



Kharazmi University

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Foreign
Languages in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master Of Arts (M.A) in English Language and
Literature**

**IDENTITY AND THE CHAOTIC FLUX OF
BECOMINGS**

Psychoanalytical Reading of *The Human Stain* By Philip Roth

Supervisor: Dr. Kamran Ahmadgoli

Advisor: Dr. Fazel Asadi

by

Mohammad Mousavi

February, 2013

Iran, Tehran

چکیده

پایان نامه ی حاضر رمان "تنگ بشری"، اثر فیلیپ راث را با رویکردی روانکاوانه و با محوریت روان راوی و روایت که همواره در مسیر "شدن ها" قرار دارد می آزماید و در حاشیه ی نگاه علاوه بر پرداختن به شخصیت اصلی به تحلیل چندین کاراکتر تاثیر گذار در روند داستان و بحرانهای هویتی آنها، از منظری جامع تر و با ردیابی علل جامعه شناختی آنها می پردازد. در این راستا، محقق طرح مقدماتی استدلال خویش را چنین پایه می ریزد که پربرترین خوانش از رمان "تنگ بشری" شاید از کانال فلسفه و روانکاوی- یا به عبارتی بهتر ضدروانکاوی- ژیل دلوز که در بازگویی و تعریف شرایط انسان پسامدرن و خواسته ها و توانایی های بالقوه اش، بدون فروکاستن اش به هویتی فرمولیزه شده تواناتر و گویاتر می باشد، بدست آید. نظریه های ژیل دلوز در تقابل با نظریه های متفکرین دیگر همچون پائول ریکور و فرانز فانون بهتر ارزش گذاری شده و کاربردش توجیه بیشتری می یابد که بدین منظور سوژه ی لاروی (Larval Subject) دلوز در کنار هویت روایی (Narrative Identity) ریکور در تاویل کارکرد راوی سنجیده می شود و در جایی دیگر تعریف فانون از بیگانگی یا هویت باختگی (Depersonalization) با کارکردزدایی یا قلمرو زدایی (Deterritorialization) دلوز که در بستر شدن ها و در راستای آزادسازی نیروهای شکل گرفته و یا شکوفایی استعدادهای فرد امری طبیعی بنظر می رسد، بیطرفانه مقایسه می گردد. بخش پایانی تحقیق نیز رابطه ای منطقی با تروما و شکل گیری هیولای انسانی برقرار می کند که پشتوانه نظری آن از طریق جولیا کریستوا و میشل فوکو و در تایید دلوز تامین گردیده است.

کلیدواژه ها: شدن، میل، زمین ساقه، سوژه ی لاروی، هویت روایی، هویت زدایی/باختگی، قلمروزدایی، تروما، هیولای انسانی

Abstract

This thesis examines Philip Roth's *The Human Stain* with an emphasis on analyzing the narrator/author and the protagonist along with a peripheral look on two or three influential characters in the course of the novel. The researcher argues that the most fruitful reading of *the human stain* may be achieved through Deleuzian philosophy, or in a narrowed sense his psychoanalysis. Such a reading is aware of post-modern human condition and his/her capacities without reducing them to some formulated entities. The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 summarizes the plot of the novel and makes its case for a becoming-centered reading. In Chapter 2, I map out Ricoeur's concept of Narrative Identity and Deleuze's Larval Self and their relevance to the novel with a loose focus on the narrator of the novel. In Chapter 3, the researcher gives a gist of Fanonian definition of *Depersonalization* or *Alienation* then tempers it with Deleuzian becomings regarding the case of Coleman Silke. Chapter 4 is dedicated to explicate the impact of *Trauma* on *Monstrosity* examining three different characters in the novel. And Chapter 5 tries to conclude the inconcludable.

To My Family

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the thinkers, dead or alive, such as Deleuze, Fanon, Ricoeur, Kristeva, Gordon, Foucault and lots of others whose thoughts I have utilized to compose the present Master Thesis. I am grateful, too, to my supervisor Dr. Kamran Ahmadgoli, who has, throughout my studies and research, patiently and generously guided me through many a maze of my own making, always taking the time to foster ideas and provide direction. I am also obliged to my Counselor, Dr. Fazel Asadi, for the feedback and support he has provided me with in the writing process.

January 2013.

