

City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY Academic Works

Publications and Research

College of Staten Island

2015

Subjunctive Desires: Becoming Animal in Green Porno and Seduce Me

Cynthia Chris

CUNY College of Staten Island

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/si_pubs/284

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).

Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

17. This essay focuses upon Caillois's writing of the 1930s. He would amend and expand upon his thinking about mimicry later in his career, in *Méduse et cie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), but would maintain the central belief with which I am concerned here, namely that the insistence on interpreting all animal behaviour in terms of utility is a form of anthropomorphism.
18. Press release for Cannes Film Festival 1996, available at <http://www.filmfestivals.com/cannes96/cfilc2.htm>.
19. 'Le Monde de *Microcosmos*'.
20. Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérennou, *Photographier la Nature: De la Loupe au microscope* (Paris: Hachette, 1979).
21. Scott MacDonald, 'Interview with Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérennou', in *Adventures of Perception*, p. 190.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p. 189.
24. Ibid., p. 192.
25. 'Le Monde de *Microcosmos*'.
26. MacDonald, 'Interview with Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérennou', p. 190.
27. MacDonald, 'Up Close and Political', p. 163.
28. Roger Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', in Frank, *The Edge of Surrealism*, p. 93.
29. 'Le Monde de *Microcosmos*'.
30. Nuridsany and Pérennou, *Photographier la Nature*.
31. Stan Brakhage, *Metaphors on Vision* (New York: Film Culture Inc., 1963).
32. Brakhage, 'Metaphors on Vision', in Bruce R. McPherson (ed.), *Essential Brakhage: Selected Writings on Filmmaking* (New York: Documentext, 2001), p. 12.
33. Stan Brakhage, 'The Camera Eye', in McPherson, *Essential Brakhage*, p. 19.
34. Ibid., p. 23.
35. Jean Painlevé, 'Le Cinéma scientifique', *La Technique cinématographique* (1955).
36. Helen Phillips, 'Sex, Flies and Videotape', *Nature*, vol. 387 (1997), p. 363.
37. Press release for Cannes Film Festival 1996.
38. See, for example, Adrian G. Dyer, Angélique C. Paulk and David H. Reser, 'Colour Processing in Complex Environments: Insights from the Visual System of Bees', *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 278 (2011), pp. 952–9.
39. 'Le Monde de *Microcosmos*'.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. MacDonald, 'Interview with Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérennou', p. 193.
43. 'Le Monde de *Microcosmos*'.
44. Roger Caillois, 'The Praying Mantis: From Biology to Psychoanalysis', in Frank, *The Edge of Surrealism*, pp. 69–81.
45. Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérennou, *Masques et simulacres: Le Mimétisme dans la nature* (Paris: Du May, 1990).
46. Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', p. 97.
47. Ibid., p. 100.

Cynthia Chris

7 Subjunctive Desires

Becoming Animal in *Green Porno* and *Seduce Me*

How much my life has changed, and yet how unchanged it has remained at bottom!

Franz Kafka, 'Investigations of a Dog'

Male whitetail deer compete for opportunities to mate with multiple females, and males losing these battles mount each other.¹ (They get to have same-sex sex.) A limpet, an aquatic snail, 'born sexless', attaches to a rock, and becomes female. Other limpets cluster around her, each becoming male and mating with her. When she dies, the closest limpet to her becomes female: the species is sequentially hermaphroditic. A male bedbug stabs a female, ejaculating in her abdomen, in an act known as traumatic insemination. A snake, a seahorse and a squid, in turn, engage in sexual behaviour, coupling or cloning, singly or with another or with many others. In the series of short films known as *Green Porno* and *Seduce Me*, these creatures – the deer as well as the duck, the dolphin and more – are not themselves. Each of these animals is familiar to humans from urban parks and zoos, picture books, biology classes and wildlife films. But in these films, the animal is both present and absent.

