KAFKA'S ZOOPOETICS

BEYOND THE HUMAN-ANIMAL BARRIER

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Beyond the Human-Animal Barrier

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It is possible to read Kafka's animal stories for quite a while without realizing that they are not about human beings at all. When one encounters the name of the creature—monkey, dog, mole—one looks up in fright and realizes that one is already far away from the continent of man.

—Walter Benjamin, "Franz Kafka:
On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death"

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Contents

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this book:

A *America: The Missing Person*. Trans. Mark Harman. New York: Schocken Books, 2011.

BON *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*. Trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins. Cambridge: Exact Change, 1991.

CS *The Complete Stories*. Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir and Tania and James Stern. New York: Schocken Books, 1983.

D *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910–23*. Trans. Joseph Kresh and Martin Greenberg. New York: Schocken Books, 1976.

E *Die Erzählungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2003.

KSS *Kafka's Selected Stories: New Translations, Background and Context, Criticism*. Trans. Stanley Corngold. New York: Norton, 2007.

LF *Letters to Felice*. Trans. James Stern and Elizabeth Duckworth. New York: Schocken Books, 1988.

LFBV *Letter to the Father / Brief an den Vater: Bilingual Edition*. Trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins. New York: Schocken Books, 2015.

LFFE *Letters to Friends*, *Family, and Editors*. Trans. Richard and Clara Winston. New York: Schocken Books, 1977.

LM *Letters to Milena*. Trans. Philip Boehm. New York: Schocken Books, 1990.

M *The Metamorphosis*: *Translation, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*. Trans. Stanley Corngold. New York: Norton, 1996.

PP *Parables and Paradoxes: In German and English*. Trans. Clement Greenberg, Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins, Willa and Edwin Muir, and Tania and James Stern. New York: Schocken Books, 1975.

T *The Trial*. Trans. Mike Mitchell. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

WPC *Wedding Preparations in the Country, and Other Posthumous Prose Writings*. Trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins. London: Secker and Warburg, 1954.

Introduction

Kafka and Other Animals

Nonhuman protagonists are ubiquitous in Franz Kafka's oeuvre, from his early stories down to the very last one. Among them we find dogs, jackals, leopards, a tiger, a panther, a vulture, a cat, and a mouse; a few unspecified animals, such as a mole-like and a marten-like; mythological creatures, including sirens and a dragon; a kitten-lamb crossbreed; and several human-animal protagonists: a human transformed into vermin, a man who used to be a horse, and an ape turned into a human being. Nonhuman animals[1] abound also in Kafka's personal writings. In a letter to his fiancée, Felice Bauer, Kafka formulated his ultimate aim: "I strive to know the entire human and animal community, to recognize their fundamental preferences, desires, and moral ideals, to reduce them to simple rules, and as quickly as possible to adopt these rules" (LF, 545). His diaries and letters also reveal unique and enduring identifications with nonhuman animals. "I am thriving among all the animals" (LFFE, 150), he declares in a letter to his friends Max and Elsa Brod, while visiting his sister on a farm in the village of Zürau. "But I truly suffered to the full the anguish of all animal nature" (LFFE, 216), he writes to another friend; and in a letter to Milena Jesenská, his Czech translator and intimate friend, Kafka states: "Fundamentally I was still only the animal, belonged still only in the forest" (LM, 159). In his biography of Kafka, Pietro Citati notes:

> He sensed an animal within him. Again and again, composing with the figures of his unconscious a bestiary just as immense as a medi-

> eval one. He felt within him a beetle or a hibernating cockchafer; a mole that dug tunnels through the ground; a mouse that fled the moment man arrives; a slithering snake; a worm squashed by a human foot; a fluttering bat; a parasite insect that fed on our blood; a sylvan beast that lay desperate in a filthy ditch or in its den; a crow gray like ashes with atrophied wings; a dog that snarled and bared its teeth at anyone who disturbed him, or barked nervously running around a statue; a twofold animal with the body of a lamb, the head and claws of a cat.[2]

Kafka's fascination with animality, within and beyond humanity, did not escape his attentive early readers. In his essay on the tenth anniversary of Kafka's death, Walter Benjamin maintains that "the world of his ancestors was as unfathomable as the world of realities was important for him, and we may be sure that, like the totem poles of primitive peoples, the world of ancestors took him down to the animals."[3] In a similar vein, Theodor Adorno notes that "the flight through man and beyond into the non-human—that is Kafka's epic course."[4] Joachim Seyppel's 1956 study, arguably the first full-length essay on Kafka's nonhuman animals, underscores their central role in his writings:

> There is in particular one theme which has so far escaped accurate and detailed analysis: the animal theme. There are in his writings countless references to animals, human-animal comparisons, allusions to animal life, fables, and animal motifs; there are important works in which the human person has been transformed into an animal, or vice versa. There are hardly any stories in which Kafka did not include at least one significant reference to creatures of the animal kingdom.[5]

In their 1975 book on Kafka, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari define his writing as "essentially animalistic."[6] In some contemporary scholarship, Kafka's work has been celebrated as unveiling a "creaturely realm" that is "marked by a sustained engagement with animality," and Kafka himself hailed as a harbinger of animal studies critiques of anthropomorphism and as "the most thoroughgoing bestiarist of the modern period."[7] In fact, the neologism "zoopoetics" was coined by Jacques Derrida in reference to "Kafka's vast zoopoetics."[8]

Resisting Allegorization

Despite the prominence of nonhuman animals throughout Kafka's writing, their representation has been predominantly regarded as a mere allegory of intrahuman matters, such as Judaism and Zionism, modern alienation, metaphysical concepts, and psychoanalytic ideas. In *Die Funktion der Tierfiguren im Werke Franz Kafkas* (1969), the first book dedicated to animal representation in Kafka's work, Karl-Heinz Fingerhut concludes that Kafka's animal figures are depictions of human attributes and ciphers of human thoughts.[9] The allegorization of Kafka's animal stories is abundant in contemporary criticism as well, deriving from a widespread tendency to allegorize both animal stories and Kafka's stories.

Nonhuman animal figures in literature have been interpreted first and foremost allegorically, that is, as representing something else. "Animals have served literature well. They have stood as allegorical figures to represent human nature and as a rich body of metaphors for the inanimate as well as the animate,"[10] maintains Mary Allen in the opening of her pioneering 1983 study *Animals in American Literature*. Yet reading nonhuman animals as standing for something else replaces a reading of them as standing for themselves. Allegorization is therefore an act of exclusion, as another pathbreaker in the field of literary animal studies, Margot Norris, states in her 1985 *Beasts of the Modern Imagination*: "Nowhere in literature were animals allowed to be themselves, to refer to Nature and to their own animality without being pressed into symbolic service as metaphors, or as figures in fable or allegory."[11] More recently, Susan McHugh, in her critical study of animal stories, points out that "although animals abound in literature across all ages and cultures, only in rarified ways have they been the focal point of systematic literary study,"[12] while Mario Ortiz-Robles notes that "from the earliest epics, fables, parables, and plays, animals have donned a great variety of guises to become the privileged presences that show us how to be human."[13]

The systematic exclusion of nonhuman animals from literary discourse despite their ubiquitous presence throughout the literary canon may be explained by a famous psychological experiment called "The Invisible Gorilla." In this experiment, subjects were shown a short video of two groups passing basketballs around and asked to count how many times the players in one of the groups pass the ball. Halfway through the video, someone in a gorilla suit strolls into the middle of the screen, pounds his chest, and then

walks out of the frame. Focusing entirely on the given assignment, about half of the subjects missed the gorilla. When asked if they had noticed anything unusual, whether they had spotted anything walk through the scene, even more specifically—if they had seen a gorilla, the answer was no. This experiment demonstrates selective attention, also known as inattentional blindness, such that we fail to see things we are not prepared to see.[14]

"The Invisible Gorilla" first came to my mind while teaching a course on animal stories. When I mentioned *Moby Dick*, several students were surprised, for they could not recall any nonhuman figure in the book. Like the preoccupied viewers who had not seen the gorilla in the video, the students—preoccupied with the allegorical and symbolic functions of the whale—failed to notice the tremendous whale Moby Dick in *Moby Dick*. Literary critics are no different: they tend to read through nonhuman protagonists in literature, and thus these literary animals become invisible. Yet, unlike the invisible gorilla experiment, animal stories are read without any specific instructions. So why is the reader's attention so selective? What distracts the reader from the nonhuman figures? In a single word, the answer to these questions is *anthropocentrism*.

The term "anthropocentrism" was coined in the 1860s, amid the initial controversy over Darwin's theory of evolution, to represent the view that humans are at the center of the universe.[15] In animal studies and posthumanist theory, anthropocentrism is regarded as an ideology of human exceptionalism, which operates to "maintain the centrality and priority of human existence through marginalizing and subordinating nonhuman perspectives, interests and beings."[16] An overarching anthropocentric ideology directs our attention to specific things (humans) and away from others (nonhumans). Asking "What do they represent?" and "What do they stand for?" When dealing with nonhuman animals in literature, we often ask "What do they represent?" and "What do they stand for?" assuming that they cannot simply represent and stand for themselves, as they are neither important nor interesting in themselves. As numerous scholars have pointed out, nonhuman animals are typically invisible in the literary discourse, which projects upon them categories and values derived from human society.[17] The anthropocentric tendency to view nonhuman animals—neither the same as humans nor totally dissimilar—figuratively goes far beyond literary practices. "We polish an animal mirror to look for ourselves,"[18] Donna Haraway observes, echoing Claude Lévi-Strauss's famous saying, "Animals are good to think with."[19]

Scholarly interest in nonhuman animals and their relations with humans

has expanded considerably over the past few decades in various academic disciplines. In what is known as "the animal turn,"[20] nonhuman animals have moved beyond the confines of the natural sciences, spreading to the humanities and social sciences, and have been brought within the scope of cultural, political, and ethical considerations. Engaging with various theoretical and critical approaches, the cross- and interdisciplinary field of animal studies (also known as human-animal studies or critical animal studies) has been energized since the 1990s by poststructuralist and posthumanist theorists. The subfield of literary animal studies, which emerged from the interplay between literary studies and animal studies, explores the representation of nonhuman animals in literary texts, as well as the cultural origins and impacts of fictional animal representations.[21] In this way, the allegorical conception of nonhuman animals in fiction has been replaced in recent scholarship by a zoopoetic approach, which "revisits, examines, perplexes, provokes, and explores the agency of the nonhuman animal."[22]

Resistance to the allegorical reading of Kafka's animals, however, is not limited to animal studies and posthumanist critique. Alongside the overall tendency to allegorize animal stories, there is also a pronounced inclination to allegorize the work of Kafka. It seems that the enigmatic nature of his fiction has led many of Kafka's commentators in this direction. Max Brod, Kafka's lifelong friend and posthumous editor and publisher, canonized the Jewish interpretations in the 1920s and 1930s, and gradually, as James Rolleston says, "It became evident that whatever worldview came to dominate the Western intellectual scene—existentialist, structuralist, postmodern—Kafka's writing seemed to respond eagerly, as if pioneering the new trend."[23] A similar observation can be found in Susan Sontag's renowned essay "Against Interpretation":

> The work of Kafka . . . has been subjected to a mass ravishment by no less than three armies of interpreters. Those who read Kafka as a social allegory see case studies of the frustrations and insanity of modern bureaucracy and its ultimate issuance in the totalitarian state. Those who read Kafka as a psychoanalytic allegory see desperate revelations of Kafka's fear of his father, his castration anxieties, his sense of his own impotence, his thralldom to his dreams. Those who read Kafka as a religious allegory explain that K. in *The Castle* is trying to gain access to heaven, that Joseph K. in *The Trial* is being judged by the inexorable and mysterious justice of God.[24]

The allegorical approach to Kafka's stories has been widely criticized in recent Kafka scholarship, which rejects allegorization as a barrier—rather than an aid—to understanding, pointing out that Kafka's narratives have no simple allegorical key and therefore are not allegories at all.[25] As early as 1934, Walter Benjamin claims in his influential essay on Kafka, that "his parables are never exhausted by what is explainable; on the contrary, he took all conceivable precautions against the interpretation of his writings. . . . Both the psychoanalytic and the theological interpretations equally miss the essential points."[26] While Adorno also recruited Kafka to his ideological agenda, arguing that his work deals with the materialist mechanism of modern society, the main contribution of his landmark essay on Kafka was the rejection of Brod's approach, according to which there is a one-to-one correspondence between Kafka's fictional universe and extradiegetic ideas. As Adorno notes, in Kafka's texts "Each sentence says 'interpret me,' and none will permit it."[27] In fact, even Max Brod, who is identified with the allegorical approach to Kafka's work—and the Jewish allegories in particular—argues in his biography of Kafka that "Kafka never is allegorical, but he is symbolical in the highest sense."[28] Likewise, Albert Camus claims in "Hope and the Absurd in the Work of Franz Kafka," the appendix to *The Myth of Sisyphus*:

> The whole art of Kafka consists in forcing the reader to reread. His endings, or his absence of endings, suggest explanations which, however, are not revealed in clear language but, before they seem justified, require that the story be reread from another point of view.[29]

Heinz Politzer has famously coined the term "open parable" to describe Kafka's poetics, asserting that his stories indeed have meaning that exceeds the literal text, but that this meaning is evasive, and that the stories are therefore paradoxical: an unsolvable riddle.[30] This approach has had a profound impact on Kafka studies. Relatedly, Gerhard Neumann labels Kafka's prose a "sliding paradox" (*gleitendes Paradox*) to refer to the way his writing confronts us with paradoxes; through devices like semantic displacements or alienating metaphors and the countering of reader's expectation, Kafka leads his reader into a space where all rigid concepts begin to slip.[31] Roland Barthes similarly emphasizes:

> Kafka's truth is not Kafka's world (no more Kafka-ism), but the *signs* of that world. Thus the work is never an answer to the world's mystery; literature is never dogmatic. By imitating the world and its legends, the writer can show only the *sign* without the *signified*: the world is a place endlessly open to signification but endlessly dissatisfied by it. . . . Kafka's narrative authorizes a thousand equally plausible keys—which is to say, it validates none.[32]

More recently, Paul Haacke notes in his essay on Kafka's political animals:

> Kafka's stories do not communicate an explanatory message in the voice of a didactic authority, and they are not presented in the form of teleological narratives that lead to a resolute moral, maxim or conclusion. Instead of providing examples for the purpose of instruction or guidance, they remain ambiguous, paradoxical, and open to multiple or conflicting interpretations.[33]

Paradoxically, this resistance to interpretation has become the most useful key for interpreting the work of Kafka.[34] In the conclusion of his *Idea of Prose*, entitled "Kafka Defended against His Interpreters," Giorgio Agamben states that "the only content of the inexplicable—and in this lies the subtlety of the doctrine—consists in the command—truly inexplicable—'Explain!'"[35] Agamben's words echo Kafka's short piece "Prometheus," which tells four different legends seeking to explain the myth, but eventually concludes: "There remained the inexplicable mass of rock. The legend tried to explain the inexplicable. As it came out of a substratum of truth it had in turn to end in the inexplicable" (CS, 432). This metatextual theme can be traced in many of Kafka's writings; for example, "On Parables" ("Von den Gleichnissen") dramatizes the situation of those trying to find meaning in texts, stating, "In effect, all these parables merely attempt to say that the inconceivable is inconceivable, and we know that already" (KSS, 161). Likewise, the closing sentence of Kafka's story "The Test" ("Die Prüfung") is "He who does not answer the questions has passed the test" (CS, 442). The priest's words to Josef K. in Kafka's novel *The Trial* (*Der Prozess*), "What is written is unchanging, and opinions are often just an expression of despair at that" (T, 157), can also be read as reflecting Kafka's skeptical approach to interpretation.

Moreover, the inability of Kafka's protagonists to reach the destination of their journey has been often read as equivalent to readers' inability to reach their own destination in the journey of reading, which is supposed to culminate in finding the meaning of the story. This is, of course, central in Kafka's novel *The Castle* (*Das Schloss*), as well as in numerous short stories and fragments. The reaction of the policeman to the narrator's request for directions in the short story "A Comment" ("Ein Kommentar") may reflect Kafka's reply to his commentators:

> He smiled and said, "you want me to tell you the way?" "Yes," I said, "since I can't find it myself." "Forget about it! Forget about it!" he said, and with a broad swing of his body he turned away, like people who want to be alone with their laughter. (KSS, 161)

In the same vein, Kafka's brief story "Advocates" ("Fürsprecher") concludes:

> So if you have started out on a walk, continue it whatever happens; you can only gain, you run no risk, in the end you may fall over a precipice perhaps, but had you turned back after the first steps and run downstairs you would have fallen at once—and not perhaps, but for certain. So if you find nothing in the corridors open the doors, and if you find nothing behind these doors there are more floors, and if you find nothing up there, don't worry, just leap up another flight of stairs. As long as you don't stop climbing, the stairs won't end, under your climbing feet they will go on growing upwards. (CS, 451)

The antiallegorical approach to the work of Kafka has also influenced the way his animal stories are read, and the critique that allegorization is counterpoetic has also brought about a growing interest in Kafka's nonhuman animals per se. Drawing attention to Kafka's statement in his diary, "Metaphors are one among many things which make me despair of writing" (D, 398), Deleuze and Guattari apply this antimetaphorical approach to the nonhuman animals in Kafka's oeuvre:

> Kafka deliberately kills all metaphor, all symbolism, all signification, no less than all designation. Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor. There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense,

> but only a distribution of states that is part of the range of the word. The thing and other things are no longer anything but intensities overrun by deterritorialized sound or words that are following their line of escape. *It is no longer a question of* a resemblance between the comportment of an animal and that of a man; it is even less a question of a simple wordplay.[36]

Even within the allegorical framework, many literary scholars have long rejected the reduction of the text to the allegorical level. In his classic *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), William Empson states:

> Part of the function of an allegory is to make you feel that two levels of being correspond to each other in detail and indeed that there is some underlying reality, something in the nature of things, which makes this happen. . . . But the effect of allegory is to keep the two levels of being very distinct in your mind though they interpenetrate each other in so many details.[37]

Similarly, Angus Fletcher, in his extensive study of allegory, asserts that the literal level of many allegories is free of the usual allegorical intention, so that the work is no longer felt to be strongly iconographic. In such cases, the diegetic level of the narrative is to be taken in a completely literal way, becoming sufficient unto itself.[38] Northrop Frye also problematizes the very notion of allegory, arguing that every literary analysis is allegorical to some degree, as it exceeds the diegesis and refers to the actual universe; hence, he distinguishes a limit case of naive allegory, namely a work that is "so anxious to make its own allegorical points that it has no real literary or hypothetical center."[39]

Animal fable, in which the literal level is by definition subjected to the thematic level, seems to be such a limit case; but even the reduction of this limit case has been challenged. Reflecting on the role of nonhuman animals in animal fables, Emmanuel Levinas states that "men are seen *as* these animals and not only *through* these animals; the animals stops and fill up thought. An allegory is not . . . a poor man's symbol."[40] If even in animal fables the nonhuman animals should be taken into consideration, this must be even more so in complex texts such as Kafka's animal stories. The poetic critique of allegorization thereby intensifies the animal studies critique, inasmuch as the reduction of literary nonhuman animals to in-

trahuman concepts fails to notice the complexity of both the literary text and the nonhuman animals.

Embracing Humanimality

The innovative zoopoetic approach to literary animals seeks to critically examine human-animal dynamics and explore the experience of nonhuman animals. The outlying position taken against the exploration of nonhuman experience presumes that such experience does not exist. The Cartesian doctrine, according to which nonhuman animals have no mental experience, not even the simplest experiences of pain and pleasure, as they are nothing but "machines made by the hands of God,"[41] has long been abandoned and scientifically refuted.[42] The common contemporary argument against representing nonhuman experience is now epistemological rather than ontological; it is concerned with denying, not the existence of nonhuman consciousness, but our ability to access it.

Indeed, the representation of nonhuman experience in fiction poses a unique challenge. In contrast to other artistic forms, the literary representation is restricted to a verbal account, and as such encounters stumbling blocks when depicting nonhuman focalization, which is inherently nonverbal.[43] Unlike most other societal minorities, nonhuman animals cannot tell their own story; hence their representation is inevitably performed by humans.[44] "How is it possible to be true to animal experience, even if that were the wish," Gillian Beer asks, "if your medium of description is written human language?"[45] The fundamental challenge of nonhuman representation in literature was addressed already in 1927, in E. M. Forster's famous treatise on the novel:

> Since the actors in a story are usually human, it seems convenient to entitle this aspect People. Other animals have been introduced, but with limited success, for we know too little so far about their psychology. There may be, probably will be, an alteration here in the future . . . and we shall have animals who are neither symbolic, nor little men disguised, nor as four-legged tables moving, nor as painted scraps of paper that fly. It is one of the ways where science may enlarge the novel, by giving it fresh subject-matter. But the help has not been given yet, and until it comes we may say that the actors in a story are, or pretend to be, human beings.[46]

Since Forster wrote these words we have witnessed significant developments in cognitive ethnology that substantially contributed to the scientific knowledge of nonhuman animals. This knowledge, as Cary Wolfe notes, can be transferred from scientific to literary accounts:

> Given what we have learned in recent decades about many nonhuman animals—the richness of their mental and emotional lives, the complexity of their forms of communication and interactions—many scholars now think that we are forced to make the same kind of shift in the ethics of reading and interpretation that attended taking sexual difference seriously in the 1990s (in the form of queer theory) or race and gender seriously in the 1970s and 1980s.[47]

In fact, animal literature should have not waited for a scientific breakthrough. First, as Konrad Lorenz shows, realistic animal fiction at the turn of the twentieth century—achieved by careful empathic observation and not by scientific knowledge—has largely influenced animal science, and not vice versa.[48]

More importantly, realistic writing of nonhuman animals is merely one possibility—among other options—for creating nonhuman figures who are more than merely "little men disguised," in Forster's terms, or "absent referents," in Carol Adams's formulation.[49] Literary accounts are not restricted to realistic representation, and mimesis is neither the exclusive nor necessarily the preeminent manner of depiction in literature. As Tom Regan and Andrew Linzey assert in their study of nonhuman animals in literature:

> What literature can do—as can probably no other discipline—is to reconnect us with the world of animals. No matter how much we may learn about animals from disciplines such as psychology and biology (for they have much to teach us), that knowledge cannot replace the insights that can come from the disciplined exercise of our imagination.[50]

The fact that the protagonist of Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando*, for example, abruptly transforms from male to female with no explanation certainly does not mark gender issues as irrelevant to the novel. In like manner, species issues are essential when discussing Gregor Samsa's overnight transformation from human to nonhuman in Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," regardless of the nonrealistic nature of this transformative event.

Literary nonhuman animals, including anthropomorphized ones, should raise questions about human/nonhuman dynamics and illuminate the nonhuman condition. Anthropomorphism, in other words, is not equivalent to anthropocentrism. Narratives that use anthropomorphism and do not represent nonhuman animals faithfully may have—beside anthropomorphic elements—other elements that deal with the nonhuman experience, as well as human-nonhuman relations and dynamics. "There are degrees of personification," I. A. Richards argues in his epochal *Practical Criticism* (1929); "it can range from a mere momentary loan of a single human attribute or impulse to the projection of a complete spiritual being."[51] Various contemporary scholars have recognized the literary spectrum of anthropomorphism, falling between the pure mimetic and the completely anthropomorphized representation.[52] As Erica Fudge observes:

> Anthropomorphism might actually serve an ethical function: if we don't believe that in some way we can communicate with and understand animals, what is to make us stop and think as we experiment upon them, eat them, put them in cages? By gaining access to the world of animals, these books offer a way of thinking about human-animal relations more generally, and potentially more positively.[53]

Consider, for example, the Aesopian fable "The Man and the Lion Traveling Together":

> *A man and a lion were traveling along together one day* when they began to argue about which of them was stronger. Just then they passed a stone statue representing a man strangling a lion. "There, you see, we are stronger than you," said the man, pointing it out to the lion. But the lion smiled and replied: "If lions could make statues, you would see plenty of men under the paws of lions."[54]

This fable, which on the literal level deals with human-animal power relations, has been largely read as a fable about power relations within humanity. The abolitionist Wendell Phillips, for example, famously referred to it in his 1845 preface to *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*: "You remember the old fable of 'The Man and the Lion,' where the lion complained that he should not be so misrepresented when the lions wrote history. I am glad the time has come when the 'lions write

history.'"[55] Nevertheless, such reading, which sees the lion as standing for subordinate groups, deprived of self-representation, should not exclude nonhuman animals, who inherently cannot represent themselves. The anthropomorphized lion, who anticipates here the contemporary critique of the canon, radically exposes cultural representations as anthropocentric practice that merely reflects the perspective and interests of the dominating humans.

Like Aesop's lion, as well as many other anthropomorphized animals, Kafka's anthropomorphized figures can also be read in a nonanthropocentric way. Following the Kantian account of imagination as "another nature out of the material that actual nature gives it,"[56] Hannah Arendt contends that it is a misunderstanding to class Kafka with the surrealists. Arendt describes Kafka's storytelling as the construction of models, comparing them to blueprints, "which sometimes in a page, or even in a single phrase, expose the naked structure of events," and can be understood only "by those who are willing and able to realize by their own imagination the intentions of architects and the future appearances of buildings."[57] Paradoxically, Kafka's nonrealistic depiction of social reality is regarded as peculiarly truthful; hence Georg Lukács holds that "Kafka belongs with the great realist writers."[58] Correspondingly, Kafka's nonrealistic portrayal of nonhuman animals, who intertwine both human and nonhuman traits, should be viewed as a truthful alternative to the anthropocentric human-animal contradistinction. Like Woolf's case of gender fluidity, Kafka's species fluidity implies the radical suspension of the human/animal binary. Standing on the threshold between humanity and animality, Kafka's fictional creatures undermine the species barrier, creating a liminal human-animal space, which can be described as "humanimal."

Species fluidity in literature at the turn of the twentieth century, which is part of the larger phenomenon of animal abundance in the literature of this period, has been broadly recognized in literary animal studies as post-Darwinian.[59] Inspired by Darwin's theory of the mutability of species and intensified by Nietzsche's critique of metaphysical anthropocentrism, as well as Freud's mapping of the unconscious, the notion of the animalized human struck at the normative thinking and imaginary at the turn of the twentieth century.[60] In his memoir *Conversations with Kafka*, Kafka's friend Gustav Janouch tells an anecdote indicating that Kafka himself viewed his humanimal writing as a product of the zeitgeist. Janouch had presented to Kafka David Garnett's *Lady into Fox*, a British metamorphosis novella

published in 1922, suggesting that Garnett had imitated Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." Rejecting the idea of plagiarism, Kafka's reply was: "But no! He didn't get that from me. It's a matter of the age. We both copied from that. Animals are closer to us than human beings. That's where our prison bars lie. We find relations with animals easier than with men."[61]

Alongside the post-Darwinian zeitgeist, Kafkalogists have also related the poetics of Kafka to his sociopolitical condition as a German Jew living in Prague. Examining Kafka's writing through a sociohistorical prism, Pavel Eisner, in his 1948 *Franz Kafka and Prague*, depicts Kafka as living in a "triple ghetto":

> In the eyes of the Czechs, the German Jew was a stranger in three senses: as a Jew, either owing to creed or to unmixed blood; as a generally comfortable, prosperous and, often enough, rich citizen, in the midst of a crowd of proletarians and small bourgeois; and thirdly, as a German.[62]

In his 1951 study, *Franz Kafka*, Günther Anders suggests further contexts for Kafka's ultimate otherness:

> For where indeed did he belong? As a Jew not quite to the Christian world; and as a non-practicing Jew—as he originally was—not quite among the Jews. As a German-speaking Czech, not quite among the Czechs; and as a German-speaking Jew, not quite among the Bohemian Germans. As a Bohemian, not quite to Austria. As an official of a workers' insurance company, not quite to the middle class. Yet as a son of a middle-class family, not quite to the working class. He cannot feel at home among his office colleagues, for he knows himself to be a writer. But he is unable to live entirely as a writer either, for he sacrifices his energies to the welfare of his family. But "in my family I am more estranged than a stranger."[63]

Stranded between identities, Kafka has been regarded as apolitical,[64] a notion that is often illustrated by his remarkable diary entry of August 2, 1914: "Germany has declared war on Russia—swimming in the afternoon" (D, 301). Nevertheless, portraying Kafka as apolitical due to his lack of interest in war affairs reflects a narrow conception of politics, focusing solely on governmental and international policies—"Politics" with

a capital P.[65] Whereas Kafka's fictional and nonfictional writings do not deal with Politics, they certainly focus on politics, exploring questions of inclusion and exclusion, social and familial power relations, as well as the very notion of boundaries. Deleuze and Guattari see Kafka's subversive relationship to the dominant German culture in fin de siècle Prague as the key to understanding his work. For them, Kafka's work is an exemplar of minor literature, which leads an attack on the majority by using its language outside the relative territory of that majority, and essentially has political themes and collective value.[66]

Kafka's attack on the majority, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, is reflected also in his approach—in life and fiction alike—to nonhuman animals. In striking contrast to his indifference to the outbreak of the First World War, Kafka shows genuine concern and compassion for nonhuman animals, as illustrated, for example, by an entry in his diary three months later: "Yesterday a fallen horse with a bloody knee on Niklasstrasse. I looked away and uncontrollably grimaced in the broad daylight" (D, 350). In a letter to Felice, he maintains: "Had you not been lying on the ground among the animals, you wouldn't have been able to see the sky and the stars wouldn't have been set free. Perhaps you wouldn't have survived the terror of standing upright" (LF, 447). Elias Canetti, who stated that "Kafka's work is dipped in the color of powerlessness,"[67] interprets this passage as follows:

> One must lie down with the beasts in order to be set free, or redeemed. Standing upright signifies the power of man over beasts; but precisely in the most obvious attitude man is exposed, visible, vulnerable. For this power is also guilt, and only on the ground, lying among the animals, can one see the stars, which frees one from this terrifying power of man.[68]

His social alienation, on the one hand, and his empathy with the powerless, on the other, lead Kafka to feel detached from human beings and to identify with nonhuman animals, the most powerless of beings. "Often—and in my inmost self perhaps all the time—I doubt whether I am a human being," he writes to Felice, and shortly after he confidently asserts, "I am not a human being" (LF, 287–88). Kafka's sincere commitment to nonhuman animals, in both life and writing, is encapsulated in his remarkable words to a fish, while looking into his eyes in the Berlin aquarium: "Now at last I can look at you in peace, I don't eat you anymore."[69] Grant-

ing animality a preeminent status, Kafka directs his reader towards interspecies ethics and politics.