Mohammad Mousavi

Table of Content

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Chapter 1	1
Introduction	1
<i>General Background</i>	1
<i>The Argument</i>	5
<i>Literature Review</i>	7
<i>Thesis Outline</i>	10
<i>Approach and Methodology</i>	11
<i>Definition of terms</i>	12
Chapter 2	16
Roth's stain; Nathan Zuckerman	16
Chapter 3	38
Roth's stain; Coleman Silke	38
Chapter 4	60
Lives of Roth; Traumatized Monsters	60
Chapter 5	73
Conclusion	73
<i>Summing Up</i>	73
<i>Findings</i>	74
<i>Suggestions for Further Research</i>	75
Bibliography	75

Introduction

General Background

The Human Stain is the third of Philip Roth's trilogy of novels, *also known as American Trilogy* that explores new territories around the interrelated public and private lives, and is a contradictory exhibition of individuals' public and private selves in America during the second half of the 20th century. As in *American Pastoral* (1997) and *I Married a Communist* (1998), Nathan Zuckerman, Roth's favorite alter ego which at the same time detaches and alienates Roth from the worlds he has created, serves here as the narrator but this time rather silent and with more intangible presence. After a prostate operation rendered him impotent (which has infected his creativity also), Zuckerman retreats to a self-inflicted isolation from the world to restore his capacities in writing in residence at idyllic Athena College. Roth's novels in general and this one in particular deal with unusual encounters, There he encounters the intrusive Coleman Silk, a former dean and classics professor who was forced to resign because of alleged racial slur, -- "spooks" (archaic term for nigger) – he has used to characterize two permanently absent (invisible) students who had registered for his course but never attended a class. They turned out to be African-Americans. Hence, haunting zeitgeist of political correctness dictated that Silk's academic career, paralleled with Clinton's impeachment and resignation, was history. Coleman's wife being informed of his exposed racism dies from a stroke, and this enrages and energizes him to write an autobiographical vindication, a novel entitled "spooks", which he is unable to finish by himself thus approaches Zuckerman and asks for his help, they two strike up a friendship. This encounter happens during his questionable affair with a college janitor, which provides his enemies at the college, particularly

Delphine Roux, head of the Department of Languages and Literature, with new charge of sexual Exploitation. The exploitation of Faunia Farly, the young janitor half his age which was married to Lester Farley, an abusive Vietnam veteran suffering from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Faunia and Lester have lost their two little children in fire. This event, along with other causes, pushes Coleman further and deeper into the exile of alienation. Eventually, Coleman and Faunia are killed in a suspicious car accident, and Zuckerman based on some instinctive evidence is convinced that Lester Farley has had a hand in the arrangement of the scene of the accident. Coleman's funeral becomes a revelatory scene, in which a black woman at the graves, playing the role of Deus ex Machina to help Zuckerman with a secret which resolved all conflicts and untied all complexities around the Coleman's case. She was Coleman's sister Ernestine revealing that Coleman was a light skinned African-American (creole) passing as a white Jew for fifty years, after the event of losing his white beloved, Steena Palsson, which had not the courage of interracial marriage and accepting Coleman as an individual both separated and connected to his race. This is an epiphanic moment for Zuckerman, an instant re-evaluation of Coleman's life and his own life. Eventually, Zuckerman turns out his version of Coleman's life and downfall, different from what Coleman had requested; it is written after Coleman's death, and it is problems of people like Coleman and Lester titled *The Human Stain*, the book which the reader finishes while Zuckerman is going to commence.

This novel deals with racism and Jim Crowism which was the American version of South African apartheid. Roth's novels mostly shape a loose network of intersecting lines of flight, including races, religions, minorities, exilic individuals and etcetera, his style of writing has inherited the literary and stylistic tradition of writers

