ, the mouth (1983). Here, the breast and mouth are defined by what they are doing, by the fact that the breast is producing milk, which leads to the mouth consuming it. These are not totalizing definitions of a breast and mouth, but rather one of many temporary definitions based on an organ’s actions. Breasts are milk-producing organs in this example, but, breasts can do many things, as seen in the narrative introducing this section that highlighted the breast as a queer pleasure-producing organ. Organs focus on molecular desiring production and, as such, on affect. Organs as machines are not about Being or meaning, but rather, productions and connections. The body as organs centers on what the organs produce, which is determined by the affects other machines have on an organ and the affects the organ produces in other machines. For Deleuze and Guattari, organs are molecular, productive and affectual machines.

By keeping discussions of bodies at the molecular level of organs, desire continues to flow. This is due to the fact that desire can flow through the body as becoming and the organs as molecular desiring-machines. Desire, according to Deleuzoguattarian ontology, is the material and because desire flows through molecular bodies as becomings and organs, these too must be understood as real and material. The materiality of the body exists at the level of the organs, the level of molecular becomings. Organisms, on the other hand, are molar categories that territorialize the molecular bodies and organs. Organisms block the molecular flows of desire, of materiality itself.

The organism is one of the three great strata (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 159). Strata, as discussed in relation to subjectification, consist of “given forms to matter, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy” (Ibid., p. 40). As such, the organism cannot be considered a material essence, but rather a construction at the molar level. As discussed above, the organism is not material as desire does not flow through it, and therefore, the organism is the enemy of the material body (Ibid., p. 158). As a molar structure of signification and representation, the organism does not equate to the material body, a body that only exists in the molecular realm of production. Not only is the organism not reducible to the material body, it also attempts to stop the flow of bodies and becomings, to organize the multiplicitous, relational and immanent nature of molecular, material bodies. In order to understand this process of territorialization, the double articulation of strata²⁹ must be applied. The organism does not solely organize organs into a certain form (the first articulation), it also creates an artificial universal of the organism (the second articulation) that is understood as *a priori*. This second articulation transforms the first into examples of the universal. The universal produced by the double articulation of the organism is the axiomatic of a total, unitary, discrete body, in particular, a human body that is separate from nature. As will be discussed later in this section, this universal human body is essential in the creation of the artificial categories of male and female. Also, the organism, as an artificial universal, makes the organs appear as the expression of a fragmented, shattered organism, or as signs of a totality that is yet to come (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 326). This is the power of the double articulation, in its ability to

²⁹ As previously discussed in relation to process of subjectification and the production of the artificial universal subject

redefine the particles in the first articulation in relation to the second. This molar organization of the organs into the organism erases the organs' multiplicity, immanence and relationality. The organism refuses the body as a becoming, and in turn removes the materiality from the body. In short, the organism is not material; it is a territorialization of the material molecular body as becoming through organization and structuration.

The Deleuzoguattarian body as a material process of becoming has a number of significant implications for discussions of gender and genderqueer. Of particular interest for this project are the implications of a relational, in-process, multiplicitous and productive understanding of materiality and bodies and the ways in which a focus on organs may be useful for gender theory.

At the heart of the discussion of gender in relation to material becomings of bodies is the refusal of traditional understandings that limit bodies to static, biologically determined, bounded flesh. The molecular body constantly challenges the organization of materiality into human bodies and therefore refuses the foundation of the binary gender system. If, for Deleuze and Guattari, bodies cannot be understood as molar, unitary organisms, then the distinction between male and female (and only male and female) bodies cannot be upheld. Because Deleuzoguattarian ontology moves the understanding of bodies into the realm of desiring-production, bodies cannot be understood as static, and must refuse the territorializations of signification and representation, which include the categories of male and female. Part of the challenge to traditional notions of bodies put forth by the concept of the body as material becoming is its relationality. By highlighting the necessity of relation to processes of becoming, and mandating that these relations include all particles in the universe, the Deleuzoguattarian body as becoming

expands bodies beyond the limitations of the human. This expands the potential and contingency of bodies. In relation to gender, the body as relational expands gender beyond the artificial limits of the organism to include other particles and movements. As such, molecular gendered bodies cannot be reduced to primary or secondary sex characteristics³⁰ but must include other particles in their environment including geography, climate etc. This can be seen in the narrative in the previous chapter that spoke to the affect of the prairie in relation to genderqueer subjectivity, and can be expanded to include the role of geography in the production of genderqueer bodies. Specific to the body, the prairie skies become one of the machines or organs that contribute to the gendered becomings of the narrator. Gender expands as the body expands in the realm of the molecular.

The body as a material becoming also greatly challenges dominant binary readings of gendered bodies through its multiplicitous nature. Not only are gendered bodies relational, they are also multiplicitous in that each body contains a “thousand tiny sexes” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 213). The gendered nature of a molecular body cannot be reduced to *a* gender, but is itself a collection of many different gendered particles that are in contact with each other. It is not a matter of either/or, but rather both/and as bodies consist of many intensities and singularities of gender. This multiplicity of the body helps to break down the oppositional structure of normative gender (logic that limits bodies to a dualism): male or female, penis or vagina. Genderqueer bodies as multiplicitous material becomings can be both male and female,

³⁰ In common discourses of sex, primary sex characteristics refer to the sex organs that are directly involved in copulation and reproduction, such as the penis and uterus, while a sex characteristics are subsidiary physical features that serve as indices of masculine and feminine but are not explicitly tied to reproduction, such as pubic hair (Ausubel, 2002).

or male with a vagina, or female with a penis, not to mention a proliferation of simultaneously multi-gendered bodies that have little to do with the dominant system but resonate complexity, multiplicity and potential. Such is seen in this section's narrative, where the organs of a genderqueer body create a certain relation, specifically a relation with breasts, where the gendered nature of the breast is not related to a notion of the feminine but to that of "queer" as a gendered bodily relation. The gendered body, as a material becoming, is focused not on organization or opposition but on involution, on creation and complexity.

Crucial in this discussion of Deleuzoguattarian bodies as material becomings and gender is the fact that becomings must be considered real, not as a form of imitation or representation. Molecular bodies, in all their relational and multiplicitous glory, in their processes of production and involution, are real and material. This understanding of bodies means that genderqueer practices cannot be considered imitations of the molar categories of male and female. Molecular, material genderqueer bodies are not concerned with notions of drag, often used in discussions of gender variance³¹. As Nigianni and Storr highlight, there is a tendency for gender variant bodies to be considered "a solely reactive force of re-signification, mockery, disrespect to the dominance of heterosexuality" (2009, p. 4). Genderqueer bodies as molecular materialities cannot be understood as imitations of the male or female but rather as productive, creative practices. This refusal of a focus on the molar categories of male and female is an explicit

³¹ One such article is *Walk Like a Man: Enactments and Embodiments of Masculinity and Potential for Multiple Genders* (2002) by Sheila "Dragon Fly" Koegnig. Koegnig's article focuses on the subversiveness of "failing" in the practice of drag. As such, drag is seen as not attempting to escape gender, but instead as being "immersed in gender" and as the "hyperbolic enactment of gender, aimed at exploding boundaries surrounding gender norms by highlighting their absurdity" (Koegnig, 2002, p. 149). By focusing on the process of cross-dressing, Koegnig maintains, to a large extent, the binary system of male and female. Drag is seen as men dressed as women, or women dressed as men.

challenge to the dominance of the systems of stratification, and highlights the importance of affect in relation to bodies as becomings. The discussion of genderqueer bodies as material becomings must be focused on practice, on what these bodies do, on how they are affected and how they affect others. Molecular gendered bodies are therefore about relation, multiplicity, immanence and affect, not Being, meaning or classification.

Based on this Deleuzoguattarian reading of gendered bodies as material becomings, it can be argued that molecular gendered bodies, in my words genderqueer bodies, must be understood as a refusal and deterritorialization of the artificial universals of the organism, and specifically binary gendered organisms. Genderqueer bodies refuse the dominance of structure and organisms, instead focusing on organs. As suggested by the narrative introducing this section, organs such as breasts can refuse the representations associated with molar understandings of gendered bodies. Breasts in the realm of molecularity or genderqueer can be understood in relation to what they do, not as a part of a whole but rather as immanent, relational and multiplicitous in and of themselves. The question is not how these breasts fit in relation to the false universal of the organism, not how they convey meaning upon this organism in relation to dominant gender, but rather how they, as organs, are affected and how they affect other organs and machines. The breasts are defined by the pleasure that they produce in another body, by the way they produce an affect through their relation with other organs be they hands, eyes or otherwise. The breasts are not defined by the other organs that may be present, but rather by the ways they interact, are affected or affect them. As such, a body can have both breasts and a vagina without being considered female, as their definition is based on how they interact, how they affect each other, not by the fact they may be in proximity.

Genderqueer bodies can be understood as an instance of molecular gendered bodies, and more specifically, molecular bodies as material becomings.

The Body without Organs: General and Specific Uses

Making gender. Making bodies that feel right, comfortable, at least at this moment. So much to break down, so many layers of rules and assumptions. Not female, with a vagina. Not male, with a penis some days. Not female, with long hair and eyelashes that hit the lenses of sunglasses. Not male, with defined biceps, a wide stance and no breasts. Not female, with a narrow waste and wide hips. Not male with broad shoulders and stalky legs. These legs, hips, arms, and eyes are not male or female. The connections between them do not create a man or a woman; they break the rules. They are nothing without their movement. The way long hair brushes against broad shoulders; the way wide hips make room for stalky legs. All of this is movement and transformation of gender. It is unorganized, messy, all over the map and even off the map. A gendered materiality.

Building on the discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of organs and their rejection of the organism, this project is focused on molecular, immanent, relational bodies. A useful way of understanding these bodies is through the Deleuzoguattarian concept of the Body without Organs (BwO). Tackling this concept is no easy task as it is one of the most complex and unstable ideas within *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). Within the Deleuzoguattarian conceptualization of the BwO there are two key forms or uses of the BwO: the general or full BwO and the specific or singular BwO, both of which are important to discussions of gender and genderqueer. Both are necessary in order to develop a rigorous, in-depth understanding of molecularity, bodies and gender. I will begin with the more general sense of BwO.

The general or full BwO is a concept that runs throughout Deleuze and Guattari's work and is important not only for discussions of subjectivity and bodies, but more generally as an ontological foundation. Deleuze and Guattari define the full BwO as "the

ultimate residuum of a decentred socius³²” (1983, p. 33). The BwO refuses all organization, stratification and territorialization associated with the molar or socius. For Deleuze and Guattari, the BwO is the molecular limit of the molar, what is produced through deterritorialization, the non-specific and non-specified materiality of the molecular (1983, p. 328). It is “what remains when you take everything away” (1987, p. 151) specifically phantasy, signification and subjectification. What is left behind is the BwO: pure materiality, the essence of existence, “nothing but bands of intensity, potentials, thresholds and gradients” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 19).

This generalized BwO, as non-specific and non-specified materiality, is often understood in relation to, and at times is synonymous with, the *plane of consistency*. Deleuze and Guattari define this plane, and therefore the full BwO as the “unformed, unorganized, nonstratified or destratified body and all its flows” (1987, p. 43). This notion is ontologically significant in Deleuzoguattarian theory as it is explicitly linked to the univocity of the real. The plane of consistency is the common essence of existence, the essence of the real. The unformed, unorganized and nonstratified body or materiality highlights the fact that existence is not inherently structured, organized nor representative. The plane of consistency, also known as the full BwO, is the “abolition of all metaphor, all is Real” (Ibid., p. 69). In discussions of ontology and the molecular, the general BwO highlights that the real “knows nothing of the differences in level, orders of magnitude or distances” (Ibid., p. 69). On the plane of consistency there exists no negative, relational difference, only pure difference³³. The plane of consistency actively

³² Deleuze and Guattari use the term socius to refer to the molar organization of molecular phenomena into a notion of a society (1983).

