

DELEUZE, GUATTARI, AND APULEIUS: METAMORPHOSES OF MINOR LITERATURE

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Despite this paper's title it is only fair to warn the curious reader that it is not about reading Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, or using modern theory to better understand it. At least this is not its main intention. Instead, my wish is to experiment with the *Metamorphoses*, to wander inside it, to move from the actual to the virtual and the potential; to explore how things connect, proliferate, intensify—rather than learn how they actually are. The paper wishes to provide the readers means whereby they can experience the *Metamorphoses*, rather than examine categories of genres, style, or mode that lead to interpretation of the text. In other words, this paper addresses the *Metamorphoses* as Deleuze and Guattari do in their reading of Kafka's work in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*.¹ It focuses on modes of becomings, motions of desire, operating machines, assemblages, and language. According to Deleuze and Guattari, minor literature demonstrates literature's ability to challenge the major order, to undermine the doxa, to unstitch the seam between signifier and signified. It breaks forms and encourages ruptures and new routes, which forces reconstruction of content in new ways. It produces lines of flight, flows, streams, ramifications, and junctions instead of immobile paradigms and moulds; it prefers multiple centres to a centre and periphery; it relinquishes principles of unity for the benefit of experiencing multiplicity. Minor literature therefore is a political action containing the possibility of subverting the major order governed by structures of language, fixed and steady position, and state apparatuses.²

Entrance

How can we enter the *Metamorphoses*? This work is a rhizome, a burrow. The *Metamorphoses* has multiple entrances whose rule of usage and whose location are not very well known. Let's pick a point, and enter through Milo's house, the place where Lucius is transformed into an ass. The house is located outside the *pomerium*, the 'city limits' (1.21). Its windows overlook the city, and its heavily bolted door is at the rear, giving on to an alleyway. This door isn't the only entrance: Pamphile, Milo's wife and a witch, turns herself into a bird and exits and enters through her chamber's windows; Lucius enters through the *fores* ('gates') of the house and leaves with the robbers (in his new donkey

1. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), originally published (1975).

2. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 16f.

shape) through the stables; the robbers break into the house through its gates. Milo's house is a trap devised by Apuleius, by Pamphile, by Lucius: it is not a house—it is a net, a junction, a rhizome with no priority points, a multiple. And it is the very principle of multiple entrances that 'prevents ingress of the enemy—the Signifier, and those attempts to interpret a work that is actually only open to experimentation'.³

Deterritorialized Language

Modern theories of language argue that each proposition has three dimensions: denotation, which refers to objects; manifestation—the subjective declarative nature; and signification, which attributes meaning through general concepts. However, Gilles Deleuze is not satisfied with these three dimensions. He thinks that they cause stagnation by imposing steady forms, structures, and meanings, and in *The Logic of Sense* he suggests adding a fourth dimension, sense (*sens*).⁴ This dimension differs radically from the preceding three: whereas they belong to 'being' (*être*), sense is a matter of 'becoming' (*devenir*). Sense, according to Deleuze, is indecisive and located at the border of language, and it expresses exactly that which escapes denotation, manifestation, and signification. It does so by proliferating and making the language stutter, thereby rupturing its representative functions and turning common sense and good sense into non-sense. Such unique use of language characterizes minor writing, as it undermines stable connections between signifier and signified, deterritorializes the language, and rejects steady positions and points in favour of dynamic processes of change and becoming.

Apuleius uses language in a unique way, which—as Finkelpearl points out after Callebat—is rich in neologisms; he is a 'confounder of the expected, who manipulates language to show the reversibility and instability of human actions, and...[he] creates through his different linguistic levels expressions to describe his world of new combinations, interconnections and disconnections'.⁵ This describes a classic minoritarian use of language, which deterritorializes it, resists fixated expressions, and opens new ways and possibilities. An even more fascinating minoritarian use of language in the *Metamorphoses* is the

3. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 3. See also (1987), 27f.: 'Thus, when there is no unity in the thing, there is at least unity and identity in the word. It will be noted that names are taken in their *extensive* usage, in other words, function as common nouns ensuring the unification of an aggregate they subsume. The proper name can be nothing more than an extreme case of the common noun, containing its already domesticated multiplicity within itself and linking it to a being or object posited as unique. This jeopardizes, on the side of words and things both, the relation of the proper name as an *intensity* to the multiplicity it instantaneously apprehends...Are we not witnessing the first stirrings of a subsequent adventure, that of the Signifier, the devious despotic agency that substitutes itself for asignifying proper names and replaces multiplicities with the dismal unity of an object declared lost?'

4. Deleuze (1990b), 12–22, originally published (1969).

5. Finkelpearl (2006), 205, after Callebat (1978).

destruction of human voice and representational language which creates common sense. In fact, it is Lucius' loss of human language after his metamorphosis that moves the whole novel. The moment he smears his body with the magic potion (3.24) he realizes that he has acquired the form of an ass rather than a bird, as he had wished. Immediately, he addresses Photis, Pamphile's maid who gave him the concoction, in order to utter his vexation over the unwanted outcome. However, when he tries to speak he realizes that 'human gesture' is not the only thing he has lost: he is 'also deprived of his human voice' (*humano gestu simul et uoce privatus*, 3.25). This destruction of language leaves him with no choice but to bear the situation 'silently' (*demussatus*, 3.26). Nevertheless, he keeps trying to use human language.

His second attempt is made when, after being abducted by the robbers, he tries to address some local Greek villagers he sees, by calling out Caesar's name in his native tongue:

inter ipsas turbelas Graecorum genuino sermone nomen augustum
Caesaris inuocare temptauit; et 'o' quidem tantum disertum ac ualidum
clamitauit, reliquum autem Caesaris nomen enuntiare non potuit.

(3.29)

Among this Greek crowd I tried to invoke the holy name of Caesar in my native tongue. I shouted the 'o' articulately and vigorously, but the rest of Caesar's name I could not utter.⁶

Here Lucius' language becomes a pure sound, a signifier without a signified, an unintelligible cry with no denotation, manifestation, or signification. This, however, happens only in the literary plateau; the novel's readers understand Lucius perfectly. Nevertheless, Apuleius does adhere to a strategy of ambiguous vagueness through his use of language: even here for example it is hard to know whether Lucius is trying to speak Greek—his supposed native language and that of the literary source, or Latin—the actual language of the book, since it is unclear whether *Graecorum* modifies *turbelas* or *sermone*.⁷ The 'o'-sound recurs twice more in the novel when Lucius tries to use language. The first time is when he hears that he is being charged with the robbery at Milo's house. Upset by the lie and the miscarriage of justice he says:

hoc tantum impatientia productus uolui dicere: 'non feci'. et uerbum
quidem praecedens semel ac saepius immodice clamitauit, sequens uero

6. All translations are mine.

7. Finkelppearl (2006), 215. His claim *ibid.* that the 'distinction between Latin and Greek may therefore be irrelevant at 3.29; rather the main distinction is between human and animal talk' as well as the assertion that 'Lucius' "*genuinus sermo*" is human language'—interesting as it is—misses the minoritarian subversive potential of escape-line offered here by Apuleius.

nullo pacto disserere potui, sed in prima remansi uoce et identidem boai
 ‘non non’, quanquam nimia rutunditate pendulas uibrassem labias.⁸
 (7.3)

I wanted to say ‘I did not do it’. The first word I shouted without restraint, but I could not utter the second one. I remained on the first word but repeatedly brayed ‘No! No!’ although I vibrated my hanging lips in circles as much as I could.

