

Becoming Hu-Man: Deleuze and Guattari, Gender and *3rd Rock from the Sun*

Patricia MacCormack

Aliens have become the image of marginality *par excellence* in both television and cinema. They represent the antithesis of the human both through their intellectual superiority, and in a simultaneous defamiliarisation and even horrification of their flesh and substance (ooze, slime). Aliens are not, however, all ooze and technological superiority. The aliens in the American Carsey-Werner sitcom *3rd Rock from the Sun* (Carsey-Werner. 1996-) present advanced intellect perplexed by basic human structuralism. These aliens must *become* human. Such a seemingly mundane project, however, offers a spectacle, which may speak to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's philosophy of becoming. This article will playfully examine Deleuze and Guattari's theory of becoming read with *3rd Rock* in order to work through some of the complexities of a process of becoming which might be conceivable and available to spectators and critics alike in such everyday examples as sitcom television. However such playfulness does not theorise the text at the expense of an acknowledgement of the ways in which cultural texts both form and inform the being of subjects and social interactions in the world. While *3rd Rock* is light comedy, like all layers of culture, it can reflect and create, affirm and transform established patterns of signification of human (and non-human) situations. For a scholar of Deleuze and Guattari, the difficulty in making sense of their theories within the world as tangible and available rather than halcyon, and applying their becoming to a text assists in exploring minor becomings, of finding examples of becomings and small moments of clarification in the becoming process.

Theorists such as Camilla Griggers, David Rodowick, Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz and Brian Massumi have theorized becoming through experimentation in application with diverse results. This may be included as part of such a series in order to encourage those who enjoy sitcoms (including myself) to see them as assisting in a use of Deleuze and Guattari toward a new understanding of the corporeal and the subjective as potentially non-stratified, illogical and even feminist. Any project which includes minoritarian becoming as immanent, even if it is a sitcom, is an important project in the study of Deleuze and Guattari's destabilization of what makes us dermically signified static objects of being and what can launch us as proprioceptive processes of becoming. "Becomings are encounters that engage the subject at the limits of the corporeal and conceptual logics already formed and so bring on the destabilization of conscious awareness that forces the subject to a genuinely creative response." (Lorraine, 1999:182). Hopefully, such creative responses will be produced from the audience as well as the characters on *3rd Rock from the Sun*.

I will begin with a very brief introduction to becoming, which will introduce key terms and concepts and is intended as a guide to this article rather than a substantial introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari's project toward a practice of becoming is unique. Becoming initiates an existence whereby subjectivity is propelled into new ways of thinking the immanence of being, as multiple, as highly specific and also as immediate, serializing itself into a process where each moment and thing is defined in terms of its *haeccity*, "the individuality of a day, a season, a life" (Deleuze, 1997:189). Becoming is about being something else, changing in time and space, irrefutably and, importantly, irrevocably. Becoming involves entering into a filiation with another term where the parameters of each become fuzzy, where zones of being shift toward non-molar alliances. Choose a thing, and become it (woman, dog, rat, music, imperceptible). Becoming however, is not an imitation, it is not an

identification or correspondence, "Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, lead back to, 'appearing', 'being', 'equaling' or 'producing'," according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987:239). The result will not be a half-and-half, or a familiarity reminiscent of a mythical beast, but a unique composition. Molar entities are singular and half-and-half suggests an alliance between two singularities, which keeps the significations of each in tact. Molecular entities are a result of a serialization of processual particles, shape-shifting from one moment to the next. This is why becoming is molecular. Becoming can be as liminal or as domestic as we desire based on the potentials of our own being to expand into a process of hijacking the movement and rest, speed and slowness of that which we become. This opposes our current configuration as binarised between transcendental ego and corporeal function or physiology. Becoming must, however, take as its aim the non-dominant, what Deleuze and Guattari call the 'majoritarian', specifically the white, middle aged male. According to Deleuze and Guattari majoritarian refers to a state of domination, not the reverse. It is not a question of knowing whether there are more mosquitos or flies than men, but of knowing how 'man' constitutes a standard in the universe in relation to which men necessarily (analytically) form a majority. The majority in a government presupposes the right to vote, and not only is established among those who possess that right but is exercised over those who do not, however great their numbers; similarly, the majority in the universe assumes as pre-given the right and power of man. In this sense, women, children, but also animals plants and molecules (1987: 291).

'Minoritarian' immediately suggests certain politics such as feminist, queer or anti-racist ideology. However in Deleuze and Guattari's work such 'identity' politics does not take into account the movement through which the human subject exists – and here is where the binary of the molar (whole) and the molecular (particle-d) comes into play. Brian Massumi emphasises "the distinction is not one of scale but of mode of composition, it is qualitative not quantitative." (1996:54) When, for example, a 'feminist' politic is taken as opposed to the majoritarian politics of the traditional dominant white male, the momentary nature of the positions of the majoritarian and minoritarian, their particular qualities, should be thought. Because bodies, politics, dominance and oppression transform and alter through time (history) and space (geography) the majoritarian is not a self-evident or a priori position, rather it is the particularity of a moment, however extended or brief, where a specific form of body is dominant. Feminist politics exists currently in culture relative to its urgent need. Feminist politics is, however, a form of molecular politics – it makes extended connections and forges alliances like a multi-armed chain of molecules. It is a group assemblage whose connections are not pre-determined or predictable but forge based on (often divergent) need, desire and chance. Most feminist politics, like most women or other forms of minoritarian, choose to define their very subjectivity in a similarly molecular way, as a temporal form of subjectivity where the body is spatially distributed as a teeming mass forging many connections (the hetero feminist, the lesbian feminist, the black feminist are but a few rudimentary examples). Few feminists agree they are, as women, all the same. Covertly the majoritarian, currently the white able-bodied hetero male, is encouraged to fulfil the position of the same defined as an individual. It is far easier to define the traditional white male than 'woman' or 'non-white' or 'non-hetero'. Even the syntax of these expressions points to the majoritarian version of subjectivity – white, hetero – and the ways through which each subject differs from it. The majoritarian, in definition, is molar because its parameters are established and confirmed. The majoritarian is encouraged not to make new and strange connections, or exist transformatively in time, but rather fulfil a certain *form* of subjectivity fixed in space. This phantasy of security fails to address the changing nature of the majoritarian and also the affirmation of majoritarianism those

