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Eating Girls: Deleuze and Guattari's Becoming-Animal and the Romantic Sublime in William Blake's Lyca Poems

It is perhaps illustrative of animal philosophy's strong intent to establish itself firmly in serious academia that it has recently shown interest in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of becoming-animal, a concept which is so abstrusely theoretical and abstract that it appears to say very little on the animal as we know it.¹ In her latest study *When Species Meet* (2007), Donna Haraway has rejected not only Deleuze and Guattari's lack of concern for the real animal, but also their deeply-rooted contempt for the family pet, which they take to be a pitiful receptacle for the ungratified Oedipal sentimentality of the childless, the old, and the lonely. "I am not sure," Haraway (30) reflects, "I can find in philosophy a clearer display of misogyny, fear of aging, incuriosity about animals, and horror at the ordinariness of the flesh, here covered by the alibi of an anti-Oedipal and anticapitalist project." Criticizing the high-flown abstractness of Deleuze and Guattari's theory in more epigrammatic terms, she writes: "This is a philosophy of the sublime, not the earthly, not the mud" (28). I want to show in this paper that Haraway is speaking more than she knows here, and that the concept of becoming-animal is, indeed, rhetorically and structurally indebted to the discourse of the sublime, that amphibious aesthetic of fear and wonder that is believed to have emerged in a first-century Greek rhetorical treatise, moved to center-stage in the nature poetry of the Romantics and the aesthetic theories of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, and has invited renewed and expanded interest in the writings of Jean-François Lyotard, Slavoj Žižek, and many other postmodernists.² By relating becoming-animal to the Romantic sublime, I do not seek to deprive Deleuze and Guattari's concept of its ecological significance, however — as Haraway purports to do. Quite the opposite, I want to demonstrate that both the sublime and the dynamic of becoming-animal, despite their subjectivist preoccupation with human identity and consciousness, can bear important relevance to the study of human-animal relations. I will illustrate this relevance with an ecocritical reading of William Blake's Lyca poems, "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found," both published in his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794), which engage the aesthetic of the sublime in a way that accords closely with the poststructuralist dismantlement of human subjectivity.

Nature and Animality in the Romantic Sublime. The aesthetic of the sublime was first theorized by the Greek critic Longinus in his first-century rhetorical treatise *Peri*

Hypsous (On the Sublime), which examined the stylistic nature and psychological effects of overwhelming language. “[B]y true sublimity,” Longinus asserted, “our soul somehow is both lifted up and — taking on a kind of exultant resemblance — filled with delight and great glory, as if our soul itself had created what it just heard” (42). Although Longinus also attends to the beauty and power of nature, it is essentially human language that transports both speaker and listener, writer and reader out of their bodies and beyond material reality: “sublimity,” then, “is the resonance of greatness of mind” (51-52). As critics have shown, however, Longinus’s subjectivist model was not the most influential one when it finally reached Britain in 1554.³ Aesthetic taste in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it seems, remained more oriented toward impressive natural objects than impressive texts or speech. Admittedly, the theories of Thomas Burnet, John Baillie, and Joseph Addison show great sensitivity to the sublime as a rhetorical effect, yet they still locate the cause of that effect primarily in the natural world and its divine creator. In “An Essay on the Sublime” (1747), for instance, John Baillie argues that any “object can only be justly called the sublime, which in some degree disposes the mind to this enlargement of itself, and gives her a lofty conception of her own powers” (88). Baillie, in other words, still believes that sublimity is a material quality, albeit one which requires subjective feeling to be revealed as such.

It was mainly under the influence of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant that the central focus in the aesthetic experience shifted to the interpreting subject, and that the sublime came to be seen as a quality lying not so much in the physical world as in the eye and imagination of the beholder. In his empirical study *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Burke interpreted the sublime as a psychologically and physiologically disturbing experience of terror. “Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger,” he wrote, “that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime” (36). Burke’s theory emphatically distanced itself from earlier objectivist models in its focus on “the ideas of pain and danger” and in its interpretation of material nature as only a source of the sublime. And yet, his compulsive interest in the classification of these natural sources, in conjunction with his frequent backsliding into a materialist idiom, shows just how difficult it was to disengage oneself from the natural sublime. In the following passage, for instance, Burke ascribes the difference between beauty and sublimity to a distinction between domesticity and wildness. In other words, while we are fond of that which succumbs to us, it is the uncontrollable and excessive that we tend to find awe-

inspiring. The passage is also interesting in that it illustrates Burke's sustained interest in animality:

An ox is a creature of vast strength; but he is an innocent creature, extremely serviceable, and not at all dangerous; for which reason the idea of an ox is by no means grand. A bull is strong too; but his strength is of another kind; often very destructive, seldom (at least amongst us) of any use in our business; the idea of a bull is therefore great, and it has frequently a place in sublime descriptions, and elevating comparisons. [...] We have continually about us animals of a strength that is considerable, but not pernicious. Amongst these we never look for the sublime: it comes upon us in the gloomy forest, and in the howling wilderness, in the form of the lion, the tiger, the panther, or rhinoceros. (60-61)

Burke's preference throughout the *Enquiry* for the experience of the sublime over the beautiful brings to mind Deleuze and Guattari's penchant for the wild pack animal and what Haraway (29) describes as "their disdain for the daily, the ordinary, the affectional rather than the sublime."⁴

Although both John Dennis and Joseph Addison had already signaled the importance of terror in the psychology of the sublime, it was Burke who popularized the view of the sublime as an oxymoronic sensation, inducing both attraction and repulsion or what he called a "delightful horror" (67). In Kant's idealist model, formulated in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), the sublime triggered a similarly mixed feeling and instilled a "negative pleasure" (129). We cannot represent the overwhelming natural object, which is too vast or powerful to frame, Kant believed, but at least our transcendental faculty of reason can represent this impossibility of representation. In this display of Socratic table-turning, we manage to transcend not only our own epistemic failure but also the physical source of terror and the empirical world at large. The Kantian sublime thus "reveals a capacity for judging ourselves as independent of [nature] and a superiority over nature on which is grounded a self-preservation of quite another kind than that which can be threatened and endangered by nature outside us" (145).