The second time is when Lucius cannot tolerate the perverted behaviour of Philibus the priest and his companions:

‘porro Quirites’ proclamare gestiui, sed uiduatum ceteris syllabis ac litteris
 processit ‘o’ tantum sane clarum ac ualidum et asino proprium.
 (8.29)

I tried to cry ‘Help, citizens’, but I uttered just a clear and loud ‘o’—as appropriate to an ass—and the rest of the syllables and letters were lacking.

After his becoming-animal Lucius’ protest against law and religion, two apparatuses of the major order, is not delivered through language. He produces ‘a pure and intense sonorous material that is...connected to its own abolition’.⁹ Lucius’ use of sound dismantles and deterritorializes the language, turning common sense into nonsense and opening a line of flight from the social construct.

The deterritorialization of language through sounds occurs with humans as well. It happens with various degrees of intensity throughout the novel, and it ruptures the structured and representational language. The voice of the old man who exposes the murderous wife in Book 2 is ‘intense’ (*uoce contenta*) and ‘broken by constant sobs’ (*adsiduis singultibus impedita*, 2.27). He produces a loud noise (*instrepebat*) which inflames the citizens, who ‘add’ to the din their own ‘shoutings’ (*conclamatus*, 2.27), which then turns the sound into violent actions. Shouts are released by the crowd, who demand the conviction of Lucius in the fake trial in Book 3 (3.2). This sound soon turns into applause, which then turns into laughter in a chain of various sonorous forms that escape language (as well as logic in this bizarre fabricated trial). The gardener’s wife in Book 4 sees her husband wounded after being attacked by the ass, and immediately starts crying, while shrieking laments (4.3); this sound excites the people of the village, who set off in pursuit of the ass with their dogs in a clamour of noisy barking. The language is constantly ruptured, silenced, driven to its

8. I thank Kyle Khellaf for his observation that even the use of the Latin verb *boo* here is striking, since it seems like a Graecism from *boaō*, and therefore has additional minoritarian qualities.

9. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 6. Lucius refers to the bestial sound vs. human voices at *Flor.* 13, for example, when comparing birdsongs to the speech of philosophers; see also *Flor.* 17.

exteriority. The sounds cross the continuum of situations with varied intensity; they subvert the static lingual structure and produce motions and acts, speeds and intensities, temporary assemblages of humans and animals. In other words, they generate modes of becoming.

Becoming

The deterritorialization of language ruptures the reproducing of structures and generates instead processes of becomings, the first of which is the becoming-animal. Indeed 'it is the language that fixes the limit', as argues Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*, 'but it is the language as well which transcends the limits and restores them to the infinite equivalence of an unlimited becoming.'¹⁰ Pamphile's transformation into a bird is accompanied by a 'shrill querulous hissing' (*stridore querulo*, 3.21); Socrates' slashed throat produces 'undetermined hissing' (*stridorem incertum*, 1.13); Thrasyleon, disguised as a bear, growls like a beast when stabbed to death by the crowd (4.21). These becoming-animals are marked by sonority that ruptures the language and 'breaks away from a chain that is still all too signifying'.¹¹ These are not metaphors nor are they humans turning into a bird or a bear. Rather they mark the release of molecular particles of animals from molar humans.¹² The *stridor* is not an imitation of a bird's sound. It is the release of a sound that already exists in Pamphile's throat, in her vocal cords, a sound which escapes from her once her molar unity is dropped in favour of flows and intensities that cross her. Similarly, the becoming-bear of Thrasyleon does not refer to an imitation of 'bestial growling' (*ferino fremitu*, 4.21); rather it is particles of bestiality that escape from him once extreme violence is actuated on his body. In his becoming, there is no longer subject of expression or enunciation of a subject; the language is erased in favour of lines of flight that liberate 'a living and expressive material that speaks for itself and has no need of being put into a form'.¹³

Thrasyleon's becoming-animal, like the other becomings, opens a zone of indecisiveness that blurs the boundaries between man and animal. It escapes

10. Deleuze (1990b), 2f.

11. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 6.

12. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 34: 'Becoming-animal, becoming-molecular, becoming-inhumane, each involves a molar extension, a human hyperconcentration, or prepares the ways for them.' As in all of their concepts, the terms 'molecular' and 'molar'—introduced in the third chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), 39–74: '10,000 B.C.: The Geology of Morals'—can be understood in various ways and contexts. In terms of stasis and change and in the context of assemblage, the molecular is intensive, prone to change, and suggests parts which are intensively related to one another. The molar, on the other hand, tends towards stasis and in the context of assemblage refers to extensively related parts. The becoming is contrasted with molar stability. In terms of political bodies, 'molar' refers to the state apparatus and the civic world, whereas 'molecular' points at micro-entities. In this context, the motion between the two forms is related to the *event* and to deterritorialization. In relation to *desire*, the molecular is where the desire is generated, and the molar is where it is repressed.

13. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 21.

the mimetic system and the major order and dismantles the molar and stable entity. In this sense every becoming is also becoming-minoritarian, and ‘all becomings are already molecular’.¹⁴ But isn’t Apuleius’ entire novel a text of becoming? The becoming-animal of Lucius is not a figurative way of talking, nor is it a human imitation of an ass. Imitations or analogies merely replicate and reinforce moulds; to see Lucius’ metamorphosis that way is to miss the novel’s subversive potential and the minor politics it offers as a temporary escape from the major order. Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari explain,

metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor. There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense, but only a distribution of states that is part of the range of the word. The thing and other things are no longer anything but intensities overrun by deterritorialized sound or words that are following their line of escape. It is no longer a question of a resemblance between the comportment of an animal and that of a man; it is even less a question of a simple wordplay. There is no longer man or animal, since each deterritorializes the other, in a conjunction of flux, in a continuum of reversible intensities.¹⁵

The *force mineure* of Lucius’ becoming repeatedly dismantles his own molarity (as well as others’). He escapes steady positions in favour of nomadic movements, accidental events, contingent connections, and random experimentations. His becoming disrupts hierarchies and genealogy, which are emphasized before his becoming (in the Preface, in his social ties in Book 1, in his family connection to Byrrhaena), and reappear in the last book with the entrance of the stabilizing religious apparatus of the major order. It also breaks up reason and rationality—as he promises in Book 1 (1.3). Indeed, the whole novel is a process of becoming: becoming-animal, becoming-woman, becoming-sound. Even the novel’s hearers undergo becoming-animal as Apuleius tries to *permulcere*, ‘caress’, their ears (1.1), to unfasten the bridle of their structural set of beliefs, and to lead them to graze his text¹⁶—as bizarre and fantastic as it may sound to those who are confined by (human) structural forms of thoughts.¹⁷ Furthermore, the book itself is in a becoming-human process: in the prologue, as Harrison argues, it is the personified book that talks to the listeners (rather than Lucius or Apuleius).¹⁸

14. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 300.

15. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 22.

16. Cf. *auris remulceo, frenos detraho* (‘I caressed [my horse’s] ears and unfastened his bridles’, *Met.* 1.2).

17. ‘Hey, you’, says Lucius to the credulous listener he meets in the story, ‘with your thick ears and obstinate heart’ (*heus tu...tu uero crassis auribus et obstinato corde*, 1.3). Lucius is pointing to the traveller’s asinine stubbornness that makes him ‘spit out’ (*respuere*) the story of his companion since it does not fit the regular frames—or is, in terms of this paper, the major order.

18. Harrison (1990).

Lucius' becoming-animal (as well as other becomings) occurs through a stream of contingent encounters, accelerations, and decelerations that open new possibilities and generate additional encounters and becomings. In Book 4 Lucius happens to spot some rose bushes whose petals, once consumed, can turn him back into a human. He is so eager that he starts galloping towards them, and states, 'In my extreme speed I became a racing horse and not an ass' (*non asinum me uerum etiam equum currulem nimio uelocitatis effectum*, 4.2). However, the velocity and becoming are blocked by an unexpected encounter with the gardener who owns the roses. His intense violence towards Lucius shifts the horizontal gallop into a vertical assailment position (*lumbis eleuatis in altum*, 'I raised my loins up high', 4.3). The blocking dismantles the galloping body, turning it into agglomerate organs of legs and loins which are caught in 'repeated motion' (*crebriter*, 4.3). When the gardener's wife joins the encounter, followed by all the villagers, a multiplicity is created.¹⁹ This multitude is then enlarged by a pack of dogs who are 'great in size and many in number' (*et modo magnos et numero multos*, 4.3). The assemblage of speeding dogs are becoming-predators that are apt to fight 'like bears and lions' (*ursis ac leonibus ad conpugnandum idoneos*, 4.3). In their rapid movement they generate enormous velocity and together with the villagers and their weapons form a war machine.²⁰ Lucius tries several manoeuvres to escape the enemy; stopped in his escape, he changes direction and gallops towards his stable. But he is eventually caught, and is unplugged from the war machine only when he emits particles of bestiality and sprays the others with his foul diarrhoea.

In other encounters Lucius becomes a racehorse (6.28), a gluttonous camel (7.14), an elephant carrying a burden (7.17, 8.28), a wether among a group of catamites (8.25), and a warhorse (10.1). His becomings create indeterminate areas of in-between and plot lines of flight, yet they never allow freedom.²¹ Lucius' constant attempts to escape his condition never enable exit, only misleading motions in space (even if they are represented as escapes). Sometimes his becoming is becoming-motion itself: in Book 7, during a contingent encounter with a she-bear, Lucius throws back his body weight onto his knees, stretches, raises his neck, and starts rolling down the hill by inclining and throwing his body forwards (7.24). Here Lucius becomes the gallop itself.

19. See additional discussion of multiplicity below in the sections 'Packs and multiplicity' and 'Becoming II'.

20. See the additional discussion of the war machine at n.39 below.

21. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 35. See also (1987), 9f.: 'Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees...That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of the good and the bad. You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still a danger that you will reencounter organizations that re-stratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier, attributions that reconstitute a subject—anything you like, from Oedipal resurgences to fascist concretions. Groups and individuals contain microfascisms just waiting to crystallize.'

The continuum of movements and becomings stresses the imaginary unity of Lucius (and other characters) and opens up a game of possibilities, effects, and desires. The events ceaselessly proliferate and accelerate, constantly creating packs and multiplicities of various intensity. The robbers just sit down around their table, and immediately another gang appears, 'larger in its number' (*plures numero*, 4.8). This group increases the quantity of objects (possessions and fortune), and multiplies the pack: 'beside the big amount of fortune that we obtained by our braveness, we not only returned to our camp with our band unharmed, but we also returned augmented by eight feet' (*praeter tantam fortunae copiam, quam nostra uirtute nacti sumus, et incolumi numero castra nostra petuimus et, si quid ad rem facit, octo pedibus auctiores remeauimus*, 4.8.)

This is a movement from the individual to the pack or the collective multiplicity. There is no subject but a collective, a 'circuit of states that forms a mutual becoming in the heart of a necessary multiple or collective assemblage'.²²

Packs and Multiplicity

In the tale of Psyche, the desire for Cupid throws Psyche into a 'restless motion in diverse directions' (*uariis iactabatur*, 6.1), and propels her through series of movements, speeds, and events. She circulates through the country (5.28); wanders around day and night (6.1); accelerates when climbing a mountain (*citatum gradum*, *ibid.*); retraces her steps (6.3); descends into a valley (*ibid.*); ascends to Venus' palace (6.8); approaches the woods near a river (6.11f.); returns to Venus' palace (6.13); 'increases her pace' again (*studiose gradum celerans*, 6.14) when climbing a mountain; returns yet again to Venus' palace (6.16); advances relentlessly towards a tower in order to kill herself (6.17); descends to the underworld 'without delay' (*nec morata*, 6.20); hastens back (6.20); and finally, although 'hurrying' (*festinanse*, 6.20) to complete her toil, she opens the forbidden jar, falls asleep, and is carried up to heaven (*ibid.*). The movements of acceleration (*citatum, celerans, festinans*) are repeatedly blocked by the hostile divinity, who is herself in a constant motion (6.2). However, these stumbling blocks do not eradicate Psyche's desire but generate more movements, more becomings, further encounters. The motions of alacrity and sloth that occur simultaneously (*interim*: 5.28; 6.11; 6.21; *interea*: 6.1; 6.22) characterize also the tale's linguistic modules, which alternate between swiftly moving narrative and static depiction.²³

Hence the encounter between Psyche and Venus produces a series of new encounters, which generate movement from the individual Psyche to the pack or the collective multiplicity.²⁴ Facing the toil of sorting and classifying an enormous

22. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 22.

23. Kenney (1990), 37.

24. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 18.

pile of grain, Psyche is aided by the arrival of a pack of ants. Psyche becomes ant as her dimension shrinks before the towering mountain of grain and the 'unresolvable mass' (*inextricabili moli*, 6.10); she suddenly loses her human ability to speak and to use her hands. Soon enough though she is joined by 'a whole division of ants' (*cunctam formicarum... classem*, 6.10), becoming one of their number.²⁵ The ants themselves undergo a becoming-human: one ant calls the neighbourhood's ants, and they all run from place to place (just as Psyche did), pray in human voices to the goddesses. The ants and Psyche form a multiplicity and collective assemblage. When the toil is completed this temporary unity disintegrates, and the ants accelerate their movement and disappear 'speedily' (*perniciter*, 6.10). Throughout the tale Psyche constantly forms assemblages with various packs: from the first pack formed with her village population who accompany her when she is driven out of the family framework to an unknown fate (4.34) to the various packs that appear in her toils (ants, a herd of sheep, a band of ferocious snakes).