³³ As discussed previously, pure difference refuses dualistic thought, allowing for the difference of a thing to be based strictly on its singularity not in relation to molar, static categories or points.

refuses the establishment of negative difference through constant deterritorialization. Therefore, the plane of consistency, or full BwO, is the absolute line of flight or escape, the absolute deterritorialization (Ibid., p. 55). The BwO as plane of consistency is the breakdown of the strata in the name of the molecular flows of desire.

Such an understanding of the full BwO as the ultimate in molecularity and desiring-production leads Deleuze and Guattari to define the full BwO as the *field of immanence of desire*. This field of immanence is a “continuum of all substances of intensity and all intensities of substance” (Ibid., p. 154). The field of immanence of desire is the molecular. It is made up of both the intensities³⁴ that have been freed by deterritorialization (substance of intensity) and of the intensities that have been captured or overcoded by the molar (intensities of substance). As the realm of molecular intensities, captured and flowing, the field is a pure multiplicity of desire. The multiplicities of the field of immanence, or the full BwO, are made up of immanent material haecceities, the total sum of molecular reality. While the BwO is made up of all of the singularities, all the haecceities, all the intensities in the cosmos, it is still a plane of consistency as all of these intensities share the essence of multiplicity, relationality, and immanence. It is these shared essences that define the univocity of the real. The term BwO is used in this context to highlight how the plane of consistency shares an understanding of materiality as molecular and to emphasize the refusal of organization that is part of materiality. If anything, the full BwO is the absolute version of becoming, the absolute limit of molecular materiality to which becomings are oriented. As such, the field of immanence that constitutes the plane of consistency of the general BwO can also

³⁴ Intensities are best defined by what they do or how they work, as waves and vibrations, migrations, thresholds and gradients that affect, augment or diminish the power of a particular instance of becoming to act and to be affected (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 256).

be understood as the sum of all the specific BwOs, each understood as a unique haecceity or becoming. It is these specific BwOs that I will now explore.

Emerging from understandings of the full BwO or plane of consistency, the specific or singular BwO maintains many of the same attributes of the more generalized conceptualizations including a focus on intensities and immanence. In addition, a specific reading of BwOs allows for a more tangible discussion of bodies, and in particular, gendered bodies. A specific BwO, is all of the potentials, connections, affects, and movements of a specific body or haecceity. This specific BwO has an explicit connection to the previous section's discussion of organs and the organism, as the BwO, along with the organs, opposes the organization of the organism (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 326). In other words, the specific BwO can be understood as a collection of organs that refuses the territorialization of the organism. Important here, a dualism cannot be set up between the specific BwO and the organs. Instead, the organs (often discussed or described as partial objects in relation to the BwO³⁵) and the BwO are one and the same thing. Deleuze and Guattari explain this as "the partial objects [organs] are the direct powers of the BwO, and the BwOs, the raw material of the partial objects [organs]" (Ibid., p. 326). This relationship can also be explained in relation to intensities, in that the BwO can be described as matter that always fills a space to a given degree, while the organs are these specific degrees (Ibid., p. 326). As such, a BwO can be understood as the potential for bodily haecceities and intensities, while the organs are the specific instances of such intensities. Therefore, the organs are the haecceities of the specific BwO.

³⁵ Partial objects refer to productions of desire that are not part of a predetermined whole, but instead are total in and of themselves. The partial object refuses the possibility of a universal totality, transforming the very notion of totality into a singular, immanent concept. In relation to organs, this refusal is of the organism, and makes organs total in and of themselves, and defined in relation to affect.

The fact that the BwO and the organs are not opposing or in a negative relation of difference, but rather are general and specific understandings of the same molecular materiality or phenomena, is important to how the BwO is defined. Most specifically, the singular BwO cannot be understood as an empty body stripped of its organs. In this sense, the “Body without Organs” is a misnomer, as the body does not lack organs but rather the organism and its molar structures and territorializations. The BwO is a body in which organs are distributed in the form of molecular multiplicities. The organs of the BwO are rhizomatic.³⁶ The organs are connected on the BwO, but these connections are unstructured, non-hierarchical and open to contingency and potential. Also, a rhizomatic understanding of organs in relation to the BwO necessitates a focus on movement, as points in a rhizome are actually lines of movement (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 8). It is this productive rhizomatic relation of organs that refuses the notion of the BwO as a dead or empty body. Rather, the BwO is understood as a living body “all the more alive and teeming once it has blown apart the organism and its organization” (Ibid., p. 30). The specific BwO presents a way to explore the breaking down of the organism and the outcomes of such breakdowns, all the while refusing the artificial equation of the material with the organism. This is incredibly useful in thinking about the deterritorialization of dominant gender binaries and the possible outcomes of such a process, including what the molecular, genderqueer BwO might look and act like.

Important to this discussion of the specific BwO is the fact that it is not an inherent, *a priori* body, but a body that must be made through a process of

³⁶ As discussed in chapter two, a rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system of circulating states (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 21). Any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other, and necessarily must be (Ibid., p.7). As such, connection is not created through universal rules or pre-defined relationships but is based in contingency and potential.

deterritorialization (Ibid., p 149). It is a body that is never fully made because it is not a concept or an object but a practice, a process of becoming through deterritorialization that one is forever attaining but never fully achieving. Like the general BwO, the specific BwO is a limit. The constant attempt to make the BwO is inherently material and is a process Deleuze and Guattari equate to the production of the real (Ibid., p. 153). The process of making the specific BwO, according to Deleuze and Guattari, has two phases: the first being the fabrication of the BwO and the second being making intensities circulate on the BwO or pass across it (Ibid., p. 152). The first step produces a body that can be occupied by only intensities, through a process of breaking down the organism (the molar) and freeing the flows of desire (the intensities). Deleuze and Guattari are very specific about the process of making a singular BwO:

This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of light, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO. (Ibid., p. 161)

This process can be thought of in relation to this section's narrative and its refusal of molar categories such as male and female while still acknowledging the gendered organs that are involved in bodily existence, such as wide hips and long eyelashes. As such, the narrative does not refuse its relation to the strata, but attempts to create lines of flight, relations of organs and affects that challenge such an organization of life. In creating a genderqueer body as a specific BwO, there must be an engagement with the strata while a simultaneous break down of it. In this way, the making of a BwO has an inherent

relationship with the strata or the organism as it is built through a constant deterritorialization of structures, through a constant process of breaking down. Here, as seen in the subject as residuum, breakdown can be considered productive.

Through their two-step definition of the process of making a BwO, Deleuze and Guattari set up two types of questions that must be asked in relation to the specific BwO. The first is a question of type: “What type is it, how is it fabricated, by what procedures and means” (Ibid., p. 152). The answers to these questions are important and have implications for the next set of question, as the modes of production and types of BwO will predetermine which intensities (if any) will come to pass. The second set of questions, therefore, pertain to these intensities: “What are its [BwO’s] modes, what comes to pass, and with what variants and what surprises, what is unexpected and what expected?” (Ibid., p. 152). These questions help with understanding the specific BwO as they highlight the defining aspects of a BwO. The question of modes of production highlights that the specific BwO is a process. The question of what comes to pass shows that the BwO exists at the level of flows and intensities. And finally, the question of the variants, the surprises and the unexpected of the BwO, highlights the contingency and potential that is inherent to the BwO. These questions therefore help to define the specific BwO as in-process, molecular, productive and contingent.

These questions of Deleuze and Guattari’s concerning specific BwOs can be applied explicitly to discussions of bodies as the BwO is itself a molecular body. Importantly, the BwO as a process and a limit highlights the importance of affect. The question of how BwOs are made can be understood as what affects them, their capacity to be affected, and the question of what comes to pass on a BwO emphasizes their ability to

affect others. This discussion, embedded in affect, can be useful for a tangible discussion of the molecular body in relation to gender and genderqueer, as will the more general discussion concerning the full and specific BwOs.

Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the BwO has significant applications for discussions of gender and genderqueer. Both the full BwO (the plane of consistency), and the specific BwO (haecceities) can be used to discuss molecular gendered bodies, what I define as genderqueer bodies. I will begin with the general BwO and gender, and then move to a more detailed and tangible discussion of the specific BwO and gender.

Most significantly the general BwO helps in changing and challenging the dominant understandings of materiality. As an example of the univocality of the real, the full BwO highlights that materiality is fundamentally a nonstructured, nonorganized phenomena. As such, discussions of the material must be understood as discussions of the molecular. In discussions of gender, the material aspects of gender are not the categories of male and female, the discourses of the human organism as a distinct and determinate body, but rather, concern the relationality, multiplicity and immanence of flows and intensities. It may seem difficult here to understand how a molecular body can be gendered, especially if using dominant notions of gender as a social construction. What is necessary is to shift to a concept of gender that includes the material in a not just a limiting, but also enabling way. Therefore, a call for material theory often seen in feminist work³⁷ must be understood as a call to the molecular, the unconscious, the undifferentiated. A material theory of the body, if understood in a Deleuzoguattarian sense, would not be a theory concerned with representation, signification nor

³⁷ This focus on embodiment and materiality is shown across feminist works including those of Judith Butler (1993), Rosi Braidotti (2002), and Elizabeth Grosz (1994) and will be discussed in-depth in the final chapter on gender politics.

subjectification, but rather with the gendered flows of molecular bodies, flows I define as genderqueer. The general BwO allows for such a shift in the understanding of material theory.

With regards to the specific or singular BwO, there are a number of significant applications that can be made in the realm of gender. If a gendered body is thought of as a BwO, gender must be understood as something that must be made, that is, at the same time, a limit that cannot be reached. Gender as in-process and a limit sounds very similar to Judith Butler's understanding of performativity and her definition of gender norms as limits or ideals (1992, 1993), but there is at least one crucial distinction between the work of Butler and Deleuze and Guattari. Butler's theory examines the realm of signification (in Deleuzoguattarian terms the molar) while the gendered body as in-process and a limit for Deleuze and Guattari is focused on the molecular and its materiality. While I will not go in-depth with regards to Butler's work in relation to Deleuze and Guattari here, I will discuss it more fully in the final chapter. What is important to gasp at this moment is that the gendered body as a specific BwO focuses molecular gender on practices, on productions and on the fact that gender is never complete, always in motion.

Thinking about molecular gendered bodies as specific BwOs, bodies I have defined as genderqueer allows for Deleuze and Guattari's key questions in relation to BwOs to be used as tools for discussing and exploring gender. Their two questions translate into the following: First, how is a specific gendered body produced? Through what deterritorializations, breakdowns, and lines of flight does this occur? Second, what intensities come to pass on such a gendered BwO? What do such flows produce, enable, and refuse? These questions focus the discussion of gender on affect and the productions

of certain bodies with certain affects. It refuses the common focus on the representation of gendered bodies, as biological categories of gendered being: male and female. This can be thought in relation to the narrative at the beginning of the section, in which gender cannot be considered a certain coherent relation that produces either a female or a male-bodied individual. Long hair does not equate to a female body but rather is defined in its relation to broad shoulders, how it affects the shoulders and the shoulders affect it. Certain organs, through the deterritorialization of molar categories and organisms, do not equate to only one gender, let alone one of the genders in the binary of female and male.