Additionally, animal representations in Kafka's canon are always humanimal, seeking to explore not only the nonhuman experience, but also the very animal-human divide, and as such they are highly political. As Adorno notes, "Instead of human dignity, the supreme bourgeois concept, there emerges in him the salutary recollection of the similarity between man and animal, an idea upon which a whole group of his narratives thrives."[70] Kafka's vast zoopoetics reflects, then, his radical zoopolitics, embodying the posthumanist agenda constituted decades after his death, as Agamben has expressed it:

> What is man, if he is always the place—and, at the same time, the result—of ceaseless divisions and caesurae? It is more urgent to work on these divisions, to ask in what way—within man—has man been separated from non-man, and the animal from the human, than it is to take positions on the great issues, on so-called human rights and values.[71]

It is in this vein that Eric Santner identifies a series of German Jewish writers, among them Kafka, who have placed the notion of the creaturely at the center of their literary and philosophical elaborations of human life in modern times:

> For these writers, however, creaturely life—the peculiar proximity of the human to the animal at the very point of their radical difference—is a product not simply of man's thrownness into the (enigmatic) "openness of Being" but of his exposure to a traumatic dimension of political power and social bonds whose structures have undergone radical transformations in modernity. The "essential disruption" that renders man "creaturely" for these writers has, that is, a distinctly political—or better, *biopolitical*—aspect; it names the threshold where life becomes a matter of politics and politics comes to inform the very matter and materiality of life.[72]

Jay Geller's *Bestiarium Judaicum* thoroughly explores the extensive engagement of German Jewish authors with questions of animality. Geller reflects on the work of various writers, from Heinrich Heine in the early

nineteenth century to Felix Salten (the author of *Bambi*) on the eve of the Second World War, and yet he encapsulates his exploration in one single word—"Kafka." [73]

In recent years, Kafka's zoopoetics has been tellingly recognized by his commentators, as well as by posthumanist and literary animal studies scholars, who have yet, however, aspired to provide neither an overarching nor interdiscursive account thereof. This book aims to fill this lacuna. Positing Kafka's animal stories as a distinct and significant corpus within his entire poetics, and closely examining them in dialogue with both Kafka studies and posthumanist theories, this book seeks to critically revisit animality, humanimal dynamics, and the very human-animal contradistinction in the writing of Franz Kafka.

I choose to focus on six of Kafka's animal stories, those that are the most elaborate and that are also characterized by animalistic points of view: "The Metamorphosis" ("Die Verwandlung"), "A Report to an Academy" ("Ein Bericht für eine Akademie"), "Jackals and Arabs" ("Schakale und Araber"), "Researches of a Dog" ("Forschungen eines Hundes"), "The Burrow" ("Der Bau"), and "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" ("Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse"). In order to trace Kafka's zoopoetic trajectory, the chapters are chronologically arranged, from his first to his very last animal story. Other animal stories by Kafka—among them "A Crossbreed" ("Eine Kreuzung") and "The Animal in the Synagogue" ("Das Tier in der Synagoge")—will be referred to over the course of my discussion of the selected works.

Lastly, it is important to note that animality in Kafka's oeuvre is not restricted to nonhuman characters but can be found in human figures as well. The animalization of humans complements the humanization of nonhuman figures in destabilizing the boundaries between humans and other animals. Therefore, Kafka's animalized humans—found in "A Country Doctor" ("Ein Landarzt"), "A Page from an Old Document" ("Ein altes Blatt"), "Building the Great Wall of China" ("Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer"), and "A Hunger Artist" ("Ein Hungerkünstler")—will be also examined in dialogue with his animal stories.

PART I

Interspecies Transitioning

CHAPTER 1

The Metamorphosis of the Human/Animal Binary

"The Metamorphosis" ("Die Verwandlung"), written in 1912 and first published in 1915, is among the most distinguished masterpieces of twentieth-century fiction. The novella opens with the overnight transformation of the traveling salesman Gregor Samsa into a monstrous vermin (*ungeheures Ungeziefer*) and follows life at the Samsas' house after the transformation. Kafka's first and most extended animal story has not been considered as such, but has rather been read allegorically. It would be impossible to encompass the enormous variety of allegorical readings of this story, which include, among many others, a satire on petit bourgeois mores, a Marxist critique of capitalist hierarchies, a psychological analysis of alienation or the Oedipus complex, a case for the futility of Jewish assimilation into European society, a parable about the frailty of human empathy and solidarity, an account of a homosexual coming out of the closet, and a tale of a family struggling with an afflicted family member.[1] "The Metamorphosis" thus seems an inexhaustible resource for allegorical interpretation.

Nonetheless, the very multiplicity of allegorical readings indicates that the story is in fact not an allegory, as Tzvetan Todorov argues in his extensive work on the fantastic:

> The plethora of allegorical interpretations point to the fact that "The Metamorphosis" is not an allegory, since the text does not invite a specific allegorical interpretation. Several allegorical interpretations are perhaps suggested, but they are all vague and the text does not

> favor any one in particular. The fact that the story does not offer a definitive allegorical message clearly indicates that "The Metamorphosis" should not be defined as an allegory.[2]

Ironically, the animalized protagonist at the center of the story, who is excluded from the domestic arena by his family, is also excluded from the interpretive arena by the literary commentators, who see him as a mere vehicle for various interhuman themes. However, "the plethora of allegorical interpretations," the huge bundle of hermeneutic keys (of which Kafka's narratives paradigmatically do not favor any particular one) keeps the door open, allowing the animalized figure to break through the threshold. Through this open door between the nonhuman and the human sphere, I would like to read Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" as a story about this very threshold separating humans from other animals; a story that exposes the construction of the human/animal binary, and also deconstructs this binary.

The Construction of the Human/Animal Binary

"The Metamorphosis" commences with one of the most memorable opening sentences in world literature: "When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin" (M, 3). The vermin, the animal that Gregor Samsa transforms into, is named in the original German text *Ungeziefer*. While the denotation of *Ungeziefer* in German is indeed equivalent to "vermin" in English, its etymological meaning, which harks back to Middle High German, is "an unclean animal, unfit for sacrifice."[3] Inevitably lost in translation, this etymological meaning is crucial to the text and serves as a point of departure for my zoopoetic reading of "The Metamorphosis."

The Modern Alienation from Nonhuman Animals

In his groundbreaking work *Homo Sacer* (1995), Giorgio Agamben raises fundamental questions about the nature of political power through an analysis of an obscure figure of archaic Roman law. The term *homo sacer*, which literally means "sacred man," designated the status of a person who

is excluded from society and its law. In consequence, this person could be killed by anyone, but not sacrificed in religious rites. Agamben refers to the life of the *homo sacer* as "bare life." Such life is distinguished from both animal life (*zoé*), which can be sacrificed, and human life (*bíos*), which cannot be taken with impunity.[4] Agamben's political theory had largely focused on how human life has become bare life throughout Western history, suspending the question of animal life and politics, but in his later work, *The Open: Man and Animal* (2002), he puts the notion of bare life to work in his discussion of nonhuman animals, primarily through a rereading of Heidegger's conception of nonhuman animals as being "poor in world" (*weltarm*).[5]

The idea that nonhuman life became bare life in modern times can be traced to Jean Baudrillard's insightful essay "The Animals: Territory and Metamorphoses" in his 1981 *Simulacra and Simulation*. The fact that in modern society nonhuman animals are no longer sacrificed and prosecuted[6] seems to suggest an improvement in their status, yet actually indicates, according to Baudrillard, their total exclusion from social and political life:

> Animals were only demoted to the status of inhumanity as reason and humanism progressed. . . . Those who used to sacrifice animals did not take them for beasts. And even the Middle Ages, which condemned and punished them in due form, was in this way much closer to them than we are, we who are filled with horror at this practice. They held them to be guilty: which was a way of honoring them. We take them for nothing, and it is on this basis that we are "human" with them. We no longer sacrifice them, we no longer punish them, and we are proud of it, but it is simply that we have domesticated them, worse: that we have made of them a racially inferior world, no longer even worthy of our justice, but only of our affection and social charity, no longer worthy of punishment and of death, but only of experimentation and extermination like meat from the butchery.[7]

Both *Ungeziefer* and *homo sacer* refer to those who are unfit for sacrifice, and hence can be viewed equivalently. The transformation of Gregor Samsa into *Ungeziefer* will thus be contextualized with Agamben's characterization of the *homo sacer* and Baudrillard's critique. Correspondingly,

the morning in which Gregor woke up and found himself changed into vermin (*Ungeziefer* or *homo sacer*) is the dawn of modern humanism.

And indeed, Gregor is twice violently pushed to his room, beyond the threshold of humanity, by the implements of reason and humanism. On the first time, his father "picked up in his right hand a heavy newspaper from the table, and stamping his feet, started brandishing the cane and the newspaper to drive Gregor back into his room" (M, 14). The newspaper in this scene recalls Heidegger's reformulation of *zoon echon logon*, the Greek definition of man as a speaking living being: "A human being is a living thing that reads the newspaper."[8] In this context, the newspaper functions metonymically, standing for human reason, which is used to suppress and exclude other animals. Moreover, the German word for "newspaper," the weapon used here to suppress animality, is *Zeitung*, derived from the word *Zeit*, which means time. The newspaper, the *Zeitung*, is the embodiment of the zeitgeist, the zeitgeist of modernism. In her essay "Franz Kafka: A Revolution," written on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Kafka's death, Hannah Arendt points out that Kafka's critics, though strongly disagreeing about the inherent meaning of his work, oddly agree on one essential point: all are struck by a quality of modernity that appears nowhere else with the same intensity and unequivocalness.[9] Focusing on human-animal dynamics in modern times, my analysis of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" is also "struck by a quality of modernity."

The second time Gregor's father pushes his transformed son beyond the confines of humanity, he is armed with a biological weapon:

> It was an apple; a second one came flying right after it; Gregor stopped dead with fear; further running was useless, for his father was determined to bombard him. He had filled his pockets from the fruit bowl on the buffet and was now pitching one apple after another. (M, 28–29)

Though the fruit of the tree of knowledge in the book of Genesis is not identified, in Christian iconography and symbolism it is often portrayed as an apple, which consequently became the symbol of knowledge and reason. Therefore, the modern sin against animality here harks back to the original sin. The intertextual link to the biblical story sheds light on the relations between the original sin of humanity and the modern sin of humanism; in both cases human reason detaches humanity from nature.

Yet, whereas in the biblical myth the separation of humanity from the paradisiac harmony with nature in the Garden of Eden was a punishment by God for its sin of disobedience, in the modern case the detachment of humans from the rest of nature is itself the sin committed by humanity.

Moreover, unlike Adam, who was led to sin by Eve, Gregor's father is the active sinner, while his mother "forced herself onto his father, and embracing him . . . her hands clasping his father's neck, begged for Gregor's life" (M, 29). The reversal of the gender roles indicates that, unlike the original sin, the humanist sin, the sin of humanism against animality, is first and foremost patriarchal.[10] According to legend, the forbidden fruit of knowledge became lodged in Adam's throat, and since then men have this laryngeal prominence—also known as an Adam's apple—as an eternal reminder of the original sin. Likewise, one of the apples thrown at Gregor "literally forced his way to his back . . . the apple remained imbedded in his flesh as a visible souvenir" (M, 29). Kafka's apple, echoing Adam's apple, stays in Gregor's body till his very last breath, as a reminder of the humanist sin.

This scene, in which the father bombards his son with apples, is also intertextually linked to the myth of Wilhelm Tell, a folk hero of Switzerland, which was canonized in Friedrich Schiller's eponymous play. In Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), a powerful manifesto for political freedom, tyrant Gessler, governor of the Swiss cantons, forces Wilhelm Tell to shoot an apple off his son's head. Unlike Tell, who saves his beloved son by hitting the apple, Mr. Samsa hits his hated son with an apple, which causes him injury and eventually kills him. Viewing this scene in the light of the iconic *Apfelschuss* scene in *Wilhelm Tell* reveals Mr. Samsa not only as oppositional to the heroic Tell but also as analogous to the initiator of the horrific act—Gessler, the sovereign power.

It is worthwhile comparing the sovereign powers in the two *Apfelschuss* scenes through the Foucauldian lens of biopolitics, which has shaped much contemporary theorizing of politics. In *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Foucault analyzes an historical shift in the operation of sovereignty: "The old power of death that symbolized sovereign power was now carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life."[11] Whilst in the premodern era the power of the sovereign was either to *take life* or to let live, in modern times the sovereign right is transformed into the new right to *make live* and to let die. Foucault sees the moment when violence begins to proliferate beyond the recognizable

historical framework of sovereign power into this innovative operation of power, which he defines as biopower or biopolitics, as the inception of modernity.

In Foucauldian terms, whereas tyrant Gessler is the old sovereign power who can take life—"You shoot, or die—together with the boy"[12]—Mr. Samsa stands for the modern sovereign power, which does not take Gregor's life but rather shapes and controls it thoroughly. While Foucault did not apply the notion of biopolitics to nonhuman animals, posthumanist theorists have variously suggested that the dominion over nonhuman animals in modern times exemplifies his notion of biopolitical control.[13] Therefore, a zoopoetic reading of Mr. Samsa's biopower over Gregor does not reduce biopower over nonhuman animals to an intrahuman context, but rather expands the Foucauldian notion of biopolitics beyond the boundaries of humanity.

The Middle-Class Alienation from Nonhuman Animals

A considerable difference emerges between the attitude of his family toward Gregor and that of the cleaner. While the family members evince ambivalence and revulsion, the cleaner displays only equanimity and curiosity. She is also not afraid of him, nor is she threatened by him:

> For now the cleaning woman was there. This old widow, who thanks to her strong bony frame had probably survived the worst in a long life, was not really repelled by Gregor. Without being in the least inquisitive, she had once accidentally opened the door of Gregor's room, and at the sight of Gregor . . . she had remained standing, with her hands folded on her stomach, marveling. From that time on she never failed to open the door a crack every morning and every evening and peek in hurriedly at Gregor. In the beginning she also used to call him over to her with words she probably considered friendly, like "Come over here for a minute, you old dung beetle!" or "Look at that old dung beetle!" (M, 32–33)

The nonchalance of the cleaner when face to face with the transformed Gregor is particularly contrasted with the reaction of his mother, who cries, "Help, for God's sake, help!" (M, 14) on seeing him. Exhibiting calm

and composure vis-à-vis Gregor, the cleaner's function in the story seems to serve as foil to the other characters.

Addressing the uncharacteristic reaction of the cleaner to Gregor, several commentators have pointed that she lacks any familial affinity with Gregor; unlike Gregor's parents and sister, she has no emotional attachment to premetamorphosed Gregor.[14] This explanation is nevertheless inconclusive, inasmuch as a gigantic vermin,[15] who is part of the household, is bound to evoke horror, or at least some degree of revulsion, regardless of one's acquaintance with the human past of this being. The boarders, for example, who know nothing of his previous history, are utterly shocked and disgusted to see Gregor, unwilling to continue living under the same roof with him. An alternative explanation for the cleaner's nonchalant attitude toward Gregor is class based. The Samsa family, the chief clerk, and the boarders all belong to the same social class; they are bourgeois. The cleaner, on the other hand, is a working-class woman.

Several historical studies have pointed to increasing sensitivity toward nonhuman animals among the Western middle class from the Renaissance onward.[16] At the same time, a more significant trend can be discerned in the transition from conscious intent (either cruel or compassionate) to an attitude of alienation, indifference, and ignorance.[17] The social division of labor, technological developments and the process of urbanization brought about increasing physical separation between humans and most other animals. Following the Middle Ages, human habitation was separated from the locale where "working animals" and "food animals" were kept, and direct contact with other animals was drastically decreased. Later, slaughterhouses were moved from cities to the periphery, principally for economic reasons, but also because of the horror these repugnant facilities evoked.[18]

In his 1937 masterwork, *The Civilizing Process*, the sociologist Norbert Elias examines the eating habits of nobles and bourgeois. He depicts a gradual progression, from piling up whole animals on the table, through serving them without palpable signs of life (such as the head), to camouflaging the living animal by cutting, processing, and preparing it beforehand in the kitchen. Concealing the traces of violence done to the animals served for human consumption is, according to Elias, part of a broader paradigm characterizing the progress of civilization: rejection of all manifestations of cruelty by the upper and middle classes.[19] This new sensitivity toward nonhuman animals appeared in the second half of the eighteenth century, finding expression in intellectual tracts, the establishment of ani-

mal welfare organizations, a growing trend of adopting companion animals, and so on. All this, however, did not improve the condition of most nonhuman animals, as the "dirty job" of exploiting and killing them had not stopped, but was only better concealed from the higher classes and carried out solely by the working class. In Elias's words, "The distasteful is removed behind the scenes of social life."[20]

Interestingly, the dynamics of the division of labor regarding Gregor's care, as well as the different approaches toward him, faithfully reflect the dynamics of the division of labor between the working class and the higher classes with respect to the treatment of nonhuman animals in Western society as described by Elias. Whereas the cleaner (who represents the working class) treats Gregor with a mixture of cruelty and empathy, the family (standing for the middle class) exhibits estrangement, revulsion, and repression toward him.

In the first phase of estrangement, according to the aforementioned historical progression, there is a physical separation; a tacit agreement dictates that the members of the family should refrain from seeing Gregor:

> One time—it must have been a month since Gregor's metamorphosis, and there was certainly no particular reason any more for his sister to be astonished at Gregor's appearance—she came a little earlier than usual and caught Gregor still looking out the window, immobile and so in an excellent position to be terrifying. It would not have surprised Gregor if she had not come in, because his position prevented her from immediately opening the window, but not only did she not come in, she even sprang back and locked the door . . . he had to wait until noon before his sister came again, and she seemed much more uneasy than usual. He realized from this that the sight of him was still repulsive to her and was bound to remain repulsive to her in the future, and that she probably had to overcome a lot of resistance not to run away at the sight of even the small part of his body that jutted out from under the couch. (M, 22)

In contrast to this estrangement and repression exhibited by the family, the cleaner is not threatened by Gregor, nor does she try to avoid or exclude him. She treats him rather fondly, albeit with a touch of contempt and condescension, even going so far as to confront him. Gradually, the members of the household, the middle-class folk, distance themselves from

him, shun him, and lose interest in his condition. And after Gregor's sister relinquishes her duty and no longer takes care of her animalized brother, the cleaner is the only one entrusted with his care.

The difference between the family members and the cleaner is most pronounced after Gregor's death; upon noticing that he is lying motionless, the cleaner tickles Gregor with the broom, and then, after realizing that he is dead, she calls out, "Come and have a look, it's croaked; it's lying there, dead as a doornail!" (M, 40). Later, she disposes of Gregor's corpse, as she realizes that the family is reluctant to deal with it. But the Samsas not only avoid handling the mortal remains, they do not even wish to be informed of how this was done:

> "Look, you don't have to worry about getting rid of the stuff next door. It's already been taken care of." Mrs. Samsa and Grete bent down over their letter, as if to continue writing. Mr. Samsa, who noticed that the cleaning woman was now about to start describing everything in detail, stopped her with a firmly outstretched hand. (M, 42)

The family's reaction is a demonstration of Elias's claim that "the distasteful is removed behind the scenes of social life." It is, however, interesting to note that the family experiences relief for the first time, not at the removal of Gregor's dead body, but when seeing the butcher's boy:

> When a butcher's boy, with a carrier on his head came climbing up the stairs with a proud bearing, towards them and then up past them, Mr. Samsa and the women quickly left the banister and all went back, into their apartment. (M, 41)

Gregor's disturbing presence is not only vanished, but the distasteful dead body is substituted with another dead body, yet in a "civilized," modern form of chopped meat.

The Alienation from the Nonhuman through Adolescence

Alongside the cleaner's approach to Gregor in contrast to that of his family, we can also examine the attitude of Grete, Gregor's sister, in comparison

to his parents' stance. Of the three family members, Grete is the lowest in status due to her gender and age. Significantly, she is the only family member who treats Gregor with care and attentiveness, at least up to a certain point. Her relations with Gregor are distant and cold (she enters Gregor's room only when he is concealed and cannot be seen) yet are still better than the parents' relation to their son, whose dismissive rejection of Gregor is virtually absolute. Grete is the sole person who genuinely tries to address his needs. Thus, when she realizes that Gregor does not eat his regular food, she performs an experiment:

> To find out his likes and dislikes, she brought him a wide assortment of things, all spread out on an old newspaper: old, half-rotten, vegetables; bones left over from the evening meal, caked with congealed white sauce; some raisins and almonds; a piece of cheese, which two days before Gregor had declared inedible; a plain slice of bread, a slice of bread and butter, and one with butter and salt. In addition to all this, she put down some water in the bowl apparently permanently earmarked for Gregor's use. (M, 17–18)

The biologist Marian Stamp Dawkins, who has carried out numerous experiments based on giving choices to nonhuman animals in order to find out their preferences, offers a similar method as a means of understanding other animals and overcoming the language barrier.[21] It seems that Grete, many decades before Dawkins, intuitively utilizes this methodology, allowing humans to answer the question—paraphrasing Freud's (in)famous query, "What does a woman want"—"What does a nonhuman animal want?"

Parallel to studies of different attitudes toward nonhuman animals in terms of social class, there are also age-based theories. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913) Freud states:

> Children show no trace of the arrogance, which urges adult civilized men to draw a hard-and-fast line between their own nature and that of all other animals. Children have no scruples over allowing animals to rank as their full equals. Uninhibited as they are in the avowal of their bodily needs, they no doubt feel themselves more akin to animals than to their elders, who well may be a puzzle to them.[22]

This difference between children and adults in approach to nonhuman animals is also reflected in literature. In her book on the cultural representation of nonhuman animals, Erica Fudge observes that in many literary works children connect to other animals better than they do to grownups. Fudge examines E. B. White's classic 1952 children's book *Charlotte's Web* as a paradigmatic narrative in which Fern, the young heroine, shows empathy for other animals, while the adults are estranged from the nonhuman world.

Nevertheless, unlike other social positions (such as gender, ethnicity, or class), age status is inherently labile. And indeed, when Fern grows up, she finds herself estranged from nonhuman animals.[23] In the same vein, Carmen Dell'Aversano points out that transgressive feelings of empathy and affection for nonhuman animals are initially repressed:

> From earliest infancy we are taught to discount both our own feelings for animals and the feelings of animals themselves. Innumerable children have been served their pet lamb or duck for dinner, or have been forced to abandon their puppy or kitten at the beginning of the holiday season. A few have reacted with permanent shock and horror; most have yielded to societal pressure, and have learned to regard their most authentic and deepest emotions as nothing more than childish "squeamishness." In all its horror, this is, in the experience of many of us, the moment in which our identity is founded and constructed as "human" in contrast to the "non-human." And the "non-human," embodied in the corpse, maimed beyond recognition, of the being we loved the most.[24]

Dell'Aversano demonstrates the initiation ritual into the primacy of the bond between humans in Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's 1938 novel *The Yearling*, a story of a Florida boy who is forced to shoot his beloved fawn when the fawn grows up and threatens the family's crop. Through the killing of his nonhuman friend, the protagonist makes the transition from a "yearling" to a full member of society, defined—among other things—by a willingness and ability to kill beings of other species as a proof of his loyalty to his own.[25]

Unlike in *The Yearling*, in "The Metamorphosis" it is not the parents who convince their child to get rid of the nonhuman; conversely, it is Grete who persuades her parents that the verminous Gregor should be got

rid of. Like Fern, Grete also loses interest in the nonhuman animal. Unlike the child in *The Yearling*, Grete does not physically kill the nonhuman animal; but the fact that Gregor dies right after hearing his sister decisively say, "It has to go" (M, 38), indicates that her words at least symbolically caused his death. In their book on young adult literature, Kenneth Donelson and Alleen Nilsen show that in many cases animal sacrifice is a symbol of the young person's loss of innocence.[26] In Kafka's metamorphosis story, Grete, the young adult, also sacrifices the nonhuman animal, who until that point was unsacrificable (literally, as he is *Ungeziefer*—an animal unsuitable for sacrifice).

Grete is older than White's Fern; she is not a child, but adolescent. Yet, similarly, there is a clear correlation between the increasing alienation she feels toward her animalized brother and the process of maturation that she undergoes. After finding Gregor's dead body, the parents promptly notice how Grete has matured:

> As they were talking in this vein, it occurred almost simultaneously to Mr. and Mrs. Samsa, as they watched their daughter getting livelier and livelier, that lately, in spite of all the troubles which had turned her cheeks pale, she had blossomed into a good-looking, shapely girl. Growing quieter and communicating almost unconsciously through glances, they thought that it would soon be time, too, to find her a good husband. And it was like a confirmation of their new dreams and good intentions, when at the end of the ride their daughter got up first and stretched her young body. (M, 42)

These words referring to Grete's maturation conclude the story, underlying the centrality of this theme. The process of Grete growing up, blossoming into a lovely young woman, is also often described in terms of metamorphosis.[27] Clayton Koelb even claims that the story is in fact about Grete's—and not Gregor's—metamorphosis:

> An attentive reader will notice right away that the action of Kafka's story actually has almost nothing to do with the process of Gregor's bodily alteration . . . , which is already complete before the story begins. It has everything to do with the consequences of that transformation, the most significant of which is yet another transformation:

> the radical and miraculous change in Gregor's family, especially his sister Grete.[28]

Nevertheless, Grete's transformation does not only stand in contrast to Gregor's transformation—he turns into a monstrous vermin and she becomes a vivacious and beautiful woman. The two transformative events, at the very beginning and at the very end of the story, are also analogous. Grete's transformation is not merely physical but first and foremost mental, and this change—just like Gregor's change—can be described in terms of monstrosity. Whereas Gregor became nonhuman, Grete becomes inhumane. Grete has completed the process of coming of age with the full rejection of animality. Complying with "humanormativity,"[29] her socialization is completed, and she has become a normative bourgeois, ready to start a bourgeois family of her own.