The creator of these films, Isabella Rossellini, occupies the very space in which we find the cuttlefish, the barnacle or the whale. (She has always been an adventurer.²) Not only writer, producer and director or co-director, Rossellini also stars in each film. She undertakes these acts – performances, transformations or becomings, we are yet to be sure – in a series of eighteen very short films shot on high-definition video. Most follow a standard format: three minutes or less, simple props on nearly bare sets, focused on the sexual behaviours of nonhuman animals. According to Sarah E. S. Sinwell, the project began as Sundance Channel's experimental debut on so-called third and fourth screens (computers and mobile devices, respectively).³ The films have been screened at 'first-screen' film festivals and as part of the New York-based IFC Center's Short Attention Span Cinema programme – essentially, as shorts before a feature; on television (the 'second screen') via Sundance Channel and the Independent Film Channel; and on YouTube and on Sundance's own website.⁴

Green Porno's first season (2008) featured mostly insects. The second season concentrated on marine life.⁵ The third includes three films with a 'Bon Appetit' theme, taking on the impact of commercial fishing on oceanic populations, as do photo essays on shrimp, anchovies and squid in a book version of *Green Porno*.⁶ A sequel, *Seduce Me*, comprises two sets of five films, with somewhat more eclectic animal subjects, and more elaborate sets and costumes than *Green Porno*. Occasionally, other actors appear, but none as recognisably, or as centrally, as Rossellini herself. For example, a man's bulging bicep represents masculine allure in 'Cuttlefish'. In 'Deer', Rossellini is one of four females hoping to be selected for mating by the herd's dominant male, who she refers to as 'champ'. All the does wear Rossellini masks, which, rather than low-tech props, are video images composited using chroma key techniques.

Rossellini becomes the firefly and the salmon, among other animal others, in a world of construction paper and puppet strings, wearing fabric wings and wiry antennae, swollen with thorax or bursting with fins. What would it be like to live underground or underwater, to spin a web or to light one's own way, bioluminescently? Can our human selves ever really know? Sinwell situates Rossellini's presence in these films, using the work of Judith Butler and Michael Warner as frameworks, as performative, parodistic and political.⁷ However, there may be other layers of meaning to be discerned within these films through other lenses. I might argue that, to answer these questions, Rossellini becomes animal. Fleeting, knowingly, but animal nonetheless. Or – considering the terms set by Deleuze and Guattari's delirious sections on 'becoming-animal' in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1989) – does she? Amid passages on 'the fine film *Willard*', vampires, the Wolf-Man and Melville's *Moby-Dick*; or, *The Whale* (1951), Deleuze and Guattari offer:

A becoming is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, or imitation, or, at the limit, an identification ... To become is not to progress or regress along a series. Above all, becoming does not occur in the imagination, even when the imagination reaches the highest cosmic or dynamic level Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor phantasies. They are perfectly real. But which reality is at issue here? For if becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal ... [b]ecoming produces nothing other than itself.⁸

Within this setting, Rossellini's *Green Porno* and *Seduce Me* performances might be dismissed as resemblance, imitation, identification that fail to qualify as becoming. Or, taking another tack through the notion of becoming, we might find that Rossellini indeed becomes, animal or otherwise. To do so, I would argue, involves less transmogrification than transitivity: a matter of establishing a relationship between the transitive verb *to become* and its object (proverbially, here, animal). Becoming, then, may be fundamentally grammatical: the syntactical arrangement of components of a system (animals and humans being inextricably part of the same system, after all). This chapter explores Rossellini's short films, in which she

performs the roles of various animals, against and through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-animal. In *Green Porno*, becoming begins with a wish, expressed in a tense as object-hungry as the transitive verb form, the future subjunctive: 'If I were ...'. But not all becomings are knowingly desired, even if desire proves key to all becoming.

Becoming insect

To see what becoming may be, it might pay to consider a becoming-animal undergone elsewhere. In Franz Kafka's wonderful tragedy *The Metamorphosis* (1915), the travelling salesman Gregor Samsa wakes up to find that he is not quite himself. The young man, accustomed to throwing two legs over the side of his bed, taking his case of fabric samples in hand and rushing to the early morning train, finds that his body has become crusty with shell and gawky with unexpected, sticky appendages. He misses his breakfast but has a newfound taste for rot. He croaks ('chirping', Kafka writes) in a voice that is, to his own ears, 'unmistakably his own voice', and, to others, 'the voice of an animal'.⁹ Gregor Samsa goes to bed man, and wakes up animal – insect, that is; cockroach or beetle, Kafka does not say, and Gregor does not seem to know himself – gnawing on the doorknob and clinging to walls.

Kafka spares us the actual metamorphosis, so it is hard to say exactly what happened in the night. The story begins in the morning, when Gregor finds himself irrevocably late for work and already changed. But we do know that as a man, Gregor is only an object of others – his voraciously dependent family; his demanding, deafened boss; his far-flung clients, to whom he migrates, shuttling about in trains and scratching out nights in hotels. Gregor scuttles from sale to sales prospect, returning occasionally to a home that he experiences only as the site of debts to be paid and mouths to be fed. One might say that his species-being is unfulfilled, in the terms Karl Marx used to describe the alienated worker in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*: 'in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal'.¹⁰ That is, Gregor becomes insect because that is the abject hull that remains when his circumstances – as exploited labourer and as his family's meal ticket – desiccate his humanity.