In addition, the specific BwO helps to understand relations between organs in a gendered body without necessitating the organization of the organism. The gendered BwO, as an understanding of gendered matter that has the potential for any number of intensities and relations, does not organize the organs (here understood as gendered degrees of intensity) but rather is the raw matter from which they are produced. The gendered body as a BwO necessitates understanding the body and the organs as one and the same. The gendered BwO is not the assumption of a larger totality, but is itself the pure multiplicity of potential that can be made over and over again, producing different intensities and allowing different connections between different organs. There is no assumption that a certain body will produce a certain organ or have a pre-determined relationship to or between different organs. Therefore, at the molecular level of genderqueer bodies as specific BwOs, a “feminine” body has no necessary relationships with breasts, ovaries, a clitoris, or a uterus. There is no pre-assigned organization that determines what organs a feminine BwO will produce, or how those organs will be connected, unlike the female organism. The gendered body as a BwO, a body I define as

a genderqueer, is open to potential while at the same time breaking down the molar categories of male and female.

Finally, the understanding of gendered bodies as BwO opens up discussions of gender to potential, to production, to creation, rather than representation and replication. Deleuze and Guattari explicitly focus on the variants, surprises, and the unexpected productions of specific BwOs, emphasizing their orientation to contingencies and potentials, all of which are very much real. In such an instance, gendered bodies become affirmative³⁸ in the sense that they do not claim to represent some previous, *a priori* truths but rather, are events in themselves, producing themselves and subsequently leading to new productions flowing from them. Molecular gendered bodies are therefore not responsible to, nor compared to, a previously established binary but have the potential to produce new gendered affects. This process of production and involution also aids in the breakdown of molar categories by refusing a coherent structural organization of organs. This is a very genderqueer understanding of bodies. Often genderqueer practices not only produce gendered bodies that are new, they also call into question the established molar categories and axiomatics that are applied to bodies. As seen in the narrative concerning a genderqueer relation to breasts as not inherently indicative of molar woman, not only is a new form of body produced by a different affect of the breast, but a challenge is put forth to molar structures that would necessitate that breasts indicate an *a priori* female body, and must exist alongside other markers of the such a body

³⁸ “A thought is active or affirmative if it avows its status as creative and if it realizes itself as the formation of concepts and as an event of life. A thought is reactive, however, if it pretends to be the mere adherence, representation, replication or faithful copy of some prior truth or meaning.” (Colebrook, 2000, p. 8)

including a vagina and uterus. This explains why my definition of genderqueer explicitly states that genderqueer practices include a challenge to the reification, mutual exclusion and determinism of the binary concepts of gender. The deterritorializing BwO, the gendered BwO, is in many ways a genderqueer body.

Limitations of the Deleuzoguattarian Bodies: A Cautionary Tale

From bodies to Female. From bodies to Woman. From a collection of things, complexities and experiences to Female, to Woman. The organs, their flows of mucus, blood and tears halt with the heavy hand of Woman, Female. Sitting on a gurney, in a white room, waiting for authoritative voices to diagnose, treat, cure; a process of roping these bodies in, roping them in to the Female, the Feminine, the role of Woman, and all the expectations that go along with it. These bodies become an example, a representation of all the females before it, and all the females yet to come. Hysterical female: crazy, unhealthy, unclean. Not a new blockage, nor is it a permanent one. Fleeing the room, the ropes of medical files and histories breaking from the intense pressure of the flows of bodies, flows that break through the blockage of female, and once again produce, expand, multiply and create.

Deleuzoguattarian discussions of bodies as material becomings, as specific BwOs, present a molecular understanding of gendered bodies that highlights the relationality, multiplicity, and potential of bodies. The Deleuzoguattarian body, a body I have defined as a BwO and in the context of gender, a genderqueer BwO, focuses on the molecular, on the deterritorialized flows of intensity and speed. These discussions focus on the molecular realm in which anything is possible, where all bodies and all genders can be produced, and require a supplementary discussion of bodies and the molar. As discussed in the previous chapter concerning Deleuzoguattarian subjectivity, the molecular and molar realms cannot be considered mutually exclusive. Specifically, in relation to bodies, an oppositional distinction cannot be made between the great strata of the organism (molar) and the plane of consistency of the BwO (molecular). Rather, the strata of the organism must be considered a “spinoff” of the plane of consistency (Deleuze and

Guattari, 1987, p. 70). The molar categories and organization of bodies can be understood as a “thickening” of the BwO or Plane of consistency in that the speeds and intensities of molecular bodies as becomings are slowed down to the point that they appear to be static. This slowness, this artificial stasis is susceptible to the double articulation of the organism. In the molar, bodies are seen as a certain list of static characteristics that constitute a whole, a unity of an organism. What must be remembered is that the molar category of the organism and the plane of consistency are not mutually exclusive. It is not a relation of an either/or relation but rather both/and. Underneath the organization of the organism, there remains the BwO, the plane of consistency, as they are always primary and immanent (Ibid., p. 70). Therefore, the plane of consistency (BwO, materiality, organs, bodies as becomings) and the plane of organization (organisms, strata, bodies as *a priori* universals) must be explored in relation to each other. In particular, in the context of this chapter that tends to emphasize the plane of consistency, it is necessary to acknowledge that there is always a potential for territorializations, for the production of strata and, in particular, the organism. Deleuze and Guattari describe these territorializations of molecular, material bodies into organisms succinctly: “You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body” (Ibid., p. 159). It is not enough to speak of the deterritorializations and lines of flight of the BwO but it is also necessary to discuss how there is always a chance of territorializations of bodies and organs. Neither the molar (the organism) not the molecular (the becomings, the BwO) can be studied in isolation. Therefore, I will now discuss the territorialization of bodies and the production of the organism through the Deleuzoguattarian concept of *incorporeal transformations*.

Incorporeal transformations refer to the actions of territorialization that take molecular, fluid bodies as becomings and BwOs and transform them into static, molar, and artificially universal categories of representation. These transformations are very different than the molecular transformations of becomings that are rooted in affect. In relation to bodies, Deleuze and Guattari make the distinction between molecular becomings of bodies through affect and incorporeal transformations very clear: “We must however, distinguish between the actions and passions affecting those bodies, and acts, which are only noncorporeal attributes or the “expressed” of a statement” (Ibid., p. 80). The actions of incorporeal transformations do not concern molecular affect but rather “expression,” a concept tied to signification and representation. This shift to an expression of a body through characteristics such as male, female, white, black etc., is explicitly linked to the double articulation of the organism (discussed in section one of this chapter), and its production of the assumption of an *a priori* universal. This production of a universal allows the incorporeal transformation to assume there is a body with fixed characteristics that exists previous to the expression. The incorporeal transformation is assumed to be expressing a universal characteristic of a universal organism. However, the expression of a static characteristic of a body is artificial and does not concern the material body, a body which must be understood molecularly. The difference between bodily singularities at the level of the molecular and molar incorporeal transformations is made clear by Deleuze and Guattari in that they are not denying that “bodies have an age, they mature and grow old; but majority, retirement, any given age category, are incorporeal transformations that are immediately attributed to bodies in particular societies”(Ibid., p. 81). In this sense, incorporeal transformations

organize bodies and shift the discussion away from affect to what certain bodies and characteristics mean in societal (molar) contexts. This is not to say that the molar categories produced through incorporeal transformations do not impact bodies and subjectivities, but rather to highlight that the molar categories of incorporeal transformation are extremely limited and fail to engage with the molecular materiality of bodies. Through incorporeal transformations, bodies are made male or female, old or young, coloured or white, and with these distinctions comes not only the assumption of universal *a priori* bodies, but also social consequences for those bodies that are categorized as “Other” or do not fit into the categories at all.

With regards to bodies, and in particular molecular bodies as specific BwOs, there are a number of limitations that must be discussed. Stemming from a refusal of dualistic oppositions between molecular and molar, between BwOs and organisms, the limitations of the production of a specific BwO must be discussed. Deleuze and Guattari are very specific about this production and the caution that must be involved: “you don’t do it with a sledgehammer, you use a very fine file” (Ibid., p. 160). Therefore, the deterritorialization of the organism is a cautious process, not a blind destruction of the organism and the body. It is not at all a process of killing the body, but rather an “opening up the body to connections” (Ibid., p. 160). The production of a BwO does not concern the complete destruction of the body, but rather, the production of a plane of consistency through the deterritorialization of the organism and its plane of organization. As discussed previously, the BwO is not in opposition to the organs but rather the organization of the organism, and as such, deterritorialization must not proceed by the removal of the organs but rather by the breakdown of their molar organization. As

Deleuze and Guattari argue: “you don’t reach the BwO, and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying. That is why we encounter the paradox of those emptied and dreary bodies” (Ibid., p. 161). Examples of such bodies used by Deleuze and Guattari are those of the anorexic and the drug addict, bodies that have emptied themselves of their organs rather than “looking for the point at which they could patiently and momentarily dismantle the organization of the organs we call the organism” (Ibid., p. 161). Therefore, caution must be used in the making of a BwO, as it is completely possible to fail in such a pursuit. In actuality, one can fail twice: once in the production of the BwO (the deterritorializing and breaking down the molar categories such as male and female) and again in the attempt to get intensities to flow on the BwO (the making of connections between organs that allow for the production and modification of flows of molecular gender). Cautious deterritorializations are one way to help prevent such failures.

Equally important with respect to bodies as BwOs is the necessity of recognizing that there are times, places and situations in which the organization of the organism may be of benefit to a body. Practically, there can never be a full rejection of the organism, especially in the context of societies that demand certain things from bodies in order for their survival, such as advanced capitalism³⁹. Deleuze and Guattari adamantly refuse an oppositional, all or nothing approach to the BwO:

you have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of signifi-ance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality. (1987, p. 160)

³⁹ This is illustrated well by Michel Foucault in his discussions of biopower and how bodies are governed in modern states (1987).

Therefore, there are moments and situations in which the molar realm and its territorial productions of organisms, signifiante, and subjects cannot be refused. Specific to the body, the organism, with its coherent, predetermined organization of organs, may be necessary at times when the dominant socius calls on certain bodies. Molecular, fluid bodies threaten the dominant molar system, putting these bodies in danger, and at such times, the organism may be necessary for survival. Viviane Namaste illustrates this through her discussion of “genderbashing” which is a term she has developed to highlight how much of the violence against sexual minorities, violence she argues is on the rise, is “fundamentally concerned with policing gender presentation” (2000, p. 136). As such, gendered bodies that do not fit into the dominant categories of male and female are at significant risk of violence, and even death. This discussion has significant implications for how Deleuze and Guattari discuss politics (a discussion at the heart of the next chapter) along with this chapter’s discussion of genderqueer bodies.

With respect to the territorialization of molecular bodies as becomings into static categories through incorporeal transformations, gender can be considered a significant form of transformation in western, capitalist societies⁴⁰. The categories of men and women are produced in relation to the artificial universal of the human body. The singularity and multiplicity of molecularly gendered bodies of becoming is shut down in the name of representational categories. This process of incorporeal transformation of gendered bodies occurs in many different ways, many of which significantly impact genderqueer bodies. One such way, often discussed in the literature⁴¹, is through the

⁴⁰ See Braidotti (2002), Grosz (1994).