Deconstructing the Human/Animal Binary

Already from its opening sentence, it is established that Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" is a metamorphosis narrative.[30] There are, in fact, two major distinct metamorphosis models in Western literature, which differ from one another narratologically and ideologically. The first model comprises etiological metamorphosis narratives, which offer a mythological explanation for the origin of something, typically (though not exclusively) a natural phenomenon. The metamorphic event in such tales is thus, in narratological terms, the resolution of the narrative. The Ovidian metamorphosis narratives, with very few exceptions, belong here.[31] In the other metamorphosis model, the metamorphic event functions as the conflict of the narrative, taking place in an early stage in the story. Such narratives follow the characters' lives after the metamorphosis has occurred and typically conclude with a countermetamorphosis, when the human form is regained. Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*, as well as numerous popular tales, such as "Beauty and the Beast," "Swan Lake," and "The Princess and the Frog," fit this type of metamorphosis narrative. Kafka makes use of aspects of both models, but also departs from them in significant ways. The human/animal binary in Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" is thus subverted through selective obedience and violation of the conventions of both metamorphosis models.

Transgressing the Species Boundary

It seems that by presenting figures undergoing a species transition metamorphosis narratives in which humans are transformed into nonhuman animals[32] inherently subvert the human/animal binary, replacing it with a model of species fluidity. In the last chapter of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the character of Pythagoras concludes with the ethico-political lesson learned from this subversion, which is that we should not harm other animals:

> All things change, nothing dies. The spirit wanders and
> comes from there to here, from here to there and occupies whatever
> body
> it likes, and from wild beasts transfers into human bodies,
> and into wild beasts when in ours, and does not perish at any time.
> And just as wax is easily stamped with new images,
> and does not remain as it was nor keep the same shapes,
> but is, even so, itself the same, so, I teach, is the soul always
> the same, but it passes into a variety of shapes.
> And so, in case piety is conquered by the belly's desires,
> refrain, I do declare, from expelling kindred soul
> by unspeakable slaughter, and let not blood be fed by blood.[33]

However, in nonetiological metamorphosis narratives this subversive implication does not exist, not even implicitly. On the contrary, these tales typically reinforce the human/animal binary, as well as the anthropocentric paradigm, by presenting a psychophysical split. While the human body is transformed into a nonhuman body, the mind remains human throughout the plot, allowing the human and the nonhuman to oppose and define each other.[34] This dichotomous model presented in metamorphosis tales is rooted in the tradition of dualism in philosophy of mind, which sees body and mind as two ontologically separate categories.[35] The human identity of the transformed person is not challenged, and the transformation is presented as a discrepancy to be corrected. The psychophysical split in nonetiological metamorphosis tales is either explicitly stated or implied. It is explicitly stated, for example, in the metamorphosis scene in *The Odyssey*, in which Circe turns Odysseus's friends into pigs: "For they grew the heads and shapes and bristles of swine, with swine-voice too. Only their reason remained steadfastly as before,"[36] as well as in Apuleius's *The Golden*

Ass, in which Lucius reports his mental condition directly after he was transformed into an ass: "Though I was now a perfect ass, a Lucius-turned-beast, I still preserved my human faculties."[37]

Already the very first sentence of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" places the story within the nonetiological tradition of metamorphosis narratives, as the metamorphic event is clearly the conflict—and not the resolution—of the story. Gregor Samsa's first reaction to the transformation also fits the nonetiological metamorphic model, as there is a complete discrepancy between Gregor's animal body and his human mind:

> He was lying on his back as hard as armor plate, and when he lifted his head a little, he saw his vaulted brown belly, sectioned by arch-shaped ribs, to whose dome the cover, about to slide completely, could barely cling. His many legs, pitifully thin compared with the size of the rest of him, were waving helplessly before his eyes. . . . "Oh God," he thought, "what a grueling job I've picked! Day in, day out—on the road." (M, 3–4)

Surprisingly, what troubles Gregor's mind at this juncture is his work, and not the horrific change that his body has undergone; his human thoughts are sharply contrasted with his animal body. This juxtaposition underlines the chasm between Gregor's body and his mind, showing how alienated Gregor is from his new body. At this early stage, Gregor Samsa is confined in the verminous body, as Josef K., the protagonist of Kafka's *The Trial*, is imprisoned in his apartment.

But unlike earlier nonetiological metamorphosis stories, the psychophysical split is not maintained throughout the narrative, and instead of confirming dualistic assumptions the progression of the plot denies them. Soon there is a gradual change, and the dichotomous split between the nonhuman body and the human mind is undermined. Already on the very first morning of his transformation, Gregor gains dexterity in operating his new body; he manages to get out of bed, walk to the door, and open it. His new body is no longer a mere source of pain and suffering but also of certain pleasure: "For the first time that morning he had a feeling of physical well-being; his little legs were on firm ground; they obeyed him completely, as he noted to his joy" (M, 14). As Gregor Samsa becomes more united with his nonhuman body he simultaneously feels more detached from his humanity, and the incompatibility between nonhuman body and

human soul diminishes, becoming more congruous; Gregor learns to live with his body and gradually accepts his animalistic being. In fact, the corporal transformation, which at first was described as happening overnight, is later seen as a continuous process. Thus, for instance, his sight is deteriorating, as he noticed when looking through the window: "From day to day he saw things even a short distance away less and less distinctly" (M, 21).

Gradually, the change takes on an epistemic dimension as well. Gregor's thoughts no longer center on his premetamorphosis human life, but on his present existence as a rejected vermin. He even starts to enjoy activities appropriate to his current nonhuman existence:

> He adopted the habit of crawling crisscross over the walls and the ceiling. He especially liked hanging from the ceiling; it was completely different from lying on the floor; one could breathe more freely; a faint swinging sensation went through the body. (M, 23)

Gregor himself has become aware of this mental change:

> Gregor realized that the monotony of family life, combined with the fact that not a soul had addressed a word directly to him, must have addled his brain in the course of the past two months, for he could not explain to himself in any other way how in all seriousness he could have been anxious to have his room cleared out. Had he really wanted to have his warm room, comfortably fitted with furniture that had always been in the family, changed into a cave, in which, of course, he would be able to crawl around unhampered in all directions but at the cost of simultaneously, rapidly, and totally forgetting his human past? Even now he had been on the verge of forgetting and only his mother's voice, which he had not heard for so long, had shaken him up. (M, 24–25)

As the story progresses, it becomes harder to distinguish Gregor Samsa's nonhuman aspects from his human ones as the two intermingle. This is not a simplistic dichotomy between the human mind and the vermin body; the mind itself contains the contradictory elements of the two states of being. In accordance with Marx's dictum that "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness,"[38] Gregor's material existence—that is,

his verminous body—gradually determines, or at least affects, his consciousness. His human psyche has adjusted to the corporeal being and is undergoing its own, albeit imperfect, transformation. We witness here a dynamic fusion of human mentality, equipped as it is with cognitive tools for conceptual and verbal thinking, and animal mentality, which manifests itself chiefly in certain preferences, volitions, and desires.

Moreover, the traditional psychophysical spit is undermined here not only through the dynamics of Gregor's mind, which gradually becomes less human and more animalistic, but also by his physicality, which subverts traditional metamorphosis conventions. In cross-species tales, the physical turnover is typically complete, and the original human form has no somatic traces. Therefore—even in fantastic stories, in which metamorphosis is viewed as a possible occurrence—characters who were not witness to the moment of the transformation do not recognize the person behind the nonhuman body. The fantastic opening event in "The Metamorphosis" is usually read as an exceptional aberration from the realistic line of the story. As such, it is regarded as either a direct precursor or a straightforward instance of magic realism, a literary genre most associated with Latin American literature, portraying fantastical events in an otherwise realistic tone.[39] Gregor Samsa's transformation is given to the reader in the very first sentence of the story, but not to the other characters, and yet none of the other characters has any doubt that the monstrous vermin is indeed Gregor.

The fact that the vermin is in Gregor's room while Gregor is absent is insufficient to firmly conclude that Gregor has turned into the vermin. The first realistic thought at the sight of a monstrous vermin coming out of Gregor's room would probably be that the vermin has somehow entered the house and either devoured Gregor or scared him away. But the Samsa family entertains no doubt as to the origin of the monstrous vermin—it is clear to them that Gregor has turned into vermin. If Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," apart from Gregor's transformation, is indeed a realistic story, why is the metamorphic event taken for granted? The fact that the Samsas instantly recognize the vermin as their beloved son and brother indicates that the transformed Gregor Samsa is actually still recognizable—that is, the metamorphosis is not complete, and Gregor still maintains some of his anatomical human features. Some significant anomalies in the entomological paradigm have been long noted; the transformed Gregor has some human somatic features and characteristics that the insectile body does

not have, including a neck and ability to turn his head, to close his eyes, to tear up, and even to breathe (for insects have a very different respiratory system).[40]

Gregor's becoming-vermin actually epitomizes Deleuze and Guattari's theorization of "becoming-animal." To become-animal, for them, is to stake out an ongoing and never-ending path of escape, which undoes the strict renderings of animal and human identity as defined by social forces. This process is a result of ever-moving and changing drives and desires, which allow the subject to reach a continuum of intensities.[41] In contrast with earlier nonetiological metamorphosis narratives, Kafka's novella breaks down the species boundaries between the human and the nonhuman as it does not present a human trapped in a nonhuman body but rather a humanimal hybrid, whose physical and mental existences both contain, side by side, human and nonhuman features. Instead of the human/animal and body/mind oppositions, Kafka offers a wide and dynamic spectrum between the human and the nonhuman, physically and mentally alike. Gregor Samsa does not cross the barrier between the human and the nonhuman from one side to the other; he is situated rather on the threshold of the two domains. In his very in-betweenness, floating in the liminal space between the human and the nonhuman, humanimal Gregor transgresses the human-animal barrier.

Transgressing the Species Hierarchies

The outline of most nonetiological metamorphosis stories can be depicted in the tripartite structure of sin-punishment-redemption, in which the metamorphic event is a punishment for a sin and redemption takes place with the regaining of the human body. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno describe the anthropocentric premise of this paradigm in their 1944 magnum opus, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*:

> In popular fairy tales the metamorphosis of humans into animals is a recurring punishment. To be imprisoned in an animal body is regarded as damnation. To children . . . the idea of such transformations is immediately comprehensible and familiar. Believers in the transmigration of souls in the earliest cultures saw the animal form as punishment and torment. The mute wildness in the animal's gaze

> bears witness to the horror which is feared by humans in such metamorphoses. Every animal recalls to them an immense misfortune which took place in primeval times. Fairy tales express this dim human intuition.[42]

Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" radically violates this anthropocentric pattern. As several studies have shown, Kafka dramatically breaks from the metamorphosis tradition on which his story relies, as the expectation that Gregor Samsa will eventually regain his human body is not materialized.[43]

Nevertheless, the triangular matrix of sin-punishment-redemption is not realized in Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," not only due to the lack of redemption. The two other components are also absent. Punishment is defined as an (1) intentional infliction by someone in authority (2) of something negative (3) on someone who has committed a breach of rules.[44] Gregor's metamorphosis meets none of these three criteria. In most cases, the literary metamorphosis is indeed intentionally inflicted by someone in authority. The castigator in most metamorphosis narratives is a witch or a sorcerer, or—in mythological narratives—a god or a goddess. In Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" neither sorcery nor divine power has transformed Gregor Samsa into vermin. Nobody did. There is no alternative castigator; it just spontaneously happened. The metamorphosis takes place, as Friedmann Harzer puts it, in a "hermeneutical vacuum."[45]

The identity of the castigator in Kafka's oeuvre is typically an authority whom the character is subordinated to; and even when the nature of the crime is unknown, as in *The Trial*, the identity of the castigator is well known. In Kafka's story "The Judgment" ("Das Urteil"), Georg Bendemann's father has no legal authority, yet clearly has the power to inflict on his son a horrific punishment. In "The Metamorphosis," on the other hand, the reader cannot find the castigator, while the protagonists—Gregor Samsa and his family—do not even look for one. Gregor's metamorphosis is presented and perceived by all as a spontaneous occurrence. As no one has deliberately transformed Gregor, it cannot be considered as a punishment; no one is punishing Gregor.

In fact, even in the broader sense of "poetic justice," Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis cannot be viewed as a punishment, as he has not committed any breach of rules. Before the metamorphosis Gregor was a salesman working very hard to support his family, and did not harm anyone. An excessively severe punishment, disproportionate to a minor sin, is indeed

a common motif in Kafka's oeuvre. For example, in "The Knock at the Courtyard Gate" ("Der Schlag ans Hoftor") the narrator's sister beats her fist absent-mindedly on the farm door, or perhaps only shakes it, an action that leads to her brothers' imprisonment. "In the Penal Colony" ("In der Strafkolonie") deals with a prisoner condemned to be tortured to death for sleeping on duty. Likewise, Georg's punishment in "The Judgment"—death by drowning—is certainly not commensurate with his transgression, namely encroaching on the patriarchal authority. As horrific as these punishments are, however, they are at least somewhat explained in terms of cause and effect. Such explanation is not provided in "The Metamorphosis."

The metamorphosis of Gregor Samsa cannot be regarded as a punishment for a sin, as there is neither a punisher nor a sinner. But even more interesting, the third criterion—the infliction of "something negative"—is not fulfilled, as the transformation on the whole is not presented as a negative event. Various critics have suggested that the metamorphosis is Gregor's way out of life as a traveling salesman, burdened with the task of providing for his family; once transformed, Gregor is no longer required to be the breadwinner of the family. The metamorphosis thus frees him from all his social obligations as a human being, and thus can be viewed as a covert salvation from the fate of losing oneself for the sake of others. After his transformation, Gregor is free to climb the walls of his room to his heart's content, enjoying a liberty he has not known before.[46]

In "Report to an Academy" ("Ein Bericht für eine Akademie"), as will be discussed in the next chapter, Red Peter's transformation from ape to human is expressly presented as a conscious choice, as a way out of his unfortunate life. Gregor Samsa's transformation in "The Metamorphosis" is not by choice, but can also be described as a "way out" of a life of misery. Gregor's metamorphosis is, in Heinz Politzer's words, the wish fulfillment of an escapist.[47] Gradually it becomes clear that being vermin is not such a bad thing after all, especially when the alternative is the human life Gregor Samsa had before the metamorphosis. As Deleuze and Guattari note, "Gregor becomes [vermin] . . . to find an escape where his father didn't know to find one, in order to flee the director, the business, and the bureaucrats, to reach that region where the voice no longer does anything but hum."[48]

Kafka here breaks down the barrier between human and other animals,

not only ontologically, but also in terms of value, as "The Metamorphosis" dismisses the anthropocentric dogma that human existence is a priori superior to nonhuman existence. This dogma is encapsulated in John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism* (1863), in which it is claimed: "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied . . . and if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question."[49] The presupposition that human existence is superior to animal existence, and that metamorphosed figures would therefore necessarily prefer their human existence, had been challenged already in antiquity, through Plutarch's *Moralia*. Under the title "Beasts Are Rational," this first-century text reworks the metamorphosis scene in Homer's *Odyssey*. In Plutarch's version, Circe instructs Odysseus, who wishes to restore his friends their human form, to ask them first if they are interested in being so restored, and, surprisingly, Gryllus, one of Odysseus's former friends, says: "I shall quickly make you see that we are right to prefer our present life in place of the former one, now that we have tried both."[50] In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the transformation into a nonhuman body is not necessarily a punishment, and in many cases it is even redemptive. In "The Metamorphosis" Kafka revives this classical tradition, wherein becoming an animal is not automatically perceived as punishment, but at least to some extent is a salvation.

Moreover, human superiority over other animals is undermined in the story from an ethical standpoint as well, inasmuch as the identification of humans with humaneness and nonhuman animals with brutality breaks down. As several studies has pointed out, Kafka makes it clear that the nonhuman Gregor Samsa is much more humane than his inhumane, human family. The vermin is clearly the most sensitive, gentle, and moral of all the characters in the story.[51] This is reflected, among other things, in Gregor's strong emotional reaction when his sister plays the violin, while the others show no interest. Gregor's behavior stands in contrast to the parasitic and ungrateful behavior of his family, who sponged on Gregor before his metamorphosis and alienate him afterward. As Wayne Booth notes in his widely acclaimed *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), although the transmogrified Gregor is far from a creature that arouses empathy, the reader is empathetic toward him.[52] Similarly, Walter Sokel writes that the character of Gregor Samsa has affected his personal attitude toward vermin in the real world:

> Kafka text's had the effect upon me of extending sympathy and solidarity in suffering to life beyond the human species. A human being had been changed into a specimen of vermin. Might not the huge cockroach I chanced upon in an upper Manhattan bathroom be a creature with some feeling, some sensibility, might it not by some inexplicable fluke be sheltering another traveling salesman or former clerk, another Gregor Samsa? Or at least a being not totally unlike myself?[53]

The story thus undercuts the human-animal contradistinction that human culture fosters, with its dogmatic insistence on ascribing certain moral values to biological qualities.

Transgressing Species Essentialism

Numerous critics have granted the vermin of Kafka's story a biological identity. Some have seen him as a cockroach, others as a beetle, and more specifically a dung beetle.[54] Nabokov, approaching the story armed with vast knowledge and interest in entomology, disproves the presumption that the creature in question is a cockroach—for cockroaches are flat in shape and have large legs, while Gregor Samsa is curved and has small legs. He suggests that Gregor is a beetle, though not a dung beetle.[55] But even Nabokov's detailed and careful entomological analysis, with its charts and graphs of Gregor Samsa's body, is doomed to fail, for it is in principle that the nature of the vermin cannot be biologically identified. Had Kafka wanted Gregor Samsa's species to be identified, he would have referred to him not merely as a monstrous vermin. Presumably, the story would then open with Gregor waking up in bed realizing he had turned into a (monstrous) beetle, cockroach, or even a broader biological category, such as insect or bug.[56]

It is not simply that the nature of the vermin is undefined, it is also a priori indefinable. Beyond the biological inconsistency in the description of the vermin, which does not allow for biological identification, reductive attempts to biologically classify the vermin are infeasible also for purely literary reasons, namely for fear of losing the particular rhetoric effect of the *Ungeziefer*. The observation that the vermin cannot be reduced to any biological category is further reinforced by Kafka's own plea for indeter-

minability. When Kurt Wolff, the publisher of "The Metamorphosis," informed him that an artist for the frontispiece of the story's first edition has been commissioned, Kafka strongly requested the publisher not to illustrate the vermin:

> Dear Sir,
>
> You recently mentioned that Ottomar Starke is going to do a drawing for the title page of *Metamorphosis*. . . . This prospect has given me a minor and perhaps unnecessary fright. It struck me that Starke, as an illustrator, might want to draw the [vermin] itself. Not that, please not that! I do not want to restrict him, but only to make this plea out of my deeper knowledge of the story. The [vermin] itself cannot be depicted. It cannot even be shown from a distance. (LFFE, 114–15)

The vermin cannot be depicted, as Kafka firmly determined; one can draw a cockroach or a beetle, but there is no schematic drawing of vermin since this is a broad category encompassing diverse creatures. While there are thousands of species of cockroaches and dung beetles, they all belong to the same order within the taxonomical rank, and as such, they share many of their characteristics. The category of vermin is actually not a biological category at all, as it crosses all the taxonomic ranks within the animal kingdom; it includes animals from different families, orders, and even divisions, such as Arthropods (e.g. cockroaches), Chordates (such as rats) and Annelids (like various worms).[57] The designation *Ungeziefer*, then, does not refer to any biological attributes, but merely to the negative connotations it has in human culture; it denotes something particularly objectionable, outside the ordinary classification of life forms.

The chaotic, yet commonly used category of *Ungeziefer*, as well as its English equivalent "vermin," brings to mind the famous Borgesian alternate taxonomy. In his 1942 "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins" ("El idioma analítico de John Wilkins"), Jorge Luis Borges describes a fictitious taxonomy of animals in which nonhuman animals are divided into fourteen unusual groups: "(a) those that belong to the Emperor, (b) embalmed ones, (c) those that are trained, (d) suckling pigs, (e) mermaids, (f) fabulous ones, (g) stray dogs, (h) those that are included in this classification, (i) those that tremble as if they are mad, (j) innumerable ones, (k) those drawn with a very fine camel's hair brush, (l) others, (m) those that have

just broken a flower vase, (n) those that resemble flies from a distance."[58]

Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966), which traces the invention of man in modern times, opens with this Borgesian taxonomy:

> This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought—our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography—breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other.[59]

The exclusion of humans from the natural world plays central role in the invention of man in modern times, as Foucault later notes in *The History of Sexuality*: "For millennia, man remained what he was to Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics calls his existence as a living being into question."[60] Therefore, Borges's taxonomy, which is often used to illustrate the arbitrariness and cultural specificity of any attempt to categorize the world, should also draw our critical attention specifically to the way we categorize other animals in respect to ourselves.

In *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2002), Derrida critically reflects on the overarching category of "the Animal":

> Confined within this catch-all concept, within this vast encampment of the animal, . . . are all the living things that man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbors, or his brothers. And that is so in spite of the infinite space that separates the lizard from the dog, the protozoon from the dolphin, the shark from the lamb, the parrot from the chimpanzee, the camel from the eagle, the squirrel from the tiger, the elephant from the cat, the ant from the silkworm, or the hedgehog from the echidna.[61]

Unlike Borges's fictitious classification of the animal world, which excites laughter in Foucault and probably in other readers as well, the very category of animal, does not seem comic to Derrida, but rather sinful: "The confusion of all nonhuman living things within the general and common

category of the animal," he notes, "is not simply a sin against rigorous thinking, vigilance, lucidity, or empirical authority, it is also a crime."[62] Derrida's critique of the category "animal" is applicable also to the subcategory of vermin.

Nonetheless, not only does the word *Ungeziefer*, as the lowest of the lowest, possess evident negative connotations, it is also modified in "The Metamorphosis" as *ungeheuren Ungeziefer*, a monstrous vermin.[63] Like vermin, "monster" is also not a biological term; both words convey only society's horror at the sight of certain beings. The combination of these two German words—*ungeheuren Ungeziefer*—both start with the prefix *un*, which indicates negativity, further strengthens the negative content embodied in each one of the words. Additionally, the evocative use of the negative prefix *un* diverts the reader's attention from entomology to etymology, as it also brings into consideration the etymology of both words: *Ungeziefer*, an unclean animal unfit for sacrifice, and *ungeheuer*, a person without ties to any family.[64]

In his account of the abnormal, Foucault discusses the construction of the monster, whose existence and form violate the laws of both society and nature. "When the monster violates the law by its very existence," he contends, "it triggers the response of something quite different from the law itself. It provokes either violence, the will of our simple repression, or medical care or pity."[65] It is interesting to note that Foucault's account of reactions to the monster perfectly matches the reactions of the Samsas to the monstrous vermin. Their first response, when only Gregor's voice from behind a closed door indicates his condition, is to fetch medical care: "'My God,' cried his mother, already in tears, 'maybe he's seriously ill, and here we are, torturing him. Grete! Grete! . . . Go to the doctor immediately. Gregor is sick. Hurry, get the doctor. Did you just hear Gregor talking?'" (M, 10). But as soon as the door is opened, and the family not only hears but also sees the monstrous vermin, it all changes and medical care is no longer an option. At this point, responses to the monstrous being are split and each one of the three family members responds differently to Gregor, in accordance to the other three reactions to monstrosity as described by Foucault: pity (the sister), repression (the mother), and violence (the father). As the plot advances, the sister's response to Gregor changes from pity to repression, and eventually the entire family falls in with the harshest treatment. The change in the sister's attitude even takes on a grammatical signal: one of the turning points in the story is when Grete strips the last

vestige of humanity from her brother by referring to him as "it" (*es*) rather than "he" (*er*).[66]

The depersonification of Gregor Samsa has been completed; it is the attitude of his family that ultimately brings about a change in his status: from someone into something. Having heard his sister expressing a wish that he disappear from their life, Gregor expires, becoming a carcass, a physical object without any mental dimension. Gregor's corporal turnover has indeed taken place spontaneously, but his becoming "monstrous vermin," that is—based on the etymology of *ungeheuren Ungeziefer*—an unclean animal, with no family ties, is certainly a function of the societal attitude towards him. As Stanley Corngold and Benno Wagner state, "Vermin is an entirely hybrid, non-self-identical, historically transient, socially constructed entity about which there exists no certain information: there is no science of the vermin, unless it is political science."[67]

The source of Gregor's anguish and the most horrific aspect of his transformation is not in fact the physical transformation but rather his family's attitude toward him. Gregor is indeed confined in a nonhuman body, but he is also confined in his room, and the societal confinement seems to be even worse than the anatomical one. Had his family not excluded him, presumably Gregor might have been less wretched, perhaps even content in his verminous existence. It is the alienating family that strictly designates Gregor as vermin, as Elias Canetti observes:

> Instead of a son, who feeds and supports the family, all of a sudden there is an insect. This transformation exposes him, inescapably, to humiliation; an entire family feels provoked to inflict it actively. Hesitantly, the humiliation begins. Time is allowed for its expansion and intensification. Gradually all the characters, almost helplessly and against their will, participate in it. They recapitulate the act that is given at the outset: it is the family itself that transforms Gregor Samsa, irretrievably, into an insect. What was an insect becomes, in the social context, vermin.[68]

The opening sentence of "The Metamorphosis" indicates that Gregor Samsa's transformation is a matter of biological determinism. Yet over the course of the novella it becomes clear that his verminous existence is not forced on Gregor from outside, by nature, but from his immediate human environment, namely his parents and sister. It is the family that engenders

this change through its attitude towards Gregor. Animal existence is not presented here as purely a biological state, but as a fusion of biological and social existence. It is important here to note that the original German title of the novella, *Die Verwandlung*, is not entirely equivalent to its English title, "The Metamorphosis." While metamorphosis refers, both literally and in literary convention, to a change in form, *Verwandlung* is more accurately translated as "The Transition," as it is not necessarily restricted to physical change.[69] And indeed, the story only briefly deals with Gregor's physical transition. The drama is clearly centered around the noncorporeal aspects of becoming vermin, suggesting that Gregor's humanimal transition is largely socially constructed.

Following the well-established distinction between sex and gender, Carmen Dell'Aversano suggests an analogous variance between "biological species" and "species identity."[70] In similarity to the distinction between sex and gender, one can discern in the category of species both biological and social components. In fact, we can paraphrase Simone de Beauvoir's epigrammatic formulation, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,"[71] stating that Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" demonstrates that "one is not born (or physically transformed into), but rather becomes, an animal." Like womanhood, animality is presented in "The Metamorphosis" as a reflection not of essential differences between human and nonhuman animals but of differences in their social situation.

To understand how one becomes an animal, we can literally use Jean-Paul Sartre's words in his preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*: "I am not saying it is impossible to change a man into an animal. I am saying they can't do it without weakening him considerably. Beating is never enough, pressure has to be brought by undernourishing him."[72] The set of corporeal biopower practices against Gregor includes both beating and undernourishing. Facing the body of her beaten and starved brother, Grete's initial reaction is "Just see how thin he was. It's such a long time since he's eaten anything. . . . Indeed, Gregor's body was completely flat and dry" (CS, 136–37). Gregor Samsa, intertwining the famous words of de Beauvoir and Sartre, was not born an animal, but rather became one through beating and undernourishment.

"The Metamorphosis" is considered a radically innovative work of literature, since it defies various narratological norms, not least of all in its startling, *in medias res* opening. Kafka's decision to situate the ultradramatic metamorphic event in the very first sentence of the story, without any

expositional account, thereby throwing the reader off the literary norm, has made this sentence one of the most remarkable opening sentences in world literature. Yet if the novella indeed focuses on the process of Gregor Samsa's becoming animal through social construction, Gregor's corporal transformation is in fact merely the exposition of the central drama. Under this reading, "The Metamorphosis" might be less poetically radical than it seems at first glance, yet more politically radical. By presenting the physical turnover as secondary to the social construction in Gregor's animalization process, the adversarial binarism of human/animal is de-essentialized. Alternatively, Kafka offers a counterintuitive antithesis of species identity as a socially constructed category, generated through biopolitical practices of segregation, exclusion, confinement, undernourishment, and violence.