Arguably, it is Kant's idealist power fantasy and its lack of interest in material reality that has inspired scholars such as Donna Haraway to construe the sublime as a disembodied and self-empowering experience of *ekstasis*, transporting the self beyond animality and nature. A number of ecocritics, however, have suggested that the sublime occasionally dramatizes an experience of intense embodiment, rooting the subject

firmly in the visceral and biological. In *Beast and Man* (1979), most notably, Mary Midgley takes issue with Kant's sublime and its tendency to recuperate natural magnitude as a mere symbol of our rational power and subjective autonomy (346). She draws attention to a scene in Iris Murdoch's *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970) to illustrate how the overwhelming insight into "the sheer alien pointless independent existence of animals, birds, stones and trees" can throw us out of our ethereal self-centered perspective, thus granting us an insight into biological interdependence and our fragile physicality:

I am looking out of my window in an anxious and resentful state of mind, oblivious of my surroundings, brooding perhaps on some damage done to my prestige. Then suddenly I observe a hovering kestrel. In a moment everything is altered. The brooding self with its hurt vanity has disappeared. There is nothing now but kestrel. And when I return to thinking of the other matter it seems less important. (Murdoch 84)

Midgley's theory was not without its shortcomings, addressing as it did the sublime in a rather cursory, hit-and-run way at the end of a voluminous study. In a belligerent response, Keith Tester pointed to the "feelings of horror, fear, and loathing" (30) provoked by Burke's model to drive home that "the sublime cannot be the basis of a morality" and that "Beast and Man turns around an empty rhetoric" (31). Midgley's ecological rehabilitation of the sublime, indeed, offered a rather biased account, which underplayed the sublime's psychology of terror and all too eagerly foregrounded its cathartic emotions of "admiration, reverence and respect," which Burke (53) in fact only considered residual effects of the sublime.

Christopher Hitt's article "Toward an Ecological Sublime" (1999) formulated a more convincing environmentalist interpretation, as it acknowledged the sublime's alienating violence and problematized rather than simply brushed aside its inherent tendency towards self-apotheosis. Relying on Neil Evernden's *The Social Creation of Nature* (1992), Hitt assembles an ecological model that follows Kant's trajectory without subscribing to its logocentrism or anthropocentrism. Hitt mostly draws on Evernden's description of a violent confrontation with nature's otherness, a confrontation that is so unmediated and powerful that it instantly short-circuits the subject's rationalizing skills and cleanses its "conceptual pollution of nature" (Evernden 50). "The initial reaction," Evernden writes, "to the awareness of something existing *other than me* is, surely, astonishment: radical astonishment. If, in the narcissistic dawn of a person's awareness, there comes a realization that this 'center' is not unique, the world reels" (111). Hitt (613-14) rightly

wonders to what extent this unsettling insight into nature's otherness differs from Kant's subjectivist and profoundly anti-environmental sublime. The difference is, he argues, that this ecological sublime "is only possible outside the realm of conceptualization [...]. By contrast, the estrangement of subject and object mandated by the Kantian sublime depends [...] on logos — on the emergence of what Kant calls 'reason'" (614). In Kant, he concludes, the triumph of reason humiliates nature; in the ecological sublime the triumph of nature humiliates reason (616-17). Whereas Kant's sublime, in other words, uproots the human mind and transports it to transcendental heights, the ecological sublime stimulates a profound awareness of our interaction with the material world as organic beings. In Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798), for instance, the terrifying confrontation with the gruesome water-snakes — "slimy things did crawl with legs / Upon the slimy sea" (125-26) — arrests the Mariner's appropriation of nature by violently cleansing the physical world of human meaning and restoring the animal's otherness in a kind of return of the repressed. Instead of carrying the Mariner upwards through a Platonic flight of the mind, this sublime experience emphasizes his vulnerability as a corporeal being and fosters an ecological understanding of natural interdependence. In an overly scholastic and somewhat tame conclusion, then, the Mariner lectures: "He prayeth well, who loveth well / Both man and bird and beast" (612-13).

Becoming-Animal and the Sublime. It is no coincidence that Deleuze and Guattari first elaborated their theory of becoming-animal in their study on Franz Kafka, an author whose writings frequently explore species mutations and feature both animalized humans (Gregor Samsa, the Hunger Artist) and humanized animals (Red Peter, Josephine).⁵ Kafka's interest in animality certainly ties in with his general concern with the oppressed and the marginal, but when the travelling salesman Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning to realize he has changed into a cockroach, Kafka is doing more than just making literal or explicit the capitalist dehumanization of labor. Gregor's becoming-animal, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is not so much a logical, if extreme, outcome of his loss of humanity as it is a positive, emancipating dynamic of self-reinvention that "stake[s] out the path of escape" and that allows him to roam freely below the radar of the patriarchal and the capitalistic (*Kafka* 13). "Gregor becomes a cockroach," they write, "not to flee his father but rather to find an escape where his father didn't know to find one, in order to flee the director, the business and the bureaucrats" (*Kafka* 13). It is also in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975) that Deleuze and Guattari's lack of interest in the animal's biological nature and social emancipation becomes most evident. "Kafka's animal tales," they assert, "were written just before *The Trial* or at the same time as it, like a sort of counterpoint to the novel which liberates itself from all animal concern to the benefit of a much higher concern" (15).⁶

That Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-animal takes little or no interest in animal life is not necessarily a shortcoming on their part, however. Despite their frequent reliance on a zoological lexicon, after all, they never claimed that becoming-animal developed from a deeply moral concern with the rights and relevance of the non-human. Even so, why introduce a concept as morally charged as animality in an ethical and biological discourse when one is not fundamentally interested in it? More questionable still is Deleuze and Guattari's tendency to reduce animality to a site of non-identity, social anarchy, and freewheeling sexual desire, as if dogs cannot be patriarchal fascists and pigs cannot have Oedipal fixations. While they repeatedly urge woman to become-woman, they never encourage the non-human animal to become-animal, a neglect that demonstrates not only their poor zoological knowledge but also their lack of insight into the biology of ideology.

Deleuze and Guattari's deliberate obscurantism and typically postmodern suspicion of rhetorical clarity renders their theory resistant to straightforward explanation and, what is worse, extremely prone to misinterpretation. Problematically enough, becoming-animal constitutes an autological concept that rigorously practices what it preaches. If it lacks stable, linear meaning, this lack is precisely one of its defining characteristics and serves to underline Deleuze and Guattari's general distrust of semantic stability and transparency. To formulate a straightforward definition of becoming-animal, then, would run counter to its precepts and eviscerate the concept of its meaning and strength. Is it, nevertheless, possible to strip becoming-animal of Deleuze and Guattari's obscure jargonizing and rhapsodizing without domesticating it into a tame schoolbook definition? Deleuze's use of the concept in his study *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981) might create some much-required transparency. Bacon's portraits often remove the personality and humanity of their subjects by distorting their faces into amorphous heads and reducing their bodies to lumps of flesh and meat. Bacon does not simply transform or deform his characters into beasts, but he creates a graphic interspace where species attributes conjoin and engage in a monstrous assemblage, the dynamism of which is brought home by Bacon's long, curving brush strokes. The people in his portraits, as a result, no longer look like humans, but neither have they much in common with any animal we know. Bacon's paintings, Deleuze clarifies, establish "a zone of the indiscernible, of the undecidable, between man and animal" (Bacon 21). Becoming-animal, indeed, is a reciprocal process of desubjectification and designification that explodes the human-animal dualism and configures an extremely volatile and protean concept of identity out of its debris, an identity fluctuating along

the constantly changing dynamic of becoming, not firmly based on the ontological stability of being.