⁴¹ See Namaste (2000)

medicalization of bodies. Discourses of the organism and specifically, the scientific axiomatic of biology, organize genderqueer bodies into distinct categories based on an assumed *a priori* relationship not only between organs but also between organs and organisms. These incorporeal transformations have only two accepted forms: male and female. Any body that does not fit such an organization is considered defective, or deviant, and must be “cured”, be it physically as seen with intersex bodies⁴² or mentally as seen in Gender Identity Disorder diagnosis and the emphasis on “full transition” for transsexual bodies⁴³. The multiplicity of fluid, molecular bodies is transformed into noncorporeal categories of male and female, and any aspect that does not fit these organizations of organisms are either erased (through the limitations of institutional and linguistic categories) or physically altered (surgical “interventions” in trans and intersex individuals⁴⁴). Therefore, the strata of the organism and significance still impacts genderqueer bodies as they are territorialized through incorporeal transformations such as medicalization.

The genderqueer body as a specific BwO is not without gender, nor is it the refusal of gender (as feared by the likes of Braidotti⁴⁵) but rather, it is the refusal of static, binary, *a priori* categories of gendered bodies (sexes). In genderqueer, gender is not done away with, but rather made multiple, fluid and always infused with potentials for new productions. The production of a genderqueer body requires a gradual and cautious

⁴² See Daly (2007)

⁴³ See American Psychiatric Association. (2000).

⁴⁴ Here, I am not equating the experiences of trans and intersexed individuals, but rather, highlighting two ways in which physical alterations of bodies are used to maintain the binary nature of the gendered body and static definitions of each of these categories within the binary.

⁴⁵ “Philosophical nomadism seems to be functioning like a magnet that attracts a relatively broad range of queer, perverse, in-between positions which coalesce around the project of destroying, overcoming or abolishing the gender system” (Braidotti, 2002, p. 103).

process that recognizes that there will be contexts where the organism and its categories of male and female, may be of use to the body. In relation to genderqueer, this resonates with discussions of passing, of being able to be read as male or female for reasons of safety. It is this caution and refusal of mutual exclusion between genderqueer BwOs and dominant categories of male and female that must be kept in mind while making and using a genderqueer body. Discussions of bodies, while exciting when focused on the creative potential of the molecular, must also engage with discussions of the molar, and the limitations and precautions such discussions produce.

Conclusions: Deleuzoguattarian Genderqueer Bodies

The Deleuzoguattarian body is an in-process material becoming, an unorganized and unstructured BwO, while at the same time constantly engaging with territorializations and incorporeal transformations. Like the Deleuzoguattarian subject, the body is fluid, in-process, relational, immanent and multiplicitous. It is open to contingency and potential, and as such, is an incredibly useful way to think about gender and especially genderqueer. In this chapter I have explored the genderqueer body as both a material becoming and as a specific BwO, showing how Deleuzoguattarian notions of the molecular as material can be used to open up discussions, theoretical and otherwise, of gender to ideas beyond binary, biologically embedded gender and sex. This is the engagement of gender with the truly material, with the unorganized flows and productions of molecular gendered bodies; bodies I have argued are genderqueer bodies. Outside of the strata of the organism, stratification and subjectification, gender becomes focused on creation, involution and potential. Gender does not disappear but opens up; bodies and subjectivities open up to transformation. At the same time, I have highlighted

the limitations of a solely molecular understanding of gender, specifically how the molar can, rather violently, territorialize molecular bodies, genders, and subjectivities. These discussions of production, territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization are inherently political.

Chapter 4: Genderqueer as Minoritarian Politics: Infusing Potential and Involution into Gender Politics

Deleuze and Guattari set out a very clear, if abstract, understanding of politics in both *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). Throughout their texts runs a form of politics that emphasizes the political potentials of molecular subjectivities and bodies, while not ignoring molar states and power centers. Molecular politics for Deleuze and Guattari can be understood as *minoritarian politics*: the politics of desire and becoming that emphasize involution, creativity and production. This is the realm of politics that I find missing in the current literature concerned with gender politics, and subsequently, the form of politics I wish to elaborate as genderqueer politics. Before delving into a discussion of Deleuzoguattarian minoritarian politics and how they relate to the subjectivities and bodies discussed in the previous two chapters, I want to first discuss the context of such politics. Deleuze and Guattari are writing specifically in the context of capitalism and, as such, their politics are meant to operate in such a context. Therefore, I will begin by explaining a Deleuzoguattarian understanding of capitalism.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the most characteristic and important tendency of capitalism is its tendency towards the decoding of flows and the deterritorialization of the *socius*⁴⁶ (1983, p. 34). As such, a Deleuzoguattarian understanding of capitalism recognizes its tendency towards the BwO, the unorganized, unstructured plane of consistency. The processes of capitalism constantly deterritorialize their own social structures; constantly break down the assumed rules or truths of society. However, the capitalist processes of decoding and deterritorializing do not occur on their own, but are

⁴⁶ Deleuze and Guattari use the term *socius* to refer to the molar organization of molecular phenomena into a notion of a society (1983).

part of a “two-fold movement of decoding and deterritorializing flows on the one hand, and their violent and artificial reterritorialization on the other” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 34). This violent and artificial reterritorialization occurs through the production of axiomatics; truths that do not have to be proven to be considered true (as seen in chapter two’s discussion of subjectivities). These axiomatics, such as biology or more specifically human anatomy, cover over the contingencies of capitalism’s constant deterritorializations, creating fundamental and universal truths that come to underlie systems of organization: the organism, signification and subjectification. Capitalism decodes and deterritorializes flows only to cause them to “pass into an axiomatic apparatus that combines them, and at the points of combination, produces pseudo-codes and artificial reterritorializations” (Ibid., p. 374). Therefore, the deterritorializations of capitalism are always relative, not absolute, as they do not escape the system or reach the BwO, but rather are recaptured by the reterritorializing processes of capitalism. This understanding of capitalism as a two-fold process of deterritorialization and simultaneous reterritorialization has significant influence on how Deleuze and Guattari understand politics.

Deleuzoguattarian Politics: Minoritarian and Majoritarian

Deleuze and Guattari, in developing such nonnormative and non-commonsensical understandings of subjectivities and bodies, also produce a very different approach to discussions of politics. Deleuzoguattarian notions of politics, and more specifically revolutionary politics, focus on the molecular realm, on the flows of desiring-production and their immanence, relationality and multiplicity. This molecular politics, or micropolitics, is most often referred to as *minoritarian politics*. In order to understand

Deleuzoguattarian minoritarian politics it is necessary to first distinguish between the term minoritarian and the more common or commonsense understandings of politics as a relationship between the majority (often represented by the state) and minorities. Deleuze and Guattari refer to this molar politics as *majoritarian*. It is this normative conceptualization of politics that I will explore now.

Deleuze and Guattari define their minoritarian politics in comparison to majoritarian politics. Majoritarian politics is centered on the molar category of the majority, a term that Deleuze and Guattari define in a very specific way. Contrary to common conceptions of majority as referring to a numerical abundance or superiority, the Deleuzoguattarian majority is the artificial universal that is produced through the double articulation, an articulation that produces the unitary subject and the body as organism. The majority “implies a constant, of expression or content, serving as a standard measure by which to evaluate it” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 105). The majority is the artificial universal that comes to be the reference point for all other beings, all other subjects and bodies. And according to Deleuze and Guattari, the majority in capitalist society is *man*: white, adult, able-bodied man. Man must be considered the majority, or majoritarian in essence as it appears twice in the double articulations of both subjects and bodies: once as the universal constant (universal man, the “human” body) and again as one variable form from which the universal was produced (man in comparison to woman) (Ibid., p. 105). As such, man’s majoritarian state is based on the fact that he is both universal and specific, both the reference point and a point claiming relation to the reference point. He is both man as the human and man as a certain form of human. Who, or what, holds the position of majority is important as the majority is not only the

reference point or constant of a society but also assumes a state of power and domination (Ibid., p. 105). The majority, as a molar category, as an artificial universal, is produced through a violent reterritorialization of bodies and subjectivities. The majority, for Deleuze and Guattari, is not simply those who control or dominate others, but is itself the outcome of a process of domination and territorialization.

A majoritarian political system can be understood as focusing on the majority and how other groups relate to that majority. In majoritarian politics, the majority is always the norm or constant, and non-majoritarian groups, minorities, are always considered the “Other”. Deleuze and Guattari define majoritarian politics as a “constant and homogeneous system” and a minority as a subsystem of that majoritarian system (Ibid., p. 105). The minority exists only in relation to the majority, as that which the majority is not. Majoritarian politics is ripe with negative difference, in the sense of difference that sets up oppositional binary relations of difference in order to create meaning. In this context, the meaning or importance of an object is defined by what it is not. On top of this negative relation of meaning, Deleuze and Guattari define minorities as “objectively definable states, states of language, ethnicity, or sex with their own ghetto territorialities” (Ibid., p. 106). Minority is a molar term, like majority, which is based on the territorializations of molecular flows of bodies and subjectivities. The production of a minority entails reterritorializing oneself or allowing oneself to be reterritorialized (Ibid., p. 291). As such, both majority and minority groups are molar categories or reterritorializations and must be understood as artificial. These categories are used to establish a molar or macro form of politics that is focused on relationships between molar universals (man as majority) and molar minorities such as woman, homosexual, black,

etc. In majoritarian politics, the focus is always on the majority and how minorities might gain access to the majority category or gain from such a group. That is why Deleuze and Guattari refer to molar politics as majoritarian politics, because the focus is always the majority, and minorities are always secondary, as subsystems and subgroups. A majoritarian understanding of politics is put forth by the likes of Judith Butler, who focuses on the realm of signification. Her understandings of gender politics and social change in relation to gender will be explored in-depth in the next section of this chapter. For now, I will explore Deleuze and Guattari's alternative to a majoritarian or molar politics: minoritarian politics and the processes of becoming-woman.

Unlike the majoritarian political system that is artificially constant and homogeneous, minoritarian politics is primarily concerned with a potential, creative, and created becoming (Ibid., pp. 105-6). Minoritarian politics is the politics of becoming. As discussed in relation to both genderqueer subjectivity and bodies, becomings are molecular processes of relation, processes of alliance and immanent connection between particles based on a common speed, movement of vibration at a specific moment (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). In short, becomings are immanent, in-process relations of multiplicities of particles, and they are inherently political. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, "becoming-minoritarian is a political affair and necessitates a labour of power (*puissance*) and active micropolitics"(1987, p. 292). This "labour of power" highlights the processes of deterritorialization that are inherent in processes of becoming, and the fact that this deterritorialization is political in that it challenges dominant molar systems, systems that are centers of power. Also, Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on an "active micropolitics" illustrates how becomings are about actual practices, actual combinations

of particles and bodies, and as such can be seen as political practices. These political processes of becoming, of production through deterritorialization are always molecular (Ibid., p. 275), and therefore, minoritarian politics must be understood as molecular politics.

Another important aspect of becoming as a political practice is that it involves processes of deterritorialization, of breaking down molar categories in order to allow desire to flow. It is by allowing particles of desire to flow that becomings are produced, that particles come to relate to each other in an immanent, molecular fashion. Minoritarian politics, as a politics of becoming, concerns processes of deterritorialization that are productive. In addition, becomings, as productive deterritorializations of molar categories and aggregates (in this case the deterritorialization of majorities and minorities) have “neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination” (Ibid., p. 293). This significantly shifts how politics is understood, as a minoritarian politics cannot focus on the majority as a reference point, as an origin of rights and privileges. Minoritarian politics, as a politics of becoming, cannot be focused on making demands on a majority (often a State); it cannot be understood as goal-oriented politics. Becomings have neither beginning nor end, and neither can a politics of becoming. Minoritarian politics is always in process, constantly being made over and over again. This has a significant influence on discussion of political groups that Deleuze and Guattari refer to as minoritarian.