CHAPTER 2

A Transspecies' Report to an Academy

Kafka's 1917 short story "A Report to an Academy" ("Ein Bericht für eine Akademie") centers on Red Peter (Rotpeter), an ape captured in Africa and transported to Europe. To escape the grim fate awaiting him, Red Peter resolved to become human, at first by imitating the people around him, and later through a systematic study of humans. The entire story is Red Peter's monologue delivered to the members of the academy, who invited him to report on his former life as an ape. Like all of Kafka's animal stories, this one, too, has been largely read allegorically. The nonhuman experience and the human-animal dynamics, which are at the heart of the story, have been typically reduced to intrahuman themes. "A Report to an Academy" was first published in the Jewish periodical *Der Jude*, hence Red Peter's transformation has been perceived, first and foremost, as an allegory for attempts at assimilation by European Jews.[1] Other common allegorical readings of the story deal with European colonialism in Africa, the human condition, as well the question of mimesis in art.[2]

Tzvetan Todorov's argument, presented in the previous chapter, according to which the plethora of allegorical interpretations to "The Metamorphosis" points out that it is actually not an allegory (since the text does not invite any specific allegorical reading), is applicable here as well. Furthermore, when Martin Buber, the editor of *Der Jude*, in which both "A Report to an Academy" and "Jackals and Arabs" were published, suggested calling these stories parables, Kafka responded: "May I ask you not to call the pieces parables; they are not really parables. If they are to have any overall title at all, the best might be: 'Two Animal Stories'" (LFFE, 132). Following Kafka's own lead, I propose to read "A Report to an Academy"

as an animal story, focusing on the nonhuman condition as well as human-nonhuman dynamics.

Contextualizing Nonhuman Oppression

The Historical Context of Nonhuman Oppression

Red Peter's story is largely based on historical facts. References to reality, such as names of real places or people, are quite rare in Kafka's poetics. The absence of such indications reinforces the universal scope of Kafka's work. Thus, for example, we are not told when the plot of "In the Penal Colony" takes place, or where Gregor Samsa lives.[3] As Marthe Robert points out, Kafka uses anonymity in order to bring out a transcendent quality.[4] "A Report to an Academy" is, however, exceptional in this context. Red Peter, we are told, was captured on the Gold Coast, a colonized territory in the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa, and taken to Hamburg. The company that seized him—Hagenbeck—was an actual business that traded in wild animals, owned by Carl Hagenbeck, who established the famous Hagenbeck's Animal Park (Tierpark Hagenbeck) in Hamburg.[5] In his critical work on the modern zoo, Nigel Rothfels dedicates much of his research to Carl Hagenbeck, the father of the modern zoo. Rothfels argues that by introducing the innovative idea of the zoo as a safe sanctuary for nonhuman animals, Hagenbeck revolutionized the entire concept of the zoo:

> Hagenbeck's revolution was precisely the narratives of freedom and happiness he developed at his zoos to go along with the newer exhibits. Before Hagenbeck, zoological gardens often struggled to convince the public that it was not so bad to be an animal at the zoo. Beginning with Hagenbeck, the gardens began finally, and more or less successfully, to renarrate the captive lives of animals. Ever since Hagenbeck, animals have not been collected merely for reasons of science or education, or even really for recreation—animals have been put in zoos increasingly because they are nice, healthy, safe places to be and because the animals, we are told, might be better off there than in a real "wild."[6]

Hagenbeck made sure to promulgate this impression in his 1908 autobiography, in which he expounded his agenda. Yet, as several critics have

observed, the change introduced by Hagenbeck was not so much in the conditions of captivity, as in eradicating the traces of imprisonment; visitors to the enormous zoo that Hagenbeck built in Hamburg in 1907 saw no cages or bars: the nonhuman animals were behind invisible barriers or natural-looking fences.[7] For Adorno, the concealment itself was even more oppressive than the previous overt confinement:

> Nor can any good come of Hagenbeck's layout, with trenches instead of cages, betraying the Ark by simulating the rescue that only Ararat can promise. They deny the animals' freedom only the more completely by keeping the boundaries invisible, the sight of which would inflame the longing for open space. . . . The more purely nature is preserved and transplanted by civilization, the more implacably it is dominated.[8]

Ironically, Red Peter is not impressed by Hagenbeck's narrative of freedom:

> When I was handed over to my first trainer, in Hamburg I quickly realized the two choices available to me: the zoo or vaudeville. I did not hesitate. I said to myself: try with all your might to get into vaudeville variety; that is the way out; the zoo is only a new cage with bars; once you get into it, you're lost. (KSS, 83)

Human visitors to modern zoos may not notice the imprisonment, but the nonhuman animals certainly do; even the most advanced zoo is, in Red Peter's words, "only a new cage." The zoo, as Randy Malamud aptly points out, "fundamentally inscribes the looked-at animals inside their cages—or their 'cageless enclosures,' that is, cages that don't look like cages (to us)—as subaltern."[9]

Red Peter's alternative, after rejecting the option of the zoo—the variety show—is also anchored in historical facts and taken from the records of the Hagenbeck company. In 1887, Carl Hagenbeck established a traveling animal circus that performed all over Europe and the United States. Just as Red Peter's capture by Hagenbeck's hunting expedition is based on historical facts, so, too, are his training in human behavior and his public appearances. Rothfels cites many examples of apes captured in Africa and brought to Europe by the Hagenbeck company at the beginning of the twentieth century. Those apes were trained to behave like humans and, similarly to Red Peter, imitated drinking alcohol, smoking, shaking hands, and making

other human gestures. In fact, the only difference between those performing apes and Red Peter is that the latter also learned to speak.[10] In his book on the ethics of zoos, Stephen Bostock mentions that Hagenbeck used to select "natural performers"—exceptional individuals from among the many wild animals he traded in—"[11] which is consistent with the plot of "A Report to an Academy."

Carl Hagenbeck has also been considered an innovator in the field of animal circuses, as he championed an alleged humane method of training, using rewards and positive reinforcement instead of whips and intimidation.[12] However, this humane treatment could not be implemented, inasmuch as training animals solely with positive reinforcement is impractical. The alleged humane training accorded with the public sentiment at the time, which objected to the cruelty of whipping animals during performances, but it is evident that wild animals were trained by harsh means in Hagenbeck's facilities.[13] In other words, both in zoos and circuses, Hagenbeck's innovation was restricted to the concealment of the violence involved in capturing and training nonhumans. The traces of violence against animals used for food in modern times have been erased, as discussed in the previous chapter, to perpetuate its continuation. In a parallel manner, the treatment of nonhuman animals in modern zoos and circuses also demonstrates how concealing the violence, and not refraining from it, has been the response to the growing sensitivity to the condition of these animals in modern times. In both cases, "the distasteful is removed behind the scenes of social life," as Norbert Elias put it;[14] the violence merely disappeared from the public eye.

We can thus reevaluate the societal reservations at the sight of Red Peter's naked body:

> Recently, I read an article by one of the ten thousand windbags who vent their views about me in the newspapers: they say that my ape nature has not yet been entirely repressed; the proof is supposed to be that whenever I have company, I am inclined to lower my pants to show the bullet's path of entry. Every tiny finger of that guy's writing hand ought to be blown off, one by one. I, I have the right to lower my pants in front of anyone I like; there is nothing to see there other than a well-groomed pelt and the scar left by—let us choose a specific word for a specific purpose, a word, however, that should not be misunderstood—the scar left by a profligate shot. Everything is open and above board; there is nothing to hide. (KSS, 78)

The societal malaise at Red Peter's outrageous act of lowering his pants in public can be historically contextualized. Hagenbeck's animal business enjoyed enormous success precisely because it responded to the public's sensitivity to animal cruelty by hiding the traces of brutality from the spectators. As long as Red Peter wears his pants, the scar—the mark of malice perpetrated during his capture—is hidden from human eyes. Exposing the scar troubles the public, inasmuch as it shatters the mirage that "no animals were harmed in the making of this show," an illusion that the animal traders wished to maintain.

"The captivity of animals is predicated upon the (false) presupposition that they don't mind captivity," Randy Malamud argues. "If audiences resisted this presumption, the cognitive dissonance would be too great."[15] And, indeed, when Red Peter invalidates this presumption by exposing his scars, the audience—represented here by the journalist—resists Red Peter, and not the presumption. Red Peter's nudity exposes his "bare life" (or naked life, following Agamben's original Italian term, *nuda vita*), stripped of any rights. Amused by a humanlike ape, the audience feels ill at ease when exposed to the nonentertaining side of the entertainment industry, a reality it would rather be spared. Ironically, Red Peter is condemned as uncivilized, because he exposes the scar that so-called civilized society inflicted upon him when capturing him.

Nudity is considered animalistic, hence shameful and socially unacceptable. The human being, who has been famously designated as "the naked ape,"[16] is also the clothed animal. The conception of man as the clothed animal harks back to the biblical story of the Garden of Eden, where the immediate effect of eating the forbidden fruit on Adam and Eve is a feeling of moral compulsion to clothe themselves:

> And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves girdles. (Genesis 3:6–7)

The Bible posits here an inextricable link between becoming wise and becoming uncomfortable with nudity, and both are also correlated with

becoming human. By eating the fruit of knowledge, Adam and Eve become aware of their creaturely nature and rush to conceal it by covering themselves. Additionally, in the prior verse, the fruit from the tree of knowledge is also linked with moral knowledge: "In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). By clothing themselves, following eating the fruit, Adam and Eve have gained not only wisdom, but also moral consciousness.

Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science* (1882), dismisses the linkage between clothing and morality, stressing that covering the naked body is not a moral behavior, but rather a moral disguise:

> The naked human being is generally a disgraceful sight . . . It seems we Europeans are utterly unable to dispense with that masquerade called clothing. But why should there not be equally good reasons for the disguise of "moral men," for their veil of moral formulas and notions of decency, for the whole benevolent concealment of our actions behind the concepts of duty, virtue, public spirit, respectability, self-denial? . . . The European disguises himself *with morality* because he has become a sick, sickly, maimed animal which has good reasons for being "tame"; because he is almost a monstrosity, something half, weak, awkward. . . . It is not the ferocity of the beast of prey that needs a moral disguise, but the herd animal with its deep mediocrity, fear, and boredom with itself. *Morality dresses up the European*—let's admit it!—into something nobler, grander, goodlier, something "divine."[17]

Red Peter's resentment at the requirement to cover his body seems to echo this Nietzschean critique. Nietzsche's portrayal of clothes as a moral disguise is concretized in "A Report to an Academy," as covering Red Peter's body also covers the mark of immortality, the scarred mark of violence etched into his body.

In fact, Derrida's sustained engagement with the human-animal question commences with the notion of humans' distinctive discomfort with nudity. He opens *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, originally a seminar delivered in 1997, with a description of a situation, where he felt ashamed (as well as embarrassed for being ashamed) of having his naked body gazed upon by his cat. Consequently, Derrida astonishingly asks: "Ashamed of

what and before whom?" His answer to the second part of the question ("before whom?") becomes the point of departure for his exploration of animal agency, as one can only be ashamed before someone, and not before something. Whereas the title of his seminar, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, is a close variation on the Cartesian cogito, this query can also be viewed as a paraphrase of Descartes's formulation: "I am ashamed before the animal, therefore the animal is." Derrida's answer to the first part ("ashamed of what?") is "ashamed of being as naked as a beast."[18] He reverses here the commonly accepted notion, that humans differ from other animals since they are ashamed of their nudity, stressing that humans are disgraced by their naked body because it exposes that they are not different from other animals. The clothed animal, which in the biblical paradigm is metonymic to the moral and wise animal, in Derrida's analysis is merely the animal that is ashamed of being animal.[19] In light of the Derridean reversal, Red Peter's act of exposing his naked and scarred body is viewed as inhuman, as unlike human beings he is not ashamed to expose his animality, his creaturely condition.

An additional historical source to "A Report to an Academy" is suggested in J. M. Coetzee's 1999 metafictional novella *The Lives of Animals*. This text revolves around a celebrated aging Australian author named Elizabeth Costello, who has been invited to give a lecture at an American university. But instead of talking about her own books or about literature in general, she chooses—in her own report to an academy—to discuss the horrific treatment of nonhuman animals by human society, focusing extensively on Kafka's "A Report to an Academy."[20] Costello reports that the Prussian Academy of Science built a research facility in Tenerife, operated from 1912 to 1920, to study the mental abilities of apes. In 1917, the psychologist Wolfgang Köhler, one of the scientists working on the project, published an elaborate report on the mentality of apes, describing his experiments and findings. Kafka published "A Report to an Academy" a few months after Köhler's report came out. Costello points out that Red Peter, like Köhler's apes, was captured in Africa by hunters specializing in primates; the animals were then transported by sea to a scientific institute where they were trained to behave like humans. Costello talks at length about a particular ape, Sultan, who was Köhler's star student, and apparently served as the prototype for Red Peter.[21] In the conclusion to his report, which describes research from 1913 to 1917 (a period of five years, which is identical to Red Peter's period of training) Köhler writes:

> The chimpanzees manifest intelligent behaviour of the general kind familiar in human beings. . . . Chimpanzees do not only stand out against the rest of the animal world by several morphological and, in the narrower sense, physiological, characteristics, but they also show a type of behaviour which counts as specifically human.[22]

"A Report to an Academy" includes a few nonrealistic elements; chief among them is Red Peter's ability to use human language. However, the story of an African ape, who was shot, captured, and imprisoned by Hagenbeck's hunting expedition, then shipped by sea to Hamburg, where he entertained audiences by imitating human behavior, faithfully chronicles the lives of many apes at the time. The clear historical context encourages further reading of the story as an animal story, whereby the human-animal relations within the diegesis reflect such relations in the extradiegetic reality.

The Political Context of Nonhuman Oppression

In Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), one of the foundational texts of modern political theory, people formed a social contract, transferring their self-sovereignty to the authority of a ruler, whose monopoly on the use of power would guarantee justice. They do so to escape life in the state of nature, which was "continuall feare and danger of violent death; And the life of man solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short."[23] By entering the social contract individuals exchange freedom for protection. The rejection of the Hobbesian formulation of the social contract is central in posthumanist critique,[24] and it also stands at the core of Kafka's poetics. The Kafkaesque version of the social contract, in which the absolute power of the sovereign provides nothing but insecurity and terror, is antithetical to Hobbes's. It is evident in Kafka's punishment narratives, such as *The Trial*, "The Judgment," and "In the Penal Colony," and it is also explicitly articulated in "On the Question of the Laws" ("Zur Frage der Gesetze"):

> Unfortunately, our laws are not generally known, they are the secret of the small group of nobles who rules us. . . . if, following these conclusions, which have been most carefully sorted and filed, we seek to make some little arrangements for our lives for the present

> or the future—then all this is extremely uncertain and may be no more than an intellectual game, for the laws that we are trying to figure out may not even exist. (KSS, 130)

Hobbes's theory of the social contract is largely grounded upon the human/animal and nature/civilization dualism, identifying the state of nature with violence, a state where *homo homini lupus*—people are wolves to each other. The presumed identification between the state of nature and violence justifies for Hobbes the loss of freedom and the sovereign's absolute power. Whilst Kafka's stories typically resist the Hobbesian paradigm by undermining the alleged identification between civil society and security, in "A Report to an Academy" Kafka also undercuts the other part of Hobbes's equation, which is the presumed identification between the state of nature and violence:

> I am afraid that what I mean by "a way out" will not be clearly understood. I was using it in the most common and also the fullest sense of the word. I deliberately do not say "freedom." I do not mean that great feeling of freedom on all sides. Perhaps I knew it as an ape and I have known human beings who long for it. But as far as I am concerned, I did not ask for freedom either then or now. By the way: human beings all too often deceive themselves about freedom. And just as freedom counts among the most sublime feelings, so too the corresponding delusion counts among the most sublime. . . . You mockery of holy Nature! No building could stand up to apedom's laughter at such sight. (KSS, 79–80)

The state of nature in Red Peter's report is not violence, but freedom. It is not in the state of nature that *homo homini lupus*; it is not in the state of nature that individuals (both human and nonhuman) are cruel to each other. Alternatively, as Red Peter exposes in his report and in his scarred body, it is in the so-called civilized society that humans are cruel to nonhumans. Like Gregor Samsa, who one day wakes up to realize that he has turned into a monstrous vermin, and Josef K., who discovers one morning that he is under arrest, Red Peter, who has led a peaceful life in nature, having no inkling of what is in store for him, is suddenly captured, and his life changes irrevocably.

While the initiating event in "The Metamorphosis" is fantastic, and in

The Trial is at least peculiar, what happens to Red Peter in "A Report to an Academy" (apart, of course, from the fact that he can speak in human language and tell his story) is thoroughly probable. The realism is foregrounded by the references to the actual world, foremost among them to Hagenbeck's company, which—as noted before—are rare in Kafka's oeuvre. Apes in Africa, like nonhuman animals all over the world, are not subject to an equitable legal system; they are constantly at risk of being suddenly deprived of freedom through no fault of their own.[25] The very last words that Josef K. utters before his execution, "like a dog" (T, 165), identify senseless killing, carried out openly without any attempt to conceal it, with the killing of a nonhuman animal. In "A Report to an Academy" Kafka also identifies the lack of rights with nonhuman lives.

In *Minima Moralia* (1951) Adorno sees the othering of humans as a result of dehumanization, which is rooted in the othering of nonhuman animals:

> Perhaps the social schematization of perception in Anti-Semites is such that they don't see Jews as human beings at all. The constantly encountered assertion that savages, blacks, Japanese are like animals, monkeys for example, is the key to the pogrom. The possibility of pogroms is decided in the moment when the gaze of a fatally-wounded animal falls on a human being. The defiance with which he repels this gaze—"after all it's only an animal"—reappears irresistibly in cruelties done to human beings, the perpetrators having again and again to reassure themselves that it is "only an animal," because they could never fully believe this even of animals.[26]

In a similar vein, Agamben's pivotal point in *The Open* is the notion of the "anthropological machine," conceptualizing the repeated act of drawing the line between humans and other animals, through which the two categories are produced, as a mechanical entity:

> Insofar as the production of man through the opposition man/animal, human/inhuman, is at stake here, the machine necessarily functions by means of an exclusion (which is always already a capturing) and an inclusion (which is also always already an exclusion). Indeed, precisely because the human is already presupposed every time, the machine actually produces a kind of state of exception, a

> zone of indeterminacy in which the outside nothing but the exclusion of an inside and the inside is in turn only the inclusion of an outside.[27]

The "anthropological machine" creates, according to Agamben, "a kind of state of exception," a term referring to a law-free zone, in which constitutional rights are suspended. For the nonhuman animals, the "state of exception" is an everlasting state; for them, all zones in the civil world are law-free zones.

This nonhuman state of exception can be actually illustrated in the famous example given by Bertrand Russell of the problem of induction. Russell analyzes the philosophical question at the basis of the assumption that "there is nothing new under the sun," arguing that, in fact, there can be something new under the sun, and that the sun may suddenly cease to shine:

> We are all convinced that the sun will rise tomorrow. Why? Is this belief a mere blind outcome of past experience, or can it be justified as a reasonable belief? . . . We have a firm belief that it will rise in the future, because it has risen in the past. If we are challenged as to why we believe that it will continue to rise as heretofore, we may appeal to the laws of motion. . . . The interesting doubt is as to whether the laws of motion will remain in operation until tomorrow. . . . The man who has fed the chicken every day throughout its life at last wrings its neck instead, showing that more refined views as to the uniformity of nature would have been useful to the chicken.[28]

The methodological doubt that Russell applies to our ability to predict events corresponds to Kafka's poetics, where such doubt is a key feature. As a chicken can suddenly be taken to the slaughter one day, as per Russell's example, so can an ape be wrenched from his natural habitat in Africa, as occurs in Kafka's text. Unlike humans in the Hobbesian civil society, who voluntarily forfeit their freedom but ostensibly gain protection as members of the social contract, Red Peter lost his liberty when he was unwillingly abducted from nature into civil society, without gaining anything in return.

Red Peter is not deprived of his freedom in order to enter the social contract; he loses his liberty precisely because he is not—and as a nonhuman, he cannot be—part of the social contract. While members of society

bound by the social contract are protected from brutality, violence against others is permitted. Deprived of the freedom he had in the state of nature, yet also denied the protection under the social contract in the civil world, Red Peter receives the worst of both worlds and belongs to neither of them, simultaneously captured inside and outside the force of law. No longer in the state of nature, yet without an option of becoming a member of civil society, Red Peter—as he himself reflects on his situation on the boat—is stuck between the two states:

> I was stuck. If they had nailed me down, I would have had no less freedom of movement. Why was that? Scratch open the flesh between your toes, and you will not find the reason. Crush your backside against the bars of your cage until they almost cut you in two, and you still won't find the reason. I had no way out but had to provide myself with one, for I could not live without it. Always up against the wall of this crate—I would inevitably have croaked. But at Hagenbeck, apes belong up against the wall—well, so I stopped being an ape. (KSS, 79)

Red Peter recognizes that as an ape he can neither return to the state of nature nor enter the social contract. He also realizes he cannot exist outside both states, so he chooses the only way out, the only option left—to stop being an ape, which may allow him to enter the social contract. His search for "a way out" (*Ausweg*) is thus a search for "a way in"—a way into a protective order.

Contextualizing Humanimal Transition

"A Report to an Academy" focuses on Red Peter's transition from an ape to a human being, and hence it has been widely considered a metamorphosis story.[29] However, this story systematically deviates from the paradigm of metamorphosis narratives, including Kafka's earlier metamorphosis tale, "The Metamorphosis," which is a radical metamorphosis work, as shown in the previous chapter. Red Peter's trajectory from a nonhuman animal to a human being is in itself a remarkable deviation from the tradition of metamorphosis literature, whereas species change typically takes place in the reverse direction, from human to nonhu-

man.[30] The story of an ape turned human clearly echoes Darwin's theory of evolution, and this is the first context in which I would like to read Red Peter's species transition.

Even more subversive than the direction of the species change is the fact that Red Peter's process of becoming human is not expressed in his outward appearance at all. While it is evident to the story's characters and critics that in his physique Red Peter retains his ape body, he is still perceived by all—within and outside the diegesis—as a "former ape."[31] In "The Metamorphosis," as stated in the previous chapter, species identity is not reduced to biological identity, but contains, alongside the corporal component, also a major element of social construction. Yet, in "A Report on an Academy" the biological aspect of the species transition is entirely eliminated. This nonphysical species transition stands in stark contrast not only to the tradition of metamorphosis literature, but also to the very term "metamorphosis," which literally means change in form. I would, then, like to examine Red Peter's immaterial species transition in terms of evolution, and in light of gender and postcolonial critiques.

Red Peter's Species Transition as Evolution

Kafka's story of an ape turned human through a process of adaptation to his environment, echoes—as have been extensively noted—Darwin's theory of evolution.[32] This theory, as expounded in *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871), deals with the development of all biological species, including plants, but its particular application to the evolution of the human species, and its relationship to other primates, garnered the most public attention for its religious, social, and ethical implications. Darwinism had tremendous impact on the intellectual climate in the West at the turn of the twentieth century, and Kafka's biographers have reported that he first read Darwin at age sixteen, whereupon he became an ardent follower.[33] Darwinian motifs can be traced, as Leena Eilittä shows, throughout Kafka's works,[34] but the story that undoubtedly bears these marks more than any other work in Kafka's oeuvre is "A Report to an Academy."

In her book on the influence of Darwin on nineteenth-century literature, Gillian Beer draws a parallel between the concept of evolution and the concept of metamorphosis:

> "Omnia mutantur, nihil interit." Everything changes, nothing dies. Ovid's assertion in *Metamorphoses* marks one crucial distinction between the idea of metamorphosis and Darwin's theory of evolution. Darwin's theory required extinction. Death was extended from the individual organism to the whole species. Metamorphosis bypasses death. The concept expresses continuance, survival, the essential self transposed but not obliterated by transformation. In some ways, evolutionary theory looks like the older concept of metamorphosis prolonged through time, transformation eked out rather than emblazoned. Both ideas seek to rationalize change but through diverse means.[35]

It is easy to see that in "A Report to an Academy"—much more than in other narratives of metamorphosis—the transformation is presented as an act of survival, as a reaction to an existential threat. Red Peter describes how he found himself close to death and, in order to save himself, changed his biological species. As Walter Sokel phrases it, Red Peter opts for surviving as an individual at the expense of losing his species identity and his nature.[36] The apishness has been eradicated, while Red Peter survives. In fact, Red Peter himself draws a parallel between the process he underwent from ape to human and the process of human evolution:

> To speak frankly, as much as I like to employ figurative image for these things, to speak frankly: your apedom, gentlemen, to the extent that you have something of the sort behind you, cannot be more remote from you than mine is from me. (KSS, 77)

Apes have long been perceived as located betwixt and between humanity and animality.[37] Due to their special location on the boundary between the two mythic poles of nature and culture, Donna Haraway, in her 1989 seminal study *Primate Visions*, coined the term "simian orientalism," referring to the fantasies around apes in both scientific and sociopolitical writing.[38] By standing at the threshold of humanity, Agamben argues, apes undermine the human-animal divide, dismissing the Cartesian thesis that conceived of nonhuman animals as if they were *automata mechanica*.[39]

Red Peter has sexual relations with a female chimpanzee, but his own species is undefined in the text. However, a related passage, which Kafka did not include in the final version of the story, specifically states that Red

Peter is indeed a chimpanzee. In this passage, which is not narrated by Red Peter, the narrator addresses him, saying: "Listening to you talk . . . I really and truly forget—whether you take it as a compliment or not, it's the truth—that you are a chimpanzee" (CS, 260). In contrast to most metamorphosis narratives, including Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," where the gap between the original figure and the transformed one is dramatic, the gap in Red Peter's case is minimal, as the human and chimpanzee genomes are 98.8% identical.[40] As a humanized ape Red Peter is situated at the threshold of humanity, but even before his humanization, as a mere ape, Red Peter was literally a "human ape"—*Menschenaffe*—which is the German term for the taxonomic family of great apes (Hominidae). Furthermore, unlike most literary metamorphic events (Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis included), but in accordance with evolutionary processes, the change in Red Peter is not effected overnight. It can, in fact, be seen as a process of adaptation, which is a key term in the Darwinian paradigm.

In view of all this, the change wrought in Red Peter is to be regarded as an interim state between metamorphosis and evolution. Although Darwinism, as a scientific theory, is merely descriptive, it was co-opted—probably more than any other scientific theory—in the service of various ideological beliefs. When discussing the place of humans within the animal kingdom, the basic tenets of the theory were often distorted, as the status of human beings was converted from "the crown of creation" to "the crown of evolution," occupying the place at the top of the chain of beings. Conversely, by suggesting a model of continuation between humans and other animals, Darwin's theory of evolution (which must not be confused with its populist interpretations) is—in Carrie Rohman's words—"the most radical philosophical blow to anthropocentrism in the modern age."[41] As Darwin himself clearly states in *The Descent of Man*:

> Nevertheless, the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, is certainly one of degree and not of kind. We have seen that the senses and intuitions, the various emotions and faculties, such as love, memory, attention, curiosity, imitation, reason etc., of which man boasts, may be found in an incipient, or even sometimes in a well-developed condition, in the lower animals.[42]

Not only is the difference one of degree, and not of kind, but Darwin also has not conceived of this difference in terms of value or importance. There

is no "more evolved" or "less evolved" in his evolutionary theory, as natural selection moves in no particular direction. There are only the different paths taken by different species, which are not directed to any particular end.[43]

Red Peter is among the few Kafka protagonists, if not the only one, who has succeeded in overcoming the obstacles put in his way.[44] However, his evolution into a human being is not necessarily a positive development. Being human is presented as a mere dodge, used by the ape to avoid being a lifetime prisoner. Toward the end of the story, Red Peter states that he "reached the average cultural level of a European." However, when he describes the process he has undergone, this cultural level is presented ironically:

> It was so easy to imitate these people. Within a few days I had learned to spit. We then spat in one another's faces, the only difference being that afterward I licked my face clean and they did not. Before long I was smoking a pipe like an old hand. . . . It was the brandy bottle that gave me the greatest trouble. (KSS, 81)

Red Peter, like the sailors on the ship, identifies smoking, spitting, and drinking alcohol with human behaviors that he should adopt in order to become human. By presenting these activities as the key events in Red Peter's transition, "A Report to an Academy" underscores the negative aspects of becoming human. According to the story, humans are neither the rational nor the political animals, as often described in Western thought, but merely the drinking, spitting, and smoking animals. These are the skills one should acquire to reach the average cultural level of a European.