such as Bellow, Faulkner, Joyce, and Proust's, without being imitative. He creates his own parallel universe or cosmopolis with all its cacophonous voices, a postmodern Babel, along with the fact that his texts establish a dialogue between all wandering and exilic narrative lives and identities from writers like Ralph Ellison, Kafka, Milan Kundera and many others, Roth habitually incorporates a variety of texts into the convoluted fabric of his fictions specially through metafiction and intertextuality in a highly fragmented and contingent narrative construction. His themes enjoy the same amount of variety but from higher vantage point they seem to be consistent in the sense that they reappear in new incarnations with a peripheral look on different psychological and philosophical issues, *The Human Stain* sums up the themes of other two novels in *American trilogy* like loss of innocence produced by McCarthyism, the Vietnam war and political correctness and adds the issues of inner exile, impurity, racism and severed identities from their ethnic roots which this time proceeds from a particular minority and becomes symptomatic of a universal problem. This aspect of his work links it indirectly and unconsciously through Ellison's *Invisible Man* to Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* which is the analysis of the process of alienation or depersonalization. Alienation somehow means adopting new 'I' and suppressing the previous ones which impede desires, according to Kojève explicating Hegelian definition of desire, "we all know that the man who attentively contemplates a thing, who wants to see it as it is without changing anything, is "absorbed" so to speak, by this contemplation---that is, by this thing he forgets himself ... The more he is conscious of the thing, the less he is conscious of himself...; in his discourse, the word 'I' will not occur.(Kojève 37) this was the starting point of emptying self to get it occupied by the other or a new 'I'. Hegel through Kojève authoritatively claims "Man is what he is only to the extent that he becomes what he is; his true being

is Becoming."(40) this becoming, for Hegel, is to satisfy or attain ends or non-biological desires at the expense of putting at risk one's biological life toward another greedy emptiness, toward another 'I' whose existence is built up for being recognized or known as prestigious and one who doesn't behave so is not truly a human being. thenceforth, in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, this *true human* is born from the eternal fight for superiority, fight for recognition, a fight which brings forth two kinds of the Victor and the Vanquished, Master and Slave, Victor gains humanity because he risks his life for "non-vital ends" and this is what determines and reveals --to him and to the vanquished-- his superiority over biological life and, consequently, over the vanquished"(Kojève 42). But this for Deleuze does not necessarily mean that being human equals dominance over the others, for Deleuze being is becoming, and becoming means to step into unknown territories, in his interview with Negri, Deleuze stated that, "The difference between minorities and majorities isn't their size. A minority may be bigger than a majority. What defines the majority is a model you have to conform to... A minority, on the other hand, has no model, it's a becoming, a process. One might say the majority is nobody. Everybody's caught, one way or another, in a minority becoming that would lead them into unknown paths if they opted to follow it through. When a 'minority creates models for itself, it's because it wants to become a majority, and probably has to, to survive or prosper" or to have a state or to be recognized (Deleuze and Negri). Then he carries his words on to where he says that minorities gain their power through creation, which conforms the model of majority without dependency.

The Argument

Any written text has its own mechanisms which most of the time goes beyond the author's control, this is mostly symptomatic of literary works and particularly when an author or writer employs a certain way or style of writing which has more immediate access to his/her sub/unconsciousness. Sometimes as the author is a medium through which some drives or forces are incarnated into words, accepting the case, writer is open to the spirit of the age or subject to collective unconscious of the minorities. The writer becomes a sign for what was surreptitious or underground, Franz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* deals with depersonalizing conditions and subjects which suffer from implanted feelings and haunting desires which have led to their self-enslavement, their will to freedom fall to an atrophy. Alienated subjects guarantee the life of hegemonic colonizing father. Likewise Hamid Dabbashi, in his Book *Brown Skin, White Masks* has tried Fanonian critique of colonized by giving domesticated rendition of Fanon's work and coining terms like 'native informers,' in doing so he picks up Azar Nafisi, and her book *Reading Lolita in Tehran: a Memoir in books* and deals with her in the same fashion as Franz Fanon deals with Mayotte Capécia and her Autobiographical novel *I Am Martinican Woman* with its sincere accounts and renders her a neurotic monster. To name another example, Chang-Rae Lee's 'Native Speaker' could be the closest one. The reason why I mentioned these works is that *The human stain* so far, to my knowledge, is not studied through this perspective that Roth himself suffered the same as his fictive character or narrative identity, Coleman Silke, a man who was in pursuit of happiness and freedom and wanted just to be a citizen of the world. That does not mean that this thesis is going to side with such analysts suffering from the same paralysis which Joyce's Dublin had imposed on its

constitutive individuals but tries to establish new way of communication with such neurotic texts (in the sense that they reflect the neurosis of their authors) by means of interpreting the strange phenomena through Deleuzian becomings and Nomadic identities, regardless of their negativity or positivity and instead of considering them as alienation. The human subject, once taken as such, turns into a desiring machine which through affectivity and affective encounters is willing to occupy any empty available spaces in order to discover and activate his capacities. Sadly, concepts like fluid identity, redefinition of identity, adopted self, and so on and so forth have taken repulsive guises. The researcher of the present thesis is willing to offer a new way of reading and understanding novels like *The Human Stain*, mostly based on Deleuzian tradition of approaching texts and works of art. The reader taking the place of a psychoanalyst in dealing with the text, as the analysand, communicates with it by means of intensive becoming, in other words identifications and roughly transference helps the act of penetration to the core of the problem and by so doing the reader appropriates the word of the text, thenceforth one in judging the other is judging one's own self. We have to keep in mind melancholia as one of the manifestations of psychosis may lead to self-punishment or in severe cases to self-annihilation as Freud says:

The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and the lowering of self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment (Freud, 1917, *Mourning and Melancholia*, 2)

Such a psychotic subject in such rigid and unbending societies to his or her libidinal investment turns to less damaging options such as becoming a 'becoming', (Deleuze, 1987) an adaptational or evolutionary, not an imitative one. This thesis in its

last steps is going to examine the relationship of trauma and alienation or mental anarchism regarding the cases of Faunia and Lester and in some other senses Coleman Silke. From a new perspective, this research would propose a connection between becoming activation of micro-racism in the victims of racism and would raise questions about contradiction in definitions and criteria of different sorts of monstrosity and uncanny characters. And the significance of all these lies in offering a new way of understanding and interpreting the other. In some places, the argumentation may seem self-contradictory and incoherent with the previous, which is the symptomatic of Rhizomatic texts and this research has some intentional tendencies toward becoming so.

Review of Literature

Lots of works are done on Philip Roth's literary canon, but, to my knowledge. One of the dissertations dedicated to his works is titled *Philip Roth's Zuckerman Books and the Rhetoric of Fiction* (2010) by Corina Puscas, the aim of which is to demonstrate that the Zuckerman series despite its bulkiness and eclecticism is above all a unified and complete whole, that there is an overall design or an organic unity, and that it is not only 'I' who is holding up unity as a goal to be achieved and a measure of aesthetic success, but it was also Philip Roth's ambition with this series of books. Another doctoral dissertation close to this aspect of Roth's canon is *Zuckerman Bound: The Artist in the Labyrinth* (Lehigh U, 1987) by Beverly Edwards. There is also a master thesis titled *Nathan Zuckerman's Role in Philip Roth's American Trilogy* by Stian Stang Christiansen (2006) which has focused on the narrator of the *American Trilogy* in which *The human Stain* comes to attention and Nathan Zuckerman and Coleman

Silke are dealt with as the actualized *Narrative Identity* of Philip Roth. Michelle L. Britt in his master thesis titled *Culture and Identity: The Academic Setting in Philip Roth's The Human Stain and Francine Prose's Blue Angel*, has tried to introduce these two work as revolutionary ones in 'Academic Genre', he concluded that these two academic novels by Roth and Prose are effective vehicles to provide commentary on contemporary American society. There is a dissertation which also pays attention to academic setting of novels like *The human Stain* and tragic selves such as Coleman Silke's by Matthew Fullerty titled *The British and American Academic Novel. The "Professorromane": The Comic Campus, the Tragic Self* (George Washington U, 2008). Some of the dissertations done on Roth's concern about the issues of identity and the vicissitudes it undergoes in post-war era and racial and social passing which necessitate redefinition of identity or transformation of it are *American 'I-deologies': The Personal and the Political in the Post-Vietnam Novel* (City U of New York, 2008) by Barrie Balter, *The Prism of Self: The Fiction of Philip Roth* (U of California, San Diego, 1985) by Marilyn Stachenfeld Fowler, *Identity crises' of Passing Figures: Physical or Social Death in Nella Larsen's Passing, Fannie Hurst's Imitation of Life, Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s The Passing of Anatole Broyard and Philip Roth's The Human Stain* (Univ. Zürich, 2010) by Katrin Gibson, *The Problem of Identity in the Fiction of Philip Roth* (Arizona State U, 1979) by Jerry Bruce Hogan, *The Discourse of Interracial and Multicultural Identity in 19th- and 20th- Century American Literature* (Indiana U of Pennsylvania, 2007) Dale M Taylor and *Utopian Discourse: Identity, Ethnicity, and Community in Post-Cold War American Narrative* (U. of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2010) by Charles Tedder. Some of the articles of the same concern which the researcher had access to can be mentioned here, like Tim Parrish's work titled *Becoming Black: Zuckerman's Bifurcating Self* (2005) which deals with