Minoritarian politics concern minoritarian groups, which Deleuze and Guattari define as “groups that are oppressed, prohibited, in revolt or always on the fringe of recognized institutions” (Ibid., p. 247). These groups are collections of becomings, of

immanent relations of movement and rest, and must not be confused with the molar category of the minority group. A minoritarian group is a becoming, a process, while a minority is an aggregate or state, a molar territorialization (Ibid., p. 291). As discussed, a minority concerns reterritorializations, while a minoritarian group as a becoming concerns deterritorializations. In relation to minoritarian groups, Deleuze and Guattari often use the concept of a *subject group*. A minoritarian group is a subject group in comparison to a minority, which they define as a *subjugated group*. Subjugated groups are “colonial formations of the gregarious aggregate” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 280) in the sense that they are molar territorializations that produce artificial minorities in relation to the equally artificial universal majority. Crucial to the subjugated group, and in turn the distinction between subjugated groups and subject groups, is the role of desire. At the heart of a subjugated group or minority is the social and psychological repression of desire, which stops the molecular flows of desiring-production. Such a group defines subjects and bodies as singular, as *a priori* categories, and uses such categories and their universal constant in order to make political claims. An example could include some practices in the women’s movement that claim that women (in a singular, essentialist sense that is based on the artificial female organism) are equal or the same as men (the universal). In such a situation, political power is understood as the force to control, to enslave and block desiring production by creating and maintaining molar categories. Women are able to define the category of “woman” and equate it to man as a universal and men as a molar variant of the universal. Women, in such a situation, are a subjugated group because their claim to power “refers to a form of force that continues to enslave and crush desiring-production” (Ibid., p. 348). The subjugated group continues to

reterritorialize the molecular, to shut down flows of desire. This is contrary to the minoritarian subject group.

The subject group is a minoritarian political group. Deleuze and Guattari define a subject group as “transverse multiplicities that convey desire as a molecular phenomena” (Ibid., p. 348). As such, a subject group is concerned with the flows of desire, with breaking down molar categories, including majority and minority, to allow desire to flow. A subject-group causes desire to penetrate into the social field, to begin deterritorializations (Ibid., p. 348). As a minoritarian group, they are concerned solely with deterritorialization, with producing lines of escape or flight that not only break down molar categories but also allow for the production of molecular becomings of bodies and subjectivities. Due to their focus on deterritorialization, subject-groups can be understood as the outcome of the deterritorialization of subjugated-groups or minorities, as the mobilization of desire in such group that not only ruptures the subjugated-group but brings desiring-production back into the social, back into politics (Ibid., p. 349). It is important to acknowledge that this relationship between minoritarian subject-groups and minorities or subjugated groups works in both directions. Just as subject-groups can be produced through deterritorializations of subjugated-groups, subject-groups are always “closing up again, remodelling themselves in the image of subjugated groups” (Ibid., p. 349). Reterritorialization of subject-groups into subjugated-groups is always possible, and constantly occurring. Therefore, an exclusive distinction between molar, majoritarian political groups and molecular, minoritarian groups cannot be made. As seen throughout this project, molar and molecular realms and processes are never mutually exclusive, and

both must be understood relationally in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of Deleuzoguattarian subjectivities, bodies and politics.

Important to Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of minoritarian politics is the concept of *becoming-woman*. Becoming-woman is the infusion of gender and bodily specificity into the discussion of subjectivity and politics. The term *becoming-woman* can be considered a misnomer as the emphasis is on becoming gendered, not specifically woman. As "male" is seen as the universal non-gendered subject in the molar realm, woman becomes that which is marked with a gender, a material body. As such, Deleuze and Guattari use the term woman in relation to molecular becomings to necessitate the role of bodies, and gendered bodies in political practice. Becoming-woman is in actuality a becoming-gendered, a production of molecular gender or genderqueer. This is important to keep in mind in relation to discussions of becoming-woman.⁴⁷

Becoming-woman is crucial to a discussion of minoritarian politics because Deleuze and Guattari argue, "all becomings pass through becoming-woman" (1987, p. 277). Becoming-woman is the key to all other becomings, and therefore is the crucial and necessary first step in producing minoritarian politics. Becoming-woman is crucial because "man" is the primary majoritarian category, making becoming-woman effectively becoming-minoritarian or molecular. Important to understanding becoming-woman is to acknowledge that it does not resemble woman as a molar entity. For Deleuze and Guattari, molar woman is "defined by her form, endowed with organs and functions and assigned as a subject" (Ibid., p. 275). Becoming-woman is not the production of such an entity. It is not the territorialization of molecular bodies and subjectivities into molar

⁴⁷ It is especially important in contrast to the Australian Corporeal Feminists reading of becoming-woman to be discussed in the next section.

“women”. Not only is becoming-woman not a becoming-molar woman (an impossibility as all becomings are molecular), it is also not an imitation of such an entity. The process of becoming-woman does not attempt to produce a likeness to the molar category of woman, as it is a becoming and becomings are never imitations of, or attempts at, identifications with molar categories (Ibid., p. 273). Rather, becoming-woman must be understood as a “function of emitting particles, that enter the relation of movement and rest, zone of proximity, of a microfemininity” (Ibid., p. 275). Becoming-woman is the production or creation of a molecular woman. This woman is immanent, relational, in-process and multiplicitous. Becoming-woman produces a subject-group, a minoritarian group not a subjugated group or minority. Important in this process is the “reconstruction of the body as a BwO” (Ibid., p. 276), the deterritorialization of molar bodies as structured, binary gendered or sexed organisms. Becoming-woman breaks down these molar bodies, allowing desire to flow, allowing rhizomatic connections between organs, and producing a molecular body as material becoming. Becoming-woman produces the body as BwO as immanent, relational and multiplicitous, opening it up to potential and contingency. Minoritarian politics, as necessarily involving processes of becoming-woman, are concerned with the production of molecular bodies and subjectivities, with the expansion of politics into the realm of involution, creation and production. Minoritarian politics is molecular involution.

Because becoming-woman is a process concerned with deterritorializing molar categories of subjectivities and bodies, allowing the molecular desire to flow, it is a process that can occur to any molar body or subject. Becoming-woman is not a process that only occurs in relation to molar subjectivities of woman or female. All bodies and

subjects are capable of becoming-woman, including those considered to be men or males. The molar constant of man can be deterritorialized through a process of becoming-woman, and necessarily must go through such processes in order to be deterritorialized. That being said, there is no becoming-man. There are many deterritorializations of man, many becomings of man, but no becoming-man. This is due to the nature of the category of man. According to Deleuze and Guattari, man (as a universal constant) is majoritarian par excellence (Ibid., p. 291). Man is always a molar category, and since becomings are always molecular, there can be no becoming-man. Therefore, minoritarian politics focuses on the becoming-woman of all bodies and subjectivities, as the first step in the production of a minoritarian politic.

Based on this discussion of Deleuzoguattarian minoritarian politics as a politics of becoming, and the specific importance of becoming-woman, there are some important conclusions that can be made about such a form of politics. Important to this discussion is what social change (what Deleuze and Guattari term “revolution”) looks like based on minoritarian politics. The first point is that minoritarian politics are a *politics of desire*. According to Deleuze and Guattari, in a process of minoritarian politics, society is defined by its lines of flight, its deterritorializations, by the ways in which desire is made to flow. In minoritarian politics, there is always something that flows or flees, escapes the binary organization of the axiomatics of capitalism (Ibid., p. 216). Minoritarian politics is defined by its desiring-production, by deterritorializations and their subsequent flows of desire. This has a significant impact on how social change or revolution is conceived. This is because according to Deleuze and Guattari “desire is revolutionary in its essence” (1983, p. 116). No society, no majoritarian system, can tolerate real desire without its

structures, its territorializations that are exploitive, enslaving and hierarchical becoming compromised (Ibid., p. 116). Therefore, minoritarian politics as a politics of desire is also revolutionary in its essence, and threatens the normative or molar structures of society. According to Deleuze and Guattari, minoritarian politics is revolutionary politics.

The second tenet of minoritarian politics is that it will be produced through the production of molecular subjectivities and bodies, subjectivities and bodies that were the focus of chapters two and three. Immanent, relational, multiplicitous bodies and selves are necessary as they allow the flow of desire. Based on minoritarian politics as a politics of desire, it is necessary that subjectivities and bodies involved in such a politics allow desire to flow through them, and are themselves the productions of such flows. This too has an impact on how revolutionary politics are understood. If minoritarian politics are revolutionary politics, and minoritarian politics require immanent, relational, multiplicitous subjects and bodies, it can be argued that these molecular bodies and subjects produce the potentials of revolutionary politics, for transforming the molar categories and structures of capitalism.

For Deleuze and Guattari, revolution comes from the courage of “agreeing to flee rather than live tranquilly and hypocritically in false refuges” (Ibid., p. 341). These false refuges are molar categories, the artificial universals of majoritarian man and minority that depend on the territorialization of molecular subjectivities and bodies into static, unitary notions of the subject and the organism. Revolutionary courage is the courage to breakdown such categories, to create a line of flight and produce immanent, relational and multiplicitous bodies and selves. But this revolution is not without its limits.

As discussed throughout this project, and specifically in this section with regards to subject and subjugated groups, the molar and molecular realms are not mutually exclusive. In Deleuze and Guattari's work, the molar and the molecular are explicitly and inherently connected, like two sides of a coin. As such, a discussion of solely molecular revolutionary minoritarian politics requires an additional discussion of molar or majoritarian politics in order to be comprehensive. As gender theory has developed over the past few decades, the focus has been on this molar component or realm of politics. Discussions of changing the dominant binary systems of sex and gender have tended to understand social change as a molar practice. In an attempt to make this project comprehensive, to produce an in-depth and rigorous theory of genderqueer politics, it is necessary to explore these theories, highlighting both their usefulness in understanding molar gender politics (something Deleuze and Guattari do not focus on) and the limitations of their sole focus on the molar at the expense of the revolutionary potentials of minoritarian politics of desire. In doing so, I will be able to conclude this project by developing an explicit and comprehensive theory of a genderqueer minoritarian politics.

Majoritarian Approaches to Gender Politics: Butler and Australian Corporeal Feminism

This section of the project explores other theories of gender and, in particular, how these theories contribute to a discussion of politics that is majoritarian in Deleuzoguattarian terms. I will explore two theories that are attempting to theorize gender politics: the work of Judith Butler and the Australian Corporeal Feminists. These theories share a claim to be creating a material theory of gender politics. What is interesting about their shared claim of materialism is that, with respect to politics, both produce a material politics that focuses on the molar realm, on majoritarian politics. This

is a serious limitation in these works. In this section, I will explore these different theories of gender politics in an attempt to not only explain their theories but also illustrate how these theories are majoritarian, each in a different way and to a different degree. I will begin with Judith Butler's theory of performativity.