dominant subjects are required to constantly re-perform. One is never 'safe' in a dominant position but must re-establish the rules of dominance while fulfilling the expected subjectivity of these rules. A similar paradox may be seen in the study of cultural texts such as television. There is an oscillation between the idea that television causes action and television reflects established action. These are both molar versions of the relationship between subjects and representation because there are only two pre-determined options, or wholes, here. Both see a clear a priori established outcome – either television causes an identical re-presentation of the narrative or the narrative reflects the already established action in the world. When watching television is configured in a mode of minoritarian becoming the time, space and body watching are gross elements in the minute, multiple and specific connections that each subject creates through viewing. Our relationship with what we watch in this aspect is never determinable but forms unexpected connections (positive, negative or combinations) that both affect our being in the world and are a result of each individual's specificity in the world that has augmented our pleasure or otherwise at the program. This is a binarised summation of Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between the molar and molecular, majoritarian and minoritarian, which may falsely set up these binaries as opposed. However the minoritarian and molecular are modes of reading, they should not be read as futuristic, yet-to-come, or necessarily anti-traditional but a different way to think the relationship between bodies and the world that addresses the specificities of all bodies rather than annexing bodies to one corporeal logic. Against the majoritarian molar expression 'I am' Deleuze and Guattari suggest the minoritarian molecular expression 'I become...'

All becomings must be a becoming-minoritarian because all becomings repudiate cultural arboreal (tree-like) structures of access and power, value and valuelessness based on any notion of fixed or complete subjectivity, preferring the more multi-plateaued model of the rhizome (root or grass like). In this respect becoming is as much about becoming non-dominant as it is becoming something else. Where 'white, hetero male' stands as signifier of the dominant, 'man's' opposition to the object of any becoming mirrors the opposition of being to becoming itself. As a philosophy that takes hierarchy out of noun choices, where woman, child and eventually music and imperception are all equal in value, the supremacy of the concept of the 'hu-Man' is refuted, indeed the concept of the human itself is repudiated in so far as it refers to the dominance of the valued transcendental white male human subject. Rosi Braidotti points out that becoming "is definitely anti-humanistic, but deeply compassionate in so far as it begins with the recognition of one's limitations as the necessary counterparts of one's forces or intensities" (1997:68). Even though becoming-majoritarian is impossible, no individual body is precluded from entering into the process of becoming. Adamantly the majoritarian body disallowed in becoming is the body most urgently encouraged to take up the process. The more marginal and minoritarian the body, the closer it already aligns itself with becoming minoritarian. Pelagia Goulimari states

Despite their attack on... 'the majoritarian', they have a pragmatic awareness that these processes and the entities to which they give rise are omnipresent, and that their elimination or the rejection of their rationality is beyond the point...What does matter, what *is* powerful, is the desire for inclusive encounters that move territorialities and majorities to a 'becoming minoritarian' (1999:110)

Every body may become, and every body's becoming is specific to its unique formation due to the particular combination of what it was before and what it is becoming. Becoming concerns specificities and an individuation of process so that each becoming is available for analysis only in terms of that becoming. Becoming can hence be as radical or as banal as is desired. While becoming may appear

radical, its strength is that it is possible, and that through its possibility becoming brings into question the arborescent systems of power and the majority that are too often configured as mandatory or fixed. Not only does becoming alter the very structure of territories of established and establishing power, but it alters any desire for re-structuration by changing the formation of territories, be they people or society, to processes or molecularities rather than molar practices.

3rd Rock from the Sun is a comedy about four aliens who arrive on earth to study human life as an anthropological project. In order to study the human they 'become' human. The high commander (John Lithgow) becomes Dick Solomon, a father and physics professor, indicating his superior evolutionary stage. The security officer (Kristen Johnston) becomes-woman, and because of the gender of her becoming, Sally as she is now known essentially does little else but try to be the woman. The information officer Tommy (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) becomes-adolescent, at every turn emphasising his previously higher age as an alien in comparison to the other aliens before his becoming. Harry, the 'satellite dish' as it were, (French Stewart) who acts as walky-talky to the leader of the aliens is somewhat of an enigma in his becoming. He is socially inept *in extremis*, appears to stand at the juncture of phallogocentric axes of dominance – he is youthful but not a child, he is white, he is male. Yet he remains the most perplexing of the aliens because his function, neither through his employment nor his corporeal signifiers of age or gender, is not evident. The *3rd Rock from the Sun* scenario has been played out many times before, from sit-com (*Mork and Mindy*, Paramount 1978-1982) to terrifying filmic take-over (all versions of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *They Live!* (John Carpenter, 1998) and the television series *V* (Warner Bros. 1984-1985) among others). *3rd Rock from the Sun* however, in many ways, is unique. The aliens do not let anyone know they are becoming, their bodies exist pre-fabricated and we never get any visual indication of their alien corporeality (or lack of). Theirs is a true becoming because of this resistance to utilise the visual and particularly the visually exterior, the dermis, as a sign of alterity. The skin or exterior flesh as signifier is molar, it insinuates a completeness and a system ordered by binary choices available within race, gender, culture, sexuality, class and age. Becoming exceeds and, in many ways, defies visual signifiers of becoming because becoming produces a particular offspring, a hybrid according to Deleuze and Guattari that is a unique version of the filiation between the becoming subject and its becoming aim. "You become animal only molecularly," they state. "You do not become a barking dog, but, by barking, if it is done with enough feeling, with enough necessity and composition, you emit a molecular dog." (1987:275) The aliens come to earth already fulfilling acceptable signifiers of molar humanity. The aliens look like and, to all purposes are human – even majoritarian human, they are white, heterosexual, able-bodied and middle class – which does not mean they are human. They still have to become human. They have to learn how to 'bark' like humans. It is in this process, juxtaposed against their visually dermic majoritarian bodies, that the aliens are minoritarian. Here also is where the aliens produce laughter. Their majoritarian flesh is completely betrayed by their becoming selves that fulfill often-opposing functions: Dick is effeminate, Sally militant, Tommy old-aged. Harry repudiates the Oedipal and Capital, he often tries to grope his sister and he watches television all day. Through their re-organisation of the alignment of majoritarian bodies with minoritarian practices the aliens could be said to be becoming minoritarian. The stratification of power and behaviour which necessarily goes with certain forms of body in culture is renegotiated, especially domestically, in *3rd Rock from the Sun* where Dick is mortally afraid of Sally, Tommy chastises his father and Harry is simply strange. Rather than their majoritarian appearances limiting the traditional scope of behaviors for sit-com 'unruly' bodies, the aliens' appearance emphasises the fissure between the necessity for majoritarian bodies to be majoritarian in behaviour as well as