What Deleuze and Guattari aim to deconstruct, however, is not so much the human-animal dichotomy as dualistic thinking in general. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the second volume of their double study *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, they take up the concept of becoming-animal again to open up its meaning by juxtaposing it with a number of other becomings. Man, they argue here, should reject his inclination towards binary and rigidly centralized systems of thought by becoming-animal, becoming-woman, becoming-girl, becoming-nomad: in short, by becoming-minoritarian. All these becomings are becomings-molecular, a concept Deleuze and Guattari define in opposition to molarity: “the animal, flower, or stone one becomes are molecular collectivities, haecceities, not molar subjects, objects, or form[s] that we know from the outside and recognize from experience, through science, or by habit” (*Plateaus* 303). Whereas the molar pertains to firm, stable and centralized blocks of being, such as the state or the family, the molecular involves a heterogeneous and chaotic group or pack that swarms too quickly and erratically to be controlled by an immobile, legislating center. These becomings-molecular, then, participate in a larger epistemological and political project which seeks to subvert the monopolistic dominance of the tree model in Western thinking (family trees, biblical trees of knowledge, Darwin’s tree of life, Chomsky’s grammatical tree) and to replace this so-called arborescent model of classification with a rhizomatic system, that is, “an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states” (*Plateaus* 23). This rhizomatic model privileges chaotic excess over ascetic structuralism, fragmentation over unity, wildness over domesticity, or — in aesthetic terms — sublimity over beauty.

Deleuze and Guattari’s critical silence on the sublime is surprising, especially considering the concept’s commanding position in postmodern thinking and the interest Deleuze had previously expressed in Kantian aesthetics.⁷ Although the sublime and becoming-animal conceptualize a very similar confrontation with an otherness (transcendental, natural, animal, racial, sexual) that arrests the self’s cognitive skills and that uproots and transports the subject beyond a certain threshold, very few critics, in fact, have cared to comment on, if they noticed at all, the extent to which Deleuze and Guattari’s concept is indebted to the aesthetic of the sublime. In his article “What Does Becoming-Animal Look Like?” (2002), Steve Baker offers an interesting discussion of species transgressions in contemporary visual and performance arts, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical apparatus and in particular on their claim that “writing is a becoming” (*Plateaus* 265). Baker, however, never refers to the sublime, even

though his analysis of the writer's and artist's self-transformative professions frequently enters its discursive territory, as when he quotes a fragment from the feminist writer and philosopher Hélène Cixous. Cixous describes the creative act as both an exhilarating and terrifying experience: "To be lifted up one morning, snatched off the ground, swung in the air. [...] To fall asleep a mouse and wake up an eagle! What delight! What terror" (qtd. in Baker 75). That delight and terror — the two dominant emotions of the sublime — recur time and again, Baker notices, in the artist's creative encounter with animality (84). When describing their shark encounters, for instance, the British artist duo Olly and Suzi talk about "the wonder, the horror" of the experience (qtd. in Baker 84). Even when Baker questions the relevance of the aesthetic of the beautiful in postmodern animal art (93), he fails or chooses not to make what could have been an insightful excursion into Burkean or Kantian aesthetics.

Let us briefly look at the epistemological, ontological, and moral similarities between the Romantic sublime and the dynamic of becoming-animal. The object triggering the experience of the sublime, such as a storm or predator, defies easy conceptualization and thereby calls into question our rational grip on the empirical world. In Thomas Weiskel's semiotic analysis, the sublime "is that moment when the relation between the signifier and signified breaks down and is replaced by an indeterminate relation" (qtd. in Portia Williams Weiskel xiii). Weiskel's apocalyptic interpretation of the sublime as an epistemological breakdown resonates in Deleuze and Guattari's definition of becoming-animal. "To become animal," they write, "is [...] to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs" (*Kafka* 13). While the Romantic sublime initially triggers a disintegration or becoming-animal of the subject, it only seems to do so in order to construct and legitimate an even more enclosed and centralized identity afterwards.⁸ And yet, the traumatic memory of the sublime significantly spoils the pleasure of this reconstruction and turns it into a very mixed experience. The impression remains that the mind forms only a very fragile unity that can easily be undone and shattered again. Even if Kant's recomposed subject looks more seamless and self-contained than ever before, Kant cannot rule out the possibility that next time the sublime recuperation of the self will be less successful and will give birth to a hideously fragmented creature like Frankenstein's Monster, with the stitches still visible. It is this trauma of the sublime which increasingly came into focus during the eighteenth century and which relates the sublime most intimately to Deleuze and Guattari's theory of becoming.

In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), David Hume rejected the idea central to Kant's and Burke's aesthetic theories, which suggested that the sublime mixture of pain and pleasure ultimately consolidates a sense of self:

There are some philosophers who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our self; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity. The strongest sensation, the most violent passion, say they, instead of distracting us from this view, only fix it the more intensely, and make us consider their influence on self either by their pain or pleasure. (299)

Just as Deleuze and Guattari deny the existence of a stable metaphysical sense of identity, Hume argued that we have no "idea of *self*" (299) and that we "are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (300). While the Romantics dramatically exploited that Humean condition in which the subject lacked any ground and threatened to disintegrate into thin air, in the end they still chose to fixate the molecular flux into a stable molar centre, whether it be Kant's logocentrism or Burke's phallogentrism. This final, compensating phase of the sublime, however, does not drastically reduce its similarity to the dynamic of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari, too, recognize that — to repeat Brian Massumi's metaphor (48) — all muck eventually becomes rock and all molecular systems sooner or later coagulate into stable molar ones: "no flow, no becoming-molecular," they write, "escapes from a molar formation without molar components accompanying it" (*Plateaus* 334).

The dynamic of becoming combines a destructive process of fragmentation with a creative process of transformation, a double movement that also characterizes the experience of the sublime. The Kantian self primarily draws on the material world to inflate its own subjectivity, so that the limitlessness of the seascape or the awe-inspiring power of the tiger eventually come to signify the infinite power of human reason. In his "Essay on the Sublime," by the same token, John Baillie writes that "[t]he *Sublime*, when it exists *simple* and unmixed, by filling the *mind* with *one vast and uniform Idea*, affects it with a solemn Sedateness; by this means the Soul itself becomes, as it were, *one simple grand Sensation*" (97). This introjection of otherness to aggrandize the power of the self is a very risky undertaking, however. In line with the homeopathic principle, Burke argued that terror causes a brief moment of mental instability which may cure the subject of a "dangerous and troublesome incumbrance" (123). While he puts the emphasis in his theory on the curative and invigorating rather than the potentially

psychotic effects of the sublime, it is difficult to ignore the risk of permanent mental trauma. When he writes, for instance, that during the experience of astonishment “the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it,” Burke (53) seems to describe a pathology of clinical shock and obsessive neurosis possibly leading to schizophrenia. Weiskel similarly suggests that the sublime may conclude with madness: “If you do not recover from the second phase, you are likely to replay the precipitating occasion in an involuntary repetition compulsion (like the Ancient Mariner), a disorder Burke finds frequent in madmen” (97).