Of particular interest to this project is Judith Butler's work *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993). In this text, Butler develops a refined version of her theory of performativity first discussed in *Gender Trouble* (1990). In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler expands the notion of performativity beyond the realm of sex and gender to that of materiality itself. Butler defines performativity as "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects it names" (1993, p. 2). Performativity is a signifying practice that produces the categorizations of bodies and subjects that come to appear as *a priori*. This is a very similar to Deleuze and Guattari's use of the double articulation. Butler's notions of performativity stems from her Foucauldian understanding of power as productive. Michel Foucault argues that:

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (1984, p. 61)

Therefore, it is essential in understanding Butler's conceptions of bodies, materiality, and their relation to power, to not think of power as simply a force of repression but also as a productive force, that which brings subjects into being and is essential to the existence of an accessible or thinkable reality. Performativity is one process of this productive form of power. Performativity is a productive process creating and maintaining the dominant

heteronormative system. For Butler, there are no selves or bodies outside of the realm of signification, only bodies and subjects that are produced through the citational processes of performativity. There are no innately male or female subjects but rather a process that cites these artificial norms and in turn produces male and female subjects and bodies. Both Butler and Deleuze and Guattari have an aspect of production to their work, but what they mean by such a concept differs. For Butler, production is the performativity of signification. For Deleuze and Guattari production is a molecular process inherently tied to desiring-production and not the molar realms such as signification. As such, the notion of materiality produced by Deleuze and Guattari is very different. While materiality for Deleuze and Guattari is molecular, fluid and filled with potential, materiality for Butler is a process of discursive performativity, a molar process of territorialization in Deleuzoguattarian terms.

Butler's exploration of materiality as a discursive process of performativity is a theory of how norms are produced and maintained and how the molar structures of dominant social systems operate. It is a theory of the molar, of the processes Deleuze and Guattari refer to as territorialization. For Butler, the processes of reiteration are central to the production of bodies and subjects, bodies and subjects that are never total or complete. This in-process characteristic of Butler's molar subjects and bodies stems from her understanding of reiterations, and its relation to the processes of refusal. For Butler, the norm comes to signify through a process of refusing those lives and bodies that do not fit into the norm: the abject. Butler defines the abject as:

precisely those "unlivable" and "uninhabitable" zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the "unlivable" is required to circumscribe the domain of the

subject. This zone of uninhabitability will constitute the defining limit of the subject's domain. (1993, p. 3)

The abject is the constitutive outside of the norm, that which must be refused in order for the norm to signify. As such, the norms that produce bodies and selves exist through a relation of lack, they exist based on what they are not. In such a way Butler is very psychoanalytic in her understandings of subjects and bodies, sharing a focus on the foundational loss that constitutes the subject, as elaborated in her work *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997). Butler's notion of production differs from that of Deleuze and Guattari's, as it is fuelled by the attempt to fill a void or lack, a process of performativity necessary to maintain the unstable subject. Butler's reading of gender and materiality is based in relations of lack and negative difference.

Within Butler's theory, it is very interesting to consider the role of the abject in producing both the norms and the possibility for changing, challenging or transgressing these norms. Butler sees great political potential in the abject. This is due to its ability to haunt the norm (Butler, 1993, p. 188). As the refusal of the abject is necessary for the production of normative bodies and selves, the norm is dependent on the abject. This is what Butler refers to as negativity, a focus she finds lacking in Deleuze and Guattari: "One reason I have opposed Deleuze is that I find no registration of the negative in his work, and I feared that he was proposing a manic defence against negativity" (2004, p.198). Butler, while acknowledging that often her work becomes focused on lack, highlights that there is a productivity to negativity, to refusal, as it produces the very realm of signification. As such, this negativity of production imbues the abject with the potential to change the norm. At first glance this seems similar to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the molecular as constantly threatening the molar, constantly troubling and

deterritorializing the categories and aggregates of the molar. However, there are significant differences. Deleuze and Guattari are not setting up a relationship of negativity with respect to the abject or molecular. The molecular is not the unlivable, the unknowable, as that which must be refused for the molar realm to exist. Rather, the molecular is a productive part of the molar, not through its refusal but through its organization. The molecular is productive, producing speeds and resonances that are then organized by the molar. The molar is not a rejection of the molecular but rather an organization of the molecular. This is very different than Butler's relation with the abject, which is based on lack and creates a category of abjection that cannot be explored. This has a significant impact on Butler's ability to speak of political possibilities beyond the norm/abject relation.

By rendering the potentials and contingencies of bodies and selves to a negative relation to the norm, and always in relation to the norm, Butler necessitates a politics that centers on the norm, or what can be considered in Deleuzoguattarian terms, the majority. Politics, in a world defined by Butler's notion of performativity and relationship of lack, is focused on the abject's ability to haunt or trouble the norms. The normative matrix of heteronormativity is maintained as the focus, as the reference point. This focus on the artificial constants of heteronormativity can be understood as a focus on the majority. Politics for Butler is the constant unsettling of the norm through reiterations of the norm by the abject. At times, Butler acknowledges the limits of identity politics, expressing her distaste for a pluralistic solution to the current symbolic and political situation, arguing that "the multiplication of subject-positions along a pluralist axis would entail the multiplication of exclusionary and degrading moves that could only produce a greater

fractionalization, a proliferation of differences without any means of negotiating among them” (1993, p. 114). Most of the time, however, Butler maintains a notion of politics that focuses on the normative system. This is seen in Butler’s example of the drag performance and her use of the concept of theatrical rage. This ability to rework the violence of naming, of interpellation, of citation, becomes the foundation of Butler’s political framework. Butler sees this reworking and amelioration of performative violence as a double movement in which the invocation of a category and the subsequent institution of an identity can also be seen as the opening up of that category as a site of permanent political contest (Ibid., p. 222). Drag, becomes a critique of the norm, a critique that, while opening up the possibility of change, is still very much focused on the norm or majority. Butler does not see the possibility of effective politics or transgressive agency as being outside of the realm of signification, but instead, argues for the necessity of remaining deeply engaged with the very terms of the hegemonic discursive regimes. By rendering materiality as constituted solely through processes of signification, Butler does not escape the dominance of the normative system to explore the potentials of other bodies and selves. Such a critique of Butler is shared by Colebrook who argues that for Butler queer is defined by its dependence on the norm, on its relation to notions of humanity and a coherent subject (2009). By equating materiality with signification, Butler produces a theory of politics that is focused on the relationships between the norm and the abject, a relationship that Deleuze and Guattari would call majoritarian, and refuses the possibility of politics outside of this molar realm.

In short, Butler, in an attempt to escape the determinism of sex in the sex/gender binary, produces a notion of materiality that is limited to the realm of signification, a

distinctly molar realm according to Deleuze and Guattari. Her use of the abject allows her to state that there are bodies and selves outside the norm, but limits her from discussing these bodies and selves as they are abject and cannot be known. Butler's understanding of materiality as signification produces a politics of gender that does not explore the realms beyond the molar, nor is capable of thinking of such realms in a political manner except in relation to the norm. Butler creates a theory of materiality and politics that prevents her from engaging with the breadth of potential, creation and contingency that exists in Deleuzoguattarian notions of the molecular. Butler does not engage with bodies and selves at the molecular level, something I have attempted to do in this project through an exploration of genderqueer and Deleuze and Guattari. In Deleuzoguattarian terms, Butler is not able to engage with the Real: the molecular flows of desire, what Deleuze and Guattari define as the material. As such, her theory of politics focuses on the norm or majority, and must be considered majoritarian.

Another approach to a material theory of gender/sex and politics is put forth by the Australian Corporeal Feminists, including Rosi Braidotti. Like Butler, in producing a political theory of sexual politics, Braidotti et al. become focused on the majority and how politics could work within the realm of the molar. This may seem like a confusing conclusion to be made in reference to a group of theorists who are pulling from the work of Deleuze and Guattari to such a great extent. But, as discussed in chapter one, the Australian Corporeal Feminists cannot be considered Deleuzoguattarian in their understandings of sex and gender. Rather, Braidotti, Grosz and others tend to pull their theoretical underpinnings with regard to sex and gender from the works of Luce Irigaray. As such, Braidotti makes an explicit argument for the use of "strategic essentialism"

(2002, p. 46), which enforces a binary notion of difference, and specifically of sexual difference into discussions of bodies and selves. For the Australian Corporeal Feminists, a binary, oppositional essentialism between men and woman must be read into the molecular for strategic political reasons. Therefore, in the realm of gender politics, discussions are reduced to discussions of man and woman, which posits man as the universal subject position and “posits as radically other a female, sexed, thinking subject, who stands in an asymmetrical relationship with the masculine” (Ibid., p. 26). She, like Irigaray, calls for a “speaking of the feminine” that does not have a relationship to the masculine universal thinking subject. At first glance, this fits with a minoritarian approach to politics in its refusal of the majority, but in actuality, it is an attempt to create a feminine form of majority that refuses the complexity of gender and sex that is beyond the binary. This form of essentialism, even if rooted in a more Deleuzoguattarian ontology has a significant impact on discussions of politics.

Fundamental to the Australian Corporeal Feminists understanding of politics is their critique of the Deleuzoguattarian notion of becoming-woman. Both Braidotti and Grosz take on becoming-woman, discussed previous in this chapter, in ways that reinforce a majoritarian approach to politics. Braidotti highlights three problems she sees in Deleuzoguattarian becoming-woman: “(1) an inconsistent approach to the issue of the “becoming-woman”; (2) the reduction of sexual difference to one variable among many...; and (3) an assumption of symmetry in the speaking stances of the two sexes.” (1994, p. 117). It is important to explore these criticisms not only to develop a more rigorous understanding of Deleuze and Guattari, but also to help explicate the majoritarian undercurrents in the Australian Corporeal Feminists understanding of gender

politics. In relation to the first criticism, that of the inconsistency of becoming-woman, Braidotti argues that Deleuze and Guattari are contradictory in that they advocate for a molecular becoming-woman while at the same time acknowledging the need for molar feminist politics, and she labels them as being in “denial” (Ibid., p.188). The problem with this criticism is it maintains a reactive, either/or understanding of knowledge, and more specifically a dualistic understanding of the molar and molecular realms. If one understands Deleuze and Guattari to be advocating for a more affirmative approach to theory, and acknowledges their refusal of the oppositional binary of molar and molecular, Braidotti’s argument does not hold. In turn, it becomes apparent as to why the Australian Corporeal Feminists focus on the molar. In maintaining the opposition of either a molar or molecular politic, their emphasis of molar politics requires a rejection molecular politics. Secondly, Braidotti argues that Deleuze and Guattari are flawed in placing sexual difference as one difference among many, arguing instead that sexual difference is “a founding, fundamental structural difference, on which all others rest” (Ibid., p. 118). This is integral to her “strategic essentialism” and refuses the multiplicity that is necessary for a politics of becoming, once again pushing Braidotti’s work into the majoritarian realm. This reading of Deleuze and Guattari is flawed as it fails to recognize that Deleuze and Guattari are not refusing the importance of gender (as seen in their understanding of becoming-woman as primary to minoritarian politics) but rather complicating the very category of gender by acknowledging the possibility of contagion and the connection of all the particles of the universe. Finally, Braidotti argues that Deleuze and Guattari assume that the two sexes (male and female) will have the same point of exit from the current molar systems, that of a becoming-woman, and that in

actuality, “the points of exit from the monological position of being... are dissymmetrical” (Ibid., p. 118). While it is problematic to assume that all bodies and subjectivities will go through the same process in the production of social change, the Deleuzoguattarian notion of becoming-woman cannot be seen as a static, defined process, but rather an immanent, multiple and ever-changing process of becoming. Braidotti, by once again refusing the multiplicity that lies at the heart of becoming-woman, sets up an artificial binary of man and woman, excluding both bodies and subjectivities that do not fit into these categories, but also those bodies and subjectivities that are fluid and ever changing. As such, Australian Corporeal Feminism becomes focused on the artificial molar categories of woman and subsequently focuses its discussion of politics on the molar when it comes to discussions of sex and gender.