In fact the entire novel is populated by packs, bands, groups, and multitudes. In his becoming-animal Lucius loses his singular subjectivity and molar subject position. He becomes a member of the bands and packs, and enters the polity of the multitude. Indeed, 'every animal is fundamentally a band, a pack', argue Deleuze and Guattari; 'it has pack modes, rather than characteristics, even if further distinctions within these modes are called for. It is at this point that the human being encounters the animal. We do not become animal without a fascination for the pack, for multiplicity.'²⁶ Tossed between poles of stasis (molar position) and change (molecular becomings), Lucius constantly creates compositions with objects and subjects, becomes a pack, joins the multiplicity. From the moment of his becoming he is hardly ever alone or on his own; he is always with packs and blocs (of robbers, of slaves, of religious cults, of other animals). Also his constant intersections and encounters proliferate through contagion, battles, and catastrophes, which are combinations that are not genetic or structural but are inter-kingdoms and unnatural clustering.²⁷

Deterritorialized Language II

Apuleius creates movements from stasis to change and from structures to becomings also by stuttering the spoken language; this allows him to rupture its stable position, which sets the world on steady structures, to the benefit of excesses and inundations that create heterogeneity and variety. When Psyche

25. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 9, tie ants to the rhizome, claiming that 'you can never get rid of ants because they form an animal rhizome that can rebound time and again after most of it has been destroyed'.

26. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 239f. See also their discussion of the packs of wolves in chapter two of *A Thousand Plateaus*, (1987), 26–38: '1914: One or Several Wolves?'

27. See Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 241f.

approaches the waters of the Styx they speak to her, uttering a series of short commands and questions:

iamque et ipsae semet muniebant uocales aquae. nam et ‘discede’ et ‘quid facis? uide’ et ‘quid agis? caue’ et ‘fuge’ et ‘peribis’ subinde clamant.

(6.14)

And the waters defended themselves with their own voices: ‘Go away!’ and ‘What are you doing? Look!’ and ‘What are you up to? Beware!’ and ‘Run away!’ and ‘You will die!’ they shouted repeatedly.

This series of questions (a structure that is determined by aleatory points)²⁸ and imperatives, divided and proliferated by repeated *et* (five times, and once more at the beginning of the passage),²⁹ makes the word *et* stutter the language. The dialogical structure of questions and answers is subordinated to the sole voice of the addresser, eliminating the position of the addressee by interspersing commands instead of answers. It thwarts the speech act and suspends the questions, creating a portmanteau construction that leads to two sides: that of words and that of things. It pushes the language into a zone of indecisiveness that creates a situation of *impossibilitas*, in the face of which Psyche is ‘transformed into stone’: although she is ‘present in her body’, she is ‘deprived of her senses’ (*sic impossibilitate ipsa mutata in lapidem Psyche, quamuis praesenti corpore, sensibus tamen aberat*, 6.14).

A different way of stuttering the language appears in the nocturnal episode at the inn, which appears in the first inserted tale in the first book. At the end of a scene in which two witches penetrate the room of Aristomenes and his companion Socrates and murder the latter, they approach Aristomenes, who is lying terrified under his cot. They bend over, urinate on him, and leave the room. At that point the language, which so far served Aristomenes to describe the occurrence, is ruptured. In an effort to substantiate the singularity of the process, or the ‘sense’ (which escapes denotation, manifestation, and signification), Apuleius stutters the language. Aristomenes’ speech turns into a broken monologue followed by a series of questions. He describes himself lying on the ground ‘as if he just came out from his mother’s womb’ (*quasi recens utero matris editus*), ‘no, indeed as half-dead and yet his own survivor’ (*immo uero semimortuus, uerum etiam ipse mihi superuiuens*), ‘and a posthumous child’ (*et postumus*), ‘or a candidate for the cross’ (*uel certe destinatae iam cruci candidatus*, 1.14). The extensive use of words and particles denoting doubt (*quasi...immo uero...uerum etiam...et...uel certe...iam*) vibrates the language and stretches it to its limits in

28. Deleuze (1990b), 56.

29. For the widespread use of *et* by Apuleius in the *Met.* as a transitional phrase, probably common in spoken Latin, see Keulen et al. (2015), 258.

an attempt to encounter that which escapes from it.³⁰ The paragraph is divided into short phrases of various length with asyndeta and different conjunctions that lead to a climax.³¹ Then follows a series of questions that ceaselessly swell the language:

‘quid’ inquam ‘me fiet...? cui uidebor ueri similia dicere proferens uera?
...sub oculis tuis homo iugulatur, et siles? cur autem te...non peremit? cur
saeua crudelitas uel propter indicium sceleris arbitro pepercit?’
(1.14)

‘What’, I said, ‘will happen to me...? Who will believe me...? You saw this and stayed silent...? Why didn’t they kill you as well...? Why did their cruelty spare you and leave you as a witness...?’

This vivid style of questions, as argued by Keulen, is reminiscent of a declamation from a man trapped between truth and verisimilitude.³² Furthermore, Aristomenes knows that his words will also not be judged credible in the court (an institution of major order), and paradoxically stresses this incredibility striving to reinforce it as a narrator by moving from common language to legal arguments.³³

Another example of language stuttering that offers a minoritarian use of ‘becoming’ appears in the book of Isis when Lucius is saved by the goddess and returns to human shape. Paradoxically, the first thing that happens to Lucius who becomes a man again is language loss rather than its retrieval. He ‘freezes and becomes speechless’ (*tacitus haerebam*, 11.14), while his *animus* is unable to comprehend—or express—his sudden joy. Apuleius structures the situation through a series of four increasing segments, which, as noted by Keulen et al., is marked by ‘intense use of euphonic effects such as assonance and alliteration’ whose focus is on ‘the recovery of the last human feature’—the ability to speak.³⁴ This is done again through a series of unanswered questions (that paradoxically mention four different terms related to speech: *uocis*; *sermone*; *linguam*; *uerbis*):

quid potissimum praefarer primum, unde nouae uocis exordium
caperem, quo sermone nunc renatam linguam felicius auspicarer, quibus
quantisque uerbis tantae deae gratias agerem?
(11.14)

30. See also my argument that this section is related to the dissolving boundaries between the corporeal sensation and the lingual system, or—in Deleuze and Guattari’s terminology—between the sensible and intelligible (Krebs [2018], 70).

31. Keulen (2007), 281.

32. Keulen (2007), 286.

33. See Keulen (2007), 286f.

34. Keulen et al. (2015), 269.

What would be best to utter first? Where should I find beginning words for my new voice? What speech should I use to make an auspicious inauguration of my reborn tongue? With which and with how many words should I thank such a great goddess?