Zuckerman's current identity as the consequence of events and other lives he recalls and suggests that Roth has made identity an effect of the history that permeates one's choices. Elaine B. Safer in her book *Mocking the Age: The Later novels of Philip Roth* (2006) in one of her articles titled *The Human Stain: Comic Irony and the Lives of Coleman Silke* deals with the political and satirical aspects of the novel and the range of humor in *The Human Stain* which constantly shifts from the grim tone of black humor to farce. *Being Game in The Human Stain* (2008) by Ross Posnock accentuates this aspect of *The Human Stain* that enlarges the emphasis on man's propensity for play, for mimicry and invention, but in a key more somber and searching and capacious. Posnock contends that the *costs* of conceiving identity and artifice as synonymous are weighed, as the limits and illusions of freedom inscribed in extravagant, adamant self-making are revealed. And experimental ventures in self-*unmaking*—opening the self to less brutal and entrapping modes of being—suddenly emerge near the end of the protagonist's life. The present thesis applies psychoanalytical approach which seems more efficient but less utilized especially regarding the case of *The Human Stain*. In this regard Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* in dealing with racial passing finds more relevance and the argumentation of the present thesis is strongly dependent on Deleuze's *becomings* and his magnum opus, *A thousand Plateaus* (1987), written in collaboration with Guattari helps the researcher with wide range of concepts and new perspectives. Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (1984, 1985, 1988) along with *Oneself as Another* (1991) with their peculiar terminology play a significant role in expanding the subject of identity.

Thesis Outline

Second chapter deals with two complementary views about selves, the chapter embarks on Ricoeur's *Narrative Identity* and its relationship with the notions of *ipse* and *idem* (Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative III*, 1988). The research would push it toward its zone of proximity with Deleuzian notion of *Larval Subject/Self* (Deleuze, 1968: 115) to bring Roth's relationship with detached narrators of his works, particularly Zuckerman in *The Human Stain* and also other character like Coleman into different light. This chapter tends to moderate Ricoeur's essentialist view about Narrative Identity which holds some hopes in the unification of its humpty-dumpty nature by intensive tempering or transforming it to larval subject of Deleuze which implicates rejection of essence in terms of fictive or narratives selves. The chapter implicitly is willing to agree with post-structuralist and deconstructionist views about the slippery and deferred nature of the author or meaning which enjoys both Ricoeur and Deleuze in developing its argumentation but cherishes Deleuze.

Third chapter after giving a short account about Fanon's psycho-social views about depersonalization and its roots through the mediums of thinkers like Homi K. Bhabha which by means of his foreword *Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition*(1986) to *Black Skin, White Masks* has approached the text without bias and critically along with Lewis Gordon and his passionate reading of Fanon in his *Through the Zone of None being* (2005) and trying its applicability to the case of Coleman Silke, would turn to Deleuzian philosophy and tradition as a higher vantage point but not negating one.

The penultimate chapter is from different nature and somehow with a contradictory air, this chapter has to do with Trauma and its relationship with

alienation and uncanniness, in this regard it would establish connections between Kristeva's idiosyncratic definition of *Abjection* (1982) and Freudian notion of *uncanny* or *unhomely* (1919) along with a little bit of Foucault's understanding of monstrosity (1999).

Chapter five, the concluding one, is going to sum up all the discussed issues and leave it open ended for further studies. The whole project is about asking right questions without seeking answers.

Approach and Methodology

As it is supposed to be, all researches in humanities in general and literature in particular are library based regarding the method of research. This thesis is tending to utilize post-structuralist psychoanalysis and would develop a kind of materialist discourse and argumentation void of transcendental fallacy and philosophy suitable for the purpose of academic and logical writings, to be honest, the present thesis is willing to develop an eclectic approach with focus on psychoanalysis and peripheral look on what may help the clarification or expansion of the issue under scrutiny. Freud as the father and organizer of psychoanalysis and Lacan as a fresh air to it would play in the background of the research, Deleuze and Deleuzean tradition of schizoanalysis and interpretation occupy the center of attention, and Ricoeur's pseudo-psycho-narratological terms along with Fanon's post-colonial psychoanalysis would be at the margin. Some other philosophers and thinkers would take part in developing and providing the argumentation with new perspectives such as Julia Kristeva and Michel Foucault.