The Australian Corporeal Feminists’ insistence on a strategic essentialism in the form of binary sex contributes to their production of a molar or majoritarian prescription for gender politics. In their more general political theory, the Australian Corporeal Feminists maintain a very Deleuzoguattarian, and specifically a minoritarian Deleuzoguattarian notion of the political. Braidotti argues that the Deleuzoguattarian subject is a “non-unitary yet politically engaged and ethically accountable nomadic subject” (2002, p. 84). As such, the Australian Corporeal Feminists grasp that Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of molecular politics, of selves and bodies as immanently relational becomings, is not a romantic theory; that it has possibilities in the current political situations. Elizabeth Grosz, in her discussions of a general theory of politics is critical of goal-oriented, majoritarian politics, arguing “any political struggle must not content itself with a final goal, a resting point, a point of stability or identity” (1994, p.178). This being

considered, it is not that Australian Corporeal Feminists do not believe in the political potentials of molecular bodies and selves, in a minoritarian politics, but rather, when it comes to theorizing sex and gender, they necessitate a strategic essentialism and emphasize a heterosexual basis to all of life and interaction (Braidotti, 2002, p. 46). This prevents them from applying a minoritarian framework to gender politics.

Unlike Butler, whose majoritarian political focus emerges from her equation of materiality and signification, the Australian Corporeal Feminists do not deny the material specificity and determinateness of bodies (Grosz, 1994, p. 190). They are not denying the existence of materiality outside of signification but rather argue that this molecular materiality greatly contributes to how territorializations occur. The Australian Corporeal Feminists' majoritarian political stance emerges from the binary nature they apply to this molecular materiality, the strategic binary essentialism which is itself a form of territorialization of the flows of gender and sex at the molecular level. By necessitating a binary structure to the specificities of sexed bodies, they maintain and reinforce the oppositional binary of male and female, and maintain the male as the universal. The politics of sex are reduced to the opposition between the dominant male and the oppositional female. Gender politics remains a discussion of male and female, where man is understood as the dominant universal and woman as the other, and political engagement is understood as the assertion of the rights and legitimacy of woman in the dominant system. There is no place for non-normatively gendered bodies and selves as all bodies and selves are territorialized into the binary of male and female. This majoritarian politic closes down the possibilities of speaking of non-normative gender practices and their role in politics. Australian Corporeal Feminists' strategic essentialism leads to the

production of a majoritarian gender politics and shuts down the potential and contingency that is so powerful in Deleuzoguattarian theory. As Moira Gatens argues, “to opt for “strategic” adoption of essence leads to a closing off of present possibilities” (1996, p. 87).

In this section, I have explored two main theories of gender politics that I consider to be majoritarian in nature. Utilizing Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of majoritarian politics that emphasizes molar political engagements that remain stuck in the logic of majority and minority, (or in the context of Butler, norm/object) I have illustrated that these current theories of politics are majoritarian. While Butler and Australian Corporeal Feminists, both claim to be producing materialist theories of gender politics, they resort to majoritarian prescriptions when dealing with the logistics of political action. To a great degree, I agree with this majoritarian focus. To refuse a majoritarian politics would be to set up an oppositional relationship between molar and molecular, between majoritarian and minoritarian, and this is in no way my intent. Continuing in my attempt to remain affirmative in my approach to this project, I acknowledge the need for molar, majoritarian discussions and practices of politics. As I discussed in chapters two and three, the processes of territorialization of genderqueer bodies and selves are very much a reality for gender variant persons. In that sense, majoritarian politics have a very real role to play in the politics of gender variance. What I am trying to emphasize is that there is a need for something more. Just as a sole focus on the molecular realm would be highly problematic and replicate oppositional dualism, the current focus of gender theory on molar politics is equally problematic. I see a need to begin to address genderqueer bodies and selves and their political potentials through minoritarian understandings of politics;

politics that do not necessitate the territorialization of fluid, immanently relational, multiplicitous and in-process bodies and subjectivities in order to think politically. The implications of such an understanding of politics for the realm of sex and gender are the focus of my next section on minoritarian gender politics as genderqueer politics.

Genderqueer Minoritarian Politics: The Potentials of a Molecular Gender Politic

This section will explore the political implications and potentials of this project's discussions of genderqueer subjectivities and bodies as instances of molecular gender. In particular, I will look at how the discussions of bodies and subjects in the two previous chapters contribute to the possibility of minoritarian gender politics. In turn, I will illustrate why the addition of minoritarian politics to the more traditional majoritarian politics is of benefit. I will begin with the political implications of molecular genderqueer subjectivity.

In chapter two, a Deleuzoguattarian understanding of subjectivities as partial objects, becoming and the rhizome helped to explicate the ways in which molecular gender subjectivities can be understood as genderqueer subjectivities. This understanding of subjectivities has a significant influence on how gender politics is discussed. Specifically, if gendered subjectivities are understood as genderqueer molecular subjectivities, both identity politics' relationship of "us versus them" (Roen, 2002) and queer politics' focus on the dominant system (Nigianni and Storr, 2009) cannot be maintained. Molecular genderqueer subjectivities cannot replicate such a relation of politics based on "difference from" as they do not create static unitary subjects that can be placed in such a relation. A substantial shift in gender politics occurs when subjectivities, thought of as Deleuzoguattarian genderqueer subjectivities, are no longer

the static rallying points of politics. Such a shift has the potential to produce a minoritarian gender politic. The implications of such a shift are easily illustrated through an exploration of genderqueer as partial object, becoming and rhizome.

If gendered subjectivities are understood at the molecular level as partial objects there are a number of significant shifts that help to produce a minoritarian gender politic. Firstly, genderqueer subjectivity as a partial object removes the assumption of an *a priori* subject. The subject becomes an outcome of the productions of desire and movement at the molecular level. This removes the political subject as an *a priori* necessity for political action. Politics are not understood as a number of individuals, with pre-established subjectivities, coming together to fight a certain fight, or reach a certain goal. Instead, the subjectivities must be understood to be produced through the actions and doing of politics. As such, a majoritarian stance of majority and minority with clearly demarcated entities is impossible. Secondly, building on this refusal of the *a priori* subject, the genderqueer subjects of minoritarian politics are also seen to be producing in themselves, as they are not static but constantly going through processes of change and transformation. This too refuses the ability to create clear categories of subjects that are necessary for majoritarian politics. Thirdly, the genderqueer subject as residuum moves the subject from the center to the periphery, as it is not only a production, but one of many productions. Subjectivity, and specifically gendered subjectivity cannot be considered as an isolated or defining aspect of politics. It must be acknowledged that gender is always produced alongside thousands of other productions including class, race and ability. Grosz highlights this by arguing that bodies cannot be represented as “entities in themselves or simply on a linear continuum with its polar extremes occupied by male

and female bodies... but as a field, a two-dimensional continuum in which race (and possibly even class, caste or religion) form body specifications” (1994, p.19). Gendered subjectivities as molecular genderqueer subjectivities are never unitary; they never exist without a relation to a thousand other flows of particles, human and otherwise. As such, subjectivity cannot be seen as the only rallying point of politics, and the majoritarian tendency towards identity politics is refused. Finally, genderqueer subjectivities as partial objects refuse the relationship of lack that is often central to majoritarian politics of “us versus them”. By refusing the unitary universal subject, gendered subjectivities refuse a relation to an artificial totality and become total in and of themselves. The lack often associated with attempts to create a unitary coherent subject is refused, and in doing so, the pure difference of a moment of partial genderqueer subjectivity is lacking. Politically, this removes the relationship with the universal reference point, what Deleuze and Guattari call the majority, and subsequently creates a politics that is not attempting to gain the position of the majority. In addition, a refusal of lack also refuses the negative relationship of “us versus them” in which difference is defined by what one is not, by the exclusion of difference and the assumption of the universalism of one’s subject position. In short, molecular genderqueer subjectivities as partial objects, through a refusal of universals (and subsequently lack), and emphasis on production and the peripheral nature of subjectivities, create the possibility of a minoritarian politics, a politics of desiring-production. This is complemented and expanded by a notion of genderqueer subjectivities as becomings.

An understanding of gendered subjectivities as genderqueer becomings opens politics up to a very different notion of relation that differs from the majoritarian notion of majority

and minority. Relationality, in the context of becoming, must be understood as a relation of alliance and contagion not filiation or heredity. Politically, this means that gendered subjectivities cannot be considered to have an origin (often defined in relation to biology and static organisms). A notion of becoming produces a gendered subject that does not have a clear line of development; becoming has neither origin nor destination. Therefore, gendered politics is not clear static identities (origins) that work towards obtaining a certain goal of legitimacy or recognition (destination). Rather, relations are understood as immanent, as stemming from the affects of certain intensities or movements in the molecular. This reinforces a focus on what certain momentary subjectivities do, on how they are affected and how they affect others. It prevents the establishment of a coherent, long-term political strategy specific to singular, unitary subjects. Politics become momentary relations of intensities that are ripe with contingency and possibility. This is enhanced by Deleuze and Guattari's notion of contagion, of a relation that is about the contact of new and different subjects that does not have a determined relationship or outcome. It prevents the production of a political movement with clear limits, with coherent lines of who is and who is not part of a movement. There is no "us" to be set in relation to "them". There is always contingency and potentials for new contact that change the affectuality of a subject and its relations with others. A political movement, organized around gendered subjectivities as becomings, is focused on movement itself, not on who is moving, but on how movements, changes, resonances interact and produce new possibilities. There is no defined political "road map" but rather an openness to potential. The plethora of potentials and creations, the influence of involution, is emphasized by gendered subjectivities as rhizomatic.

The final aspect of molecular gendered subjectivities, which I have argued are genderqueer subjectivities, that contributes to a minoritarian gender politics is the rhizome. The rhizome is useful for thinking about the relations and connections highlighted in subjectivity as becoming and the refusal of universal subject positions illustrated by subjectivity as partial object. Crucial here is the Deleuzoguattarian notion of pure multiplicity, in which multiplicity is not defined in relation to a universal “One”, to a majoritarian constant, but is rather seen as an immanent characteristic of gendered subjectivities. As such, politics is not about a multiplicity of identities, a notion that is often seen in the discourse of pluralism that does not challenge static subjectivity but rather sees the need to multiply the number of subject positions. Instead, the politics of genderqueer subjectivities recognizes that the subject is multiple in and of itself. As such, difference in this context is not about difference from the norm (something that Roen highlighted in the “us versus them” politics of gender) but rather difference in itself. The multiplicity of gendered subjectivities is not established through their relationship with the majority, in the context of politics the white adult able-bodied man, but rather must be understood as an immanent property of fluid, in-process subjectivities. As such, a politics of pure multiplicity cannot be a majoritarian politics, as the majority constant is refused. Also, stemming from a rhizomatic understanding of genderqueer subjectivity, notions of connections in politics must also change. No longer can it be assumed that connections are between distinct points or actors. Once again, the “us versus them” notion of politics is refused. Connections in a rhizome are not established between points but rather are relations of movement, of production. Gendered subjectivities are understood as relational, but like the alliances of becoming, a determined path of relation must be

refused. All lines of movement in the rhizome could be connected to any other and necessarily are so. Politically this means that lines cannot be drawn between who is connected to a social movement or certain group as all connections are possible. There is no outside of a certain subject or movement, as through contagion and heterogeneous connection all the particles of the universe, all the particles of the world in which as subject may exist, come in to relation and connection with it. As such, subjectivity becomes heavily embedded in time and place: how a gendered subject can be defined changes with its context, as connections change through alliance, contagion and rhizomatic relation. Therefore, genderqueer subjectivity refuses the majoritarian politic of identities, of molar entities that are determinant and fixed, and which have a clear relation of “One” and “Other. This is a refusal that is heavily in debt to Deleuzoguattarian notions of the body, notions of gendered bodies that are very much genderqueer.