These schizophrenic effects would come to the foreground in postmodern theories on the sublime. Fredric Jameson, for example, relates Burke’s aesthetic of fear to the “schizophrenic dissolution of the boring old bourgeois ego” in consumer culture (“Pleasure” 71). He interprets schizophrenia in a Lacanian sense, as a disruption of the relationship between signifier and signified: “when the links of the signifying chain snap,” Jameson writes, “then we have schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers” (*Postmodernism* 26). Jameson’s semiotic approach to schizophrenia calls to mind Weiskel’s sublime as well as Deleuze and Guattari’s process of becoming-animal. The difference is that while Deleuze and Guattari unreservedly celebrate the schizophrenic’s transcendence of binary thinking, Jameson takes a more ambivalent view. On the one hand, he seems to mourn the late capitalist loss of meaning and subjectivity, and writes that “schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link into a coherent sequence. The schizophrenic does not know personal identity” (“Postmodernism” 119). On the other hand, Jameson recognizes that in its cultural manifestations, schizophrenia “becomes available for more joyous intensities, for precisely that euphoria which we saw displacing the older affects of anxiety and alienation” (*Postmodernism* 29). It is this positive evaluation of sublime schizophrenia as a creative rather than destructive frame of mind that we also come across in Deleuze and Guattari’s theory and in Romantic texts such as “The Ancient Mariner.” Allowing several, conflicting identities to thrive within the same mental space, the schizophrenic, Deleuze and Guattari believe, constitutes a becoming or a Body without Organs, a being-in-progress that escapes the molar processes of dualization and linear signification. The schizoid, they argue, “does not reduce two contraries to an identity of the same; he affirms their distance as that which relates the two as different” (*Anti-Oedipus* 85).

The keyword that links the schizoid effects of the sublime to Deleuze and Guattari's becoming is contagion. Becoming-animal, Deleuze and Guattari claim, does not spread through procreation between two creatures of the same species in a straight line of descent, in the way that a father "becomes" his daughter. Instead, it spreads "by contagion, epidemics, battlefields, and catastrophes," and proliferates in a horizontal line between heterogeneous elements, such as a human and an animal (*Plateaus* 266). The sublime has similarly been conceived of as a contagion that catches the subject by surprise and contaminates its thinking with power, insight and rhetorical wit or, if things go wrong, with disorientation and hysteria. For Longinus, sublime passion induces a kind of delirium or "madness" in the orator (51). Commenting on Longinus's rhetorical model, Philip Shaw claims that "one does not learn the sublime; one catches it, like a divine contagion" (13). The rhetorical sublime inflames not only the speaker but also the listener. In *Clio; or a Discourse on Taste* (1769), James Usher writes that the "enthusiastic orator expresses his own feelings, and his discourse is infectious" (152). The eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher, Thomas Reid (178) suggests that "no passions are so infectious as those which hold of enthusiasm" and Burke similarly talks about "the contagion of our passions" (160).

If the sublime is an epidemic discourse inducing obsessive neurosis and schizophrenia, then the beautiful is an aesthetic of mental stability and physical relaxation, an aesthetic that eventually engenders — in a straight line of descent — a unitary and homogeneous subject. Unlike the sublime becoming, the beautiful does not transform the self by contagion or violent intrusion, but, as Burke writes, "we enter willingly into a kind of relation with" beautiful objects and experience "love, or some passion similar to it" (39). This affection is not the passionate, self-forgetful feeling or "exercise in depersonalization" that Deleuze and Guattari have in mind when they talk about love (*Plateaus* 40). Sexuality, they argue, is a self-undermining experience that produces "the becoming-woman of the man and the becoming-animal of the human" (*Plateaus* 307). Burke, who wanted to avoid such a loss of male subjectivity at all cost, emphatically distinguished love from physical desire and lust. Beauty is a "social quality," he wrote, and "the passion caused by beauty, which I call love, is different from desire" (39, 83). Burke's aesthetic, critics have noticed, presents an Oedipal sublimation of desire, whereby the subject's lust for the mother is purified into a love for the beautiful and its sentiments of fear and loathing towards the father are sanitized into noble expressions of awe and admiration.⁹ This oedipalization of desire is one of the main targets of Deleuze and Guattari's criticism in their study *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Desire, they claim, needs to be controlled by the family's triangular relationship because it "is revolutionary in its essence [...] and no society can

tolerate a position of real desire without its structures of exploitation, servitude, and hierarchy being comprised" (*Anti-Oedipus* 126-27).

Even though Deleuze and Guattari introduce becoming-animal as an emancipating dynamic that liberates minoritarian individuals from patriarchal control, their philosophy remains characterized by moral ambiguity and seems — very much like the sublime — to operate above party politics. Since they regard the political establishment as an arborescent or molar organisation through and through, it is only logical that their concept of becoming remains far removed from any institutionalized political programme. Brian Massumi's attempt at pinpointing some historical manifestations of a molecular politics illustrates just how closely Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy leans towards anarchy (120-21). He includes, among others, the student riots of May '68, squatters and extraparliamentary greens in Northern Europe, and the radical splinter groups of feminism and other liberation movements. More importantly, Massumi points out that political systems rarely manifest themselves as purely molar or molecular bodies: "A society [...] is an endless tug-of-war between the cancerous limitative body without organs of fascism-paranoia and the viral nonlimitative body without organs of anarchy-schizophrenia" (119-20). Deleuze and Guattari similarly emphasize that the distinction between the arborescent and the rhizomatic is not absolute and that even the extremely molar organization of the fascist state draws on rhizomatic strategies to propagate its ideas. In the same vein, the sublime is primarily an aesthetic category without straightforward moral implications. Thomas Weiskel, for instance, very aptly concludes that

Anyone who reads into the tradition of speculation about the sublime knows in what a variety of ideologies the sublime moment finds a central place. What happens to you standing at the edge of the infinite spaces can be made, theoretically, to "mean" just about anything. (28)

The Beautiful and Sublime in Blake's Lyca Poems. When William Blake wrote and designed his illustrated collection *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789-1794), he meant to create a total work of art in which word and image worked in tandem and supplemented rather than simply complemented each other.¹⁰ What is striking about the visual designs is that nearly all of them depict trees, roots, branches, or leaves, botanical elements that underscore the environmentalist character of the poems and make explicit the pastoral tradition within which Blake was writing. Saree Makdisi has singled out two types of trees in Blake's plates: the isolated, vertical tree, which functions as a symbol of autocratic oppression and also figured in Burke's and

Wordsworth's writings as an organic metaphor for conservative morality and traditional class hierarchies; and an extremely flexible kind of tree, which seems to curve strangely in the wind or to mutate halfway into a horizontal bush (177-78). It is this dynamic species that Makdisi links, if tentatively, to Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic system of thought.