But Kafka provides 'something more than an entomological fantasy', as Vladimir Nabokov argued in a lecture at Cornell University in the late 1940s.¹¹ (Nabokov was not only a novelist and poet but also something of an insect expert – specifically, a lepidopterist.¹²) While he spends some of the lecture trying to identify Gregor's species from Kafka's clues, Nabokov largely refuses the symbolic and summarises the story's other themes in formal terms, beginning with the three-somes that echo throughout the tripartite story: 'There are three doors to Gregor's room. His family consists of three people. Three servants appear in the course of the story. Three lodgers have three beards. Three Samsas write three letters.' If one is tempted to find Holy Trinity in this theme, Nabokov finds only 'aesthetic and

logical' structure.¹³ Second, he identifies the theme of opening and closing doors, an action which allows information (as well as persons and objects) to flow within the story, literalising the notion of narrative space. Third and finally, he finds Kafka preoccupied in *The Metamorphosis* with the economic 'ups and downs' of Gregor's family, its cyclical 'flourishing' and despair.¹⁴ It may be this tendency toward cyclicity that prompts Nabokov to declare, 'I am interested here in bugs, not in humbugs', in a section of the lecture that acrimoniously rejects a Freudian analysis of the story as Oedipal allegory.¹⁵ Nabokov insists, and rightly so, that there is more to *The Metamorphosis* than the obvious fact that the son is, literally, squashed by the father.

Still, it is hard to keep the paternal figure that looms over Gregor entirely out of the picture, given that the family's periods of economic hardship and relative comfort – which Nabokov identified as a worthy theme – alternate as the role of breadwinner shifts from father to son and back again. (And given Kafka's own well-known conflicted filiality.¹⁶) In a 1934 essay, Walter Benjamin notes the story's fundamental reversal: it is the father who is parasitic, even if it is the son who turns animal.¹⁷ It may just be that, from Nabokov's perspective, too much attention to the father-son dyad distracts from the elegantly triangulated structure he identifies throughout the story. Yet another dyad central to the story is at least as unavoidable: it is a woman who brings desire squarely into view.

And it is desire that holds the key to becoming. If it seems at times that in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari most deftly articulate what becoming-animal is not, in their earlier volume *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986), they explicate the concept with uncharacteristic clarity. Thanks may be due to the rich animal territory provided by their subject. After all, the insect that Gregor Samsa becomes in *The Metamorphosis* is only one member of the menagerie that populates Kafka's work, making music and making conversation, and often, narrating these very stories. Consider the half-lamb/half-kitten of 'A Crossbreed' (1917), Red Peter the ape in 'A Report to an Academy' (1917), the unnamed creature (a mole?) of 'The Burrow' (1923), 'Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk' (1924) and the canine characters of 'Temptation in the Village' (1914), 'The Jackals and the Arabs' (1917) and 'The Investigations of a Dog' (1922).¹⁸ To Deleuze and Guattari, becoming-animal is an affronting displacement of power and a refusal of repression – 'where one believed there was the law, there is in fact desire and desire alone' – that alters the subject himself.¹⁹ 'To the inhumanity of the "diabolical powers",' they write

there is the answer of a becoming-animal: to become a beetle, to become a dog, to become an ape ... rather than lowering one's head and remaining a bureaucrat, inspector, judge, or judged ... To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold ...²⁰

Becoming animal is 'the way out', and it is driven by desire.²¹

That is, desire is the route between Gregor's human and animal selves. While Marx cordoned off procreating, like eating and drinking, as an 'animal function', Gregor yearns for a connection with another human that transcends reproductive imperatives.²² Yet love proves as elusive as his labours are estranged. The object of Gregor's desire appears in a photograph torn from a magazine, preserved in a frame carved by his own hand and hung on the wall of his bedroom. The woman in the photograph is his very own Venus in Furs, unobtainable and already wrapped in animal.²³ From Gregor's aching perspective, she is so remote, so unfamiliar, that she may as well be another species, 'untouchable, unkissable, forbidden'.²⁴ He is so close to her, yet she is so far from his reach, that he cannot bear his desire, not for one more night. And so he rises, devoid of the heart and groin and mouth and hands he once sported, to find himself in a body as foreign to him as the body of the beloved but unknown woman, and as foreign to him as the body of vermin that he would have previously dismissed as beneath knowing. He becomes, but does not recognise, the animal he is and will be. His task after becoming is not to assign himself to one category or another, to fret over species as he had fretted over the corners of the picture frame, but only to learn to operate new apparatus, the sticky feet and flailing legs and steel-trap jaw with which he finds himself newly equipped. Later, when his family clears the furniture from his room, Gregor uses his new body to cling to the picture, as if the remnants, the memory, of his humanity depended on it.²⁵ I am quite sure that it did.