Definition of key terms

Most of the key terms are fully defined in the course of the thesis , terms like *Narrative Identity, Larval Self, depersonalization, Abjection* and *Trauma* but some others are taken for granted because definitions of which are about to follow as it goes bellow:

Alienation (in psychoanalytical terminology)- according to *International Dictionary Of Psychoanalysis* (2006) “[it is i]nscribed in the opposition between the Same and the Other, alienation describes the condition of the subject who no longer recognizes himself, or rather can only recognize himself via the Other. For Lacan, who followed Hegel on this point, human desire is constituted by mediation: “Man’s desire finds its meaning in the other’s desire, not so much because the other holds the keys to the desired object, but because his first objective is to be recognized by the other” (Lacan, p. 58). specifically, the objective is to be recognized by the Other as a desiring subject, because the first desire is to have one’s desire recognized. The conclusion is Lacan’s well-known formula: “Man’s desire is the desire of the Other,” which doesn’t mean that one desires another as object, but that one desires another desire, and wants to have one’s own desire recognized by the Other. This is an echo of Hegel’s master/slave dialectic (a struggle for pure prestige) where each consciousness wants to be recognized by the Other without recognizing it in turn (“each consciousness seeks the death of the other”). In this fight to the death, the one who accepts death in order to win becomes the Master; the other will become the slave. But the Master is taken in a trap, for he owes his status to the recognition of a slave consciousness. The slave, however, will be liberated by the Master as his work extracts from things the consciousness of self that was lost in the struggle, the slave will end up, in the Marxist perspective, transforming the world in

such a way that there is no place for the Master (Fascism). Thus the theme of alienation in Lacan refers to what is called a forced choice, or *vel*, which is the Latin word expressing an alternative where it is impossible to maintain two terms at once. The *vel* is alienating in that it gives a false choice, a forced choice (“your money or your life,” “me or you”). The Master’s freedom, which must pass through death to attain consciousness of self, is no freedom. Lacan derived several consequences from this structure of alternative, particularly in his critique of the Cartesian *cogito*, by indicating that thought and being cannot coincide. Thus, “I am where I do not think” and “it thinks there where I am not.”” (IDP: Alienation)

Becoming- In the context of modern literary theory, being is both spatial and temporal, perceived as an event implying relationship to others and as a process of continuity or becoming. The concept of becoming is articulated in the collaborative work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A thousand Plateaus* (1986), in relation to the economics and flow of desire. Because the flow of desire precedes the subject, such flow is neither restricted to nor defined in relation to the psyche of the individual. Traversing subjectivity, flows open onto potential becomings. Because the notion of becoming is indicative in the work of Deleuze and Guattari of an oceanic, radical destabilization of discrete or finite meaning or identity (see deterritorialization), it cannot be thought as merely being a liberatory transformation which, once achieved, comes to rest in an alternative identity. Indeed, it is because of the radically utopian conceptualization of becoming as resistant to the very idea of meaning or identity that it becomes problematic in the extreme to provide a definition. Deleuze and Guattari describe a series of different becomings ± becoming-animal, becoming-woman, becoming-imperceptible, becoming-

majoritarian, becoming-other ± all of which are examples of the multiplicity of flows termed desiring machines. None of these implies a conscious imitation or identification but, in the words of Tamsin Lorraine, 'becomings are encounters that engage the subject at the limits of corporeal and conceptual logics already formed and so bring[ing] on the destabilization of conscious awareness that forces the subject to a genuinely creative response'. Becoming is thus for Deleuze and Guattari, 'absolute deterritorialization'. 'To become animal', they write (to take one example of the envisioning of becoming) 'is to participate in movement, to stake out a path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, 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 deterritorializes flux, of nonsignifying signs'

Desire-An ineluctable force in the human psyche distinguished from need, desire holds a crucially central position in Lacanian psychoanalysis and, subsequently, in psychoanalytically inflected critical discourses. Desire for Lacan is always an unconscious drive, conscious articulations of desire being merely symptomatic of this unstoppable force. Need is seen as a purely biological instinct, while desire, a purely psychic phenomenon, is a surplus or excess beyond all articulation of demand. Desire, writes Lacan, comes always from the unconscious, and is thus unlocatable as such, while being, equally, 'desire for something else' (as it is expressed in *Ecrits* ([1966] (1977))), by which formula Lacan indicates that one cannot desire what one has, while what is desired is always displaced, deferred.

Rhizome--The figure of the rhizome, which is taken from a form of continuous, underground plant stem growth consisting of lateral shoots, is adapted