The chaotic knitwork of trunks and branches that frames the Songs indeed serves as a particularly fitting image of the rhizomatic power structure which Blake seems to advance in his poetry, that is, a power structure where patriarchal centers appear either absent or emasculated, and where it is instead heterogeneous packs of children, outcasts, and animals that dictate the verse. Mary and Rodney Baine have signalled, moreover, that Blake's poetry and designs abound with species transformations and becomings whereby humans and animals come to participate in an economy of humanization, dehumanization, and rehumanization (573-75). Especially in Blake's later work, Vincent Arthur De Luca points out, this loss and recovery of selfhood takes on a very physical character and often induces a sublime effect (73). In line with the experience of the sublime, the metamorphoses in Blake's poetry highlight the traffic between the self and other, and in doing so, demonstrate the fragility and mutability of the human subject. This sublime traffic is, importantly, a two-way movement that affects the animal and the human alike, and that provokes both humanizations and animalizations. In *Jerusalem* (1804-1820), for instance, "Lion, Tyger, Horse, Elephant, Eagle, Dove, Fly, Worm" all appear to "Humanize / In the forgiveness of Sins" (98: 43-45).¹¹ In *Vala, or the Four Zoas* (1797-1807), on the other hand, it is humans who lose their subjectivity and regress into animal forms: "Then he beheld the forms of tygers & of Lions dishumanizd men / Many in serpents & in worms stretchd out enormous length" ("Night the Sixth" 70: 34-35).¹²

First included in *Songs of Innocence* (1789) but relocated to *Experience* when the combined volume *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* was published in 1794, "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found" further develop the *Songs'* thematic interest in the child's rite of passage from a dualistic worldview to one that integrates and reconciles opposites, such as domesticity versus wildness, feminine love versus masculine sexuality, infancy versus parenthood, and human vulnerability versus brutal violence. In the first poem, the prepubescent girl Lyca wanders off from her parents and is eventually adopted or abducted by a pack of lions, tigers, and leopards. In the second poem, the parents meet the "beasts of prey" in a surreal and terrifying encounter, which unexpectedly concludes with a millennial scene of reconciliation as the parents follow the animals into their cave to find their daughter Lyca.

On an aesthetic level, the two poems record the transition from the naively pastoral world of the beautiful to the ambiguously chaotic realm of the sublime. Enticed by “wild birds song,” the seven-year-old Lyca strays into “the desert wild” to eventually encounter “the beasts of prey” that “Come from Caverns deep” (“Lost” 16, 7, 34, 35). The “Lovely Lyca,” as Blake characterizes her time and again, presents an obvious image of Burke’s and Kant’s aesthetic of the beautiful, which was typically seen as a feminine category, and reduced woman to a passive object of male desire. Beauty, Burke argued in his *Enquiry*, “is highest [...] in the female sex,” and “almost always carries with it an idea of weakness and imperfection” (100). That the girl falls asleep before the beasts of prey arrive only compounds her weakness and reinforces her function as an object of Burke’s concept of the beautiful. When Lyca, then, ventures into the desert, she enters the no man’s land of the sublime, where both moral and species boundaries appear extremely precarious. The inhabitants of Blake’s desert — lions, leopards and tigers — represent the typical features of the sublime, such as wildness, exoticism, and terror. Wild animals recur as symbols of the sublime in Blake’s poetry. In “The Tyger” and “Night,” both published in the *Songs*, the predator produces the characteristically Burkean mixture of admiration and terror, and in doing so, reflects Blake’s ongoing struggle to formulate a satisfying answer to the theological problem of evil, a problem famously expressed in that line from “The Tyger”: “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?” (20). That moral question is also left open in the Lyca poems. While the animals are initially negatively characterized as “beasts of prey,” a few lines later the lion receives the epithet “kingly” and in “The Little Girl Found” it even appears to wear a “crown” (“Lost” 34, 37; “Found” 37). The animals’ habitat is similarly first referred to in “Lost” as “caverns” and “caves,” but it becomes a “palace” in “Found” (“Lost” 35, 52; “Found” 43). Since their moral nature and motives remain obscure throughout, it is not entirely clear whether the lion’s licking and the lioness’s undressing of Lyca should be interpreted as expressions of sexual or carnivorous appetite or, more innocently, as parental gestures of care and concern:

While the lion old
Bowed his mane of gold,

And her bosom lick,
And upon her neck,
From his eyes of flame,
Ruby tears there came;

While the lioness

Loosed her slender dress,
 And naked they conveyed
 To caves the sleeping maid. ("Lost" 43-52)

Blake's pronouncedly sexual imagery and the soft-core pornographic designs have motivated a number of critics to read the Lyca poems as a sexual initiation or what Robert Gleckner describes as a "rape of experience" (223).¹³ Gleckner's interpretation fits the category of the sublime, which has similarly been conceived of as a masculinist discourse of rape and sexual harassment. In his treatise *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704), for instance, the English dramatist and critic John Dennis describes the sublime as a "pleasing Rape upon the very Soul of the Reader" (37), and in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990) Terry Eagleton similarly indicates that it is "a lawless masculine force which violates yet perpetually renews the feminine enclosure of beauty" (54). The bestial rape — or near rape — of Lyca, then, drives home how the aesthetic of the beautiful in both Burke and Kant is constantly under the threat of being overpowered and ingested by the masculinist sublime.

The psychological effects of the sublime surface most dramatically in the second poem, in which the parents encounter the wild animals and are eventually escorted to their daughter. This encounter is first presented as an immobilizing experience of fear and terror until the lion licks the mother's hand, and the parents' initial feelings of horror are replaced with a sense of "deep surprise" and "wondering," also the primary emotional response to the sublime ("Found" 34, 35). "The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*," Burke writes in his *Philosophical Enquiry*, "is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror" (53). The licking, which still looked ambiguously sexual and carnivorous in the first poem, now appears as an unequivocal act of sympathy and initiates a millennial reconciliation of opposites. Such a radical change also characterized the moral trajectory of Blake's "Night," but there the reconciliation between predator and prey was only achieved after the violent catharsis of slaughter and ingestion, something that is perhaps implied in the Lyca poems, yet never made explicit:

When wolves and tigers howl for prey,
 They pitying stand and weep;
 Seeking to drive their thirst away,
 And keep them from the sheep
 But if they rush dreadful,
 The angels, most heedful,

Receive each mild spirit,
 New worlds to inherit.
 [...]