Becoming subjunctive

In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor's becoming-insect is no mere imitation, nor is it allegory in which the bug is simply a symbolic pointer to the man's fragmented and repugnant self.²⁶ What of Rossellini's animal acts? Is that all it is – just an act – or does she become animal? It might pay to consider both the boundaries of mimicry and the beginnings of becoming. According to Deleuze and Guattari, becoming is a matter of composition. They are instructive:

Do not imitate a dog, but make your organism enter into composition with *something else* in such a way that the particle emitted from the aggregate thus composed will be canine as a function of the relation of movement and rest, or of molecular proximity, into which they enter ... The actor Robert De Niro walks 'like' a crab in a certain film sequence; but, he says, it is not a question of his imitating a crab; it is a question of making something that has to do with the crab enter into composition with the image.²⁷

Again, Deleuze and Guattari hint that becoming is a kind of embodied grammar – perhaps, a taxonomic grammar that disrespects the artificial categories wrought by humans. Thus when De Niro crabwalks, or Rossellini worm-wriggles, each actor makes a step toward becoming-animal. That step is largely syntactical, not

mimicry, but a reordering of that which is human and that which is animal. It is realised when imitation (can I be *like* the crab?) is jettisoned and anything becomes possible (*if I were ...*).

Just as it is sex, or want of it and its connective externalities, that turns Gregor Samsa animal, it is sex, or want of knowledge about it, that turns Isabella Rossellini toward the animal. When she becomes animal – if indeed that is what she does – she dresses the part. She mimics and swoons. She feigns ecstasy, fear and appetite. (Is she feigning?) Her position *vis-à-vis* the animal is aspirational, slinking and prancing in the manner of this beast or that, yet always quite obviously herself, peeping out from a mask or sporting antlers. Unlike Gregor Samsa, Rossellini never has to ask, ‘What’s happened here?’²⁸ Gregor, after his transformation, cannot imagine himself, ever uncertain about his size, his shape, his strength and to what use he might put all those legs, but Rossellini is devoted to categorisation, to cataloguing difference species by species. She explains the animal and herself, narrating each short scene as if to persuade the viewer that she is, despite her recognisable face and voice, bird, fish, marine mammal, reptile, insect. She is Adam, naming the animals; Noah, collecting them; and animal herself.

Sinwell argues that Rossellini’s animal performances are distinctively ‘scandalous and queer’.²⁹ To be sure, *Green Porno* and *Seduce Me* defy traditional binaries, singular subjectivities and stable identities. Rossellini’s presence is frequently multiple; in ‘Bee’, she plays ‘the roles of the queen bee, daughter bees, and drones’.³⁰ She is, in these films, ‘both male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, asexual and pansexual, animal and human’.³¹ She challenges conventional wisdom and giggles when normative boundaries collapse under scrutiny. It may not make *Green Porno* and *Seduce Me* – or, for that matter, Rossellini herself – precisely *queer* so much as encyclopedically non-discriminatory. But they do celebrate – normalise, even – non-normative sexualities. That the sexual behaviours explored are primarily practised by nonhuman species is both the point and beside it. Difference, in sexual and species terms, proves pervasive.