After the deterritorialization of language that characterized Lucius so far, its reterritorialization—which happens together with the installation of the religious apparatus of the major order—heralds the end of the process of becoming. Along with the structured major language, Lucius reacquires a secure position within the major order and the social apparatus.

The impotence and inability of a (major) language to convey real actuality is seen in various ways throughout the *Metamorphoses*. In Book 3, during Lucius' false trial, he is amazed at seeing the wineskins that he thought were human robbers whom he had murdered. Immediately he releases a flow of short declarations: 'What a sight...! What a portent! What a sudden change of my fortunes!' (*quae facies...! quod monstrum! quae...mutatio...! quamquam...numeratus*, 3.9), followed by a statement that there are no 'suitable words' (*idonea uerba*) to denote a rational account of the occurrence. When in Book 11 he sees Venus rising from the sea he laments the 'poverty of the human expression' (*paupertas oris humani*, 11.3) to convey the sight. A similar phrase appears in Book 4 in regard to Psyche's beauty (4.28). Apuleius posits the sensible and the intelligible, the words and the things, in a continuum of blurred boundaries; there are no steady points or fixed positions—only lines of flight and becomings. Repeatedly Apuleius plays with the sense and the nonsense, whose diversity, as Deleuze puts it, 'is enough to give an account of the entire universe, its terrors as well as its glories'.³⁵ Repeatedly he leads the language to its edge by stuttering it, by inundating everything with it, by deterritorializing it. This minor use of language ruptures its *sens commun* and allows the actual to escape the fixed structures that the language forces on the real through its structure. The molar language is dismantled into molecular sounds, syllables, fragmentary enunciations, and proliferating phrases that lead to the singularity of events.

Becoming II

Thrasyleon (the name means 'bold lion'), one of the robbers mentioned in Book 4, volunteers to enter a bear's hide as part of a robbery he plans with his gang. Locked in a cage he is sent to the house that they intend to rob. At night he sneaks out of his cage, and opens the doors for his fellows. Nevertheless, unlike the scheme of the Trojan horse, something goes wrong. After he opens the house's gates he is spotted by a slave, who informs everyone that the

35. Deleuze (1998), 22. The cited words were written by Deleuze about Lewis Carroll, but can be equally applied, so I believe, to Apuleius' text.

'bear' has got free. A hunt begins. A multiplicity of people with weapons and barking dogs that rush to hunt him marks his becoming-bear in a scene of swift motion.³⁶ Thrasyleon is aggressive; he moves like an animal that 'at times flees, at times resists' (*nunc fugiens, nunc resistens*, 4.20), until eventually after varying his body postures and movements he flees the place. However, the pack keeps chasing him until the dogs surround him, and with innumerable bites they tear him to pieces.³⁷ The pack of dogs is followed by numerous hunters who injure the bear fatally. The wounds and suffering of Thrasyleon do not result in 'a cry or a scream' (*clamore...ululatu*, 4.21) but draw from him the growls of a wild beast.³⁸

In Book 2, when Lucius returns to Milo's house at night after dinner at Byrrhena, his lamp suddenly goes out. Making his way through the dark in the pitch-black windy night, Lucius becomes a blind bat, tossed and turned by strong winds, hurled against stone walls, and blind to the coming event. Forming a 'joint structure' (*iunctim*) with his companion he encounters three robbers who are trying to break into Milo's house (2.32). This meeting with the robbers, who are actually wineskins made of enchanted goat hairs that have acquired human breath, extracts 'particles of batness' out of Lucius: he 'flies into' (*inuolo*) the gang, attacks, and punches them. The clash between the tiny bat and the 'huge' (*uastuli*, 2.32) goatskins creates an assemblage of a war machine consisting of sounds, movements, objects and subjects, swords, gaping wounds, breathing, fighting, and tumult.³⁹

The dynamic motion of becoming resists static positions, fixed characteristics, and a steady sense of identity. Just as the molecular animal is released from the

36. Cf. Hijmans et al. (1977), 150.

37. This recalls in reverse the episode at *Met.* 7.26, in which a wild bear attacks and lacerates the donkey-driver.

38. Hijmans et al. (1977), 159, mention 'Vallette's suggestion that *clamor* refers to articulate speech, *ululatus* to inarticulate utterance'.

39. The term war machine is mentioned by Deleuze and Guattari in various compositions; the longest discussion of this term appears in Plateau 12 of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), 351–423: '1227: Treatise on Nomadology—The War Machine'. While regular views of machines usually refer to them as actual devices for work, Deleuze and Guattari use an abstract definition of machines as productive organizations of forces (such as social or lingual structures, or mathematical formulas). The war machine has several features which are related to the current paper. The war machine is always exterior to the state apparatus, and is closely related to the nomad. However, Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 354, note that 'it is not enough to affirm that the war machine is external to the apparatus. It is necessary to reach the point of conceiving the war machine as itself a pure form of exteriority, whereas the State apparatus constitutes the form of interiority we habitually take as a model, or according to which we are in the habit of thinking.' Nomadic principles provide opposition to those of the state: the nomadic is flexible, spontaneous, and in constant motion; it operates by joining and connecting points rather than by following existing conventional paths; it challenges rigid structures (social, political, geographical) while continually producing new possibilities. In this respect, the war machine is related to becomings, deterritorializations, and lines of flights, and it provides non-orthodox paths, knowledge, and ways of existence. The machine phyla, which resist systematic and rigid structures, produce different types of operations and innovative practices in various dimensions through speed (by allowing rapid and spontaneous connections that subvert the state apparatus), affects, and secrecy.

human, so particles of humaneness are driven out of Apuleius' animals. When Lucius enters Milo's stable as an ass just after his metamorphosis, a horse and a donkey 'reach a joint decision' (*consentiunt*, 1.26) to drive him away; in Book 4 a fellow ass in the robbers' band guesses and anticipates Lucius' thoughts and intentions to rebel (4.5). He therefore lies on the ground, 'pretending' (*mentita*) to be too exhausted to keep on walking just before Lucius himself does so. The predatory bears of Demochares in Book 4 are wearied by the conditions of their captivity, and they start lying down in the streets of the city. The ants in Psyche's tale feel pity for her and pray to the god. Lucius as an ass also releases human particles: he emits weeping sounds when he learns of his expected castration (7.24); he eats human-cooked food, sleeps in a bed, and understands the human language (10.14–17).