image. In this sense humor would only be available in an alien who looks majoritarian. A minoritarian alien becoming minoritarian would not create laughter for the same reasons that a man in drag is funny while a woman in drag is not. The majoritarian becoming minoritarian takes *risks*, politically and corporeally, and here is where we laugh. There may be a certain discomfort in watching a woman pretend to be a man because she is, as a minoritarian, destined to fail, and this failure is a reflection of the everyday failure minoritarians must negotiate in achieving political and human rights. There is no risk because, for women, minoritarian races, non-heterosexual and certain other forms of maligned subjects, everyday is a risk, or at least a negotiation with subject position. The majoritarian sets out to negotiate these risks by performing drag, or poverty, or black-ness. Sally, as a woman, does not have an established enough subjectivity to take risks with it – what she may lose by being masculine is never clear and her gender ambiguity is a play with gender rather than a clear reversal. Although the aliens, by being alien, are minoritarian, their corporeal establishment as majoritarian is necessary so that their social transgressions may have meaning, and create humor rather than sexist or racist reaffirmation – reterritorialisation - of minoritarians as ridiculous or powerless. Of course such transgression from-dominant to non-dominant potentially reaffirms the destined-to-fail definition of the minoritarian, it may be a ruse that re-establishes traditional racist and sexist jokes. However reading through Deleuze and Guattari, the movement of the characters is as important as who or what they are, and the movement (or the narrative) is the funny part, more than the result. It is the pie flying through the air about to hit someone in the face as much as the pie-covered face, to use a classic comedic act, that makes us laugh. The act of transgression is humorous, and because it is the main characters, the characters we are meant to like, rather than those we do not like, transgression of traditional majoritarian positions is made attractive, endearing rather than distasteful.

Alien Becoming

Video Store Patron: "Pardon me, where could I find *Aliens*?"

Harry: "Nowhere. Not here that's for sure. Nobody here but us humans...stop looking at me!"

("Frozen Dick")

While Deleuze and Guattari do not specifically mention aliens in their thesis on becoming, many theorists have forged this alliance. Rosi Braidotti, Eric White, Camilla Griggers and Steven Shaviro all apply becoming with relative ease to the idea of the alien as an evolution of the human in order to theorise a primary stage in the 'coming down to earth' of becoming. The wild aliens mentioned by these theorists, such as *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979) and *The Terminator*, (James Cameron, 1984) exist as radical departures from the human body, fulfilling what Kelly Hurley claims is the "spectacle of the human body de-familiarized, rendered other" (1995:203). Aliens defamiliarise the human most commonly in two ways, their located defamiliarisation, (where they come from in outer space) and their temporal defamiliarisation (where they have come from in time rather than in space). This allows the nearest neighbor to a subject to be rendered alien by virtue of making strange the place the subject (I) exists at, both in space and time. Hurley, discussing Robin Wood on the 'American nightmare' points to aliens, be they next door or next galaxy, as those "individuals or groups discredited by or perceived as inimical to the dominant culture; within Western capitalism these groups include women, the proletariat, non-white and non-heterosexual." (1995:206-7) This space of marginality is precisely the minoritarian space where Deleuze and Guattari demand we begin our processes of becoming. Whether the alien is far superior or inferior to the human, the most important