Becoming human does not require rational thinking, and certainly not moral virtues, as in his former apish life Red Peter harmed no one, while human beings shot, captured, caged and tortured him. The humanization process is, in fact, completed when at the very end of his report Red Peter describes an abusive relationship he has with a female chimpanzee:

> If I return late at night from banquets, from learned societies, from convivial occasions, a little half-trained little chimpanzee is waiting for me, and I have my pleasure of her in the way of all apes. In the daytime I do not want to see her; she has the lunatic look of the bewildered trained animals; I am the only one who recognizes it, and I can't stand it. (KSS, 83–84)

In his *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno argues that "there is nothing so expressive as the eyes of animals—especially apes."[45] In addition to smoking, spitting, and drinking alcohol, rejecting the animal gaze is also presented here as a crucial aspect of human behavior that one should acquire when turning human. As in "The Metamorphosis," the correlation between "being human" and "being humane" is disrupted, as rendered by Clayton Koelb:

> In the course of his report Red Peter emphasizes the costs inherent in the transformation; a moral descent from a life of genuine freedom to a human life of obligations and constraints. The descent from ape to man thus recapitulates the fall from Eden.[46]

"A Report to an Academy," then, relates the story of an ape evolving into a human. This evolution, however, is not portrayed in terms of progress, but such description is actually in line with Darwin's concept of evolution, which is free of value judgment. As several critics have noted, in "A Report to an Academy" Kafka keenly satirizes the humanist ethos, as he undermines the hierarchical separation of humans from apes, suggesting that there is little to admire about human society and humankind.[47] At first glance, the story—which follows the evolutionary trajectory—seems to go against metamorphosis norms, whereby the species change is from a higher form of life to a lower one. Yet in retrospect it turns out that the story actually does comply with this norm, as Red Peter's change from ape to human is indeed presented, at least to some degree, as a regression from a higher to a lower form of life.

Species Transition as Performativity

In the previous chapter, Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" has been presented as a radical metamorphosis story, since Gregor becomes an animal as, in Beauvoirian terms, one becomes a woman; the corporal transformation is merely the point of departure for the cross-species transition, which is to a large extent socially constructed. In "A Report to an Academy," the species transition is purely a matter of social construction, which has no corporal component whatsoever. Therefore, if the transformation of Gregor Samsa is indeed an animalistic embodiment of Simone de Beauvoir's view of gender, Red Peter's species transition animalistically reflects Judith Butler's

gender theory. The idea of gender performativity is at the core of Butler's work, notably in her 1990 groundbreaking study *Gender Trouble*. Gender, Butler concludes, is not something that one *is*, rather it is something one *does*—a *doing* rather than a *being*, and, therefore, "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results."[48]

In his memoir, Gustav Janouch quotes Kafka as sharing a similar idea about culture, which Janouch retrospectively associated with "A Report to an Academy": "The civilized world depends for the most part on the effect of successful training procedures. That is what culture means."[49] In the Romantic period apes came to represent the golden age in human history, living a natural life, serene, healthy, happy, and free.[50] Anthropoid apes can be found in several works of Kafka's German Romantic forebears, such as E. T. A. Hoffmann's 1814 "News of an Educated Young Man" ("Nachricht von einem gebildeten junger Mann") and Wilhelm Hauff's 1827 "The Young Englishman or the Ape as Human" ("Der junge Engländer oder Der Affe als Mensch"), both considered to be major influences on "A Report to an Academy."[51] Hauff's story is centered on a mysterious character arriving at a German town, introduced as one of the inhabitants' nephew, who is not versed in local customs and mores. Soon the nephew learns to speak German and to behave like a gentleman, charming the locals. Only at the end—debunking social manners and conventions—does it transpire that the stranger is, in fact, an ape. The similarity between Kafka's and Hauff's humanized apes is evident. Yet it is the dissimilarity between the two narratives that highlights Kafka's radical concept of species. Unlike Hauff's ape, Red Peter does not need to hide his biological species in order to be accepted as a human. Society in "A Report to an Academy" does not mistakenly identify the ape as human, but sees him as a former ape, regardless of his biological identity.

Reading "A Report to an Academy" through a Butlerian lens can sharpen this point: species identity in Kafka's ape-man story, is—like gender in Butler's thought—merely a cultural code, which relies on imitation and reappearance, having no inherent essence. As such, it can be disrupted, undermined, turned over, resisted, and troubled. Red Peter's humanization begins already on the boat, literally as a performance, inasmuch as he imitates human behavior, like spitting and smoking, and "all of steerage cheered" (KSS, 81). Red Peter's human performance on the ship is virtually a drag show. Butler turns to drag as a strategy and site of

potential subversion, as by ridiculing normative cultural expressions and performances, drag aims at destabilizing identities. "In imitating gender," Butler maintains, "drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself, as well as its contingency."[52]

Yet, as Butler emphasizes in *Bodies That Matter* (1993), the performance context is crucial; drag is not categorically subversive, as it can also have the opposite effect, reinforcing the binaries of dominant norms and reproducing cultural hegemony.[53] Red Peter's drag show on the boat has two different sets of audience: one includes the sailors, the immediate audience who witnesses the show in real time, and the other is actually us, the readers.[54] In the context of the real-time show, Red Peter's aping human performance in front of the sailors on the boat is indeed a nonsubversive act of humanist entertainment. As Henri Bergson observes in his classic essay on laughter, inversion has a comic effect:

> Picture to yourself certain characters in a certain situation: if you reverse the situation and invert the roles, you obtain a comic scene. . . . . Thus, we laugh at the prisoner at the bar lecturing the magistrate; at a child presuming to teach its parents. . . . In every case the root idea involves an inversion of roles.[55]

Likewise, in his study of humor Simon Critchley remarks that when the animal becomes human, the effect is "pleasingly benign."[56] The subversive potential of Red Peter's humanization is realized only in the context of the secondary audience, the readers, as human identity is reduced—not only during the drag show but throughout the story—to acts like smoking, spitting, and drinking alcohol. Human identity is presented here as a series of tricks that are artificial additives to animal nature. Ironically, some of these tricks that establish human identity in the story are often described as beastly and brutish.

Nevertheless, in the story these crude rituals are regarded as the quintessential human attributes that Red Peter should gain in order to become human. Red Peter only briefly mentions that after mastering the art of drinking, he also began to speak. Within the framework of the detailed description of the drinking training, the succinct reference to his experience of language acquisition marks its relative marginality in the process of becoming human. Speech here is merely a speech act, like any other act, and not even the most challenging one. Throughout history, the capacity

to speak has been a primary emblem of humans' diacritical difference from other animals, harking back to the classical determination of human being as the speaking animal (*zoon echon logon*), as famously pronounced in Aristotle's *Politics*:

> Man is the only animal who has the gift of speech . . . the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, or just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state.[57]

Kafka here replaces the Aristotelian notion of humans as the speaking animals, stated in his *Politics*, with Aristotle's own competitive definition of humans as the imitating animals, as appears in his *Poetics*: "Imitation is co-natural with human beings from childhood, and in this they differ from other animals, because they are the most imitative and produce their first acts of understanding by means of imitation."[58]

Moreover, when examining the function of Red Peter's humanization, Butler's distinction between performance and performativity is imperative; unlike performance, performativity is not a bounded act, presupposing a preexisting subject. Red Peter's human performativity does not take place only on stage. It is not merely a parodic relief from the humanist paradigm, for the amusement of his viewers. The ape's human performativity also continues offstage, to a point that he is indeed perceived by all as a transspecies—someone, whose species identity does not correspond with their birth species. His species transition begins with human performance in the literal sense on the ship, and continues with human performativity in the Butlerian sense:

> My hands in my pants pockets, the wine bottle on the table, I half-lie, half-sit in my rocking chair and look out the window. When company comes, I play host as is proper. My manager sits in the anteroom; when I ring, he comes and listens to what I have to say. (KSS, 83)

Red Peter's acquisition of human identity reflects Butler's fundamental claim that identity is not an essence but is actually formed, constituting

a subject, which does not "exist" prior to it. However, Red Peter's human identity is not fully consistent. When a journalist claims that Red Peter's predilection for taking down his pants in public proves that his "ape nature has not yet been entirely repressed," he responds: "I have the right to lower my pants in front of anyone I like" (KSS, 78). This angry reaction discloses the transspecies' wish to bring into being multiple modes of species performance; Red Peter is not interested in committing himself to any stable species identity, but his nonhuman performance coexists alongside his human one. Eventually, Kafka's ape-to-man protagonist cuts not only the Gordian knot of biological species and species identity, but also its correlation to sexual preference, as the story concludes with Red Peter's description of his sexual relations with a female chimpanzee.

Red Peter actively disrupts normativity and transgresses the boundaries of propriety, interfering with the status quo in a closed social system. In doing so, Red Peter embodies the notion of queerness. Several scholars have implemented the concept of queerness not only beyond human sexuality, but also beyond humanity. For example, Phillip Bernhardt-House describes the legendary werewolf as queer, and Greta Gaard defines queer ecofeminism, which problematizes "the normative dualisms, value-hierarchical thinking, and logic of domination that together characterize the ideological framework of Western culture." In her study of queering the human-animal bond, Carmen Dell'Aversano proclaims that queer is about sex only incidentally—as "the real topic of its polymorphously transgressive reflections is identity."[59] Red Peter should thus be viewed as a "species queer," who "by refusing to crystallise in any specific form, maintains a relation of resistance to whatever constitutes the normal."[60]

Furthermore, the ape's humanization, on- and offstage, occurs with a complementary case of animalized humans, reinforcing its transgressive potential. Together, these two-way transgressions, animal-to-human and human-to-animal, resist the power structure that regulates species identities. The most animalistic figures in the story are the sailors on the ship:

> They always had something in their mouths to spit out, and they didn't care where they spit landed. They were always complaining that my fleas jumped on them; yet they were never seriously angry with me on that score; they were aware that fleas thrived in my pelt and that fleas are jumpers; they came to terms with this fact. When they were off duty, a number of them would sometimes sit in a

> semicircle around me; hardly speaking but merely making cooing sounds to each other. (KSS, 80)

The sailors are dehumanized not only by their animalistic behavior, but also by depriving them of the most human activity, which is speaking. They appear to have lost the capacity for language, as Akira Lippit notes, "replacing it instead with meaningless laughter and a compulsion to expectorate. Their mouths are not used for language but rather for the expression of affect (laughing), ingestion (smoking and drinking) and excreting (spitting)."[61] Likewise, the trapeze artists in the circus perform apelike acts:

> Often, in the vaudeville theaters, before I go on, I have seen some artiste couple up at the ceiling fooling around on their trapezes. They swung, they rocked, they jumped, they floated into each other's arms; one carried the other by the hair with his teeth. (KSS, 79)

Species transition is bidirectional, and as Deleuze and Guattari put it: "The deterritorialized animal force in turn precipitates and intensifies the deterritorialization of the deterritorializing human force."[62] Human characters are not only animalized in the story, some actually go under a species transition; as Red Peters reports, "I practically made a monkey of my first teacher, who was soon forced to give up training and had to be delivered to a sanitarium. Fortunately he was soon released" (KSS, 83).

"A Report to an Academy" thus denaturalizes the most basic and pervasive binary on which our society rests: that of the "natural" divide between humans and other animals. The transgression of the species barrier in "A Report to an Academy" is even more radical than in "The Metamorphosis," not only because Red Peter's species identity is changed without any biological—or preternatural—trigger, but also because species transition goes both ways, from nonhuman to human and vice versa, and it is not a one-time event that happens solely to one character.[63] The multiplicity within species identity includes Red Peter himself—the self-made humanized ape—as well as his dehumanized former teacher, the animalistic sailors, the trapeze artists, and also the half-trained female chimpanzee. Species identities and boundaries were never more fluid and scrambled. None of these characters can be defined as "cis-species," an individual whose species identity—in parallel to the term "cis-gender"—matches the biological species assigned at birth. Kafka displaces here the human/animal binary

and replaces it with a rainbow of species identities, a broad spectrum of manifestations and roles.

Species Transition as a Mask

Red Peter's process of becoming human, as several critics have shown, begins when he is actually a prisoner on the boat, sailing from Africa to Europe, after realizing that apes belong in cages, and therefore if he wants to be out of the cage he should stop being an ape.[64] This identity shift can also be viewed through the prism of postcolonial discourse, underscoring the intersections between posthumanism and postcolonialism. In his key work *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Frantz Fanon argues that class and race gain their meaning from one another. As opposed to causally related, they are coconstituted—neither of them predetermines or is a consequence of the other, but rather each is dialectically coproduced:

> It is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to. In the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure. The cause is effect: You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich.[65]

In "A Report to an Academy" Kafka presents a parallel coconstitution between species and class, or in other words—between being nonhuman and being oppressed. As Fanon denaturalizes the category of race, Kafka, designating here nonhuman animals as "the wretched of the earth," denaturalizes the category of species. The correlation between being oppressed and being nonhuman in "A Report to an Academy" is in fact more valid than the stability of species identity, as Red Peter cannot stop being oppressed as long as he is nonhuman, but he can stop being nonhuman, and as a result—stop being oppressed.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) Fanon recounts how the process of becoming white takes place through mastering language and culture, which mask black skin:

> The Antilles Negro who wants to be white will be the whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is. Rather more than a year ago in Lyon, I remember, in a lecture I had drawn

> a parallel between Negro and European poetry, and a French acquaintance told me enthusiastically, "At bottom you are a white man." The fact that I had been able to investigate so interesting a problem through the white man's language gave me honorary citizenship. Historically, it must be understood that the Negro wants to speak French because it is the key that can open doors which were still barred to him fifty years ago.[66]

In a similar fashion, Red Peter's report to the academy, which could be also entitled "Simian Skin, Human Masks," demonstrates that becoming human does not require a biological change; it is gaining mastery of human codes and manners that masks his simian skin and humanizes him. Red Peter already realized that while being caged on the boat from Africa to Europe:

> I did not calculate; but I did observe matters with great calm. I saw these men walk back and forth, always the same faces, the same movements: it often seemed to me that only one man was involved. So, this man or these men went unmolested. An exalted goal dawned on me. No one promised me that if I become like them, the cage door would be raised. Promises of that kind, for seemingly impossible fulfillment, are not given. But if fulfillment is achieved, the promises also appear subsequently, just where they had earlier been sought in vain. (KSS, 81)

As mentioned above, "A Report to an Academy" ends with Red Peter's quite disturbing description, which can be viewed as the completion of his species transition; he indeed fully turned from the oppressed to the oppressor position, as his treatment of the female chimpanzee indicates. Yet the alternative to becoming human, as Red Peter recognizes, is actually not being oppressed, but simply not being—it is "turn human or disappear," in parallel to Fanon's famous words, "Turn white or disappear,"[67] describing the dilemma with which the black person is confronted. As Red Peter clarifies in his report to the academy:

> I had no way out but had to provide myself with one, for I could not live without it. Always up against the wall of this crate—I would inevitably have croaked. But at Hagenbeck, apes belong up against the wall—well, so I stopped being an ape. (KSS, 79)

The phenomenon of apes dying shortly after their captivity was well known to science at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1908, the German zoologist Alexander Sokolowsky published a study of the spiritual life of great apes, focusing on their high mortality rate a few days after their arrival in Europe. Describing apes in captivity as apathetic, morose, and tending to hide themselves, Sokolowsky suggests that these apes could not overcome the loss of freedom, as for them freedom is an existential sine qua non, and without it they are likely to die.[68] Such a description perfectly fits Red Peter in the first few days after his capture, when he is confined in a crate on a boat sailing to Hamburg:

> I squatted with bent, continually trembling knees; and since at first I may not have wanted to see anyone and was eager only to remain in the dark, I faced the crate while the bars of the cage cut into my flesh of my backside. . . . Glumly sobbing, painfully searching for fleas, wearily licking a coconut, knocking my skull against the wall of the crate, sticking out my tongue whenever someone came near me—these were the first occupations in my new life. (KSS, 78–79)

If freedom is necessary to ape's existence, as Sokolowsky asserts, then the captured Red Peter is no longer an ape, since he is now deprived of this quintessential quality. From his perspective, he is no longer an ape, not because he adopted human behaviors and human skills, but because he is divested of his ape's freedom.

During his captivity on the boat, Red Peter undergoes a process of obliteration, whereby he loses his "apishness" and, only afterward, does he begin the process of adopting human characteristics. Red Peter describes this process through a German idiom: "There is an excellent German expression, 'to slip off into the bushes': that is what I did, I slipped off into the bushes. I had no other way, presupposing that freedom was never an option" (KSS, 83). The original German phrase, "sich in die Büsche schlagen" (E, 332), means willingly disappearing, or self-obliteration.

Red Peter also repeatedly emphasizes that becoming human was merely the lesser of two evils, and not a fulfillment of his heart's desire: "Now, in themselves these men had nothing that especially appealed to me" (KSS, 81). After the completion of the species transition he states: "I did not overestimate it, not then, even less today" (KSS, 83). Red Peter chooses humanization for one reason only—not because he wishes to be human, but simply because he wants to live: "I was looking for a way out, for no

other reason" (KSS, 82). Becoming human, as he stresses, was then his only way to survive, or in Frantz Fanon's words, "A feeling of inferiority? No, a feeling of nonexistence."[69]

The process of becoming human also includes learning, as Red Peter testifies:

> And, gentlemen, I learned. . . . I used up many teachers, indeed, even several teachers simultaneously. When I had become more confident of my abilities and the public world followed my progress, I had glimmerings of a future; I myself hired teachers, seated then in five adjoining rooms and managed to study with them all at the same time by leaping incessantly from one room to the other. This progress! . . . Through an effort that has hitherto never been repeated on the planet, I have reached the average cultural level of a European. (KSS, 83)

Yet his *Bildung* is not based on learning, but largely on mimicry, which is a central concept in the postcolonial discourse: "It was so easy to imitate these people. . . . I was not attracted to the idea of imitating men; I imitated because I was looking for a way out, for no other reason" (KSS, 81–82). Colonial mimicry appears when members of a colonized society imitate and take on the culture of the colonizers. Homi Bhabha borrows the term "mimicry" from Lacan, who actually imported it from zoology, asserting that "the effect of mimicry is camouflage, in the strictly technical sense. It is not a question of harmonizing with the background but, against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare."[70] Following Lacan's definition of mimicry, Bhabha opposes Fanon's dichotomous "Turn white or disappear," suggesting that the process of imitation is never complete, as inevitably there is always something lacking. Bhabha defines colonial mimicry as "a subject of a difference, that is almost the same, but not quite."[71] Instead of full transition from the identity of the colonized to the identity of the colonizer, Bhabha's concept of mimicry is about ambivalence and hybridity, which is "at once a mode of appropriation and of resistance."[72] As in Bhabha's conceptualization of colonial mimicry, Red Peter is almost human, but not quite. In fact, Red Peter does not claim to be human, but only that he is no longer an ape. Hanging between the two species identities, Red Peter is the result of the encounter between the human oppressors

and the oppressed nonhuman, manifesting multiplicities within species. His reaction to the female chimpanzee at the end of the story reflects this very liminal state, in which he belongs to neither the oppressed nonhumans nor the human oppressors.

Furthermore, in this context Red Peter should not be perceived as an opportunist, who conveniently switches from the oppressed to the oppressor position. Like camouflage in both biology and warfare, mimicry protects the mimickers, enabling their survival, but also providing a position from which to attack. The human mask Red Peter wears allows him to unmask human society. Yet Red Peter is fully aware that while he might be able to unmask human society, he cannot tear off his human mask and return to his simian skin. Following his humanization Red Peter can no longer speak for the nonhumans. His report to the academy members begins with the following statement:

> Exalted Gentleman of the Academy! You have granted me the honor of summoning me to submit to the Academy a report on my previous life as an ape. Unfortunately I am unable to comply with the intent of your request. Almost five years separate me from apedom, a span of time that is short, perhaps, when measured on the calendar, but infinitely long when galloped in the way I have done. (KSS, 76)

Paradoxically, Red Peter can resist human exceptionalism only through humanization, but due to his humanization he can no longer do it as an ape, as he explains to the academy members:

> My memories have become more and more closed off from me. If at first my return—had the world of humans wanted it—was open to me through the entire gateway that the sky forms over the earth, at the same time it became even lower and narrower under the lash that drove my evolution forward. I felt more comfortable and more fully enclosed in the human world; the storm that blew at my back from my past subsided; today it is only a draft that cools my heels; and the far-away gap, through which it comes and through which I once came, has grown so small that, if ever my strength and will were even adequate to run back to that point, I would have to scrape the hide from my body in order to pass through. To speak frankly, as much as I like to employ figurative images for these things, to

> speak frankly: Your apedom, gentlemen, to the extent that you have something of the sort behind you, cannot be more remote from you than mine is from me. (KSS, 77)

As Kari Weil shows, "A Report to an Academy" illustrates the significance of the fundamental problematic of "the animal question": How does one have access to "the animal," if it is the animal that must be "civilized" to exist in human society?[73] Nevertheless, while the humanized ape is no longer a nonhuman being, and therefore he cannot fully represent nonhumans, he can do it to some degree, "in the most limited sense," as Red Peter himself declares:

> In the most limited sense, however, I may indeed be able to respond to your inquiry, and I do so with great pleasure. . . . Naturally, today I can use human words only to sketch my apish feelings of the time, and so I misstate them; but even if I cannot arrive at the old apish true, my recital at least leans in that direction, there can be no doubt. (KSS, 77, 79)

In one of the most famous and enigmatic sentences of *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) Wittgenstein states that "if a lion could speak, we wouldn't be able to understand him."[74] Red Peter's report to the academy seems to refute Wittgenstein's observation; if a lion could talk, we would be able to understand him, just as we understand Red Peter.[75] The only problem might be that he would no longer be a lion, just as Red Peter is no longer an ape. Wittgenstein does not explain why we would not be able to understand the speaking lion, but a Spivakian reading might shed light on Wittgenstein's statement. Arguing that the necessarily Western perspective of the academic discourse of postcolonialism serves to silence other perspectives, Gayatri Spivak's blunt answer to the question in the title of her landmark essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is no, the subaltern cannot speak.[76] Subalterns' inability to speak is derived from the inability to understand them, without enforcing the Western paradigm upon them. Or in other words: if subalterns would speak, we wouldn't be able to understand them. Likewise, we would not be able to understand Wittgenstein's lion, because we are trapped in the anthropocentric paradigm, beyond which we cannot trespass.

Even a lion, the strongest animal, is a subaltern who falls outside of the

hegemonic power structure, as also demonstrated in the introductory section with the Aesopian fable "The Man and the Lion Traveling Together." In their account "Man and Beast" in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno proclaim that the backbone of resistance is language, and therefore "even the strongest animal is infinitely feeble."[77] In *The Differend* (1983) Jean-François Lyotard equivalently sees the nonhuman animal, who suffers wrongs but cannot claim damages, as "the paradigm of the victim."[78]

Through the freedom of fiction Kafka enables his nonhuman protagonist to be less feeble, less paradigmatically victimized, by providing him with "the backbone of resistance." While the ability to speak does not seem to Red Peter as crucial to his becoming human, it is essential to his becoming a narrator and protester. Interestingly, throughout this fictional dialogue between humanity, represented here by the academy members, and animality, represented by Red Peter, it is the humans who remain voiceless and silent, for a change. Unlike the subaltern, whose voice, according to Spivak, is mediated and interpreted by Western academics, here Red Peter speaks for himself, and his report is not rewritten by the academy members or any other human narrator. Yet the freedom of fiction Kafka uses in "A Report to an Academy" is still limited. In Kafka's diegetic universe the protagonist can use human language, enabling him to protest against his oppression, but by doing that, he inevitably loses his nonhuman agency.

PART II

Humanimal Power Relations

CHAPTER 3

Slaughterous Anthroparchy, Jackals, and Arabs

"Jackals and Arabs" ("Schakale und Araber"), written and published in 1917, is a story of a European man traveling in the Arabian desert who is approached by a pack of talking jackals. Abhorring the Arabs who kill animals for food, the jackals ask the traveler to resolve their bloody strife with the Arabs by killing the latter with a small rusty pair of sewing scissors. An Arab soon arrives on the scene; he mocks the jackals and dumps a camel carcass nearby. While the jackals devour the camel, the Arab cracks his whip at them, but the narrator attempts to stop him. As noted in the previous chapter, in a letter to the publisher, Kafka stressed that "Jackals and Arabs" and "A Report to an Academy" are not parables (and therefore should not be referred to as such) but rather "animal stories" (*Tiergeschichten*). Despite this explicit authorial statement, the story has been primarily interpreted parabolically, reducing the interspecies clash standing at the core of the narrative to solely interhuman issues.

The fact that "Jackals and Arabs" was first published in a Jewish periodical (*Der Jude*) gave rise to parabolic interpretations of Jewish themes, according to which the jackals are the Jews, waiting for the Messiah to redeem them, or that they stand for the Zionists and the Arabs are the Palestinians.[1] Another common Jewish interpretation of the story sees the dispute between the jackals and the Arabs, which centers on their different meat-eating habits, as a reflection of the controversy over Jewish ritual slaughter (also known as kosher slaughter, or *shechita*).[2] The fierce debate over *shechita* in fin de siècle Europe was intensified by antisemitic

myths, drawing a link between ritual slaughter and ritual murder.[3] Nonetheless, Kafka's writing on slaughter should not be reduced to the debate over kosher slaughter and the antisemitic stereotypes it evokes. It should also be read in light of Kafka's vegetarianism—his rejection of any kind of slaughter—and his deep identification with nonhuman animals. Following Kafka's own objection to killing animals and eating their flesh, as reflected in his texts, and the basic call of the jackals to end human slaughter of nonhuman animals, my analysis of "Jackals and Arabs" addresses the issue of slaughter, as well as human dominion over other animals.

Resisting Slaughter

Kafka often drew an analogy between the murder of people and the slaughter of nonhuman animals, and also depicted himself as a slaughtered animal. As he himself reports in a letter to Max Brod: "My mind is daily prey to fantasies, for example that I lie stretched out on the floor sliced up like a roast, and with my hand am slowly pushing a slice of meat toward a dog in the corner" (LFFE, 95). Likewise, *The Blue Octavo Notebook* (*Die Acht Oktavhefte*) contains fragments, excerpts from journals, and aphorisms, where Kafka describes himself as a hunted animal to be slaughtered:

> I lay on the ground by a wall, writing in pain, trying to burrow into the damp earth. The huntsman stood beside me and lightly pressed one foot into the small of my back. "A splendid beast," he said to the beater, who was cutting open my collar and coat in order to feel my flesh. (BON, 84)

The murder/slaughter connection also appears in Kafka's diary:

> Always the image of a pork butcher's broad knife that quickly and with mechanical regularity chops into me from the side and cuts off very thin slices which fly off almost like shavings because of the speed of the action. (D, 223)
>
> Between throat and chin would seem to be the most rewarding place to stab. Lift the chin and stick the knife to the tensed muscles. But this spot is only rewarding only in one's imagination. You expect to see a magnificent gush of blood and a network of sinews and little bones like you find in the leg of a roast turkey. (D, 342)

In like manner, Gustav Janouch recounts that when Kafka saw him reading Alfred Döblin's *The Murder of a Buttercup* (*Die Ermordung einer Butterblume*), he said, "How strange it sounds, when one takes a perfectly ordinary idea from the world of a carnivorous culture and couples it with some frail botanical name."[4] In a letter to Milena, Kafka includes a description and a drawing of an execution machine, whose inventor copied from a butcher:

> So that you can see something of my "occupations," I'm enclosing a drawing. These are four poles, through the two middle ones are driven rods to which the hands of the "delinquent" are fastened; through the two outer poles rods are driven for the feet. After the man has been bound in this way, the rods are drawn slowly outward until the man is torn apart in the middle. Against the post leans the inventor who, with crossed arms and legs, is giving himself great airs, as though the whole thing were his original invention, whereas he has only copied the butcher who stretches the disemboweled pig in his shop-front. (LM, 201)

Rejecting meat culture and drawing a parallel between the slaughter of nonhumans and the murder of humans can also be found in Kafka's fiction. For example, Kafka links slaughter and murder in his short story "A Fratricide" ("Ein Brudermord"), wherein the murder weapon is "half bayonet, half kitchen knife" (KSS, 73). Schmar, the killer, literally slaughters his victim, Wese, as he stabs him in his throat, and the victim's death rattle is compared to the sound made by water rats when they are slit open (KSS, 74).