‘Snail’, from *Green Porno*’s first season, begins, as most of the films do, with a medium shot of Rossellini, standing against a plain green backdrop and looking directly into the camera. She begins, ‘If I were a snail ...’. (In *Seduce Me*, the opening narration goes Sherlock Holmes, deducing the identity of the animal subject from behavioural cues: ‘Are they trying to seduce me? What am I?’) Cutting to a long shot, her entire body, sheathed in a tan unitard, becomes visible, and she continues: ‘... I would have one big slimy foot.’ She raises that huge foot, and streamers play the role of the sticky mucus that gastropods secrete as they move. Then she twists and curls the costume around her, so that ‘my foot would end up at the bottom, allowing me to crawl. My anus would end up on the top of my head. Unfortunately.’ As green goop slides onto her cheek, she grimaces. Sound effects – watery slurps – emerge from a subtly minimalist score by Andy Byers (who is also the production designer) to mark those moments when the snail exudes slime or excrement. In the next scene, Rossellini lies on the floor with her lower half



Seduce Me: Snail (2010)

encased by a shell; tufts of green grass, which appear to be cut from cardboard, spurt around her. She disappears, explaining matter-of-factly, ‘I can withdraw my entire body into my shell’, then peeks out again, adding, ‘where I can hide my vagina and my penis. I have both.’ Her inflection shifts to coy. In the second minute of the film, she demonstrates how snails strike at one another with calcium darts before mating, interacting with a faceless snail costume that may be occupied by an unseen human (elsewhere, puppets are used), diverting from strict attention to what the snail *does*, to how the snail might *feel* (‘I love to be hurt’). Her swoon, upon impalement, may hold an intertextual wink to fans, recalling her performance in the role of the abused and masochistic nightclub singer Dorothy Vallens in David Lynch’s *Blue Velvet* (1986). To close ‘Snail’, she intones, ‘Sadomasochism excites me’, before the picture cuts to black and credits roll.³²

Seduce Me season one’s ‘Duck’ begins with a half-dozen male hands patting and pawing Rossellini’s head and grasping her neck. A smile turns to a distressed expression, as she cries, ‘Are they seducing me? What am I, a duck?’ Using only her head and shoulders, caped with a duck costume while the rest of her body is invisibly ‘underwater’, she interacts with two-dimensional duck puppets, and explains that a female subject to forced copulation can avoid impregnation by an unwanted male because of the evolution of ‘vaginal complexity’.³³ As a corkscrew-shaped duck penis enters a red and pink fabric labyrinth, Rossellini giggles and shrieks with pleasure, ‘My vaginal structure is a twisted tunnel ... I can block the phallus. I can discombobulate the phallus. I can trick the phallus!’ Then, glancing flirtatiously at a paper male duck, she murmurs, ‘I want you to be my husband’, and allows him to mount, guiding his penis directly to her eggs.

Starting *Green Porno* videos in the future subjunctive mood, Rossellini muses, ‘If I were a fly...’, ‘If I were a barnacle ...’, ‘If I were a whale ...’. Searching for anatomical corollaries, she imagines her own body in the shape of the animal, and settles for flirtatious mismatches: ‘If I were a firefly, I would light up my ass at night’ is *Green Porno*’s vivid if vague distillation of the luciferin-luciferase reaction that produces bioluminescence in the lantern section of the firefly’s ventral abdomen. Occupying a long, segmented pink sheath from which only her face emerges, she begins, ‘If I were an earthworm ...’, going on to explain how her earthworm body would eat, breathe, excrete, mate (‘in the 69 position’, of course)



Seduce Me: Earthworm (2010)

and reproduce. 'I would be both male and female', Rossellini declares, peeping out from her wormy pink tube (earthworms are simultaneous hermaphrodites). She is not quite the worm, and not quite not the worm, always contingent, bound to human subjectivity by that pesky 'if' that marks species-difference as too great for the desire that seeks to become the animal Other.

It is that 'if' that, if Deleuze and Guattari get to make the rules, keeps Rossellini from quite becoming. Their notion of becoming-animal thwarts the purposive performance of animal as impressionistic copying, a kind of species-plagiarism that can only be acting without knowing. Deleuze and Guattari may argue that becoming is 'a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, "appearing", "being", "equaling", or "producing".'³⁴ Such a definition risks chasing its own tail, until, paradoxically, it leaves room for little but fictive becomings. But it is also, by their own admission, wildly rhizomatic. Can the rhizome of becoming reach *Green Porno* and *Seduce Me*'s animal performances? If becoming doesn't involve actual metamorphosis, as in the case of Gregor Samsa, then it may operate in an economy of 'movement and rest ... making something that has to do with [the animal] enter into composition with the image'.³⁵ Rossellini brings something of the animal – its shell, its posture, its glow – into the picture. She becomes animal, and the animal becomes her.