element of the alien is that it is *not* human. The alien, by definition, comes into being precisely as the ways it differs from the majoritarian. Because becoming is primarily a becoming-minoritarian before a becoming-anything specific, the position of the domestic or intergalactic alien is the first location to strive toward in becoming. Becoming also insinuates a certain form of 'de-evolution' in terms of the hierarchical stratification of culture, so while the position of the alien is desirable, this alien must necessarily be lower or less valued than the dominant white position. In the episode "Hotel Dick" Dick performs an activist role in the annihilation of the prejudices of humans toward aliens after a particularly violent film about aliens becomes popular with his co-workers. Becoming alien here is marginal despite the associations inter-galactic visitors have with transcendence, both corporeal and technological. The aliens mention their previous bodies as quivering purple tubes ("Hotel Dick"). In "The Art of Dick" Harry states: "My mother was a cold receptacle and my father was just a machine" and while Mary (Jane Curtin) reads this comment as a metaphor ("We all have our baggage"), its actuality juxtaposed with its metaphoric potential in an environment of nineties ego-psychological buzz words creates humor precisely because the audience, in believing the Solomons are aliens, have moved beyond metaphor into the 'reality' of becoming. If Deleuze and Guattari are adamant that becoming is never a likeness, a similitude or an enactment, then the audience of *3rd Rock from the Sun* is similarly adamant that these bodies becoming human were once *not* human. Much of the comedy of the program pivots around this axis, of the language of metaphor in culture actually being a truthful language of becoming. In this configuration the becoming of the Solomons, to an extent, seems to work backward. Where they are becoming as aliens is not an 'as if' or a 'like', but is an actuality so radical the human characters in the show never engage with (the possibility of) the aliens non-metaphorical meaning in their language. Because none of the humans on *3rd Rock from the Sun* read the language of the aliens as anything but metaphor, the audience are given a crash course in the difference between Deleuze and Guattari's becoming, and any other notion of pretending, assimilating or performing. The aliens of *3rd Rock* are not performing a masquerade of becoming human. Such masquerade usually assists in comedic performances, the knowing-ness of the audience, the ignorance of the characters who cannot see through a masquerade. In conforming to the minoritarianism of becoming, however, masquerade enhances the power of the traditionally subjugated. In her book about television sit-coms, Kathleen Rowe discusses the doubly minoritarian 'unruly woman' of situation comedy, double because she is not only woman but not well behaved woman and often not corporeally 'normal' woman. She is loud, fat, tall, scary, sexual, and generally too much for the traditional scope of 'femininity' to encompass. This figure, which will be discussed more fully in the next section, stands as the locus of a comedy based on realignment between the audience and traditional protagonists of any other genre except that of laughter. The comedy of sit-com which includes the minoritarian is created not by laughing at the unruly minoritarian but by laughing with (to drag out an old phrase) and more importantly as her. Rowe states "while irony is often used to affirm the cultural superiority of those who 'get it' over those who don't, masquerade creates a 'bottom-up' distinction based on shared recognition within a subcultural group." (1995:6) In *3rd Rock from the Sun*, the bottom-up results in those who 'get it' being the aliens and the audience. Those who don't get it include characters in traditional positions of power. Inevitably the minoritarians who befriend the aliens are those that fare best in the stories - Mary is female, Nina female and black, Judith female, feminist and suspiciously non-hetero, Don fat and ugly. While some of these humans are majoritarian in their positions of traditional power - Mary is Dean and Don a police officer - the human characters cited above allow themselves to enter into (sometimes sexual) unions with the aliens, potentially producing what Deleuze and Guattari call "*a proximity, an indiscernibility* that extracts a shared element from the animal far more

effectively than any domestication, utilization or imitation could."(1987:279) Even Judith finds Dick attractive when he arrives at a 'Women's meeting' dressed as a woman, in "I enjoy being a Dick". It is those characters, most commonly represented in *3rd Rock* as the possible domesticators of the aliens that the audience and the aliens are differentiated from. Through direct identification with the aliens, occasional sympathy for their lovers and opposition toward the television program's obvious majoritarians, *3rd Rock from the Sun* forces its audience into their own examination of what a becoming may look like or mean. The audience learns the difference between metaphor, domestication and identification as opposed to becoming. If the audience is unsure of the difference between becoming and being-like, they need only examine themselves laughing while the human characters on the screen are not.

Becoming Gender-ed

Dick, Sally and Harry are siblings, while Tommy is Dick's son, from a phantasmatic dead wife. The nuclear family aimed toward in the becoming of the Solomon family of aliens is missed, configured incorrectly as a sibling romance rather than an Oedipal one. Specificities of gender never conform to the appropriate becoming of each character. Deleuze and Guattari claim that in order to become, all becomings (including those of women) must first pass through 'becoming-woman'. In *3rd Rock from the Sun* becoming woman is elucidated in two very different forms. The first is through the male characters and female characters being sharply opposed in their irresistible urges toward traditional gendered behaviour - maternity in Sally, competitiveness in Dick. The second is the more Deleuzian/Guattarian becoming-gendered whereby all the aliens of *3rd Rock from the Sun* are, to an extent, becoming woman. It is this second aspect of becoming woman that is most important to this article because it defies binarization and any concept of biological naturalism, preferring the significations of gender as configured as a continuum, as devoid of markers which align traditionally feminine behaviour with less value than the masculine.

The military/weapons officer alien, Sally, is directly instructed to 'become the woman', to which she often laments "Why do I have to be the woman?" (The answer Dick gives her in the first episode "Brains and Eggs" is "Because you lost.") This form of becoming woman involves performing tasks easily defined as feminine in an emphatically binarised mode of subjectivization. Sally finds her desire to raise children is overpowering ("My Mother is an Alien"). She is the last adult of the aliens to lose her 'virginity' thereby her sexuality is seen as more precious and her virginity more valuable (despite such comments as "goodbye mister hymen" which suggests she, like Dick, is unable to see the signified in various signifiers such as her hymen). And despite fulfilling the most obvious of stereotypical 'Hollywood' presentations of feminine visual perfection - tall, leggy, blonde and full-lipped - Sally has not yet 'become' the vampish female she would presumably 'be' were she more knowledgeable in the stratification of what constitutes traditionally 'sexy' femininity. She takes as an insult Dick's comment on her "comically long legs, ridiculously shiny hair and unruly breasts" ("Big Angry Virgin from Outer Space"). Her angst over the way she looks is formed more through her gendered difference to her fellow aliens than through any social index of her 'feminine' value. As an alien Sally is the most aggressive, powerful and active of the four aliens, yet as a woman, her basic gendered marker as 'the woman' and the dysmorphia that results from such a character being female is often the cause of trauma for the characters (for instance Sally's first real boyfriend Mr. Randall) and amusement for the audience. Sally's ability to be feminine fails abysmally while her overriding 'biological' maternal urges seem unquestioned. Sally cannot 'act' or 'perform' feminine, yet she is overrun with urges which cut across the notion of femininity and gender itself being performed