The Nonhuman Case against Slaughter

"Jackals and Arabs" opens when the narrator, a traveler from the North, accompanied by Arab guides, is camped out in a desert oasis. When night falls, a pack of jackals throngs around him. The eldest in the pack appears and speaks up, telling the narrator that his arrival has been long awaited by numerous generations of jackals:

> "We know," the eldest began, "that you have come from the North, that is exactly what our hope is based on. There is a rationality there

> that cannot be found here among the Arabs. From their cold arrogance, you know, not a spark of reason can be struck." (KSS, 69)

The eldest jackal seeks here a cross-species alliance between rational beings against the irrational beings. The distinction between the rational and the irrational certainly has deep roots in Western thought, drawing the line between human being, who is arguably the only *animal rationale*, and the rest of the animals, who are all irrational. Instead, for the jackals the rational/irrational division does not overlap with the human/nonhuman distinction. For them, both the jackals and the Northerners are rational beings, and they should therefore collaborate and act against the Arabs, who are irrational.

It soon turns out, as the eldest jackal continues, that he categorizes the Arabs as irrational, in opposition to his fellow rational jackals, because they kill animals to eat them and despise carrion (KSS, 70). Eating carrion is culturally regarded as contemptible; people eschew scavenging, while eating nonhuman animals that were killed specifically for this purpose is considered socially appropriate and legitimate. From the jackals' perspective, though, the opposite is true; scavengers do not harm living beings and are, therefore, ethically superior. Eating carrion is also ecologically sound, as the scavenging jackals demonstrate; they cleanse the earth of the carrion left over by the carnivorous Arabs. Hence, in their scheme, eating carrion is not—as commonly assumed—a mark of squalor and pollution—but rather of cleanliness and purity:

> "We must have peace from the Arabs; air we can breathe; a view of horizon cleansed of them; no bleated lament from a ram slaughtered by an Arab; all creatures must perish quietly; undisturbed, they must be drunk dry by us and purified right down to the bone. Purity, nothing but purity, is what we want," concludes the eldest jackal. (KSS, 71)

This inversion is obtained not only by the content of the jackal's words, but also in the terminology he uses. There is often a lexical differentiation of comparable human and nonhuman terms, and in German even to a larger degree than in English. Transgressing the common use of language produces alienation, which undermines the clear-cut anthropocentric distinction between the human world and the world of all other animals.

In his classic essay "Politics and the English Language" (1946), George Orwell criticizes such political language:

> Political language . . . is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. One cannot change this all in a moment, but one can at least change one's own habits, and from time to time one can even, if one jeers loudly enough, send some worn-out and useless phrase—some *jackboot*, *Achilles' heel*, *hotbed*, *melting pot*, *acid test*, *veritable inferno* or other lump of verbal refuse—into the dustbin where it belongs.[5]

Joan Dunayer, in her study of language and nonhuman oppression, expands the concept of political language beyond the boundaries of humanist discourse, implementing it in a postspeciesist context:

> How do we justify our treatment to nonhumans? We lie—to ourselves and to each other, about our species and about others. Deceptive language perpetuates speciesism, the failure to accord nonhuman animals equal consideration and respect. Like sexism and racism, speciesism is a form of self-aggrandising prejudice. Bigotry requires self-deception. Speciesism can't survive without lies. Standard English usage supplies these lies in abundance. Linguistically the lies take many forms, from euphemism to false definition. We even lie with our punctuation.[6]

In numerous cases Kafka transgresses this separation, using words whose German denotation is strictly animalistic when referring to humans, and words that are exclusively human to describe nonhuman animals. For example, in Kafka's "A Crossbreed" ("Eine Kreuzung") the narrator mentions that the crossbreed, who is half kitten, half lamb, can lie in wait for hours beside the hen coop, "but it has never yet seized an opportunity for murder" (KSS, 125).[7] In common parlance, the word "murder" refers exclusively to the killing of a human being by another human being. In "A Crossbreed" neither the victimizer nor the victim is human—both are nonhuman animals (a kitten-lamb crossbreed and a hen respectively)—and yet the narrator uses the term "murder" (*Mord*) and not "killing" (*Töten*). By choosing this seemingly inadequate term, Kafka resists the speciesist language in which the oppressive relationship of our species to

other ones is encoded, sending the human-normative terminology of hierarchy that naturalize speciesism—in Orwell's words—"into the dustbin where it belongs."

A similar transgression, which is inevitably lost in translation, occurs in "Jackals and Arabs." The eldest jackal's claim against the Arabs, that they kill animals to eat, is "Sie töten Tiere, um sie zu fressen" (E, 281). Both *essen* and *fressen* in German are translated as "to eat" in English; in German the term depends on the identity of the eater; *essen* is used in a human context, while *fressen* applies to nonhumans. The fact that the jackal refers to the Arabs' act of eating as *fressen* exposes the speciesist politics of language; *essen* is what we do, *fressen* is what others do. When the ingroup is humans and the outgroup is nonhuman animals, as presumed in most contexts, the word *essen* designates humans and *fressen* is used for nonhuman animals. But when the "us" are nonhuman animals, as in "Jackals and Arabs," the terms are reversed. Moreover, while the denotative meaning of *fressen* and *essen* differs according to the identity of the subject who performs the act of eating, the terms also hold a different connotative meaning; *essen* is eating in a civilized manner, while *fressen* is eating in an uncivilized, barbaric manner. Therefore, the inversive use of *essen* and *fressen* by the jackal is not only perspectival (what we do is *essen*, what others do is *fressen*), but is also objectively justified; what we jackals do is *essen*, as we do not kill other animals, whereas what the Arabs do is *fressen*, since they do kill others. The common *essen*/*fressen* distinction, which reflects how human beings perceive themselves in opposition to other animals, has therefore not only been invalidated, but completely inverted in the story.

The antislaughter message in "Jackals and Arabs" is enhanced when read in dialogue with a Kafka's contemporaneous story "A Page from an Old Document" ("Ein altes Blatt"), which Elias Canetti dubs "the loudest passages in Kafka's work [that] tells of this guilt with respect to the animals."[8] The narrator of "A Page from an Old Document" reports that nomads from the North invaded the capital, took over the town, and looted and plundered all the stores and goods, and no one could stand up to them. The height of human brutality is epitomized here by humans' inhumane treatment of animals, since the carnivorous habits of the nomadic invaders are presented as the worst cruelty and brutality:

> No sooner has he brought in his goods than everything is snatched from him and devoured by the nomads. Even their horses are meat

> eaters; often a rider lies next to his horse while both feed off the same piece of meat, one at each end. The butcher is frightened and does not dare to stop the meat deliveries. We understand this, however, pool our money, and support him. If the nomads were not to get meat, who knows what would occur to them to do; who knows, for that matter, what will occur to them even if they do get their daily meat. Recently the butcher thought that he could at least save himself the trouble of slaughtering, and in the morning he brought in a live ox. That is something he had better not repeat. For about an hour I lay flat on the floor far back in my workshop, with all my clothes, blankets, and pillows piled on the top of me just so as not to hear the ox's bellowing as the nomads sprang on it from all sides to tear pieces from its warm flesh with their teeth. (KSS, 67)

Curiously, in both cases, when Kafka condemns human slaughterous culture, he uses non-Western subjects (the Arabs in "Jackals and Arabs" and the northerner nomads in "A Page from an Old Document"), while the other humans (the traveler from the North and the local narrator respectively) are not part of this slaughterous culture. Nevertheless, in "A Page from an Old Document," the seemingly categorical polarization between the uncivilized, slaughterous nomads and the civilized narrator is implicitly disrupted: "You cannot talk to the nomads. They do not know our language; indeed, they hardly have one of their own. They communicate with each other like jackdaws. Again and again we hear this screech of jackdaws" (KSS, 67). Despite the nomads' description as the ultimate Other, animalistic invaders who take over the narrator's civilized town, Kafka chooses to depict them as jackdaws (*Dohlen*), which in Czech is translated to *Kafka* (or *Kavka* in standard orthography). Jackdaws also famously adorned the letterhead of the family firm.[9] It thus seems that the dreadful animalistic strangers who invaded the city are, in fact, part of Kafka himself, standing for both animality and alterity within the self.

Likewise, the Arab/Northerner division in "Jackals and Arabs" is also subverted; the alleged opposition, presented by the eldest jackal, between the unreasoned and impure Arabs and the reasoned and pure Northerners, is ironized as he continues, and it turns out that what makes the Arabs unreasoned and impure is killing animals for eating. Such killing is presented as an exceptional practice, followed only by the Arabs, whose "filth is their

white; filth is their black; their beard is horror; one has to spit at the site of the corner of their eye; and when lift their arm, all hell breaks loose in their armpits" (KSS, 71). The eldest jackal presumes that the narrator comes from a place where this slaughterous practice is unacceptable, and therefore distinguishes between him, as well as the rest of the Northerners, and the Arabs. Rhetorically, it creates an aesthetic distance, which encourages the narrator, and the reader too, to take the antislaughter perspective. Both the narrator and the reader are asked to take a stand against the slaughterous norms of the Arabs, and not against the slaughterous habits of their own culture. One can, however, easily realize that the Arabs' slaughterous practice, the criterion defining them as unreasoned and despicable, certainly does not situate Western people on the opposite side of the division; they are as unreasoned and despicable as the fictional Arabs, who are also untypically portrayed in the very opening of the story as "tall and white" (KSS, 69). This rhetoric is used simultaneously by the jackals on the narrator, and by Kafka on his readers.

It is important to note that the narrator is initially introduced as a man who comes from the North, and not as European. Only toward the end of the story—after the Arab leader of the caravan tells the narrator that the jackals have the same conversation with every European, as "every European is just the man who seems to them to have been chosen" (KSS, 71)—it is indicated that the narrator is a European. Europeans, as known by all, also kill animals for eating. It therefore becomes clear that the jackals' condemnation of the Arabs applies to the narrator, and to the reader (who is also European) as well. Postponing the characterization of the narrator as European and describing him as a northern outsider allows us to see him as an antithetical counterpart of the animalistic invaders in "A Page from an Old Document," who are also northern outsiders.[10] In opposition to the brutal northern outsiders in "A Page from an Old Document," the northern outsider in "Jackals and Arabs" is the alleged savior of the nonhuman figures from the brutal humans. Exposing the narrator of "Jackals and Arabs" as European can be then viewed in parallel to the association of the nomads with Kafka through depicting them as jackdaws. There, the outsiders' brutality turns out to characterize also the insiders. Likewise here, it becomes apparent that the insiders' brutality is shared by the outsiders as well.

The initial opposition between the Arab and narrator, as presented in the opening of the eldest jackal's words, is also undermined when the el-

dest of the pack tells the narrator, who thinks the jackals are about to try to kill the Arabs, "you misunderstood us . . . in the manner of humans, which, I see, is not lost even in the far North. We are certainly not going to kill them. All the waters in the Nile would not wash us clean" (KSS, 70). Here the jackal seems to realize that the interspecies coalition between the jackals and the narrator against the Arabs is somewhat limited, as the basic opposition is, after all, between humans and nonhumans, and thus the narrator, as a human being, is closer to the Arabs than it seemed at first. The main opposition between the pure and rational beings and the impure and irrational ones corresponds now with the human/nonhuman division (the jackals vs. both Arabs and the narrator), yet its criterion is still inversed. It is the nonhumans who are pure and rational, whereas the humans are impure and irrational. Therefore, the jackals ask the narrator to kill the Arabs, as they cannot do it; it takes one (from a slaughterous society, namely human) to kill one.

The Vegetarian Case against Slaughter

Discussing "A Page from an Old Document," Elias Canetti sees the narrator, who agonizes over the bellowing of an ox, as analogous to Kafka, since both recoil from the brutal, barbaric devouring of meat:

> Might one say that the narrator was withdrawing from what could not be endured, that he found peace again? Or after such bellowing can there be no peace? It is Kafka's own position; but all the clothes, rugs, and pillows in the world could not lastingly silence the bellowing in his ears. If he ever withdrew from it, it was only to hear it again, for the bellowing did not stop.[11]

Another story that expresses Kafka's vegetarian stance is "A Hunger Artist" ("Ein Hungerkünstler"). This story, written in 1923 and first published shortly before Kafka's death in 1924, describes a circus act in which a man fasts for many days. It follows the decline of the artist's career, who ends up forgotten and neglected in his cage until his death. Many interpreters have identified the hunger artist with Kafka himself, as both were dying artists, as well as gaunt men.[12] Margot Norris points out another common denominator between them, by comparing Kafka, as a vegetar-

ian who refrains from eating meat, to the hunger artist, who abstains from food entirely. Norris sees the hunger artist's dismissive rejection of food as an amplification of Kafka's abstinence from meat, and consequently she draws an analogy between the attempts of Kafka's family to thwart his vegetarianism and the impresario in the story who sets a limit of forty days on the fast of the hunger artist, which the latter resents, since he wants to go on fasting indefinitely.[13]

Additionally, the narrator of "The Hunger Artist" mentions that the permanent watchmen, chosen from the public to watch the hunger artist are "oddly enough, usually butchers" (KSS, 87), reinforcing the view of the fast as an expansion of vegetarianism. The butchers emblematize the carnivorous society from which the hunger artist—like Kafka himself—sets himself apart. The hunger artist is juxtaposed not only with the watchers/butchers, who "threw themselves with the appetite of healthy men" on their opulent breakfast (KSS, 87), but also with the panther who replaces him in the cage after his death. The description of the vigorous young predator, whose "joy of life sprang from its maw in such a blaze of fire" (KSS, 94), is contrasted with the one of the hunger artist. But at the same time, the panther is also analogous to the hunger artist; like the panther, the artist is an outsider in human society, and both are put in a cage and displayed to the public. The artist's alienation from society corresponds to Kafka's own estrangement, and the analogy between the hunger artist and the panther is parallel to the identification Kafka felt with nonhuman animals.

In the same vein, the narrator of "Jackals and Arabs" should also be interpreted in the light of Kafka's vegetarianism. One of the major weaknesses of the Jewish readings of the story, as well as other parabolic accounts, is the identity of the narrator. If the jackals are the Jews and the Arabs are the Gentiles, who then is the narrator? Regarding the narrator as Kafka's own position as a secular (or assimilated) Jew, witnessing the conflict between Jews and Gentiles, does not accord with the story, where the narrator—as a human being—is objectively closer to the Arabs, although he identifies with the jackals. Alternatively, the narrator serves as a stand-in for the author, not as a Jew but rather as a vegetarian. Belonging to neither the slaughterous human society nor their nonhuman victims, the vegetarian narrator is objectively closer to the Arabs (slaughterous humanity), but identifies with the jackals (slaughtered animals).

Kafka was a vegetarian who eschewed eating meat almost all his life, for both ethical and health reasons. His letters and diaries attest that vegetarianism had a major role in his life and identity. For instance, in November 1912 he wrote in a letter to his fiancée Felice Bauer: "First of all, I am delighted that you are a vegetarian at heart," and on the same day, in a letter to Grete Bloch, Felice's friend, Kafka tries to convince her to become vegetarian, declaring that "meat causes nothing but devastation" (LF, 60). Sander Gilman states that Kafka saw his vegetarianism as being profoundly linked to who he was, to his sense of self, but also to a marginal world he felt he belonged to.[14]

Ronald Hayman, in his biography of Kafka, connects Kafka's vegetarianism to the fact that he, as a grandson of a Jewish slaughterer (*shochet*), was exposed to slaughter in an early age:

> Kafka's vegetarianism may have had one root in revulsion at the idea of his father's father's daily activity—ritually slitting the throats of animals, hacking up their bodies, feeding his family with money earned from butchering. The butcher's knife will be recurrent in Kafka's nightmares, fantasies and fiction; the animal identifications may have seemed, at one level, like a means of making amends to the animals, or, at least, siding with them against slaughterous humanity.[15]

In a similar fashion, Pietro Citati, another biographer of Kafka, writes:

> While the others ate meat—that meat brought back to his memory vivid with hatred and disgust all the violence that man has sown over the earth, and the minuscule filaments between one tooth and the next seemed to him germs of putrefaction and fermentation like those of a dead rat between two stones—he poured onto his table nature's rich cornucopia.[16]

Max Brod also reflects on Kafka's steadfast commitment to vegetarianism. In his biography of Kafka, Brod relates that Kafka explained the Bible from a vegetarian standpoint; accordingly, Moses led the Jews through the desert so that they might become vegetarian and stop longing for the "fleshpots of Egypt" in these forty years, while eating a meat-

less diet of manna.[17] Brod also describes an episode when Kafka went to the Berlin aquarium and suddenly began to speak to the fish in their illuminated tanks, saying, "Now at last I can look at you in peace, I don't eat you anymore."[18]

As a vegetarian who refrains from eating nonhuman animals, Kafka can look at them in peace, without repelling the animal gaze because "it's only an animal."[19] Likewise, the arguably vegetarian narrator of "Jackals and Arabs" can support the nonhuman animal figures in the story, as he does not eat them. The jackals ask the narrator to help them end the slaughterous practice of the Arabs, because they regard him as someone who comes from a place where this slaughterous activity is unacceptable: "You have come from the North, that is exactly what our hope is based on. There is a rationality there" (KSS, 69). A site wherein human beings do not kill animals for food does not exist geographically, but it does exist ideologically, as there are individuals who, by abstaining from eating animal flesh, do not take part in the slaughterous practice. In fact, by asking the narrator, "How can you bear to live in this world, you with a noble heart and bowels of tenderness?" (KSS, 71), the eldest jackal seems to recognize that human slaughterous norms are universal, and he regards the narrator as a particularly sensitive and ethical individual.

Although the narrator, as a human being, is objectively closer to the Arabs than he is to the jackals, he seems more inclined to side with the jackals. His initial reaction to the eldest jackal's claim against the Arabs is "Don't speak so loudly . . . there are Arabs sleeping nearby" (KSS, 70), and his response to the jackal's wish to kill the Arabs is "'Oh!' I said more fiercely than I intended. 'They will defend themselves; they will shoot down packs of you with their muskets'" (KSS, 70). These comments reflect the narrator's concern for the jackals' well-being and protective stance toward them. His affinity with the jackals can be taken as an oblique reference to Job's lamentation, "I am become a brother to jackals" (Job 30:29). Following the narrator's magnanimous care for the jackals, which stands in contrast to his indifference toward his fellow human beings (that is, his Arab companions) Robert Lemon asks: "Why does the European display so little loyalty to his species?"[20] Yet, the narrator, whose pro-jackal stance seems to be against identity politics, might follow an alternative identitarian politics—that of a vegetarian.

When the Arab leader mercilessly whips the jackals, the narrator intervenes on their behalf, physically attempting to stop the whipping:

> Then the leader whipped his sharp lash back powerfully and forth across their backs. They raised their heads; half in ecstasy, half in stupor; saw the Arabs standing in front of them; now were made to feel the whip on their muzzles; retreated with a jump and ran backward a ways . . . the leader raised the whip again; I took him by the arm. "You are right, Master" he said, "we will leave them to their vocation; besides, it is time to break camp." (KSS, 72)

Due to its triangular victim-victimizer-spectator structure, parallels have also been drawn between "Jackals and Arabs" and "In the Penal Colony." Both stories are told from the perspective of an outsider, a European traveler coming to a strange place and getting caught up in a deadly conflict between two sides, each trying to convince him of the justness of its cause.[21] The dilemma of the narrator-spectator in the penal colony—to interfere, or not to interfere, in the violent act he is witnessing—is rendered in the form of a detailed interior monologue:

> The traveler reflected: It is always a sensitive matter to interfere decisively in other people's affairs. He was neither a citizen of the penal colony nor a citizen of the country to which it belonged. If he wanted to condemn or even block this execution, they could say to him: You're a foreigner, keep quiet. To this there was no response except to add that in this case he did not understand himself, since he was traveling with the sole purpose of observing and by no means altering other people's legal institutions. Here, however, the situation was certainly very tempting. The injustice of the procedure and the inhumanity of the execution were beyond all doubt. (KSS, 46)

Finally, and unlike the narrator-spectator in "Jackals and Arabs," he does not interfere.

The very last scene of "Jackals and Arabs," where the narrator stops the Arab leader from lashing the jackals, is also comparable, as Walter Sokel suggests, to the fifth chapter of *The Trial*, entitled "The Thrasher" ("Der Prugler"). A similar triangle of victim-victimizer-spectator is presented here as well when Josef K. witnesses the thrasher lashing the warders. As in "Jackals and Arabs," the victims in *The Trial* also appeal to the spectator for help, but unlike the spectator in "Jackals and Arabs" Josef K. does nothing to stop the violence, but rather leaves the scene while the lashing is in

progress.[22] On the background of the passivity of both the traveler in the penal colony and Josef K., the narrator's interventive act in "Jackals and Arabs" stands out. The fact that the reliable narrator, at the very end of the story, untypically intercedes on behalf of the jackals, encourages the reader to side with them.

And yet, although the jackals, like Kafka himself, reject killing animals for food, they do not refrain from eating animals. The narrator indeed interferes on behalf of the jackals, and they are perceived as the victims of the Arabs, but their humiliation and dismal fate stem—particularly from a vegetarian standpoint—from their obsession with other animals' blood:

> The all-obliterating immediate presence of the powerfully reeking corpse bewitched them. One was already at the throat, and its first bite found the jugular. Like a small rushing pump, which struggles both wholeheartedly and hopelessly to extinguish an overwhelming fire, every muscle of his body tugged and twitched in place. And already, hard at the same work, all lay piled high up on the carcass. Then the leader whipped his sharp lash back powerfully and forth across their backs. They raised their heads; half in ecstasy, half in stupor. . . . But the camel's blood already lay in steaming puddles; the body was torn wide open in several places. They could not resist. (KSS, 71–72)

Ironically, the jackals' bloodthirstiness, as revealed in the presence of the camel's dead body, makes them at least somewhat equivalent to their ultimate nemesis. Their behavior in the presence of the corpse—tearing the camel's flesh to pieces—is, in fact, reminiscent of the ferocious nomads in "A Page from an Old Document." The nomads rip a live animal and the jackals a dead one, but both arouse revulsion, especially for a vegetarian who abhors carnivorous practices altogether. Moreover, as Clayton Koelb states, both the nomads and the jackals present an uncomfortable combination of animal and human characteristics, that we believe nature keeps rigorously separate. While "Kafka's jackals are distressing because the human aspect of their behavior seems impossible: animals simply do not converse in perfect German in the world we inhabit," Koelb argues, "the nomad's behavior shocks us because it *is* possible. Human beings ought not to act in such a way, but they could."[23]

Resisting Anthroparchy

The jackals loathe the Arabs' slaughterous and oppressive ways. Their case against killing animals for food is therefore a part of a wider radical case against anthroparchy, a neologism for the structure of attitudes, practices, and institutions by which human beings dominate, exploit, and abuse members of other species.[24]

The Handless Resistance to Anthroparchy

The narrator's statement following the jackal's opening words, that he was long awaited by generations of jackals, is "That comes as a surprise to me" (KSS, 69). One might think that the narrator is surprised at the jackal's ability to speak, as nothing in the TEXT so far has indicated that the story exceeds the realistic framework. But as the narrator continues, "I'm very surprised to hear that. It is pure chance that I have come from the far North, and I am on a brief trip. What is it, then, that you jackals want?" (KSS, 69), it transpires that he does not marvel at the talking jackal. It is not the jackal's speaking ability that surprises the narrator, but solely the content of his words, the fact that the jackals have been waiting for him for a very long time. The indifference of the narrator to the jackal's conversational skills, which takes place at an early point in the narrative, indicates the diegetic norms, according to which nonhuman animals can speak.

These diegetic norms are different from the ones presented in "A Report to an Academy," Kafka's earlier narrative of a talking nonhuman, examined in the previous chapter. Red Peter's ability to speak is presented as abnormal and a quasi-realistic explanation for this anomaly is provided. Moreover, "A Report to an Academy" is entirely centered around the humanization process of the simian protagonist, who—due to the human features he has acquired—is no longer perceived as an ape, at least within the diegesis (by the academy members, by other humans, as well as by Red Peter himself). Unlike Red Peter's verbal skills, the jackals' capacity to speak is presented as normative within the diegesis and taken for granted by all participants (the narrator, the Arabs, and the jackals themselves). Nevertheless, despite their speaking ability, the jackals are portrayed and

perceived as jackals in every respect. With the exception of this capability, the descriptions of the jackals—their movements, eating habits, and general demeanor—accord with their biological species:

> And all the jackals began panting even more quickly; with racing lungs although they were standing still. . . . And all the jackals in the circle, who in the meantime had been joined by many others coming from afar, lowered their heads between their front legs and polished them with their paws. (KSS, 70)

The jackals' speaking ability allows them to deplore the Arabs, who rule over them. However, despite being provided with language, defined by Horkheimer and Adorno as "the backbone of resistance," without which "even the strongest animal is infinitely feeble,"[25] the jackals are still fundamentally weak. They cannot save themselves, but need to be redeemed by a human agent, as the eldest jackal tells the narrator:

> "I am glad to still be able to welcome you here. I had almost given up hope, since we have been waiting for you for time without end; my mother waited, and her mother and, farther back, all her mothers up to the mother of all jackals. Believe me!" . . . "Master, we want you to put an end to the quarrel divides the world in two. You are precisely the man whom our ancestors described as the one who would accomplish this. We must have peace from the Arabs; air we can breathe; a view of the horizon cleansed of them; no bleated lament from a ram slaughtered by the Arab; all creatures must perish quietly." (KSS, 69, 71)

Like the narrator, the jackals have both language and reason, but the narrator—as a human being—also has something the jackals crucially lack, which is hands. "We are poor creatures, as we only have our teeth; for everything we want to do, good and bad, all we have is our teeth" (KSS, 70–71), notes the eldest of the pack. The jackals can neither fight their armed oppressors with their teeth, as, the narrator warns them, "they will shoot down packs of you with their muskets" (KSS, 70), nor can they hold weapons. All they can do is use language in order to recruit to their side a human agent, who—unlike them—does have hands. This "handy man" can thus hold and use a weapon against their oppressors and consequently

redeem them: "Oh dear Master, with the help of your all-powerful hands, cut their throats" (KSS, 71).

The jackals' animality, which is encapsulated here in their lack of hands (and untypically not in their lack of reason or language), brings in mind Heidegger's conception of the hand, as well as Derrida's critique thereof. In *What is Called Thinking?* Heidegger marks the hand as another exclusively human feature, alongside thinking and speaking. For him, the human being is not merely the rational animal or the speaking animal, but also the animal with hands:

> The hand's essence can never be determined, or explained, by its being an organ which can grasp. Apes, too, have organs that can grasp, but they do not have hands. The hand is infinitely different from all grasping organs—paws, claws, or fangs—different by an abyss of essence. Only a being who can speak, that is, think, can have hand . . . the craft of the hand is richer than we commonly imagine. The hand does not only grasp and catch, or push and pull. The hand reaches and extends, receives and welcomes—and not just things: the hand extends itself, and receives its own welcome in the hands of others. The hand holds. The hand carries. The hand designs and signs. . . . Every motion of the hand in every one of its works carries itself through the element of thinking, every bearing of the hand bears itself in that element. All the work of the hand is rooted in thinking.[26]

The craft of the hand, which is traditionally recognized as what makes the human being a *homo faber*, "man the maker," allowing humans to control their fate and their environment through tools, is expanded here by Heidegger. The craft of the hand, he stresses, goes beyond creating concrete tools, as the hand is chiefly a semiotic vehicle. Derrida provides a detailed analysis of Heidegger's notion of the hand, as it exemplifies the anthropocentric dimension of humanism in general and Heidegger's own reductive understanding of the human-animal distinction and its reliance on binary oppositions, in particular. Derrida notes that Heidegger's remark, that "apes, too, have organs that can grasp, but they do not have hands," lacks scientific and ontological grounding and sweepingly ignores the whole body of zoological knowledge. Derrida therefore labels this Heideggerian account of the hand as "Heidegger's most significant, symptomatic, and seriously dogmatic [statement]."[27]

At first glance it seems that Kafka's portrayal of the jackals supports Heidegger's view of the hand; if humans are merely the rational animals that can speak, the jackals—who are also rational and can speak—should be practically regarded as human. Yet, despite their speaking and cognitive abilities, the jackals are still eminently nonhuman beings, due to their lack of hands, which are the third essential element in Heidegger's humanist trinity. Nonetheless, the multiplicity of the hand in the Heideggerian scheme is a vast array of complex functions, as the hand is not the grasping organ, but rather the signing organ. In fact, the elaborate list of "things we do with hands" Heidegger provides in this passage is equivalent to the formalization of speech acts in pragmatics,[28] and thus should be respectively regarded as "signing acts."