Becoming-subject (or, a conclusion)

In this *pas de deux* between animal and human, Rossellini's performances as anglerfish, elephant seal or praying mantis, begin to look a little more like becoming. So, becoming-animal is not a matter of no longer being human. Becoming animal is an opportunity arising from recognising the animal – the animal function, anyway – alongside and within. From this perspective, Rossellini's animal performances are, as much as they are acts of becoming, acts of recognition. In contrast, Kafka's animals suffer from failures of recognition. Gregor is still Gregor when he climbs the walls, but he no longer knows himself. Indeed, Benjamin observed, 'the most forgotten alien land is one's own body'.³⁶ Gregor dies morosely behind a locked door, no longer recognised by others as son or brother or salesman, and never as lover. Isabella is still Isabella when she lurks in webs and

glows in the dark, cloaks herself in the animal's colours, reshapes herself according to its parameters, aligns herself in its movements. To what end? (Or, as Deleuze and Guattari once asked, 'Which reality is at stake here?')³⁷ In 'making of' videos on the *Green Porno* and *Seduce Me* website, and in numerous interviews, Rossellini has said that she intends for the series to be both funny and informative – and that it is really about animals, once telling a *Vanity Fair* reporter that after a screening, she was asked, "What do you learn about men?" and I just said, "How do I learn about men? It was the worm I was talking about."³⁸

But it is almost impossible to keep allegory out of the equation, whenever the animal is in question. The human condition may be narcissism, after all. It may simply be part of what I referred to earlier as the veritably grammatical entanglement between the human animal and the nonhuman animal, an interdependence which, recalling Deleuze and Guattari, is multivalently systemic and semiotic. Accordingly, at times, Rossellini asks a question that fails, with apparent purpose, to exclude the human, as in 'Why Vagina', from season two of *Green Porno*. Dressed simply in a black, long-sleeved, turtleneck top and black pants, a black headband holding shoulder-length hair away from her remarkable face, Rossellini declaims directly to the camera, gesturing with her hands for emphasis:

Eggs are precious. Sperm are cheap ... If I were a female, any female, I would want to protect my precious eggs. I would want to hide them in a hole and I would want for that hole to be in a place hard to reach.

She meanders through a garden of paper shafts, as round as tree trunks and towering overhead, while she speaks, then pauses, bows her head and puts one hand on her pubic region. The film cuts to a headshot, and she raises her head, once again eyeing the viewer, smiling seductively and finishing the sentence – 'Unless I want you to reach me' – in irresistibly breathy, honeyed tones. She identifies the structures surrounding her as penises. Why are they so different from one another? Because vaginas also differ.

I would have a tunnel, and it would be a labyrinth, it would be intricate, it would be unique, it would be species-specific, so that I would not be screwed by a bear ... a cozy fit, like a hand in a glove. That's why I want my vagina.

The bear is the only animal mentioned, but it is not the subject of this particular film. It is only a marker of difference and the boundaries of desire. (Who *would* want to be screwed by a bear? Another bear, of course.) The human animal is the subject of this particular film, even if it is not named, and even if it is found only amid the sex of other species.

But then, to Deleuze and Guattari, becoming-animal has never meant becoming nonhuman. Becoming takes place by means of 'contagion', proximity, exchange.³⁹ Necessarily, then, 'A becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band,

a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity.⁴⁰ Recall Rossellini's appearance as queen and daughter and drone in 'Bee', and her *becoming herd* in 'Deer' as a quartet of does, all angling for a buck's attention. Thus, when Rossellini questions, explicitly, common knowledge about the animal kingdom (such as the presumption that all species reproduce heterosexually), an echo that returns the human subject is not far behind. In fact, becoming is nothing if not the articulation of a relationship between the human and the animal, a relationship that we have only begun to understand; about which we have only begun to ask the right questions.