Even when no animals are involved, the tales themselves are animalistic. The sword swallower in the first book (1.4) allows a young boy to turn and twist on his sword with his effeminate flexible body. In his becoming-snake the boy invites viewers of the scene (and listeners to the novel) to slough their layers of disbelief and to rejuvenate a childish naive and curious view. This becoming-animal generates a becoming-child,⁴⁰ a position of curiosity and naivety towards the world. The unity of the sword swallower and the boy bound to his sword brings to mind the image of Aesculapius with his serpent-entwined staff, who is able to heal contagious diseases—and in this case disbelief.⁴¹

Becoming III

The areas of indecisiveness which escape molar framings are manifested also in the dynamics of becoming-woman. In fact, since 'all becomings are becoming-minoritarian', and since men are 'majoritarian par excellence' (the woman—just like the animal or the child—is always in a position derived from male-standards), every becoming 'passes through a becoming-woman'.⁴² In the first inserted tale (1.5–19), both Aristomenes and Socrates become woman.⁴³ During the night two witches steal into their room at the inn. This incursion starts a chain of events that ends in subverting the masculine major order and molar identity. The witches stab Socrates in the throat, collect his blood in an external vessel, and rip his heart out (both the heart and the blood have a masculine connotation).⁴⁴ Their next victim is Aristomenes, who watches the scene

40. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 248: 'Exclusive importance should not be attached to becomings-animal. Rather, they are segments occupying a median region. On the near side, we encounter becomings-woman, becomings-child'.

41. On the concept of becoming and contagion and epidemics, see Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 247f.

42. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 320f. See also Nancy Worman's analysis in this volume.

43. For a detailed discussion on the becoming women in this episode, see Krebs (2018).

44. See *Pl. Ti.* 69e–70c.

from under his bed, sweating and trembling uncontrollably in extreme fear. The women approach him, urinate on his face, and leave him lying on the floor naked and cold. The two men in this episode become woman: their behaviour is uncontrollable, cowardly, and passive; their bodies are perforated and leaking (rather than staying masculine, closed, dry, and sealed); their spatial position is horizontal rather than vertical. Their corporeal boundaries blurs: Socrates's body becomes open and extended when parts of him are in the witches' possession; Aristomenes lies on the floor under his 'lame bed' that becomes part of his body (*de Aristomene testudo factus*, 'I turned from Aristomenes to a tortoise', 1.12). He is covered with urine that has just come out of the witches' bodies and is stuck to them in a mother-infant dyad (1.14). However, the becoming-woman of Aristomenes and Socrates are not the result of female conduct or attributes; rather, it is their loss of a stable position, their becoming a process and continuum, their movement between life and death (*semimortuus*, 1.14), liquidity and solidity, *Aionic* time and the time of *Chronos*.⁴⁵ Linear time is disrupted as Socrates is both dead (after the murder) and alive (awakes when Aristomenes tries to kill himself), and dead (again) the following morning. This becoming turns Aristomenes and Socrates from molar males to molecular aggregates of members and motions, flows and intensities, objects and materials.

The language of the tale is also affected by the process of becoming. When the witches leave, the descriptive lingual turns into a flow of unanswered questions that inundates the language: 'What will happen to me?', 'Who will believe me?', 'Why didn't you do anything? Why were you kept alive?' (1.15). This flow is intensified (*identidem... replicabam*, 'again and again...I repeated', 1.14) and proliferates further through yet another series of questions and sentences, in a form of a dialogue between Aristomenes and the inn's gatekeeper: 'Where are you?' asks Aristomenes; 'What? Don't you know there are robbers out there?' replies the gatekeeper, not responding at all to the question, 'Do you plan to leave at night?' To this answers Aristomenes, 'What can be robbed from such a poor man?', adding, 'Don't you know a naked person cannot be despoiled?' And the gatekeeper replies, 'How do I know you did not kill your roommate and you are not running away?' (1.15).⁴⁶ After this surrealistic dialogue of incoherent logic, in which the 'laws of logic and rational order are turned topsy-turvy',⁴⁷ Aristomenes returns to his room. Nevertheless the desire is not

45. In the current context, time as *chronos* refers to molar and linear time, whereas time as *aion* is molecular, cyclical, and discontinuous. The latter is also independent of matter (which fixes time). On time as *Chronos* and time as *Aion* see Deleuze (1990b), 162–8, as well as Richard Ellis's paper in this volume.

46. *et 'heus tu, ubi es?' inquam... 'quid? tu' inquit 'ignoras latronibus infestari uias, qui hoc noctis iter incipis?'... 'quid uiatori de summa pauperie latrones auferre possunt? an ignoras, inepte, nudum nec a decem palaestritis despoliari posse?'... 'unde autem' inquit 'scio an conuectore illo tuo, cum quo sero deuorteras, iugulato fugae mandes praesidium?'*

47. Keulen (2007), 296. Although he refers to a specific part of the janitor's speech (his words *ut pro te moriamur*, 'to die for you', 1.15), it certainly matches the whole dialogue.

disrupted but rather increased. Desire (*désir*) in Deleuze and Guattari's thinking is not desire for something, nor is it a movement driven by lack. Rather it is a process of production and experimentation created on the external surface through contingent encounters. The flow of unanswered questions inundates the language, opens zones of indecision and indecisiveness, of moving through experimentation and error. It is a productive process that keeps the options open and creates lines of flight.⁴⁸

The religious catamites called by the priest 'girls' (*puellae*, 8.26) manifest additional instances of becoming-woman. This becoming, however, is not related to their appellation nor does it refer to their imitation of feminine conduct. Rather, it is the catamites' marginal position in relation to the major order and law that governs this becoming, along with their deterritorialization of language, constant movement, and uncontrollable desire. They deliver future prophecies rather than establish conjugal memories; they produce systems of deterritorialization in contrast to arborescent, mnemonic, and structural systems of territorialization or reterritorialization.⁴⁹ Their 'broken, shrill voices produce discordant shouts' (*fracta et rauca et effeminata uoce clamores absonos*, 8.26);⁵⁰ their 'loud discordant frantic shrieking' (*absonis ululatibus constrepentes fanaticae*), and their groans, exiting from the 'depth of their breasts' (*imis praecordiis*, 8.27), deterritorialize the language. Their fanatic moves and dances intensify their bodies; their self-beatings perforate their bodies, allowing their 'filthy effeminate blood' to pour from the open wounds and 'flood' the ground (*spurcicia sanguinis effeminati madescere*, 8.28). This blurs the boundary of the body and creates physics that assembles the variations and the pulsations of the entire universe. The assemblage of voices, bodies, objects, and movements connects to the world, distributes the bodies, turns depth to surface, and produces a sonorous continuum.⁵¹

Another form of assemblage appears when Lucius tries to escape with Charite. The robbers suggest punishing him by cutting open his belly, inserting Charite into it, and sewing her naked inside, keeping only her head outside (6.31). This proposition connects bodies and actions, depth and surface, animal and human, and it heralds Lucius' becoming-woman: 'I was looking at my belly again and again, seeing myself already giving birth to the poor girl' (*uentremque crebro suspiciens meum iam misellam puellam parturibam*, 7.4). In fact, it seems that the whole novel of Apuleius is a becoming-woman that offers a grand tour in a rhizomatic milieu. Activated by productive desires it forms anomalous assemblages and ontologies of in-between that dismantle regular forms. It ruptures

48. For desire in the context of assemblages and the war machine see for example: Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 215f., 399f; on desire and the Body without Organs, see 154f., 165f.; on desire and becoming, see 282f.

49. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 326.

50. Cf. Quintilian's discussion on voice and his advice to orators to abstain from feminine or feeble voices, by keeping a healthy throat which prevents broken, obscure, rough, and cracked sounds (*Inst.* 11.3.20).

51. Cf. Deleuze (1990b), 125.

singularities and opens lines of flight from the major structure, generating a discourse which aims to thrive, increase, and proliferate rather than represent, reproduce, and reduce. Its attack on the linear and structural system makes use of a multi-linear system, creating a rhizomatic structure of endless compositions, continuous movement, connections, and heterogeneities.

On the Verge of Law and Desire

There is constant motion in the rhizomatic *Metamorphoses*: between natural and urban territories, between human and animalist arenas, between real and potential realms. It is a fragmented motion that moves among different continuums and structures, powers and laws. The characters always act within a certain kind of law, or at least in relation to it; and every time it enters in a despotic fashion as a transcendental authority, the law divides and breaks the text into a discontinuous repartition of blocks, with spaces between each one and the next.⁵² The theft of Lucius the ass by a gang of lawbreakers in Milo's house; the attempt to consume roses on private property; the kidnapping of Charite; the various cases of murder (of Tlepolemus by his friend; of the farmer's boys as a result of a quarrel over territory; of betraying lovers); the systematic breaking of kinship ethics and of moral conventions: the characters are always on the edge of the formal or moral law, which is repeatedly emptied and averted, ridiculed and drained.

In the market scene in Book 1 (1.24f.) a representative of the law comes to the aid of Lucius, who has been cheated by a fish merchant. However, he enforces the law in a paradoxical way that empties it and overturns its function, leaving Lucius with neither his fish nor his money. In the laughing festival in Book 3 (3.1–11) the process of law enters in the false form of a simulated trial for an imaginary murder that never occurred. The charge of Lucius murdering the windy wine skins turns the law itself to an empty wineskin full of nothing but air. In Book 10 (10.2–12) a false accusation of murder is levelled by a woman against her stepson, after the latter refuses to engage with her romantically. The case is brought to the forum by the boy's own father, and the council is so upset by the accusations that it wishes to waive the 'nuisance' (*taedium*, 10.6) of a proper trial—with its prosecutor's proofs and defence's learned excuses—and to stone the (innocent) boy (10.6). The *magistrati* who decide despite everything to conduct a trial do not do so in pursuit of justice or in order to execute the law, but rather for their own gain.⁵³

There are many other examples in the novel, but the point is clear: no one obeys the law, which is never known. A law needs to be promulgated in order

52. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 72.

53. 'The magistrates...dreaded the danger to themselves' (*magistratus...metu periculi proprii*, 10.6).

to function as an organizing principle, and to that end it must be both fixed (constantly changing law is not a law) and understood. Neither of these qualities is found in the law of Lucius' world.⁵⁴ The punishments and torments he experiences throughout the novel do not originate from his breaking laws or from his uncontrollable *curiositas*; they happen because this is the way the literary machine of the *Metamorphoses* operates. The wheels of justice or, in Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, the justice machine works out of pure desire, and has no objects or subjects. It does not seek law or justice, but operates to move things, to spread, to connect to other machines; it does not look for fixed truths but creates them; and it is not a restrictive and organizing principle but a productive and inventive force that generates metamorphoses. Throughout the novel Lucius (as well as other protagonists) keeps circling around this unknown transcendental law, which is no longer dependent on notions of good and bad or on any kind of ethics. Against this unknown law, which forms a pure form, Apuleius operates as minoritarian, and in response to it he generates lines of flights.

Within the apparatus of the unknown law Lucius' desire generates movements. As mentioned before, desire in Deleuze and Guattari's thought is not a structure but a process, an event. As such it always operates in a certain apparatus—such as the law. Lucius' desire is a movement of production and experimentation that originates in the contingent and external encounters on the surface between bodies and words, objects and deeds. He has no control over his motion; he is a nomadic desiring-machine, which testifies to the existence of other law.⁵⁵ In his encounters he forms a *machine-désirante*, a productive system that constantly dismantles and recreates characters, things, assemblages, and multiplicities, through a continuous flow of experiments and becomings. Lucius is a biological, political, and collective body that affects his surroundings, is affected by them, and generates additional transformations. From this point of view Lucius is the very generator of the metamorphosis—not at all its object.

Machinic Assemblages

When the robbers invade Milo's house, they arouse fear, terror, and 'violent noise' (*sonitu uehementi*, 3.27). A crowd runs all over shouting with fear, people swarm in various direction, torches, swords and axes, darkness and

54. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 451: 'the law in its entirety undergoes a mutation, becoming subjective, conjunctive, "topical" law: this is because the State apparatus is faced with a new task, which consists less in overcoding already coded flows than in organizing conjunctions of decoded flows as such. Thus the regime of signs has changed: in all of these respects, the operation of the imperial "signifier" has been superseded by processes of subjectification; machinic enslavement tends to be replaced by a regime of social subjection'.

55. See Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 73: 'Paranoid law gives way to a schizo-law; immediate resolution gives way to an unlimited deferral; the transcendence of duty in the social field gives way to a nomadic immanence of desire that wanders all over this field.'

light, bodies and effects—a flow of intensities and speeds that creates an assemblage. The whole place becomes a war zone. The band of robbers, appearing suddenly from elsewhere and outside the law, creates a rage against sovereignty, a celerity against gravity, a machine against the domestic apparatus.⁵⁶ They create a war machine which Lucius—who has just left his stable position and become a process of in-between—plugs into. Lucius turns into a part of this other-species, other-nature, other-origin than the state apparatus of the war machine.⁵⁷

After the robbery at Milo's house the gang starts moving through the country, activating intensities of violence, fear, and flight. Whenever the pack arrives, it destroys the steadiness of social order; it moves, fights, wounds, makes sounds; it forms new compositions with its environment. After the dissolution of this collective assemblage, Lucius joins other assemblages, a continuous motion throughout the novel as he keeps plugging into and out of various machines. When he joins a convoy that escapes the city after Charite's death he becomes a part of a multiplicity that contains herdsmen, children, women, valuable objects, chicks, sparrows, and puppies. In its movement this assemblage becomes a war machine (*nec quicquam praeter unicam tubam deerat quin acies esset proelialis*, 'only one trumpet differed from a line of warriors', 8.16). The local villagers who happen to see this fast-moving organism (speed is repeatedly emphasized: *festinatio*, 'speed'; *temeritas*, 'hastiness'; *pernicitas*, 'swiftness', 8.16)—with its armed people, war objects (lances, hunting spears, arrows, clubs, stones, sharp stakes, flaming torches, *ibid.*)⁵⁸ and hybrid creatures of beasts and animals ('everything whose weak legs might delay the flight' is loaded onto the burden-beasts, creating hybrids that 'walked in our feet', *quidquid infirmo gradu fugam morabatur, nostris quoque pedibus ambulabat*, 8.15)—are alarmed by the sight. Immediately they incite their dogs—'mad, huge, crueller than bears and wolves'—who start chasing the convoy (8.17). The dogs swarm from all sides, sinking their teeth into men and beasts, tearing their bodies apart and turning everything into one violent vibrating mass. Soon another multiple plugs into this war machine: people standing on the rooftops and in the surrounding hills start throwing rocks, joining the assemblage of beasts, men, sounds, wounds, blood.