In chapter three, bodies were explored in relation to Deleuzoguattarian notions of the materiality of becoming and the specific BwO as a source of deterritorialization. This is explicitly linked to the above-discussed notion of genderqueer subjectivities as, for Deleuze and Guattari, subjectivities are always embodied. The Deleuzoguattarian body, a body I have defined as genderqueer due to its fluidity, relationality, contingency and deterritorializing nature, has a significant impact on how politics can be discussed. It produces a minoritarian form of politics. As such, the molecular genderqueer body challenges the dominant system of majoritarian politics and opens up discussions of gender politics to potential and contingency. This is clearly illustrated by the notions of the materiality of becoming, the refusal of the organism and the BwO.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the molar realm is not the realm of the material, but rather the realm of artificial territorializations. As such, a material theory of gender politics cannot be majoritarian as the categories of the molar realm are not material. Rather, material politics can only be established at the level of the molecular, at the level of the flows of desiring-production. This is where materiality can be found and where a material theory of gender politics will be produced. In short, a material theory of gender politics will be necessarily a minoritarian theory of gender politics. Therefore, a Deleuzoguattarian theory of molecular bodies, of genderqueer bodies, is essential to a material theory of gender politics.

Genderqueer bodies, as material processes of becoming, greatly contribute to the possibility of a minoritarian politics of gender. Bodies as becomings challenge the dominant notion of the body as a static, inherent, biologically determined organism, a notion that is essential to the maintenance of a majoritarian politic. When the body is understood as a static organism, and specifically an organism that is either male or female, the artificial divisions of majority and minority are easily maintained. In the majoritarian politics of “us versus them”, static organisms play an important role in claiming legitimacy and recognition. The body comes to be that which cannot be refuted, an inherent truth from which identities stem. Male bodies produce male identities, or if gender variance is acknowledged, male bodies can also produce transsexual female identities. But maintained in such a discourse is the static nature of the body. Bodies come to be represented by identities and the materiality of bodies is reduced to its identity representation. As such, majoritarian gender politics do not engage with the body but with the organism, a molar representation. Majoritarian politics engage with the molar

categories that are artificially produced through the double articulation that establishes bodies as static, *a priori* categories. The genderqueer body as becoming challenges such a treatment of the body and produces a minoritarian politic that constantly acknowledges and engages with bodies. The Deleuzoguattarian, or genderqueer, focus on organs and relationships of organs that are based on alliance, contagion and the rhizome refuses the territorialization of organs into the organism, keeping the body as an explicitly fluid and active part of gender politics. Genderqueer bodies cannot be considered as static reference points but fluid relational productions of BwOs, and as such prevent the establishment of coherent identities that come to reign in majoritarian politics. As such, the embodied politics of genderqueer, a politic that is minoritarian in nature, cannot be reduced to a relation of man and woman, us and them. Rather, bodies are fluid, in process and constantly engaging with new relations. A material gender politic stemming from such bodies gains the contingency, potential and fluidity of those bodies.

Important to the discussion of the political role of genderqueer molecular bodies is the notion of the BwO. As discussed in chapter three, the BwO is a collection of organs that refuses the territorialization of the organism. What the BwO brings to the above discussion of embodied gender politics is both that it must be made, and that it is a limit that can never be reached. As such, bodies at the molecular level require a process of production, a process that is often defined through deterritorialization. Bodies as BwOs not only establish a politics that is minoritarian, but also in doing so break down the molar categories that are necessary for majoritarian politics. As such, the minoritarian politics of genderqueer not only create potentials in the realm of the molecular but also break down the molar realm, producing even more potential for creation and involution.

The establishment of an embodied minoritarian gender politic is not simply a separate realm of politics but also a challenge to dominant forms of political territorialization. It not only creates a new form of politics but also begins to change, challenge and transform dominant politics. Also, because the body as a BwO is a limit, it necessitates that the processes of politics are constant, are always changing. There is no end point in the minoritarian politics of bodies, but rather an impetus for a continuing politics. Gender politics will always be a process of creating potentials and new bodies. Production, potential and contingency become the foundation of an embodied genderqueer minoritarian politics.

Therefore, through the explication of gendered subjectivities and bodies as molecular genderqueer subjectivities and bodies, the possibility of a minoritarian gender politic is created. This form of politics, which refuses both static categories and a relation with the majority, is an important addition to the discussion of politics. I use the word “addition” as I do not wish to refute the usefulness or necessity of majoritarian politics, the politics seen in Butler and Australian Corporeal Feminism, but rather, I see a positive outcome in expanding such discussions to include the molecular and minoritarian politics. It is not an issue of either/or, but rather, keeping with Deleuzoguattarian affirmative theory, a situation of both/and.

Conclusion: Genderqueer Additions to Current Conversations of Gender Politics

The addition of minoritarian politics to the discussion of gender politics has a number of benefits. To think of these benefits concretely, I will engage with Wilchins’ discussion of politics in *GenderQueer* (2002), illustrating what the addition of a minoritarian genderqueer politic enables. In doing so, the intent is to show how

minoritarian genderqueer politics, stemming from molecular gendered bodies and subjectivities, can help to overcome some of the obstacles common in discussions of gender politics. Instead of rejecting majoritarian approaches to gender politics, I am taking an affirmative approach, shifting to a logic of both/and, exploring the potentials of the addition of minoritarian politics.

Riki Wilchins' prescription of a majoritarian, identity-based notion of politics is very interesting, given the critiques she levels against these very systems earlier in her work. As discussed in chapter one, Wilchins is critical of identity politics, using the example of what she terms "transgenderism", to argue that models of gender variance that focus on identities tend to create both boundaries and hierarchies (2002, p. 15). She argues that identity-focused transgenderism creates the "us versus them" mentality discussed above and in the work of Roen, as it makes gender variance into an identifiable and intelligible "Other". At the same time, by excluding gender variance from the norm, "transgenderism" (according to Wilchins) reinforces the binary gender system. Wilchins is explicitly acknowledging the limitations of a majoritarian, static-identity politics, and yet when she comes to make prescriptions for what genderqueer politics should do she ends up reinforcing such a politic. It is as though Wilchins knows that identity-politics will not achieve her political goals, but does not see another possibility for gender politics. This is where a minoritarian genderqueer politics can be substantial and crucial addition to the discussion.

The addition of a minoritarian gender politic, a politic that I have defined as genderqueer, helps to produce potentials for gender politics outside of identity-based, majoritarian politics in many different ways. First, Wilchins' call for spaces for the

acknowledgement of the multiplicity of possible gendered identities, a call that is still framed within static identities and necessitates a politics of pluralism. Here, a molecular understanding of subjectivities as multiple in and of themselves can be of great use. By refusing a static, singular identity, my Deleuzoguattarian genderqueer understanding of gendered subjectivities prevents the establishment of static identity categories, and rather than necessitating the acknowledgment of more identities in politics, emphasizes the need to acknowledge the multiplicity of each subjectivity and that these subjectivities are in a constant process of transformation. This Deleuzoguattarian understanding of multiplicity as an immanent category allows the call for multiple identities to be transformed into a call for multiplicity that is not dependent on a discourse of identity. It avoids the boundaries and hierarchies she mentions as the pitfalls of identity politics, by refusing the organization and structuring necessary for static identities. Genderqueer minoritarian politics presents a way to maintain the importance of gender and subjectivity without necessitating an identity-based politics.

A genderqueer minoritarian politic also helps to avoid focusing on the majority, on the norm, a focus that limits the potentials of politics. Minoritarian gender politics have the ability to break down and destroy the dominant molar categories of male and female, through the processes of becoming that trouble the norms without replicating them. As such, it is not a process of drag, of a transgressive representation of the norm, but rather a process of the molecular breaking out of the restraints of molar categories. This is different than a relation of norm and abject, as the molecular is never what is refused or dismissed but rather lurks within the molar at all times, constantly creating tensions on the borders of categories. Politically, this means that challenges to the norm

or molar aggregates do not require a replication of the norm, or an explicit political relation of “us versus them”, a relation Wilchins is adamantly against but gets trapped in. A genderqueer politics of becoming allows for a notion of expression that Wilchins calls for (Ibid., p. 55), an expression that is not determined by its relation to the norm but is embedded in the realm of potential. And importantly, a Deleuzoguattarian understanding of subjectivity as production that refuses the *a priori* subject helps to refuse the universal subject, itself a norm. The *a priori* subject is necessary for molar politics as seen in Wilchins’ agent of self-expression. By focusing politics on potential and creativity, the need to be intelligible to the system is removed. Instead, a minoritarian politics of becoming emphasize the deterritorializing potentials of positive, creative production. As such, minoritarian genderqueer politics can help to challenge the “us versus them” relationship of majoritarian politics without the loss of a critical engagement with the norms of society.

Also, a minoritarian genderqueer politics has implications for the role of the body in gender politics. The body is often lost within discussions of gender politics, as seen in Wilchins’ focus on the right to “self-expression”, a notion that is explicitly tied to the molar realm of signification. As such, the embodied nature of minoritarian genderqueer politics has a great deal to offer, with the potential to create very material understandings of gender politics. If materiality is understood in Deleuzoguattarian terms, it exists in the realm of the molecular and therefore material politics needs to be focused on this realm. Crucial to this production of a material politics is that it does not require coherent categories of bodies and selves, but rather focuses on materiality as production, as a process of movement, creation and involution. This prevents the reification of binary

gender categories to the level of *a priori* truth while still allowing for the discussion of gender as an immanent characteristic of bodies and selves. The materiality of gendered bodies and selves is not lost, but the necessity of categorization (territorialization in Deleuzoguattarian terms) no longer remains. This would allow Wilchins to frame self-expression in terms of production: as the ability, through affectivity, to produce new bodily flows of gender. Such a genderqueer politics does not require provisional identities to produce such flows. The body becomes another facet of expression, of production, and through the addition of a minoritarian genderqueer politic, gender politics gain an embodied nature that allows for a more material discussion of gender and politics.

Finally, and most importantly, is the way in which a minoritarian gender politic, even when coupled with majoritarian political tactics, greatly changes our understandings of potential in the realm of politics. In relation to Wilchins, the Deleuzoguattarian minoritarian politic infuses her theory of genderqueer politics with new life, with possibilities beyond identity. As discussed above, the fluid, immanently relational, and multiplicitous nature of genderqueer (molecularly gendered) bodies and subjects opens up the discussion of politics to contingency and potential. Political relations cannot be understood in this context as relationships between discrete unitary actors, but rather, must take into consideration a plethora of flows, productions and breakdowns that are constantly occurring. Politics is expanded beyond that which is, beyond the molar territorializations of bodies and selves into men and women, to focus on that which could be, on the very potentials of bodies and subjects to constantly change. In the context of minoritarian gender politics, what I term genderqueer politics, the practical is equated

with the productive, the creative and the processes of involution. It is complexity, multiplicity, and fluidity that become the focus of a politics, a politics that does not necessitate coherent static categories, but rather necessitates the flows and productions of genderqueer bodies and subjectivities.

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