The jackals, on the other hand, lack hands not as signing organs, but simply as a grasping organ. In Heidegger's terms, the jackals actually do not lack hands, but merely grasping organs. Having organs that can grasp, as apes do (as Heidegger himself notes), would be sufficient. If the story were "Apes and Arabs," instead of "Jackals and Arabs," it would entirely lose its narratological potential; having grasping organs, the nonhuman protagonists could hold weapons and therefore would not need to approach the narrator in the first place.[29] But jackals, unlike humans and apes (and raccoons, for that matter) do not have these grasping organs and therefore cannot resist their oppressors by holding weapons. While throughout the story none of the characters holds a weapon, the human narrator ultimately protects the jackals with his very hand, which he uses to stop the Arab's whip. Both Heidegger and Kafka view the hand as crucial for human existence. But whereas for Heidegger humans are the animals with hands, allowing a wide range of nuanced gestures, for Kafka humans are the animals with hands that enable one prosaic gesture: holding a weapon, which allows them to oppress other animals.

The Resistance to Anthroparchy as a Class Struggle

The fictional scenario, in which the jackals are bestowed with human language, demonstrates that anthroparchy—human domination and control over other species—is not established due the inability of nonhuman animals to talk or reason. It can be explained, rather, in materialist terms: the jackals, who stand for nonhuman animals, are subordinated to the

Arabs, who represent humanity, due to their lack of both natural (hands) and technological (guns) means. Nonhuman animals can neither produce nor use weapons. The strife between the jackals and the Arabs, as well as between nonhumans and humans in general, is equivalent to class struggle in the Marxist sense; an inevitably violent conflict of interests between the oppressed and the ruling class, as the narrator remarks: "It seems to be a very old quarrel; hence it probably runs in blood; and so it will probably end only in blood" (KSS, 70). The fact that the story was written in 1917, in parallel to the Russian Revolution, in which Kafka—who was an ardent socialist—expressed great interest,[30] supports this reading.

In this anthroparchy-capitalism analogy, the Arabs are the bourgeoisie, the ruling class, and the jackals are the proletariat, the oppressed class. The narrator then stands for the communists, whose duty is to carry out the "overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, [and the] conquest of political power by the proletariat,"[31] or in the context of the species struggle, to carry out, literally with his hands, the overthrow of anthroparchy. Yet it turns out that not only do the jackals lack hands to hold weapons, the weapon they provide the narrator, "a small pair of sewing scissors covered with old rust" (KSS, 71), is evidently inadequate for the task, and vastly inferior to the Arabs' muskets. The rusty pair of sewing scissors indicates that the jackals pose no real threat to the Arabs.[32]

Consequently, as the final scenes reveal, anthroparchy—unlike capitalism in the Marxist doctrine—cannot be overthrown. As soon as the rusty sewing scissors are presented, the leader of the Arabs appears, armed with a giant whip, shouting, "Well, finally, the scissors, and that's enough of that!" (KSS, 71) The narrator is surprised that the Arabs are aware of the jackals' plot and find it unthreatening, and the Arab elucidates:

> Of course, Master . . . it is common knowledge; for as long as there are Arabs, this pair of scissors will go wandering through the desert, and it will wander with us until the end of time. . . . These creatures possess an absurd hope; fools, true fools they are. That is why we love them. They are our dogs; more beautiful than yours. (KSS, 71)

This disparaging response underscores how firmly established anthroparchy is. The jackals' hope to end anthroparchy is nothing but a utopian ideal, as they are not aware of their inherent helplessness vis-à-vis the Arabs.

By depicting them as their dogs, the Arab relates to the jackals' dependency on humans.[33] Not only do the Arabs own the means of control (guns, whips, and hands), which the jackals crucially lack, they also gain their power over the jackals by controlling access to food. In order to illustrate the power relations to the narrator, the Arabs throw down a camel carcass in front of the jackals:

> Hardly had it hit the ground when the jackals lifted up their voices. As if irresistibly drawn on cords, every one of them, they came up, haltingly, their bodies scraping the ground. They had forgotten the Arabs, forgotten their hatred; The all-obliterating immediate presence of the powerfully reeking corpse bewitched them. . . . Then the leader whipped his sharp lash back powerfully and forth across their backs. They raised their heads; half in ecstasy, half in stupor; saw the Arab standing in front of them; now were made to feel the whip on their muzzles; retreated with a jump and ran backward a way. But the camel's blood already lay in steaming puddles; the body was torn wide open in several places. They could not resist. (KSS, 71–72)

The Arabs divert the jackals' revolutionary energies away from political action by throwing the camel carcass in front of them in the classic *panem et circenses* manner. The ruling class here literally feeds and entertains the masses as an instrument to distract them from fighting their oppressors. And indeed, as soon as the heavy carcass hits the ground, the jackals, as the narrator notes, "had forgotten the Arabs, forgotten their hatred." "They couldn't resist" ("Sie konnten nicht widerstehen," E, 284) refers here to the jackals' inability to resist the carcass of the camel, but it also refers to their incompetence to resist the Arabs, or in the broader sense—the impossibility of resisting anthroparchy.

The story ends with the Arab leader's nonchalant remark at the jackals devouring the carcass: "We will leave them to their vocation; besides, it is time to break camp. Now you have seen them. Wonderful animals, aren't they? And how they hate us!" (KSS, 72) The Arabs are not threatened by the jackals, despite their fierce hatred and overt political ploy. The power relations are so unbalanced that even the use of the whip is redundant. By the end of the story it is clear, to both the narrator and the reader, that the threat to the Arabs, which has been presented in an early stage of the nar-

rative, is merely the jackals' wishful fantasy. In fact, the initial description of the jackals' "lean bodies, as if under the whip, moving nimbly" (KSS, 69), is to be read in retrospect literally; "under the whip" is not a metaphor for their nimble moves, but for their very existential condition. Ironically, it turns out that the jackals do not live *as if* under the whip, but live under the whip in the most literal sense of the term. Long before the narrator witnessed the whip, held by the Arabs against the jackals, the whip has been present in the interspecies power relations between the jackals and the Arabs, shaping the jackals' lives, both physically and mentally.

Interestingly, in November 1917, about a month after the publication of "Jackals and Arabs," Kafka described in his Third Octavo Notebook an act of self-flagellation, which may serve as an alternative ending to the story: "The animal wrests the whip from its master and whips itself in order to become master, not knowing that this is only a fantasy produced by a new knot in the master's whiplash" (BON, 24). Three years later, in November 1920, Kafka quoted this sentence in a letter to Milena, adding that "torture is extremely important to me—my sole occupation is torturing and being tortured" (LM, 214). Here too, as in the original version, nonhuman animals cannot escape their dismal fate as oppressed beings. For the nonhuman animal, both ends are dead ends, leading to nothing but oppression. The only power nonhuman animals can have is against their own body.

CHAPTER 4

Speciesist Researches of a Dog

"Researches of a Dog" ("Forschungen eines Hundes"), a short story written by Kafka in 1922 and first published posthumously in 1931, is a quasi-scientific query, performed by a canine narrator. Unlike Kafka's earlier nonhuman protagonists—Gregor Samsa the vermin, Red Peter the ape, and the jackals—who all possess at least some animal characteristics according to their species, the nonhuman animal at the center of "Researches of a Dog" has very little canine or any other nonhuman attributes, despite the fact that he was born and raised as a dog. It is a story about a philosophical dog, who—right from the outset—declares he is no longer part of the canine community and concerns himself with complex metaphysical inquiries. This pronounced anthropomorphic portrayal has brought many of the story's commentators to regard it as a fable.[1] The tale of an outsider dog—who describes himself as "withdrawn, solitary, preoccupied only with . . . little researches" (KSS, 132)—has been widely read as an examination of the individual/community relationship, or more particularly—the relationship between the modern Jew and Jewish community, or between the author and society.[2]

The allegorical interpretations could not, however, "save" the story, which has remained largely abstruse. Thus, for instance, the story has been often taken as part of Kafka's reports, like "A Report to an Academy," but—as some critics have already pointed out—it is unclear to whom this report is addressed.[3] Unlike Red Peter, Kafka's simian narrator, who is aware of his audience and uses well-structured arguments, Kafka's canine narrator speaks in a confused, disjointed manner, deviates from his original theme, contradicts himself, and has a difficult time presenting his

ideas. In fact, most Kafkalogists have ended up according little significance to this story.[4] Alternatively, I read "Researches of a Dog" in relation to other literary dogs, focusing on human/canine interspecies dynamics.

The Paradigmatic Interspecies Power Relations

The Paradigm of the Faithful Dog

Dogs abound in Western literature, typically portrayed as humans' best friends. Yet, unlike "the big bad wolf" or "the cunning fox," the conception of "the faithful dog" is not merely a folkloric construction, but also a biological one. Dogs were the first species to be domesticated by humans, approximately fifteen thousand years ago. The process of domestication is based on the selection of traits desired by humans, which were transmitted to offspring; thus dogs were genetically designed to fit human wishes. Certain wolfish characteristics proved beneficial to humans during the domestication process, such as their hunting skills and their territorial instincts, which made them into guard dogs. In a similar fashion, the strong social ties between individuals in a pack, as well as the hierarchical structure that dictates obedience to the leader of the pack, were translated into loyalty and compliance to humans. In addition, selective breeding (also known as artificial selection) has fashioned dogs as a perennial puppy, perpetuating certain traits—both physical (such as rounded skulls) and behavioral (such as playfulness)—related to their function as a pet, that reinforced their dependence on humans.[5] As Darwin states in *The Origin of Species*, "It is scarcely possible to doubt that the love of man has become instinctive in the dog."[6]

The representation of dogs as humans' best friends in Western literature goes back to Homer's *Odyssey*, as the prototype for this model is the character of Argos, Odysseus's faithful dog. Dejected and worn out after years of separation, Argos waited for Odysseus's return, only to wag his tail and expire soon afterward: "Argos the dog went down into the blackness of death, that moment he saw Odysseus again after twenty years."[7] The canine protagonists in Miguel de Cervantes's 1613 novella *The Dialogue of the Dogs* (*El coloquio de los perros*) reflexively discuss how dogs are depicted in human culture: "What I have heard highly extolled is our strong memory, our gratitude, and great fidelity; so that it is usual to depict us as symbols of friendship."[8]

The paradigm of the faithful dog is also most common in modern literary works, in which dogs' devotion to humans often stands in unfortunate contrast with the lack of humans' loyalty to them. Ivan Turgenev's "Mumu" (1854), Anton Chekhov's "Kashtanka" (1887), Jack London's *White Fang* (1906), Mark Twain's "A Dog's Tale" (1904), and Thomas Mann's "Man and His Dog" ("Herr und Hund," 1919) are among the modern manifestations of this canine archetype.[9] The image of the faithful dog abounds also in the modern literary canon written after Kafka, including, among many others, Virginia Woolf's *Flash* (1933), Eric Knight's *Lassie Come Home* (1938) and its famous cinematic adaptations, and Paul Auster's *Timbuktu* (1999). However, the representation of dogs in Kafka's oeuvre conspicuously deviates from this literary tradition of canine loyalty. Kafka's canine figures are not portrayed positively, as humans' best friends, rather as negatively, as either submissive or despicable beings.

The Paradigm of the Despicable Dog

Aside their emblematic role as humans' best friends, dogs—as per Derrida's formulation—are also "the fraternal allegory of social poverty, of the excluded, the marginal, the homeless."[10] The paradigm of the despicable dog also has ancient roots. In his illuminating study of the human relationship with other animals, James Serpell suggests that the perception of dogs as unclean harks back to the Hebrew Bible and that it was current in Europe until the seventeenth century.[11] The negative approach to dogs in the Bible, both concretely and metaphorically, may be illustrated by the saying, "As a dog that returneth to his vomit, so is a fool that repeateth his folly" (Proverbs 26:11). In fact, the proverb Kafka's father infamously employed to resent his son's friendship with the Yiddish theater actor Yitzchak Lowy—"Whoever lies down with dogs gets up with fleas" (LFBV, 21)—reveals not only a prevailing negative attitude of many German Jews toward Eastern European Jews, as indicated by several scholars,[12] but also toward dogs.

James Serpell maintains that dogs have been regarded as unclean and despicable because they seem to engage unashamedly in activities that are prohibited or taboo in human culture, such as sexual promiscuity, incest, indolence, and the eating of carrion and feces.[13] This idea is already found in Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930):

> It would be incomprehensible, too, that a man should use the name of his most faithful friend in the animal world—the dog—as a term of abuse if that creature had not incurred his contempt through two characteristics: that it is an animal whose dominant sense is that of smell and one which has no horror of excrement, and that it is not ashamed of its sexual functions.[14]

Dogs are certainly not different from many other nonhuman animals in this respect, but unlike members of other species, dogs—as domesticated animals living with humans in their homes—exist on the boundary between nature and civilization. As various animal studies scholars have remarked, due to their liminal status dogs arouse ambivalent feelings of both affection and revulsion.[15]

With the exception of the canine representation in "Researches of a Dog," Kafka's dogs are vastly presented as despicable. In the opening of Kafka's "Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor" ("Blumfeld ein älterer Junggeselle") the protagonist considers adopting a dog, but eventually, after weighing the two paradigms—the faithful versus the despicable dog—he determines in favor of the second, and relinquishes the idea:

> He had already been wondering whether he shouldn't acquire a little dog. These animals are gay and above all grateful and loyal; one of Blumfeld's colleagues has a dog of this kind; it follows no one but its master and when it hasn't seen him for more than a few moments it greets him at once with loud barking, by which it is evidently trying to express its joy at once more finding that extraordinary benefactor, its master. True a dog also has its drawbacks. However well kept it may be, it is bound to dirty the room. This just cannot be avoided; one cannot give it a hot bath each time before letting it into the room; besides, its health couldn't stand that. Blumfeld on the other hand, can't stand dirt in the room. (CS, 18)

Comparably, under the title "A Life" ("Ein Leben") in the *Blue Octavo Notebooks* Kafka portrays a despicable female dog:

> A stinking bitch, mother of countless whelps, in places already rotting, but everything to me in my childhood, a faithful creature that follows me unfailingly, which I cannot bring myself to beat, from

> which, shunning her breath, I retreat step by step, and which nevertheless, if I do not decide otherwise, will push me into the corner between the walls, the corner that I already see, there to decompose completely, upon me and with me, right to the end—is it an honor for me?—the purulent and wormy flesh of her tongue upon my hand. (BON, 17)

Additionally, in a fragment of his diary entitled "Temptation in the Village" ("Verlockung im Dorf"), Kafka describes how while sleeping in an attic in a village, he was disturbed by a diabolic dog, which he tries to fend off: "very small bushy dog, one of those repulsive little lap dogs with disproportionately large heads encircled by curly hair, whose eyes and muzzle are loosely set into their heads like ornaments made out of some kind of lifeless horny substance" (D, 277).

The Paradigm of the Submissive Dog

The loyalty of dogs is dialectically perceived; it is not always viewed in a positive light, but also negatively, as dogs are often considered slavish and groveling creatures. The roots of this paradigm can also be traced to antiquity. For example, in Aesop's fable "The Wolf, the Dog, and the Collar," the dog emblematically stands for submissiveness, in opposition to the autonomous wolf:

> A wolf saw a huge dog wearing a large wooden restraining-collar and asked him:
> "Who has chained you up and fed you like that?"
> "A hunter," replied the dog.
> "Ah, God preserve wolves from him, as much as from hunger and a heavy restraining-collar!"[16]

In this Aesopian fable, both the dog and the wolf are anthropomorphized and used allegorically in order to demonstrate a lesson that freedom is priceless. Yet, whereas nonhuman animals in fables are used instrumentally, serving as a mere metaphor for intrahuman content, this fable can be also deallegorized and read as a tale about domestication.[17] This reading reflects common views, which are widespread also today, according to

which dogs have chosen domestication, because they preferred—like the dog in the Aesopian fable—human protection over their freedom.[18] Kari Weil traces a similar approach throughout modernity, from Rousseau and Nietzsche to contemporary thinkers, such as Deleuze and Guattari. They all condemn dogs—as well as other pets—for being domestic, deanimalized creatures that are stripped of their original virile wildness and tamed into an inauthentic servitude.[19]

Dogs are also often used metaphorically in Kafka's writings; since Kafka's dogs mark degradation, humiliation commonly takes a canine form.[20] Kafka's canine metaphors are systematically negative, functioning as a derogatory term to describe submissive, wretched, or loathsome people. Thus, for example, already at the opening of "In the Penal Colony" the narrator portrays the bound condemned man as doglike (*hündisch*): "In fact, the commended man looks so doggishly submissive that it seemed you could let him run around freely on the slopes and would only have to whistle at the start of the execution for him to come" (KSS, 36). Later on, the commended man literally acts like a dog, as when he was served with porridge, "He began to snap at the porridge with his tongue" (48).

Likewise, in "Jackals and Arabs," as mentioned in the previous chapter, the Arab leader indicates that the jackals and their murderous schemes do not threaten him, by saying: "They are our dogs" (KSS, 71). The businessman Block in *The Trial* defines the attorney humiliating himself as doglike, whereas the narrator describes how Block ingratiates to the attorney as if he literally ceased to be a client and becomes a dog: "Such a person was no longer a client, he was the lawyer's dog. If the lawyer had ordered him to crawl under the bed, as if going into a kennel, and bark, he would have done so with pleasure" (T, 139). The most famous dog image in Kafka's oeuvre appears at the very end of this novel. The last words of Josef K., who is executed in public, are "like a dog" (T, 165), that is to say, he dies humiliatingly, with no rights or dignity.[21] In his letters too, Kafka uses dogs as an image of humiliation. For example, in a letter dated March 1915 to Felice Bauer, he writes:

> I can give it to you, if at all, only when running along behind you in the Tiergarten, you always on the point of vanishing altogether, and I on the point of prostrating myself; only when thus humiliated, more deeply than any dog, am I able to do it. (LF, 372)

The Inverted Interspecies Power Relations

The Ontological Inversion

The canine representation in "Researches of a Dog" not only breaks with the traditional representation of dogs in Western literature as humans' best friends, but is also markedly different from any other reference to dogs in Kafka's work. The protagonist of the story is neither a paragon of faithfulness, nor despicable, nor submissive. All three paradigms hinge on the dependence of dogs on humans. Conversely, the protagonist of "Researches of a Dog" seems not to be dependent on people, yet he is also not a stray dog and does not live a "dog's life," in the figurative sense. In fact, humans are completely absent from his inquiry, as he deals exclusively with canine community. Members of all other species are only briefly mentioned as one insignificant and inferior unit of nondogs:

> When I think about it—and for this I have the time, the desire, and the ability—dogdom does have some truly strange characteristics. Beside us dogs there are many different kinds of creatures all around—poor, meager, mute beings, whose speech is limited only to certain cries; Many of us dogs study them, have given them names, seek to help them, educate them, improve them, etc. (KSS, 132)

From the standpoint of the narrator, canine superiority is self-evident. He does not even refer to the possibility that human beings—or members of any other species—ever had, or may have, a superior status. Not only do dogs conduct research, talk, study, contemplate music and science, and so on, they also rule over other species by dint of technological and intellectual superiority:

> For what else is there besides dogs? Who else can you call upon in this vast, empty world? All knowledge, the totality of all questions and all answers, resides in dogs. . . . People[22] often boast of the universal progress of dogdom through the ages, and they probably mean mainly the progress of science. (KSS, 141, 148)

It thus seems that by presenting dogs as the dominant species, who rule over other species, due to their technological and intellectual superiority, "Researches of a Dog" radically inverses the actual interspecies power relations.

Inverted power relations, as shown in the previous chapter through Henri Bergson's account of laughter, have a comic effect, and indeed, the story has been often regarded as either humorous, satirical, or parodic.[23] Nevertheless, the effect of inverted power relations is not merely comic; such inversion also has a defamiliarizing effect, in the Russian formalist terms,[24] causing the reader to reexamine and question issues taken for granted. In the case of inverted power relations between humans and other animals, it challenges anthropocentric views of human superiority over other species.

Such inversion of interspecies power relations appears in Jonathan Swift's satirical masterpiece *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), which is known to have greatly influenced Kafka.[25] In his fourth voyage, Gulliver arrives at an island, wherein the equine Houyhnhnms are the civilized, intelligent, and dominant species, while the human beings on that island—who are called Yahoos—are defined as "the most filthy, noisome, and deformed animals which nature ever produced."[26] The inverted interspecies power relations in Swift's classic novel undermine and blur the boundaries between humans and other animals while—at the same time—raising doubts about anthroparchy. Through the fantasy of the Houyhnhnm Land, the reader, following Gulliver himself (who can actually be regarded as the first posthumanist protagonist in the Western literary canon) becomes critical of human society and its values, including its treatment of other animals (horses in particular). Likewise, the world depicted by the canine narrator in "Researches of a Dog" seems to be a world in which dogs are the dominant species.

The story of the alleged inverted interspecies power relations is, however, not narrated by an external narrator, but rather by its canine protagonist. The option of recognizing the canine narrator as an "unreliable narrator," in Wayne Booth's terms, whose credibility has been seriously compromised,[27] is gradually established throughout the process of reading, as the reader doubts the validity of the narrator's research findings. Questioning the narrator's credibility allows a different reading of the story, wherein the inversion of interspecies power relations is not ontological but perspectival. The reversal, in this case, is not an attribute of the represented world but derives solely from the manner the dog—as an unreliable narrator—represents it. A close reading of the text reinforces this hypothesis, as I shall demonstrate shortly.

Nonetheless, the fact that the reader is introduced to the inverted world right at the beginning, before the narrator's reliability is put in question, is

rhetorically significant. The defamiliarization effect of the inversion, which challenges the human-animal hierarchies, does not disappear even when it gradually becomes apparent that the inversion is not taking place in the diegetic universe, but rather merely in the way the canine narrator sees this universe. In fact, the defamiliarization effect of the inverted interspecies power relations is particularly strong here because dogs are the dominant species, whereas the cultural representations of dogs—either positive, as typically in the literary canon, or negative, as in the work of Kafka—is thoroughly based upon their subordination to humans.

The Perspectival Inversion

The first event recounted in the story, the one that triggers the researches of the dog, is his encounter with the company of seven acrobatic dogs:

> They did not speak, they did not sing, in general they held their tongue with almost a certain doggedness, but they conjured forth music out of the empty space. Everything was music, the way they raised and set down their feet, certain turns of their heads, their running and their resting, the attitudes they assumed toward one another, the combinations they formed with one another like round dance, as when, for example, one braced his front paws on the other's back and then and they all positioned themselves so that the first dog, erect, bore the weight of all the others, or as when, their bodies slinking close to the ground, they formed intertwined figures and never made a mistake. (KSS, 134)

These acts, accompanied by loud music, perceived by the canine narrator as senseless and enigmatic: "To tell the truth, I marveled less at the art of the seven dogs—it was incomprehensible to me, quite outside my abilities and hence something I could no way relate to" (KSS, 135). When examining the dogs from a short distance, he realizes that

> it was not so much calm as extreme tension with which they worked—their legs, seemingly moving such assurance, twitched at every step with an incessant anxious trembling; these dogs gazed at each other rigidly, as if in despair, and their tongues, which they

> forever tried to control, after each attempt immediately protruded slackly from their muzzles again. (KSS, 136)

But he still cannot figure out the situation, astonishingly asking, "What, then, could they be afraid of? Who was forcing them to do what they are doing here?" (KSS, 136)

Unlike the canine narrator, the human reader can more easily explain the situation. As indicated by many critics, the reader does know the answers to the dog's inquiries; this peculiar event of the agitated dogs, shivering while performing acrobatics, can be simply understood as a circus show, in which the trained dogs are forced to perform unnatural tricks for human entertainment.[28] The questions "Why were they afraid? Who then forced them to do what they were doing?" represent the gap of understanding between the canine narrator and the human reader. Whereas the narrator finds the behavior of the dogs inexplicable, the reader can answer these questions effortlessly; the dogs afraid of their human trainers, who force them to perform unnatural acts. The following description of the dogs standing on their hind legs seems to support this hypothesis:

> Because of the loud music I had not noticed until now, but they had truly cast off all shame; these miserable creatures were doing something that was at once most ridiculous and most obscene—they were walking upright on their hind legs. Ugh! They were exposing themselves and openly flaunting their nakedness; they prided themselves on it, and whenever they obeyed their better instincts for a moment and lowered their front legs, they were literally horrified as if it were a mistake, as if nature were a mistake, and once again they rapidly raised their legs, and their eyes seemed to be asking forgiveness that they had to desist a little from their sinfulness. Had the world turned upside down? Where was I? What had happened? (KSS, 136–37)

At this point, the reader can certainly suspect, if not realize, that the diegetic universe is not turned upside down but only seems this way from the inverted perspective of the canine narrator.

The enigma of food—as several critics have shown—can be likewise explained. The narrator contemplates the source of food, presuming it just falls from the sky. The reader, however, can reconstruct an alternative, yet

a very simple, explanation whereby the food does not fall from the sky but is rather dropped to the dogs by human beings.[29] In the same vein, the mystery of the "air dogs" (*Lufthunde*) is not a real puzzle to the reader. The Yiddish term *Luftmenschen* (which literally means "air people"), referring to impractical contemplative people with no definite income, has been suggested as the source of this neologism.[30] Beyond the etymology of the term, the reader can also identify these air dogs, allegedly hovering in the air and only rarely touch the earth, as highbred lap dogs, carried by human hands.[31] But the canine narrator, who perceives nothing of the human world, finds himself again fumbling in the dark with a series of unanswered questions:

> But why, great-hearted dogdom, why do these dogs float? What is the meaning of their vocation? Why can't you get one word of explanation out of them? Why are they floating around up there, allowing their legs, the pride of dogs, to wither, cutting themselves off from the nourishing earth: they sow not and yet they reap, and they are even, I hear, especially well nourished at the expense of dogdom. (KSS, 144)

Toward the end of the story, the narrator relates his encounter in the forest with a strange dog, who was "lean, long-legged brunet, flecked here and there with white, and he had a beautiful, strong, searching gaze" (KSS, 158). The strange dog says he is a hunter and that he has to hunt. The narrator cannot understand why he has to hunt, and the canine hunter replies: "My dear little dog, do you really not understand that I have to? Don't you understand things that are self-evident?" (KSS, 159). Shortly after, a melody, which grew stronger and stronger, almost burst the narrator's eardrums, and he presumes that it is the canine hunter who sings. The reader can, however, realize behind the narrator's back, that the other dog is not an actual hunter but a hound, and the melody is not his singing but rather the horns of the approaching human hunters.[32]

As the story progresses, the hypothesis of the canine narrator as an unreliable narrator is firmly established. It gradually becomes clear that the dog consistently misinterprets the phenomena he encounters, because he is incapable of noticing other species, and humans in particular.[33] Completely eliminating the function of human beings in dogs' life leaves the canine narrator with a missing link, and, therefore, he finds simple and ordinary affairs as mysterious and unaccountable:

> Lately I have been reflecting more and more on my life, looking for when I might have made the crucial mistake that is to blame for everything, but I cannot find a mistake. And yet I must have committed some error, for if I had not committed it and still failed to achieve what I wanted by the honest work of a long life, that would prove that what I wanted was impossible, and complete hopelessness would follow. Look at your life's work! (KSS, 142)

William Riggan classifies five types of unreliable narrators: the picaro, the madman, the clown, the naïf, and the liar.[34] Kafka's canine narrator certainly does not fit into any of these types, but the closest model is the naïf, who is typically a child, as his unreliability is a result of perceptual limitations. The limitations of the dog's research are actually the limitations of his canine conciseness, which he cannot surmount. As the human readers are not restricted to such canine conciseness, they can easily read beyond it, identifying the missing links in his account. The first-person narration mode of the story seems to open up an ironic gap between the canine narrator and the human readers.