A glimpse at one final film in the series may be warranted in this regard. In 'Noah's Ark', she asks, 'How did Noah do it? How did he manage to organize all animals into couples?' While she revisits the story of the great flood, a Bible opens, revealing itself as a pop-up book containing an ark. Animals, each a wonder of detailed paperwork (perhaps more akin to kirigami than more familiar origami), are carried on a plank into the ship: elephants, giraffes, lions, monkeys, eagles, pandas, each paired two by two. When a single earthworm is about to enter, thunder and lightning crack and a masculine arm points aggressively while Rossellini, her voice exaggeratedly deepened, demands of the worm, 'You! Why are you alone?' In the costume that also appears in 'Earthworm', Rossellini explains that she is 'a hermaphrodite, both male and female. To reproduce, I can mate with another hermaphrodite, or I can segment my body and clone myself.' So much for heterosexual privilege. The couple recedes while Rossellini catalogues others. Parthenogenic aphids and whiptail lizards, all female, are asked to account for the absence of a male. Rossellini coos, 'We simulate sex, among us girls, to start off our hormones, and then we have daughters. No sons, only daughters.' Rossellini concludes by asserting the fact of diversity, despite the biblical insistence on pairing. 'How did Noah do it?' she asks. 'Hermaphrodite, transvestites, transgender, transsexuals. Polygamy, monogamy. Homosexual, bisexual. How could [they? we?] all be heterosexual?' The operative pronoun in the final sentence is appropriately unintelligible. I recall Walter Benjamin's words on Kafka's ability 'to pick up the forgotten from animals'. Rossellini, too, picks up the forgotten from animals. In doing so, she may become-animal, or come close. Or perhaps she becomes more human because of animals. 'They [animals] are not the goal, to be sure, but one cannot do without them.'⁴¹

Notes

1. A preliminary version of this chapter appeared as 'Gregor and Isabella' in Suzie Silver, Jasdeep Khaira and Christopher Kardambikis (eds), *Strange Attractors: Investigations in Non-humanoid Extraterrestrial Sexuality* (Pittsburgh, PA: Encyclopedia Destructica and the Institute of Extraterrestrial Sexuality, 2012). Thanks to Jeanine Oleson and especially Arlene Stein, and to Kathy High and Jim Supanick, who invited me to speak in the Flaherty film series Lives of Animals on *Green Porno* and other animal films.

2. Isabella Rossellini is the daughter of Italian neorealist film-maker Roberto Rossellini and actress Ingrid Bergman. A model and actress, she wrote the script (her first) for *My Dad Is 100 Years Old* (2005, directed by Guy Maddin), a playful tribute to her father. Recent projects include a semi-autobiographical hour-long special called *Animals Distract Me* (2011, for Discovery's Green Planet channel). Rossellini has also raised and trained service dogs for the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, Inc.
3. Sinwell also explores the entanglement of the celebrity body with 'green' marketing and 'greenwashing'. See Sarah E. S. Sinwell, 'Sex, Bugs, and Isabella Rossellini: The Making and Marketing of *Green Porno*', *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* vol. 38 nos 3 and 4 (Fall/Winter 2010), pp. 118–37.
4. Sundance Channel, *Green Porno*, www.sundancechannel.com/greenporno. The Sundance Channel (which was founded by Robert Redford and Showtime Networks), the Independent Film Channel and the IFC Center are all properties of AMC Networks (formerly Rainbow Media).
5. Rick Gilbert and Jody Shapiro co-produced *Green Porno* and *Seduce Me*; Shapiro co-directed. Biologist Claudio Campagna of the Wildlife Conservation Society serves as consultant on conservationist matters. He rarely appears on screen, but in the eight-minute 'Harem on the Beach' (from *Green Porno*, season three), Campagna and Rossellini appear in documentary footage shot in Argentine Patagonia, among elephant seals. As Sinwell suggests, this particular film comes closer than usual to conventional wildlife film-making ('Sex, Bugs, and Isabella Rossellini', p. 27), with its penchant for presenter-hosts who are on location with animals in their own habitats.
6. Isabella Rossellini, *Green Porno: A Book and Short Films* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009).
7. Sinwell, 'Sex, Bugs, and Isabella Rossellini', p. 130.
8. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 237–8.
9. Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, trans., ed. Stanley Corngold (New York: Bantam Classic Reissue, 2004), p. 5.
10. Karl Marx, 'Estranged Labour', in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Mulligan (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959). Reprinted at www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm.
11. Vladimir Nabokov, 'Franz Kafka: "The Metamorphosis"', in Fredson Bowers (ed.), *Lectures on Literature* (San Diego, CA: Harvest/HBJ, 1982), pp. 250–84. Reprinted at the Kafka Project, <http://www.kafka.org/index.php?id=191,209,0,0,1,0>. I draw on Nabokov's lecture as an influential analysis that comes, not coincidentally, from the pen of an insect-hunter. Deferring to a few classics, I acknowledge that there are volumes of criticism on *The Metamorphosis* that are beyond the scope of this chapter. See, for example, Marc Lucht and Donna Yarris (eds), *Kafka's Creatures: Animals, Hybrids, and Other Fantastic Beings* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2010).
12. See Kurt Johnson and Steven L. Coates, *Nabokov's Blues: The Scientific Odyssey of a Literary Genius* (Cambridge, MA: Zoland Books, 2000); Matthew L. Forister *et al.*,