And now beside thee, bleating lamb,
 I can lie down and sleep;
 Or think on Him who bore thy name,
 Graze after thee and weep.
 For, wash'd in life's river
 My bright mane for ever.
 Shall shine like the gold
 As I guard o'er the fold. ("Night" 25-32, 41-48)

Focusing on the politics of meat in "Night," Gleckner maintains that "[t]he lion achieves pity by giving vent to his wrath; the lion becomes the Lamb by devouring the lamb" (124). Gleckner's interpretation of ingestion as a symbolic process of introjection implicitly draws on Freud's anthropological discussion of cannibalism in *Totem and Taboo* (1913). "By incorporating parts of a person's body through the act of eating," Freud argues, "one at the same time acquires the qualities possessed by him" (82). This belief in the transfer of psychological qualities between the eater and the eaten also affects non-cannibalistic dietary habits and explains certain social food restrictions. "A woman who is with child," Freud points out, "will avoid eating the flesh of certain animals for fear that any undesirable qualities they may have (cowardice, for instance) might be passed over to the child that is nourished by her" (82). In Blake's "Night," then, there is both a physical and psychological transfer. The lamb becomes the lion or at least becomes part of its physiology, and the lion becomes the lamb by inheriting its meekness, passivism and vegetarianism.

Lyca's Becoming-Animal. From the beginning of the poems, Lyca's human nature is called into question by the etymological origin of her name, which derives from the Greek word for *wolf*. As a portrait of a lupine child of sorts, Blake's double poem partakes of the Romantic interest in the noble savage and, more specifically, in infants that had been raised by animals and had developed into an in-between species. While there existed no scientific consensus on the meaning of these feral children, they suggested that the human subject was a seriously fragmented and changeable creature, split between its animal nature and human nurture.¹⁴ The becoming-animal of these savage children, Deleuze and Guattari argue,

is not a question of a real production, as if the child “really” became an animal; nor is it a question of a resemblance, as if the child imitated animals that really raised it; nor is it a question of a symbolic metaphor, as if the autistic child that was abandoned or lost merely became the “analogue” of an animal. (*Plateaus* 301)

Similarly, Lyca’s becoming-animal is not produced by a conscious imitation or identification with the animal, but it is the outcome of her inscription in what Jacques Derrida calls the “sacrificial structure” of sexual and dietary consumption (112). It is in sexuality, Deleuze and Guattari write, that man becomes woman and that the human becomes animal (*Plateaus* 307). Although they stress that this sexual becoming does not require bestiality, Lyca’s transformation seems triggered by an inverted form of zoophilia, whereby the animal engages in a sexual relationship with the human.

Stripped of her clothes, Lyca is reduced to flesh for both carnivorous and sexual consumption. The idea of being eaten — by humans or other animals — is traditionally considered unnatural and horrifying because it redefines the power relationship between the eater and the eaten, and implies a final and irreversible loss of human subjectivity and agency. Not surprisingly, the Bible regarded the denial of a proper burial and the resultant risk of becoming food for carrion eaters as extremely degrading punishments. Goliath, for example, threatens to feed David’s body to scavengers: “I will give thy flesh,” he says, “unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field” (1 Sam. 17: 44). To become prey or meat, indeed, implies a passivity and objectification to which usually only non-human creatures are subjected, and it is thus a kind of becoming-animal. “Meat,” Deleuze writes in his discussion of Francis Bacon’s portrait studies, “is the common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility,” and he quotes a fragment from an interview with Bacon, saying: “Of course, we are meat, we are potential carcasses. If I go into a butcher shop I always think it’s surprising that I wasn’t there instead of the animal” (*Bacon* 23, 24). Even the ingestion of an animal that had died a natural death or had been killed by other animals was considered taboo in the Bible, since it bypassed human involvement and animalized the eater into a scavenger. In Leviticus (17: 15) it is said that “every soul that eateth that which died of itself, or that which was torn with beasts, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean.” It is these unclean, almost contagious acts of becoming-prey or becoming-scavenger that Deleuze and Guattari seem to be thinking of when they formulate their theory of becoming-animal, which displays very similar viral characteristics.

In the first poem, “The Little Girl Lost,” however, Lyca’s dehumanization results not so much from a subversive becoming-animal as from a degrading animalization and infantilization, rhetorical mechanisms which also characterized Burke’s and Kant’s aesthetics of the beautiful. Burke’s recurrent association of the beautiful with the feminine and the domesticated created the impression that women were mere pets or, in Mary Wollstonecraft’s wording, “gentle, domestic brutes” (101). In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft argued that women’s

strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves, — the only way women can rise in the world, — by marriage. And this desire making mere animals of them, when they marry they act as such children may be expected to act: — they dress, they paint, and nickname God’s creatures. (83)

Wollstonecraft’s criticism is pertinent in that it emphasizes how the sexual objectification of woman goes hand in hand with the patriarchal domestication of child and animal. “Men,” she writes, “try to secure the good conduct of women by attempting to keep them always in a state of childhood” (101). Immature, speechless and alluring, Lyca, then, is the personification *par excellence* of Burke’s beautiful, and as such finds herself reduced to the status of an animal well before the beasts of prey have a first sniff at her body. In view of this, the wild animals and their stripping of Lyca’s clothes only take the girl’s animalization to a more extreme and explicit level.

But what is the difference between woman’s becoming-animal and her being-animalized? In *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990), Carol Adams has amply demonstrated that woman is always already engaged in a desubjectifying process that reduces her to a bestialized object of desire. Both woman and animal, she claims, are first objectified, then fragmented into consumable body parts (breasts and genitalia, or spare ribs and steaks), and finally visually and orally ingested (47). Adams’s moral evaluation of the mechanism of animalization, needless to say, is quite different from Deleuze and Guattari’s. While Adams regards the bestialization of woman as a masculinist strategy to muzzle and consume female otherness, Deleuze and Guattari interpret becoming-animal as an emancipating movement that liberates woman and animal from their second-rate positions within patriarchal society. Interestingly, the main targets of Adams’s sexual politics — objectification, fragmentation, and consumption — refigure in Deleuze and Guattari’s theory as the primary instruments in a deconstruction of the male subject. What makes objectification and fragmentation victimizing mechanisms, then, is not so much their intrinsic structure as their exclusive application to woman

and animal. Instead of trying to reassemble a stable sense of female or animal identity and reaffirm a dualistic conception of gender and species — as feminist and animal rights groups might want to do — Deleuze and Guattari seek to dismember, disorganize, and ingest man like an animal, so that man becomes what they call a Body without Organs. Man, too, should — to put Adams’s phrases to new use — be “rendered being-less,” “severed from [his] ontological meaning,” and finally subjected to a total “annihilation of [...] identity” (47).