by the aliens. Why do the writers see such a marked division between 'social' gender and 'natural' gender, between Sally as a passive girlfriend and Sally as maternal? Ironically Dick becomes victim to a naturalized version of masculinity which to all purposes is purely social. When he wishes to bond with his neighbor ("Angry Dick") Dick is drawn to lift the lid of his Rambler and make a noise under the hood, not knowing what is under there but compelled, as in some pack call, to attract his neighbor to him through the functionless action of sub-bonnet howling. When Tommy does well enough in class to be accepted at an elite school ("World's Greatest Dick") Dick exhibits an uncontrollable excess of competitiveness and demands an unrealistic (for 'humans') performance from Tommy so that he will vicariously be praised for the success of his son. While Sally's maternal drives are the object of laughter only through their marked juxtaposition with her military role, "I'm still a warrior, it's just now I'm the protector not the aggressor", ("My Mother is an Alien") Dick's apparently biological instincts to compete and to bond with his neighbor are simply ridiculous. We laugh at Dick's 'masculine' behaviour because he can't control it and because it is presented as destructive, stupid and often excessive. Dick takes that which is desirable for the majoritarian to its natural, extreme conclusion and by doing so emphasises the behaviour of the traditional white, male, majoritarian as having no place in the family. It is when Dick is not this unruly majoritarian that we are most frequently encouraged to laugh with him, (although this may be my own minoritarian response!) contrasting vividly with the 'unruly woman' (upon which Rowe bases her book) and which is far more common in sit-com. It is here that Dick, as well as Sally, Tommy and Harry, are all examples of becoming-woman.

How does becoming-woman relate to becoming-human? Grosz states "Becoming woman involves a series of processes and movements outside of or beyond the fixity of subjectivity and the structure of stable entities. It is an escape from the system of binary polarization that privilege men at the expense of women." (1994:207) In *3rd Rock from the Sun* the privilege of the male gender, rather than existing at the expense of woman, exists at its own expense. It is when the male polarities of behaviour are exhibited that the audience laugh. In the following section I will explore the aliens as 'becoming-woman'.

3rd Rock from the Sun bases all of its comedic responses on the process of subjectivization failed. While attempting to become 'normal' humans, the aliens simultaneously exhibit an essential flaw in the idea of a unified predictable subjectivity attainable by any person and divulge the structures through which this phantasy is maintained. When one of the aliens tries to 'act normal', the result is usually the aliens' awareness that the act itself is not normal and the enactment of it by a human is ludicrous. Acts of subjectivization, from learning how to lie, to learning how to be successful and even learning how to have a sexual relationship, are addressed episode by episode as molar unities. When the aliens perform these acts as molar entities, unified and complete identities without the ability to negotiate subjectivity itself when negotiating unfamiliar situations, they fail, and their subjectivity fails concurrently, we laugh at them, we see how funny the 'non-humans' are. But because we identify with the aliens as our protagonists, we see how funny the concept of unified behavior is. What the aliens show us is how behavior and the act of being are process and movement, they are molecular. When it is attempted, like a sporting event, as a unified whole, it is funny, or even destructive. Whether the audience laugh as a result of seeing subjectivization as ridiculous may be optimistic, however the notion that the entire program takes as its basic premise, the deconstruction of subjectivity as given and complete, suggests its applicability to Deleuze and Guattari's becoming may be more than optimistic at the level of elucidation or articulation.

In a narrative schema it would seem that for an alien to become-woman, rather than all becomings first becoming woman on their way to becoming imperceptible (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:308) they would instead become-woman on their way to becoming-human. However becoming is not a narrative chain. It is a spreading rather than a plot. A plot, like a majoritarian, implies a whole and a result, while the spreading of becoming is like the minoritarian, it is molecular, processual and indefinite. It is in the processual behaviors of the aliens, rather than in their fixed 'biologically' gendered appearance that becoming-woman is most relevant. It seems obvious, for this argument to turn to Sally, who, beginning as non-gendered alien, must become-woman most predictably because it is she who has received the woman's body. Sally, I would argue, is the least hopeful example of the four aliens toward identifying a becoming-woman in *3rd Rock from the Sun* because she represents a co-opted or fetishized version of the deconstruction of naturalized gender. Although I have discussed above the marked differences between Sally's female performances and her biological urges, Sally remains a female character who performs, rather than becomes, woman. Her character is both in appearance and behaviour, molar man *and* molar woman. She is an oscillation between two molar poles, if that is possible, rather than a trajectory toward an undefined becoming. Sally's appearance is a simulacrum of both femininity and transvesticism - she is tall, beautiful and blonde. Her character is similar in its binarised oscillation - she is responsible for the killing of all spiders and mouthing off at all problems, she is also the house cleaner and cook (albeit badly) and man-magnet. In "World's Greatest Dick" Sally meets a potential boyfriend at a gay bar who responds to Sally's sequined dancing outfits and excessive make up and hair, completely naturalizing the over-performance of femininity as the terrain of drag queens. Sally's height, her attitude and her aggression make her seem a man with femininity draped over her, like her human skin. This suggests that the aliens are all men, but of the four Sally's behaviour is easily the most stereotypically 'male'. Such inconsistency between her body and herself, similar to Dick's old body in comparison to his image of himself as narcissistic and beautiful, is what creates the comedy of gendered errors. In its most positive sense Sally could be the woman who does not conform to her cultural role, much like Rowe's 'unruly women of comedy'. However Sally's overt masculinity beneath her physique is too stereotypically signified as 'male' for her to simply be configured as subversively 'unruly'. Sally acknowledges her own beauty through others and their responses to her 'vampish' performance. From "Brains and Eggs" she is stunned at the power of her physique, and manipulates its appearance and performance as a weapon completely in conformance with her alien role as weapons expert. Deleuze and Guattari use the correlates of man-war to women-marriage (278), and, although they claim that the man of war dressed as a woman is a becoming, the molar correspondences of this particular system are clearly not reversible - for Sally to be the woman of war is *not* the same as the male warrior in drag. Most women will proclaim the warrior they must be to navigate phallographic culture everyday. If Sally is a male warrior in drag she could represent a becoming. But Sally is a woman and her becoming cannot be found in being warrior-like, because this is too suggestive of women as not being warrior-like, which they most emphatically are, no matter how the warrior-woman of everyday masculinist culture differs from the definition of the man-of-war warrior. Sally does not refuse marriage, so she does not conform to Deleuze and Guattari's woman who resists marriage as equivalent to the man of war in drag. She does, however, emphasise the war women fight everyday in their being, and thus pointing to certain sexism that flaws Deleuze and Guattari's warrior-in-drag idea. Sally is already in drag, but biological drag is not the same as "when the man of war disguises himself as a woman" (277). Femininity and sexual prowess in Sally is always overtly performative and superficial, she wears it like a costume which she takes off and