- 'After 60 Years, An Answer to the Question: What Is the Karner Blue Butterfly', *Biology Letters* (22 December 2010), doi: 10.1098/rsbi.2010.1077; and Roger Vila *et al.*, 'Phylogeny and Palaeoecology of *Polyommatus* Blue Butterflies Show That Beringia Was a Climate-regulated Gateway to the New World', *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* (26 January 2011), doi: 10.1098/rspb.2010.2213. See also Vladimir Nabokov, 'Butterflies', *New Yorker* (12 June 1948), pp. 25–8.
13. Nabokov, 'Franz Kafka', p. 283.
 14. *Ibid.*
 15. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
 16. Franz Kafka, *Letter to His Father: Bilingual Edition*, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (New York: Schocken, 1966).
 17. Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka', in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 114. See also his 'Reflections on Kafka', in the same volume, pp. 141–6.
 18. Red Peter may be Kafka's second most famous animal, having been featured in the lecture given by the character Elizabeth Costello in the novella *The Lives of Animals* by J. M. Coetzee (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). All of these stories are collected in Franz Kafka, *The Basic Kafka*, introduction by Erich Heller (New York: Simon & Schuster/Pocket Books, 1979).
 19. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 49 (emphasis original). Thinking of Gregor and the role of the woman in Deleuze and Guattari's work, I choose the gendered pronoun purposefully.
 20. *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.
 21. *Ibid.*, p. 35; also, see Red Peter's discussion of 'the way out' in 'A Report to an Academy', in Kafka, *The Basic Kafka*, p. 253, which affirms that becoming is movement, 'right or left, or in any direction ... Only not to stay motionless ...'.
 22. Marx, 'Estranged Labour'.
 23. I allude here to the novella *Venus in Furs* by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1870), another tale in which a man desires a seemingly unattainable woman, and, having gotten his chance to be alone with her, lives to regret it.
 24. Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, p. 4.
 25. Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, p. 34. Deleuze and Guattari make the case that Gregor's devotion to the portrait provokes jealousy in his sister, a turning point at which her empathy pales, and her abandonment facilitates his messy death; see Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, pp. 4, 15, 64.
 26. Adaptations of *The Metamorphosis* tend to avoid committing to Gregor's becoming-insect. For example, in Norith Soth's *Metamorphosis: Beyond the Screen Door* (1996), Gregor Samsa becomes Tom Gregor, a man who becomes ill, but not obviously insect. Like Deleuze and Guattari, I take Gregor's transformation literally.
 27. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 274.
 28. Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, p. 3.
 29. Sinwell, 'Sex, Bugs, and Isabella Rossellini', p. 130.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
32. Rossellini is, in this case, more anthropomorphically playful than scientifically current. It is not precisely the pain inflicted by the dart that produces receptivity to mating. Rather, a substance in the mucus delivered by the dart may influence the female reproductive system to respond more favourably to sperm than if the sperm were received without dart-carried mucus, giving a reproductive advantage to snails that successfully dart potential mates. See Ronald Chase and Katrina C. Blanchard, 'The Snail's Love-dart Delivers Mucus to Increase Paternity', *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* (22 June 2006), pp. 1471–5; also, published online 14 March 2006, doi: 10.1098/rspb.2006.3474.
33. Maybe this is what Republican Congressional Representative Todd Akin of Missouri was thinking of when, explaining his position that abortion should be criminalised without exceptions for rape or incest, he told an interviewer that rape rarely if ever results in pregnancy because 'the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down'. In regard to humans, he was very wrong. See Charles Jaco, *The Jaco Report*, Fox News 2/WTVI, St Louis (19 August 2012), <http://fox2now.com/2012/08/19/the-jaco-report-august-19-2012/>.
34. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 239.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
36. Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka', p. 132.
37. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 238.
38. Julian Sancton, 'Isabella Rossellini: 'Let's Talk About (Barnacle) Sex, Baby'', *Vanity Fair Daily* (25 March 2009), <http://www.vanityfair.com/online/daily/2009/03/isabella-rossellini-lets-talk-about-barnacle-sex-baby>. Also, Ian Sample, 'Isabella Rossellini's Guide to the Sex Life of the Anchovy (and the Duck, the Snail, the Dolphin ...)', *Guardian*, 5 February 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/feb/06/isabella-rossellini-green-porno-film>.
39. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 247.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
41. Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka', p. 132.