The victimizing process of animalization only turns into the emancipating performance of becoming-animal when it affects both parties equally and thereby undercuts the idea of a stable human and animal identity. “Man becomes animal,” Deleuze writes, “but he does not become so without the animal simultaneously becoming spirit, the spirit of man” (*Bacon* 21). This spiritualization of the material body is precisely what happens in “The Little Girl Found” when the lion is stripped of its physicality and transforms into “A spirit arm’d in gold” (36). As their speech, tears, and palace bear out, the beasts of prey now appear to display human and superhuman characteristics without, however, entirely losing their animality. So, while in Burke’s aesthetic of the beautiful the discourses of animalization and infantilization forced woman to regress to the pet-like state of the child or the childlike state of the pet, in Blake’s poetics of becoming these discourses are enlisted in a subversive programme that seeks to counteract the marginalization and consumption of female and animal otherness by staking out a zone of indiscernibility where both man and woman, human and animal are stripped of their identity and species. It is not just that humans become animals and that animals become humans, but more that the signifier of species loses its stable significance and becomes, as Deleuze and Guattari would put it, undone.

It is no coincidence that the passage into experience crucially hinges on the girl and not on, say, woman or man. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, “[t]he girl and the child do not become; it is becoming itself that is a child or a girl” (*Plateaus* 306). They explain this somewhat vaguely as follows:

girls do not belong to an age group, sex, order, or kingdom: they slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes; [...] the girl is the becoming-woman of each sex, just as the child is the becoming-young of every age. (*Plateaus* 305-306)

Becoming-animal opens up an escape or line of flight from arborescent structures and, more specifically, from the Oedipal family. That the parents eventually find Lyca should not imply that they re-establish closure and that the arborescent family is

reinstated. While there is no radical parricide as Deleuze and Guattari may propose, there is no return of the Oedipal family either, as the poem's title might misleadingly suggest. Lyca's passage into experience is not a passage into the arborescent stability of adulthood, but it causes a caving in of patriarchal structures and transports man, woman and animal into the ontological flux of girlhood.¹⁵ In Blake, the child does not become "father of the Man," as Wordsworth famously put it, but Man becomes child, becomes girl.

Following the predators into their palace, the parents now emulate their daughter's becoming and enter the community of the beasts of prey:

Then they followed
Where the vision led,
And saw their sleeping child
Among tigers wild.

To this day they dwell
In a lonely dell,
Nor fear the wolvis howl
Nor the lion's growl. ("Found" 45-52)

It is these packs of animals and not the individualized pet or the mythical beast that trigger the subject's becoming. Wearing a crown and characterized as "kingly," the lion in the Lyca poems, however, seems to represent a fairly stable nucleus of power in the group's hierarchy, and recalls not the pack animal, but what Deleuze and Guattari classify as the mythical or state animal. State animals, they say, embody arborescence and appear "in the great divine myths, in such a way as to extract from them series or structures, archetypes or models" (Plateaus 265). Even so, since the lion operates as a mediator between the human and the animal, and invites the girl and her parents into a becoming, it may also function as what Deleuze and Guattari elsewhere in their study call the "exceptional individual," which is "a specific animal that draws and occupies the borderline, as leader of the pack," and which triggers the becoming-animal of the molar subjects outside the pack (Plateaus 268, 271). "[W]herever there is multiplicity," they write, "you will also find an exceptional individual, and it is with this individual that an alliance must be made in order to become-animal" (Plateaus 268).

It is in its unstable and inconclusive reconciliation between self and other that Blake's sublime most emphatically takes issue with Burke's and Kant's models. While Burke's

sublime animals — such as “the tiger, the panther, or rhinoceros” (60) — immobilized the subject into submissive veneration of patriarchal power, and Kant’s sublime concluded with the return of a unitary and re-empowered self, Blake’s sublime creates an arena where human and animal continually move in and out of the center without ever settling into fixed identities, or lodging themselves into static hierarchies. The open-ended narrative of the Lyca poems underlines how Blake’s characters are all engaged in a monstrous becoming-animal that, as Deleuze and Guattari phrase it, “has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination” (*Plateaus* 323).

We should be careful, however, of loading Blake’s sublime and Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of becoming-animal with too much environmentalist freight. Though Michel Foucault hailed *Anti-Oedipus* as “a book of ethics” and a practical guide for the “revolutionary militant” (xv), the moral programme that Deleuze and Guattari formulated there and elsewhere remains — often intentionally — fraught with ambiguity and contradiction. My reading of Blake’s Lyca poems should have made clear that if Deleuze and Guattari charge the girl with great revolutionary power, they also reduce her to a sacrificial victim, whose body has to be consumed — sexually or gastronomically — in order to free man and woman from Oedipal desire and patriarchal exploitation. Interestingly enough, this dubious recuperation of sexual victimization as a form of female empowerment also emerged in the Romantic discourses of the beautiful and sublime. Aside from animalizing woman, Burke’s aesthetic of the beautiful also threatens to animalize and disempower man, who — mesmerized and tongue-tied by woman’s beauty — constantly stands in danger of losing his self-control and becoming a passive object of his own sexual desire. Frances Ferguson has pointed out that beauty “recurs throughout the *Enquiry* in the form of a seductive and indirect assault on the reason” (51). Lacking the self-preservative agenda of the sublime, moreover, the beautiful does not caution us against the danger we find ourselves in: it is an alluring trap in which we are caught obliviously and, as Ferguson puts it, “leads us toward death without our awareness” (52). Burke, then, unwittingly invests the beautiful with sublime power, enslaving man and forcing him to become-woman. This menace of the beautiful object becomes clearest when Burke describes the physical appeal of the female body:

Observe that part of a beautiful woman where she is perhaps the most beautiful, about the neck and breasts; the smoothness; the softness; [...] the deceitful maze, through which the unsteady eye slides giddily, without knowing where to fix, or whither it is carried. (105)

Unable to fixate on a steady point, the male objectifying gaze finds itself rendered rudderless and powerless. Inadvertently, woman's beauty may thus have a sublime effect on man, an effect Burke tried to inoculate his theory against by keeping woman at a safe distance and emphasizing that the beautiful should on no account be confused with sexual desire or lust, which involves "violent and tempestuous passions" (83). If for Burke sexual desire was something to be feared, sanitized, and oedipalized, Blake as well as Deleuze and Guattari praised it precisely for its destabilizing potential. Despite this liberating power of female sexuality, however, it remains morally questionable, at the very least, to interpret the eating of girls and other animals as an experience of female and animal emancipation.

So, where does the ecological significance of Blake's sublime and Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-animal lie? Perhaps we should revisit Haraway's scathing attack on the immorality of becoming-animal. It is surprising that Haraway dismisses the ethical working of Deleuze and Guattari's theory when, as several critics have signalled, her own cyborg is so closely related to their Body without Organs.¹⁶ Both creatures are anti-oedipal (Haraway in "A Cyborg Manifesto": "The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family" [151]), they are hybrids ("The cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed" [152]), anti-transcendental ("The transcendent authorization of interpretation is lost, and with it the ontology grounding 'Western' epistemology" [153]), and both are also the monstrous products of an asexual union ("We require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities for our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender" [181]). Since the cyborg and the Body without Organs are so intimately affiliated, I suggest — in what may seem a perverse act of deconstruction — using Haraway's own cyborg to point out the ecological potential of Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-animal.