puts on as the occasion calls for it. As Sally, she is a multiplicity of non-conforming affects, but as 'Sally The Woman' Sally represents an extreme of femininity that may in turn deconstruct feminine performance. In her aggression, (what the writers of *3rd Rock from the Sun* describe as 'quirkiness' in the synopsis for "Big Angry Virgin from Outer Space") she represents an extreme of woman unfettered by the cultural signifier 'woman'. There are, however, major problems with her being configured as such, the most obvious being that woman is once again represented as a mantle which conceals the prime masculine subject beneath, what Brian Massumi in his anxiety about Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-woman discusses as:

'Man' is the standard: The social established measure of humanity against which individuals are judged and hierarchically valued. 'Woman' is the substandard: The sidekick necessary to give 'Man' something to be superior to, an 'Other' in contrast to which He can be all the Samer. (1996:86)

The becoming-woman of Sally cannot simply be a woman taking off her social repression and revealing beneath a subject which is just like man's 'unsignified' (base level zero of humanity), unrepressed subjectivity. This not only goes against the molecularity of Deleuze and Guattari's becoming, but it also indicates the co-opting of woman as pure signifier of alterity which both phallocratic culture and Deleuze and Guattari are guilty of perpetuating in their use of the term 'woman'. Like phallocratic culture, Deleuze and Guattari identify woman as the first site of alterity, which is why they claim, "We do not mean to say that a creation of this kind [the becoming-woman] is the prerogative of man, but on the contrary that the woman as a molar entity *has to become-woman* in order that the man also becomes- or can become-woman."(275-6) Were it not for the other three 'male' aliens this idea would trouble a reading of Sally as becoming-woman, she is simply playing a gender-oscillating transvestite. But it is in the other three male characters that becoming-woman seems more ripe for analysis. I do not think Sally's deconstructive or subversive effect should be ignored or remain untheorized, because she is a radical character in terms of normative femininity offered by other American sit-coms. For the purposes of this argument, Sally's position between minoritarian and majoritarian seems more of a reversed becoming, where the female on top is peeled away to reveal the male beneath. Even if this peeling process continues to reveal alternating female and male Sally's becoming is, like the becoming-woman of woman that Deleuze and Guattari espouse, caught up in questions of ethics that remain problematic for speaking of 'woman'. In this context and in others it is, nonetheless evident that minoritarian becomings are not as urgent, nor as desirable as the becoming minoritarian of majoritarians. The becoming of majoritarians is more urgent not only because it does not require a speaking as or for a minoritarian but also because it compels a renegotiation of the power exerted in being majoritarian. Because majority is about domination relinquishing this domination is the most pressing reason and positive affect of becoming. Such becoming may be seen in the seemingly majoritarian bodies of Dick, Harry and Tommy.

Dick most of all represents the becoming-women of the most majoritarian character. While Dick espouses the grandiosity of his position, his knowledge and his being a man, often articulating the importance of his skin structure in comparison to Sally's, his behaviour is so often feminine and feminizing of those around him that it is expected as an integral part of the formula which makes *3rd Rock from the Sun's* audience laugh. Until the most recent season's episode "Dick and Tuck" where Dick feels pressured into getting plastic surgery after the shocking discovery that Mary and Nina do not find him as attractive as Harrison Ford, Dick has been fascinated with his own beauty in a way that surpasses and

is different from Sally. "You are red freaking hot" ("Much Ado About Dick") he cries staring at himself in the mirror. When confronted with the daunting task of coming out to Mary about being an alien, Dick once again faces himself in a mirror and, although there to chastise himself for his alien-ness, can not help but exclaim "Look at you...You're gorgeous!" ("Hotel Dick") All the while it is painfully pointed out that Dick Solomon is old, (John Lithgow is fifty-five) balding (Tommy: "Permission to mention your receding hairline sir" Dick: "Permission denied!" "The Art of Dick") and very tall, which, in *3rd Rock from the Sun* is juxtaposed against the 'normal' sized humans, most frequently through Sally and her emphatically shorter boyfriends. Tommy and Harry are both short, although as I write Tommy is growing to the extent that he is now, in the fifth season, marginally taller than Harry. My point here is, however, that none of the aliens, male or female, young or old, could be called 'average', even if the meaning of such a word is highly contentious. The three 'male' aliens, however, do not cease their becoming-minoritarian here. Dick as the tall, white, middle aged professor should be the ultimate spectacle of the performance of the majoritarian. He seems more interested in being like his lover than complementary of her in a system of mandatory binarised behaviour. It is because Dick looks so majoritarian that he makes us laugh at his emphatically feminine and feminizing escapades.