Beside the war machine and the desiring-machine there are additional machines that operate in the text. In Book 9 the slaves and animals at the mill rotate the mill non-stop, day and night. They push the wheel and move in endless cycles of various circumferences, creating an orbicular movement that produces a cycle of suffering and tortured bodies. The slaves, molecular patches of blue skin from constant beatings, are mere assemblages of organs—

56. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 388.

57. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 389.

58. As Hijmans et al. (1985), 155, note, this is a standard description of a battle scene. Cf. Sall. *Cat.* 56.3; Verg. *Aen.* 7.505f.

feet, backs, loins—dusty parts of the machine. The animals are weak and wounded; their necks shrivel from rotten abscesses; their heads bent down; their wounded sides are worn-out machinic pieces. All are described by a survey of their members and parts, as they themselves are merely parts of the machine. The slaves are tied to each other and to the device, and together with the beasts they constitute a chain which is a part of the very machine it operates. The baker and his treacherous wife are also part of the machine, and so are the treachery stories. Those of Philesitherus (9.16) and the fuller's wife (9.24) are in the inner circle, and that of the baker's treacherous wife is in the external circumference. There is a constant bi-directional movement between these circles: from the external circle we move inside to the inner story of Philesitherus, exit to the external narrative circle, enter the baker's story of the fuller's wife, and return to the external circle of the baker.

All this time the technical machine keeps entering as a mechanism that drives the story. The sex act inflicted by the baker on his wife's lover (Book 9) ends in a corporeal punishment of flogging, which operates along with the floggings endured by the animals and slaves that turn the machine. None of the positions is steady in this machine: the flogged lover and the baker become woman, the slaves become animal. The productive machine keeps multiplying and producing flows and movements constantly; it ruptures not only the major order but also the language ('what can I say...', 9.13), and creates an irregular word order.⁵⁹ The episode at the mill places Lucius on the boundary between the technical machine, which is always a piece in the social assemblage,⁶⁰ and the social construction. Plugged into the machine Lucius criticizes the attitude of these two to other parts of the machine: his fellow-slaves, his *contubernii* beasts ('comrades', 9.13), the baker's wife, her woman friend.

Escape

How can we exit the *Metamorphoses*? This work is a rhizome, a burrow. It is a schizophrenic text; a novel that challenges the binary relationships between text and the represented world, signifier and signified. The *Metamorphoses* does not imitate the world—it creates it through various formed matters, lines of articulation, strata, territories, accelerations, and ruptures. It is a book which is a productive machine rather than merely a representative one.⁶¹ The structure of the *Metamorphoses* challenges the rational order, linear time, and geometrical

59. e.g., *ad quem modum* (9.13) instead of the usual *quem ad modum* order in the *Met.* (Hijmans et al. [1995], 125).

60. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 82.

61. For a discussion on books, rhizome, and the possibility of a book to avoid the imitation of the world and the reproduction of the common sense, see Deleuze and Guattari (1987), 3–25: 'Introduction: Rhizome'.

space. It offers escape-lines that produce three degrees of freedom: freedom of movement, freedom of statement, and freedom of desire. The *Metamorphoses* is minor literature; it is a political action, a liberating machine. It opens paths of flight from the rigid, stratified, and hierarchical social construction. A text of this kind cannot develop unless it ‘succeeds in plugging into a concrete socio-political assemblage’.⁶² The *Metamorphoses* is about multiplicity but it also *is* multiplicity. It keeps dismantling everything it can, producing alternatives through various encounters, flows, and motions. Instead of steady positions and fixed concepts it promotes movements of in-between and endless becomings. It prefers events over essences, and encourages occurrence as it happens in time and space.

The *Metamorphoses* keeps moving on unexpected routes, in which the closest is also the most distant. Psyche and Cupid locked up in Venus’ palace are both ‘separated and [present] under the same roof’ (*distentis et sub uno tecto*, 6.11). Their heavenly palace is depicted in a robbers’ cave. The roses, which Lucius desires in order to regain his human shape, are close by yet unattainable and faraway. Faraway too are all the characters that surround Lucius the ass throughout the story. Even the remotest reader of the novel is closer to Lucius than the figures that surround him but have no access to him. Furthermore, the fragments of the tales along the endless lines of the novel become tangential even when they are separated and far from each other, losing their fixed boundaries in favour of a continuum. It is not a matter of simple interiority and exteriority of the text; rather, the inside is a fold of the outside, a doubling of content, a contact that blurs borders.⁶³ Thus the text forms a rhizome within the *Metamorphoses* (as well as with other Latin and Greek texts).⁶⁴ The territory becomes ‘territorialization’ and ‘deterritorialization’ (processes of organization and dismantling), which create concepts that lead to the truth rather than representing or replicating it. It thus enables avoidance of casting static structures such as ‘law’ or ‘religion’ onto ever-changing occurrences, by using dynamic concepts such as becoming, assemblage, intensity, and speed, which make it possible to describe complex dynamic relations among various members and strata.

‘Everyone who knows anything about Apuleius is aware that the *problem* of the “unity” of the *Metamorphoses* is central’, argues Finkelppearl.⁶⁵ But is unity necessary for this text? If we grant Apuleius’ plea to suspend beliefs and assumptions (1.1) we might be able to concentrate precisely on that which is untold. We might then shift our gaze to the text’s movements of indecisiveness and uncertainty rather than to its steady points; to the dismantling of molar structures in

62. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 38.

63. The most exhaustive discussion of the fold by Deleuze appears in his book on Leibniz and the Baroque (1993).

64. Such as the original *Onos*, Greek poetry techniques, especially of Alexandrian tradition, as well as folktale, and myth, and Platonism (Kenney [1990], 12f.). See also Harrison (2000), 210f., and (2013); O’Brien (2002).

65. Finkelppearl (1998), 184. Emphasis is mine.

favour of molecular entities; and to the subversion of the major order by becomings and minoritarian politics. We could experience the text rather than understand it; we could move from the actual to the potential and the virtual.

How can we finish a paper? Maybe we cannot. Maybe we should not. A paper is a productive machine. 'To enter or leave the machine, to be in the machine, to walk around it, to approach it—these are all still components of the machine itself: these are states of desire, free of all interpretation. The line of escape is part of the machine.'⁶⁶ This paper is a rhizome. Feel free to wander inside it.

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66. Deleuze and Guattari (1986), 7.