The emancipatory potential of the cyborg, Haraway believes, resides in its ability to immobilize and transcend dualistic thinking: "a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (154). It is difficult here not to be reminded of Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-animal or Blake's Lyca poems. For Blake as for Deleuze and Guattari, the hybrid body's sublime resistance to aesthetic and biological representation stakes out a site of organic renewal and social emancipation, a site where the subject is immune to the patriarchal procedures of dualization, centralization, and marginalization. Like Deleuze and Guattari, Haraway is aware of the risks involved in this hybrid state. If

becomings also emerge in fascist ideologies and contribute to their rapid metastasization, a cyborg world can similarly announce “the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet, [...] the final appropriation of women’s bodies in a masculinist orgy of war” (154). Liberation, Haraway believes, lies in the ability to inhabit a hybrid perspective on reality and to keep an eye on both the promises and perils of this new cyborg state. “Single vision,” she writes, “produces worse illusions than double vision or many-headed monsters” (154). The moral potential of the cyborg, then, resides not in its fragmented ontological reality (which is morally ambiguous), but in the fragmented epistemology or multiple vision it inspires. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming is far from an inherently moral dynamic, but its dogged resistance to identity-thinking and to essentialist concepts of subjectivity presents the opportunity to move beyond phallogocentric and anthropocentric notions of ontology and morality. Like Blake’s poem “The Sick Rose” — in which a worm penetrates a flower and both form a monstrous and ambiguously sexual alliance — Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming-animal is about accommodating strange bedfellows and celebrating unusual partnerships. Rather than outlining a finished and stable system of ecology, it opens up a much-needed, if speculative and risky, path of escape from conventional conceptions of human-animal relations.

Notes

1. See, for instance, Steve Baker’s “What Does Becoming-Animal Look Like?” (2002), Lori Brown’s “Becoming-Animal in the Flesh: Expanding the Ethical Reach of Deleuze and Guattari’s Tenth Plateau” (2007), James Urpeth’s “Animal Becomings” (2004), and Louise Economides’s “Romantic Individualism, Animal Rights and the Challenge of Multiplicity” (2007).
2. See Lyotard’s *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (1991) and Žižek’s *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989). For a very accessible yet nuanced historical overview of the sublime and its scholarly interpretations, see Philip Shaw’s study *The Sublime* (2006), published in the New Critical Idiom Series.
3. See Samuel Monk (20) in *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England*, and Marjorie Hope Nicolson (29-31) in *Mountain Gloom, Mountain Glory* (1959). “Historians and critics,” Nicolson stresses, “have done little justice to English genius and originality, so far as the Sublime is concerned. Almost unanimously they have insisted that the conception of sublimity as it developed in the eighteenth century had its origin in a rhetorical treatise, that it was the result of ideas expressed in the *Peri Hupsous* of the pseudo-Longinus, as translated and interpreted by Boileau in 1674” (29).

4. Shaw ascribes Burke's preference for the sublime over the beautiful to three phobias: "the lapse of the extraordinary into 'custom'; the collapse of masculinity in the face of female languor; and the fall of heroic identity into social mediocrity" (63).
5. Deleuze and Guattari had in fact already talked about the process of becoming in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), published three years before *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975).
6. Steve Baker (95) already pointed to the anthropocentric tone of this passage in his essay "What Does Becoming-Animal Look Like?"
7. See Deleuze's *Kant's Critical Philosophy* (1963) and especially the section "The Relationship between the Faculties in the Sublime" (50-52).
8. Neil Hertz points out that "although the moment of blockage might have been rendered as one of utter self-loss, it was, even before its recuperation as sublime exaltation, a confirmation of the unitary status of the self" (53). Peter de Bolla (6) similarly argues that the Romantic sublime typically produced an autonomous human subject.
9. For a discussion of the Oedipal characteristics of Burke's aesthetic, see Neil Hertz (53), Ronald Paulson (69-70), and Thomas Weiskel (92-97).
10. For an analysis of the visual designs in the *Songs* and of their importance for the interpretation of the poems, see Zachary Leader (37-59).
11. All references to Blake's poetry are to *The Complete Poems of William Blake* (1977).
12. Vincent Arthur De Luca has spotted a Burkean sublime in these lines: "Not only do the mutants of these visions become 'terrors,' sources of astonishment, but, in a grimly ironic fashion, they themselves become subjects of sublime effect. The 'dishumanized' men of the first passage undergo (as serpents) the experience of incorporating the infinite within the self ('stretchd out enormous length'), or they attain 'height'" (74).
13. Mary and Rodney M. Baine construe the poems as "journeys into the sexuality of adulthood, of experience" (576). Zachary Leader (39) points out that Lyca's premature age seems to dismiss a sexual interpretation, but since the designs depict a much older girl, he suggests her age might be merely symbolic.

14. For a discussion of feral children and their implications for evolutionary science, see Adriana Benzaquén's *Encounters with Children* (2006) and Douglas Candland's *Feral Children and Clever Animals* (1995).

15. Deleuze and Guattari's interpretation of girlhood as a pre-Oedipal and anti-patriarchal stage invites comparison with Julia Kristeva's "feminine semiotic," a concept she developed in her study *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974). Reacting against Lacan's Symbolic Order, which represents the world and language of the father, Kristeva's semiotic refers to prelinguistic drives or feelings that the child experienced before the Oedipal relationship with the father was established. "The semiotic," Anthony Elliott clarifies, "is present in the rhythms, slips, and silences in speech; and it is subversive of the Law of the Father since it is rooted in a pre-patriarchal connection with the feminine" (46). It is not exclusively feminine, however, since it is pre-Oedipal and thus precedes sexual difference.

16. In his recent study *On Ceasing to be Human* (2011), for instance, Gerald Bruns closely links the cyborg to the Body without Organs, underlining mainly their moral relationship: "From a Deleuzian standpoint, a cyborg is a 'line of flight' that escapes the segmentarity of molar organizations. It is not just a kind of entity (a hybrid) but a body without organs whose desires are mobile, unregulated, and [...] capable of multiple forms of satisfaction – in other words, open to experiment. So not surprisingly the cyborg inhabits a 'zone of indiscernibility' between human and animal, even to the point of rescuing bestiality from its long-standing residence as a taboo. [...] Another way to put this would be to say that the cyborg rescues animals from the 'binary machine' that opposes them to human beings" (74-75). For a discussion of the relationship between Haraway's cyborg and the sublime, see Joseph Tabbi's *Postmodern Sublime* (1995).

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