Dick is the most attractive when he is feminine, I can not help but smile when a six-foot four white hetero male comes out of the scary movie "Dawn of the Aliens" ("Hotel Dick") and claims he liked it "Only because it made me scream like a little girl". Dick is pompous, proud, rude and domineering. He exhibits, in his transformation from alien to majoritarian male to becoming-woman a process of failed molarity and successful molecularity – an inability at the heart of learning to make all of one's behaviors conform to one subject type. Rather, a mandate of *extension* comes from Dick. He learns and his learning, instead of being built up arboreally into a stratification of appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour, spreads like a rhizome which weeds out the majoritarian responses as unsuccessful, and draws upon the becoming-woman behaviors. Despite becoming-human for five series, Dick still does such things as organizing a 'fashion' charity auctions because he is bored as the wife of the dean ("Feelin' Albright") and wanting a threesome with Mary and Nina, ("Rutherford Beauty") suspiciously not because he wants to fulfill a stereotypically male phantasy but because he wants to be in the female mode of existence which Nina and Mary have represented as fascinating and comfortable since the first series ("I Enjoy Being a Dick", "Lonely Dick", "Selfish Dick" etc).

In "Same Old Song and Dick" the Dick, who in "I Enjoy Being a Dick" dressed as a woman to become part of Mary and Nina's female world, now turns to a woman's magazine to get the spark back in his love life with Mary. Nina offers him the generic (I presume fictional) magazine 'Woman' which has an article on such. Dick can not help looking at the "10 new ways to show off your breasts" article. He rips out the pertinent "10 Surefire Tips on Bringing Your Lukewarm Love-life Back to a Boil" for later, states "Now! Showing off my breasts" and promptly presses in his cleavage, pouting and rolling his eyes back à la Marilyn Monroe. Dick's priorities relate to corporeal phantasies that he believes are available to him, despite his knowledge that he is a man. His understanding here of 'man' and 'woman' are blurred at worst and becoming at best. Dick rushes to Mary's class room during lesson time to tell her, and the rest of her class, "I've done some shaving... somewhere on my body you will discover a tufted heart" and reveals he is "not wearing any panties." Dick is not mimicking woman, or being ridiculous. His authenticity in his excitement about a newly, and passively attractive body is what makes us, not laugh at women, but laugh with him toward the appropriateness of taking women's magazines as literal and non-sexist, which they claim to be but which, when applied to a man, cause amusement. When

Mary chastises Dick for his actions, however, it is not in reference to his feminized behaviour but rather her feeling of insult that he believed their relationship was in a rut. Indeed, Dick's behaviour is seen as embarrassing not because it is feminine but because it is public. The inappropriateness of this spatial arena further marginalizes Dick as becoming-woman. He may pout, shave and show off his cleavage in the 'proper' female space for this, the bedroom. There is rarely an example of Dick's sexuality as stereotypically masculine, despite the reassurance of his big manliness that he is constantly telling everyone about. He may be a father but he is a single, dysfunctional father (evinced in Mary's documentary about the Solomons "The Loud Solomon Family - A Dickumentary") more interested in his cleavage than in being the head of the family for any biological reason. He even goes so far as to make available all his orifices whenever the opportunity to have sex with Mary arises. In the first potential sexual union between Mary and Dick ("Dick's They Are a Changin'") Dick's premiere act of desire is to put Mary's foot in his mouth, fascinated as to whether it will 'fit'. Deleuze and Guattari state: "*Sexuality proceeds by way of the becoming-woman of the man*" (278, original emphasis) and this is particularly clear in the case of Dick's emerging sexuality.

The comedy of Dick's becoming woman arises from his desire to fit in rather than stand out, to be a normal man rather than a woman. Shaviro, talking about the abject nature of comedy performed by men states: "It seems oddly based on an exaggerated respect for social values and norms, rather than on a gleeful defiance of them." (1993:110) This is the reason why Sally cannot become-woman within the context of *3rd Rock from the Sun*. For her to do so she would have to choose to actively respect the social values expected of her and then fail abysmally at them to create the comedy. Sally, in her process from alien to woman continually questions the female behaviour expected of her. She often speaks out about the unfairness of being female in human culture. If she were to blindly accept her role and the behaviour it entailed, where her failure created the comedy, Sally would become a figure of cringe-eliciting womanhood more appropriate to *Leave It to Beaver* (CBS, ABC 1957-1963). The position of majoritarian is the position of ridicule in *3rd Rock from the Sun*. Making femaleness ridiculous would be at best, a representation of everyday phallogentric culture in the extreme, and at worst, blatant misogyny. When Dick and Sally have their body's switched ("Two-faced Dick") it is not Sally but Dick who has 'problems' - specifically "where to get cute shoes in my size". Dick's ease of gender reassignment is elucidated in his immediate ability to ask 'feminine' questions, he knows what to wear and how to act he just can not make the appropriate things fit his body. His becoming, then, is not a being like, an imitation or an appropriation because he is always and already becoming-woman in his daily activities. His becoming-woman is not an activity or a mantle that he places on and off for comedic value. More than when he dresses as a woman or swaps bodies with Sally; it is in his domestic, non-ritualized becoming-woman in each episode that Dick truly exhibits his becoming. Dressing as a woman and swapping bodies is simply a more emphatic and obviously signified version of what makes us laugh at Dick each week. Using drag or body swapping as signs of becoming focuses on simple symbols of femininity that indicate a becoming-woman which fetishizes phallogentric versions of femininity as the 'true' signifiers of woman, and it also suggests there is an easy way to become by putting on a dress or lipstick. Becoming-woman for the majoritarian is more about threatening the position of dominance by *committing* to becoming a (minoritarian) something else. Becoming is permanent and it is a commitment,

One cannot become-animal at will and then cease and function normally. It is not something that can be put on or taken off like a cloak or an activity. Nonetheless, what Deleuze and Guattari make clear is that there is a kind of wildness, pivots of

unpredictability, elements whose trajectories, connections, and future relations remain unpredictable. (1994a:174)

Dick does not act like a woman or wear women's clothes to be a woman. Each episode, he surprises us with his particularly feminine reactions, behaviors and actions, even his feminine affectations, and we do not know where he will go next in his becoming. Dick is not 'like' a woman, but his ambition to become human, his position as majoritarian and his becoming-woman all create a unique composition. He enters into the celerity of woman, emitting molecular woman, to paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari (274-5). Molar woman is dressing like a woman or swapping bodies with a woman, it relies on wholeness, on easy signifiers of femininity purely phallogocally defined. What Dick becomes is a trajectory that is woman, where there is no result, hence any molar entity, to aspire toward. The risk Dick takes, and the majoritarian Dick flies from, is reiterated in our memory every time we hear his name – the becoming-woman was once 'Dick'. Like 'Brundlefly' in Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986) Dick's alien-to-human-to-woman is a unique composition incomparable to anyone else, even anyone else becoming-woman.

I have deliberately focussed in this article on explorative instances rather than sweeping claims because I find Deleuze and Guattari's becoming such a vast, and, yes, radical project that it is hard to conceive it for all bodies, and by its very definition, a result is unpredictable. But watching *3rd Rock from the Sun* makes me wonder 'Is this what a becoming looks like?' As a feminist project becoming, especially becoming-woman, is a theory fraught with the objectification and ontology of women created by men, and, in Deleuze and Guattari, reused as a male project toward alterity. Women remain, in this project, the first marker of difference and of marginality, a position women neither put themselves in nor offered to men as a radical place for a postmodern mode of being. What I like about *3rd Rock from the Sun* is that, while in many ways Sally stands as a strong feminist figure in the tradition of other comedic unruly women, such as Roseanne in *Roseanne*, (Carsey-Werner/Viacom, 1988-1997) it is the male characters which are forced into a becoming that neither fetishizes the place of women, nor laughs at women in order to re-establish a conservative status quo. Watching *3rd Rock from the Sun* will definitely not change the way we configure femininity, subjectivity and the world. It continues to represent certain mandates of majoritarianism - whiteness, middle-class-ness and heterosexuality. Heterosexuality in Dick's becoming-woman, however, could be seen as essential. Braidotti emphasises that "Deleuze's theory of becoming is also a theory of desire: the only possible way to undertake this process is to actually be attracted to change, to *want* it, the way one wants a lover – in the flesh." (1997:70) Dick wants Mary in a way more akin to becoming that Lacanian possession or any other forms of desire that retains the I/Other distinction of psychoanalysis. Jaques Donzelot points out that "desire is no longer viewed as desire for something...[it is] the simultaneous desubstantialisation and demystification of sexuality, such that desire no longer has a precise substance or meaning." (1977:30.) Dorothea Olkowski markedly juxtaposes the Lacanian with the Deleuzio-Guattarian, pointing out the advantages of desire that becomes rather than possesses. She understands what Lacan claims to be impossible as what Deleuze and Guattari make available as possible (1999:103). The problems with such a potentially co-opted configuration of desire is a continuing concern for Olkowski. She states "thus becoming woman is a presumption, a phantasmatic position for a male subject who, once again, supplements his own pleasure...[by] another appropriation of the woman's body by the male." (2000:103) The anxieties I, along with many feminists, have with replacing desire as (unattainable) possession of the Other with desire as co-opting the other is beyond the scope of this paper. However it is unclear where and what women is

in Deleuze and Guattari, because she can no longer be understood in the Lacanian sense, yet neither can she be understood in *her own* sense which is where the problem lies. If Dick did not desire a woman, his becoming woman could potentially be a becoming-femme in a traditional configuration of a gay male relationship as subscribing to an established dominance/submission matrix. Such a relationship would not be a becoming and hence I believe Dick's (weird form of not I/Other divided) heterosexuality is vital for his becoming-woman. He demystifies heterosexuality by becoming rather than exoticizing that which he desires (no longer his object of desire but his trajectory of becoming).

Taking sit-com as both a non-serious form of entertainment and cultural text available for serious analysis admits the charismatic power visual representation has for viewing subjects. There is a certain involution in the relationship between a watching body and a watched program, where body and program fold in on each other and allow the one to be newly defined by the other – we recognise ourselves in television as much as we re-create ourselves through it. Watching then, as a form of desire, is a certain becoming, a launching of the self into new modes of thinking, feeling the parameters and meanings of one's own body, which then creates new forms of television program based on the becomings of the writers, producers, and, most importantly, viewers. The lightness and joy that many theorists, including myself, feel toward both Deleuze and Guattari's theories and popular visual culture in general should not underestimate the material transformations that these analyses can suggest, and such transformations have reverberating effects for political theory. Many minoritarian movements from feminism to anti-racist and queer theory have always understood the connection between pop culture and politics. The ways in which such a connection alters actual corporeal interaction and legislation is neither predictable nor clear but is definitely an important aspect of both modern philosophies of visual culture and any politics that addresses real bodies in the world. In this way although *3rd Rock from the Sun* is a fun, silly exercise in entertainment, its visual relationship to the world is not necessarily as throw-away.

Patricia MacCormack is honorary research associate in the Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. She recently received her PhD, which was awarded the Mollie Holman medal for best thesis of 2000. She writes in the areas of film, sexuality, Deleuze and Guattari and French feminism.

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