The Critical Inversion

Little by little it becomes clear that this is not a topsy-turvy world where dogs are humans' masters, but the power relations between humans and dogs are identical to the ones we are familiar with in the extratextual reality. The inversion is a mistaken corollary of the narrator, who consistently denies the role of humans in dogs' lives. The reader, who is necessarily human, and therefore possesses a different perspective than the dog, recognizes the limitations of the dog's inquiry and sees beyond it. This gap in perspective has a comic effect; it pokes fun at the dog who—either consciously or unconsciously—tries to fit reality into his positions, and not vice versa. Bergson, in his treatise on humor, addresses the comic effect of this kind of reversal:

> At the root of the comic there is a sort of rigidity which compels its victims to keep strictly to one path, to follow it straight along, to shut their ears and refuse to listen. . . . A CHARACTER FOLLOWING UP HIS ONE IDEA, and continually recurring to it in spite of incessant interruptions! The transition seems to take place imperceptibly from

> the man who will listen to nothing to the one who will see nothing, and from this latter to the one who sees only what he wants to see. A stubborn spirit ends by adjusting things to its own way of thinking, instead of accommodating its thoughts to the things.[35]

But the comic effect is not the only consequence of the limited perspective of the canine narrator and his philosophical myopia. The initial comic effect, as Michael Uhall argues, confirms the anthropocentric presumption of superiority:

> This could be read condescendingly, such that the human reader elevates herself above Dog and attributes Dog's failures to his status as a mere animal (or as the anthropomorphized representative of a particular form of misanthropy). This reading of the story might interpret it, then, as nothing more than an expression of, or meditation on, dissatisfaction, isolation, and finitude—Dog's or, perhaps, Kafka's own—but such a reading also would reassure the reader implicitly of her position as a superior breed.[36]

While the story does not actually undermine the interspecies power relations, it does undercut speciesism and the very notion of species superiority. The narrator's caninocentrism can, in fact, be construed as a satire or parody of anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism. Just as for us humans, "Man is the measure of all things," as Protagoras put it, for dogs, "The dog is the measure of all things." The dog's depreciation of other animals, whom he lumps together into one category, is analogous to the human attitude to other animals. The very term "animals"—except in specific biological contexts—serves as a description of beings other than human beings, even though it is indisputable that humans themselves are animals. In a parallel manner, given the canine prism in the story, the dividing classification here is not between humans and nonhumans, but between dogs and nondogs. The critical gaze, which was initially directed at the unreliable narrator's canine exceptionalism, is thus soon turned inward, toward human exceptionalism. The dog's speciesist fallacy within the diegesis exposes the fundamental speciesist fallacy of human beings in the extradiegetic reality.

Moreover, unlike the descriptive question of who the dominant species is, the question of superiority of one species over the other is a subjective

one, as to a large extent it depends on the eye of the beholder. In the previous chapter, such relativism was demonstrated through the jackals' claim for superiority over the Arabs; while people see scavengers as contemptible, for the jackals, who feed on dead animals found in their habitat, animals that kill for food, like human beings, are contemptible. In "Researches of a Dog" this relativism is presented, among other things, through the canine narrator's claim for the superiority of four-legged over two-legged animals. Walking on two legs distinguishes human beings from most other mammals, and as such, it is viewed positively within the anthropocentric ideological framework. The canine narrator, on the other hand—as a four-legged animal—views it negatively. Form him, as for the animals in Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), "four legs good, two legs bad!"[37] He actually rationalizes it by claiming that walking on two legs exposes the genitals (KSS, 136), a claim that ironically echoes the anthropocentric linkage between covering the genitals and mental supremacy, as appears in the biblical story of Adam and Eve and discussed in the second chapter.

The reader can clearly recognize the circular nature of the narrator's argument. The dog identifies superior characteristics with canine characteristics, and as members of other species perform these characteristics to a lower extent, he sees that as a proof of their inferiority. It is easy to notice that the dog falls here into the logical fallacy of begging the question (*petitio principii*). Yet, by exposing the dog's caninocentric fallacy, using aesthetic distancing, the story also reveals the anthropocentric fallacy. If one position implies a logical fallacy, surely, the other does as well. While caninocentrism is anchored only in the fictional universe of the story, anthropocentrism is firmly lodged in our social reality. Thus, the comic effect, which at first seems to be directed toward the caninocentric narrator, is reversed, turning toward the readers, as being part of the anthropocentric social reality.

In his influential 1980 treatise "Why Look at Animals?" John Berger analyzes the effect of seeing oneself seen by a nonhuman animal:

> The eyes of an animal when they consider a man are attentive and wary. The same animal may well look to another species in the same way. He does not reserve a special look for man. . . . And so, when (man) is *being seen* by the animal, he is being seen as his surroundings are seen by him. His recognition of this is what makes the look of the animal familiar. . . . animals are always the observed. The fact

> that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the object of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them.[38]

Kafka, in "Researches of a Dog," inverts the observer-observed relations between human and nonhuman animals, reminding us—what according to John Berger "has lost all significance"—that we can also be observed by them. When observed by a nonhuman animal, we are just another species, and just as nonhuman animals are vastly invisible to us, so are we to them, as Kafka's dog demonstrates.

PART III

Between Ontological and Performative Hybridity

CHAPTER 5

The Burrow of the Indeterminable

"The Burrow" ("Der Bau") is an unfinished work Kafka wrote in the last winter of his life (1923–24), and was first published posthumously in 1931. It centers around and is narrated by a ground-dwelling being, seeking protection through the construction of a labyrinthine burrow. The interpretations of the story include a varied range of themes, but it has been primarily read as an autobiographical work, in which Kafka deals with writing, or with his imminent death.[1] Kafka's nonfiction writing supports such readings; for example, in a letter to Max Brod in 1904, he writes: "We burrow through ourselves like a mole and emerge blackened and velvet-haired from our sandy underground vaults" (LFFE, 132). Kafka's description of himself *as if he were* a mole seems to realize itself in "The Burrow," in which Kafka *is* a mole.

Nevertheless, the identification of the burrower in the story as a mole should not be taken for granted. Most of Kafka's nonhuman figures are introduced by their species (such as jackals, a dog, a tiger, a leopard, an ape, a mouse, a vulture, and even a fictitious lamb-kitten crossbreed). Regardless of Kafka's tendency to anthropomorphize the nonhuman animals in his stories and his critics' impulse to allegorize them, their biological identity is typically given and unquestionable. However, as discussed in the first chapter, Gregor Samsa, the protagonist of Kafka's first animal story, is biologically unspecified, and this indeterminacy is central to the story. Like the vermin in "The Metamorphosis," the species of the protagonist in "The Burrow" is also undefined.[2] The unspecified burrower is described in the story as a solitary being, living a subterranean life, preying on smaller animals and hoarding food.

In his 1931 phenomenological study of the manner by which literary works assume their meaning to us, Roman Ingarden stated that the reader tends to choose the most probable option of filling out "places of indeterminacy" in the story from among those that are possible.[3] By doing so the reader, consciously or unconsciously, applies the principle of Ockham's razor to literature. Another way to describe Ingarden's account of literary indeterminacy is by using the "duck test," or in this particular case—the "mole test": if the protagonist lives, eats, and behaves like a mole, we can conclude that s/he[4] *is* a mole. It seems, however, that the burrowing protagonist cannot pass the "mole test." A good deal of argument has arisen among the story's commentators over the question of whether the burrow-dweller is a mole or a badger or bits of both. As the burrower eats rats, while moles do not, and collects supplies of food for use in winter, whereas badgers do not, it seems that identifying the animal is an ultimately futile task.

It is important to note that while the burrower has features of both mole and badger, the creature is not a mole-badger hybrid. A hybrid stands at the center of Kafka's "A Crossbreed," which opens with the narrator's description of this animal:

> I have a curious animal, half-kitten, half-lamb. It is an heirloom from my father's estate, but it only during its time with me that it has developed; formerly it was far more lamb than kitten, but now it has about the same amount of each. From the cat, head and claws; from the lamb, size and shape; from both, its eyes, which are flickering and mild, the hair of its coat, which is soft and lying close to the skin, its movements, which are at once skipping and slinking; in the sunshine on the window sill it curls up into a ball and purrs; on the meadow it rushes around like mad and can scarcely be caught; it runs away from cats, it tries to attack lambs; on moonlit nights the roof gutters are its favorite promenade; it cannot meow and loathes rats. (KSS, 125)

This hybrid animal, who signifies that fixed ontological categories of species no longer apply, is still biologically defined. Unlike this kitten-lamb crossbreed, and like Gregor Samsa, the burrower is an indefinable being. Therefore, instead of attempting to trace the biological nature of the

burrow-dweller, endeavors that are doomed to failure, or merely overlooking this biological indeterminacy and focusing on possible allegorical contexts, I would like to discuss the animalistic and humanimal implications of this biological indeterminacy.

Nonhuman Indeterminability

The Burrower as Everybeing

In the second chapter I have discussed the effect of anonymity of Kafka's figures, who are often devoid of defining characteristics, such as social standing, nationality, and so on, and in some cases—even a name. This anonymity brings out their transcendent quality and marks them as Everymen. Representing any human being, the Everyman is an ordinary figure, with whom the reader is supposed to be able to identify with readily. The literary tradition of the Everyman dates back to a sixteenth-century English morality play entitled *The Summoning of Everyman* (c. 1510) and can be found in contemporary works as well, such as Philip Roth's novel *Everyman* (2006). Nonetheless, an Everyman is not always unequivocally marked as such. For example, Leopold Bloom, the protagonist of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) is considered one of the best-known Everymen in modern literature, albeit not explicitly defined as such.

The story of the anonymous burrow-dweller, which was written a year after the publication of *Ulysses*, can likewise be read as a story of the Everyman. Bloom is often considered "the twentieth century symbol for Everyman, the wanderer, the outsider, the exile in every man."[5] Yet the burrowing protagonist is a more nightmarish version (as can be expected from Kafka) of the twentieth-century embodiment of the Everyman. Kafka's Everyman is an image of a terrified, helpless being, invariably engaged in the struggle for survival, fighting an undetectable enemy. Whereas Joyce challenged religious and ethnic boundaries by portraying a Jew as an Everyman, Kafka's nonhuman Everyman has further broadened the concept of the Everyman, challenging species boundaries. In this sense, the burrower is in fact not an Everyman, but an Everybeing, who stands for every human and nonhuman alike.

The dominant feeling expressed in "The Burrow" is undoubtedly fear.

The constant trepidation that surrounds the protagonist's life is a central element in the story. Whereas the first half of the story focuses on building the burrow, the second half entirely revolves around the protagonist's fright of an invader and constant anxiety about the unexpected. The opening of the story, "I have established my burrow, and it seems to be a success" (KSS, 162), seems to indicate that the protagonist is pleased with the handiwork and feels secure and complacent. But it soon becomes clear that despite having a dwelling, the burrower is nevertheless far from safe. This opening sentence actually evokes the biblical story of the creation of the world. It contains two parts—the first referring to the completion of the structure, and the second expressing the satisfaction the builder feels at the completed work. A similar structure is repeated seven times in Genesis 1, after completing different components of the world, and concluded at the end of the sixth day: "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). Yet, unlike God, who after completing the creation of the world "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done" (Genesis 2:2), the completion of the burrow does not offer its creator any peace of mind. On the contrary, it is an additional source of disquiet, since having to guard the burrow generates constant apprehension.

Having a secured abode has, paradoxically, heightened the burrower's sense of insecurity. Watching the burrow from outside to check its safeness only increases the burrower's feeling of angst:

> What does this kind of security actually amount to? For the experience I have gathered here, outside the burrow, can I possibly judge the dangers surrounding me outside it? Can my enemies sniff the correct scent of me when I am not in my burrow? Certainly, they have something of my scent, but not the full effect. And isn't it the existence of the full scent often the precondition for normal danger? (KSS, 170–71)

This series of questions, apparently not addressed to any outside entity, is further proof of a shaken psyche: the burrower is consumed by anxiety bred of doubts, misgivings, and a fear of the unknown. When hearing a hissing noise and suspecting the advance of an invader, another series of questions reflects the burrower's state of mind:

> Am I preoccupied with it? It is growing louder, it is coming closer, but I wriggle my way through the labyrinth and camp up here under the moss, it is almost as if I had already abandoned my house to the hisser, content just to have a little peace up here. To the hisser? Do I have a new, definitive opinion about the source of the noise? Surely the noise stems from the channels that the little creatures dig? Isn't that my definitive opinion? . . . How did it happen that for so long everything ran quietly and smoothly? Who guided the paths of my enemies so that they engaged in wide detours around my property? Why was I protected for so long, only to be terrorized now? What were all the small dangers, which I spent my life brooding over, compared to this single one! Do I, as the owner of the burrow, hope to be superior to anyone who might come? (KSS, 184–85, 186)

In addition to the interrogative sentences, the fact that the passage, like most of the story, is written in the present tense underlines the effect of distress and agitation. The burrower reports the events—both external and internal—in real time. Due to this unusual narration mode, neither the burrower nor the reader knows how this assault will end and whether the burrower will survive. Had the story been narrated in the typical past tense, the reader would have understood that the burrower had managed to escape the danger (or supposed menace), or else he would not be able to recount it. But with this rare mode of narration, both the reader and the protagonist-narrator have no prescience of the outcome, a fact that intensifies the fear and suspense.

If in Kafka's novel *The Castle* the protagonist's worry is a consequence of his journey to an unknown, unattainable destination, here it is due to the approach of an unknown enemy. Lack of knowledge and consequent anxiety and apprehension are central motifs in Kafka's work, yet in "The Burrow" this theme is taken to an extreme, and the entire story is a study in worry and fear, as Roman Sturc points out:

> The story is at least in part a study in worry and dread ("Sorge," "Angst"), Kafka easily qualifies as the Dante of "Sorge." . . . Most of Kafka's protagonists are loners and worriers. . . . In *The Burrow* Kafka goes one better. There is only one being in this longish story: a speaking, ratiocinating animal who, in a monologue lasting well over one hour, pours out his fears, anxieties, and guilt feelings. . . .

> *The Burrow* is a study in monomania. What in *The Great Wall of China* appears to be reasonable postulate of human existence—the longing for security—in this story becomes a rage, an *idée fixe* which dominates in all respects the life of the animal.[6]

The world of the burrower is a horrifying realm subsumed by a sense of impending doom. In fact, Kafka's first extended tale, "Description of a Struggle" ("Beschreibung eines Kampfes"), could be an apt title for this work as well, since more than telling a story, it describes a perpetual state of the struggle for survival.

The incessant disquiet of the protagonist has often been viewed as a testimony to an unstable mental state, and various diagnoses abound for his alleged pathology: acute paranoia, obsessive neurosis, hysteria, or compulsive disorder.[7] Seeing the burrower's apprehensiveness as pathological excess is, however, indicative of an anthropocentric bias. While, as suggested here, the experience of the burrowing narrator can be regarded as a nightmarish representation of modern experience, it is also uniquely animalistic. Despite the potential affinity between the experience of the burrow-dweller and the experience of modern man, the significant differences between them should not be undermined. By viewing the nonhuman animal in human terms, the burrower's behavior is often regarded as abnormal. Yet such behavior (as well as feeling), which by human norms is considered abnormal, is, in fact, natural and reasonable for a ground-dwelling, nonhuman animal.[8]

Despite having specific human cognitive abilities, the burrow-dweller is not a human being in disguise. The life led by the protagonist of "The Burrow" follows quite closely the life of a similar being in nature; the borrower's behavior, actions, and interests are those of a veritable animal. The burrow-dweller is preoccupied with the real-life concerns of subterranean burrowing animals: digging a warren, storing food, hunting animals, hauling prey to the burrow, sleeping, and warding off invaders. Moreover, the burrower's sensory functions are those of a nonhuman animal—the animal's explorations are based mostly on the senses of hearing, smell, and touch, and not on sight. In fact, "The Burrow" delves into the nonhuman experience more than any other of Kafka's animal tales.

Since "The Burrow" is not a sequence of events deriving causally one from the other, it has often been described as a story without a story.[9] About two-thirds of the story—from the start until the protagonist wakes

up—is described in the present tense, denoting routine and habitual actions. The narrative progresses through the examination of various aspects of the structure and routines that make up the life of the burrow-dweller:

> Sometimes I stretch out and whirl around in the passage for sheer contentment. It is a beautiful thing to have such a burrow in advancing age, to have put a roof over your head at the approach of the fall. . . . That is where I sleep the sweet sleep of peace, of gratified desire, of the achieved goal of home ownership. I don't know whether it is habit from the old days or whether the dangers in even this house are serious enough to wake me, but from time to time at regular intervals I am startled out of deep sleep and listen, listen into the silence that reigns unchanged day and night, smile, comforted, and with relaxed limbs sink into still deeper sleep. (KSS, 164)

"The Burrow" thus deviates from the common definition of a narrative as a telling of a "connected sequence of events,"[10] or as laid down in Aristotle's *Poetics*, a "structure of events."[11] In her influential study of narratology Mieke Bal requires a conflict between two agents as a necessary component of any plot,[12] a criterion that is not met here as well.

Animal life, unlike human life—and modern human life in particular—seems to be cyclical and not linear. The relevant cycles are circadian and seasonal ones, whereas the only linear progression is maturing and growing old. The protagonist of "The Burrow" is well aware of this temporal progression. This can be inferred from the comment "I'm growing old" (KSS, 163) in the first paragraph. However, the main concept of time in the story is a cyclical one. In his 1984 novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, the Czech author Milan Kundera captures this aspect of nonhuman animal experience when describing the life of his beloved dog Karenin:

> Dog time cannot be plotted along a straight line; it does not move on and on, from one thing to the next. It moves in a circle like the hands of a clock, which—they, too, unwilling to dash madly ahead—turn round and round the face, day in and day out following the same path. . . . If Karenin had been a person instead of a dog, he would surely have long since said to Tereza, "Look, I'm sick and tired of carrying that roll in my mouth every day. Can't you come up with something different?" And therein lies the whole of

> man's plight. Human time does not turn in a circle; it runs ahead in a straight line.[13]

An animal narrative, then, is significantly different from a human narrative, which progresses chronologically and linearly. Presenting the story in the present tense, depicting habitual, routine activities—in itself a departure from the literary norm—is well suited to a nonhuman animal character, whose life consists of repetitive routines. Even the potential for confrontation, in the guise of noise, is not realized. While the protagonist of "The Burrow" is anthropomorphized (i.e., presented as having human cognitive faculties), the story—through both its structure of narration and thematic content—conveying an experience that is essentially different from human experience, even though it is not entirely an animal experience either.

The cyclical character of the natural world, in contrast to the human perception of time, is expressed in the opening chapter of Ecclesiastes:

> "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever. The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it arose. The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, there they return again. All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done; And there is nothing new under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 1:2–9)

Not only is there nothing new under the sun; there is nothing new under the ground as well. Although Kafka did not complete this story, its last sentence, "But everything remained unchanged" (KSS, 189), which ostensibly is an anticlosure, is actually a fitting finale, since indeed nothing has changed in the life of the burrow-dweller throughout the story.

Another distinct animalistic feature in the story is the burrower's dual

manner of perceiving the burrow. On one hand, the protagonist regards it as a beloved spouse,[14] and its parts as members of the family:

> There is no way that it would be necessary for me to reflect in order to understand what the burrow means to me, I and the burrow belong together. . . . It is for your sake, you passages and chambers, and you above all, castle court, that I have counted my life as nothing after having been stupid enough for such a long time as to tremble about it and delay my return to you. What do I care about danger now that I am with you? You belong to me, I to you, we are bound together; what can happen to us? (KSS, 175, 177)

The burrow can also be seen as an extension of the self, as from the standpoint of the burrower, there is no separation between these two entities:

> The vulnerability of the burrow has made me vulnerable, the injuries it suffers pain me as if they were my own. This is exactly what I should have foreseen; instead of thinking only about defending myself—and how lightly and fruitlessly did I do even that!—I should have been thinking about defending the burrow. (KSS, 186)

Once again, it seems that there is a marked tendency among Kafka's critics to impose a human model on a nonhuman animal character, criticizing this jealous possessiveness as an obsession blown out of proportion.[15] The function of the burrow as true protection against real dangers is, however, quite different from the function of a human abode. The ability to differentiate between the self and the rest of the world is in fact fundamental to all living beings, because it is necessary for survival, as Daniel Dennett explains in his account of how consciousness arises: "As soon as something gets into the business of self-preservation, boundaries become important, for if you are setting out to preserve yourself, you don't want to squander effort trying to preserve the whole world; you draw the line."[16] According to this principle, if protecting immediate surroundings is essential for survival, there is an evolutionary advantage in identifying the self with that immediate surrounding. When self-preservation depends on preserving a certain environment, the identification of self with the surrounding is thus functional and in some cases even essential. Underground dwellers

are very vulnerable when their burrows and tunnels are unprotected. The protagonist's attitude toward the burrow is therefore completely justifiable in terms of self-preservation.

In his account of the novel, E. M. Forster maintains, as mentioned in the introductory section, that the literary protagonists must be human and cannot be other animals, "for we know too little so far about their psychology."[17] Forster published his comments in 1927, three years after Kafka wrote "The Burrow." It seems that even before the scientific developments envisaged by Forster, Kafka created a character that, although it is not a faithful representation of a nonhuman animal, is certainly not a camouflaged human, or as Forster put it, a four-legged table moving around. Apart from language skills, the burrower has salient nonhuman features, both as a protagonist and as a narrator. By presenting a concept of time and self that radically differs from human time concept, Kafka's tale of the Everybeing challenges the notion of protagonist, as well as the very conception of narrative.

The Burrower as an Aspecies Being

Critical theory has increasingly underscored the tangled manners that humans imagine themselves in through a series of excluded terms and identities, foremost among them is animality; "human being has been expressed in contradistinction to the animal," Horkheimer and Adorno state at the outset of "Man and Beast" in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Similarly, the sole function of the Agambenian "anthropological machine," as presented in the first chapter, is to produce the human through the human/animal opposition.[18] Nonetheless, this contradistinction, this anthropological machine, produces not only the human but also the animal. Deriving from the binary logic of inclusion/exclusion, the very concept of animal is restricted—in most contexts and discourses—to nonhuman animals, as if human beings are not animals. As Derrida famously states in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*: "The animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to the living other."[19]

The conception of humans instituting animals through the power of word goes back, in fact, to the biblical story of creation:

> Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. (Genesis 2:19–20)

Genesis 2 retells the creation story, told in Genesis 1, with several variations; whereas in Genesis 1 God tells the humans to have dominion over other animals, in Genesis 2 human's dominion over nonhuman animals is not expressed by God's words, but by his act; God bestows humans with the right to name all other animals. The human act of naming the animals in Genesis 2 echoes the divine act of creation in Genesis 1. There God creates the world by his words: "And God said: 'Let there be light.' And there was light" (Genesis 1:3). Here, man constructs other animals, created by God, through his own words, as "whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name."

In his recent study of the creaturely, Tobias Menely compares Kafka's reader to Adam, as "like Adam, the reader of Kafka's parables encounters the animals still unnamed, so than when, in the course of the tale, the creatures are finally identified according to the accepted nomenclature, the reader's experience is one of radical defamiliarization."[20] In some cases, however, including this particular case of "The Burrow," the state of the nonhuman animals as unnamed is not merely temporary, inasmuch as the information about the identity of the nonhuman animals is not suspended, but is not revealed—and cannot be constructed—throughout the narrative. For example, in Kafka's short piece "The Animal in the Synagogue" ("Das Tier in der Synagoge"), the nonhuman animal is indefinable and also untouchable, as described at the outset of the story:

> In our synagogue there lives an animal about the size of a marten. One can often get a very good view of it, for it allows people to approach to a distance of about six feet from it. It is pale blue-green in color. Nobody has ever yet touched its fur, and so nothing can be said about that, and one might almost go so far as to assert that the real color of its coat is unknown, perhaps the color one sees is only caused by the dust and mortar with which its fur is matted. (PP, 49)

Another enigmatic creature appears in Kafka's fragment "It Is the Animal with the Big Tail" ("Es ist das Tier mit dem großen Schweif"):

> It is the animal with the big tail, a tail many yards long and like a fox's brush. How I should like to get my hands on this tail sometime, but it is impossible, the animal is constantly moving about, the tail is constantly being flung this way and that. The animal resembles a kangaroo, but not as to the face, which is flat almost like a human face, and small and oval; only its teeth have any power of expression, whether they are concealed or bared. Sometimes I have the feeling that the animal is trying to tame me. What other purpose could it have in withdrawing its tail when I snatch at it, and then again waiting calmly until I am tempted again, and then leaping away once more? (WPC, 327)

The narrator's inability to get a hand on the tail of this animal parallels the inability to define the species of the animal, as well as to describe her. In these narratives, as in "The Burrow," the reader, unlike Adam, fails to name the animals and to subjugate them through categorization. In other words, Kafka deprived his reader of "the right and the authority to give [identity] to the living other," as Derrida puts it.

In Kafka's 1914 story "The Village Schoolmaster" ("Der Dorfschullehrer"), which is also known as "The Giant Mole" ("Der Riesenmaulwurf"), the nonhuman animal is even less approachable and fundamentally indefinable. In this story, the narrator describes his unsuccessful effort to support the failed attempt of a village schoolmaster to validate the existence of a giant mole. This story is typically read as a metatextual parable on the paradox of interpretation. The narrator's attempt is doomed to failure, as by doing so he is merely producing a new level of discursive displacement:

> What Kafka's text demonstrates is the discursive character of "reality," the infinite displacement of empirical "facts" by the discursive energy that engages with these so-called facts. The World of Kafka's fiction is always, it would seem, a world controlled by discourse.[21]

Interestingly, the subject that Kafka chose to illustrate this idea is a nonhuman animal, and more precisely—a ground-dwelling animal. The ultimate unapproachable and unrepresentable is encapsulated in the figure

of a ground-dwelling animal. While, as suggested in the introductory section, through careful observation we can access—at least partly—the experience of nonhuman animals, a ground-dwelling animal is unobservable and therefore inherently unapproachable and unrepresentable.

Given the failure to provide a scientific account of the gigantic ground-dwelling creature in "The Village Schoolmaster," in his next attempt to depict a subterranean being, Kafka allows the ground-dwelling animal to tell her story by means of self-representation. Yet it should be noted that neither option is free of anthropomorphism. In the case of a first-person animal narrative, the protagonist-narrator is inevitably anthropomorphized, since the nonhuman narrator uses human language. If, however, the narrator is human, anthropomorphism is also inescapable, because the human narrator does not have access to the ground-dwelling experience. In this no-win situation, when dealing with a subterranean being, whose reality is essentially inaccessible to humans, anthropomorphism seems to be inevitable, as either the author or the narrator anthropomorphizes them.

It seems that the biological indeterminacy of the burrower can be explained, at least to some extent, by the story's mode of narration. The two major modes of narration are first person and third person, or—in Gérard Genette's terms—homodiegetic and heterodiegetic respectively. Genette also defines the autodiegetic narrative as a particular case of homodiegetic narrative, in which the narrator is the story's protagonist.[22] When nonhuman figures are portrayed by a human narrator, either a homodiegetic or heterodiegetic one, they are typically introduced by their species. For example, the homodiegetic narrator in Kafka's "The Vulture" ("Der Geier") begins his story with "A vulture is hacking at my feet" (CS, 442), and the heterodiegetic narrator in Kafka's "Leopards in the Temple" ("Leoparden in Tempel") commences with "Leopards break into the temple and drink to the dregs what is in the sacrificial pitchers" (PP, 93). If we change the perspective in such stories and make the nonhuman figures their narrators, the species of the nonhuman animals will be omitted. The first sentence of "The Vulture" would then be "I am hacking at a man's feet," and the revised opening of "Leopards in the Temple" would be "We break into the temple and drink to the dregs what is in the sacrificial pitchers."

A human narrator would probably specify the burrower biologically, but as "The Burrow" is an autodiegetic narrative (namely, the burrow-dweller is both the narrator and the protagonist of the story) keeping the biological identity of burrower unspecified is narratologically reasoned.

From the very outset, there is a self-referential use of "I," which does not necessitate a biological determination. Indeed, omitting the species identification in nonhuman autodiegetic narratives does not always ensue in Kafka's nonhuman autodiegetic narratives; in "A Report to an Academy" and "Researches of a Dog," Kafka's earlier nonhuman autodiegetic narratives, the biological identity of the narrator is specified. However, in both cases, the accounts of the narrators largely focus on species issues— the narrators' species identity and their social interactions within and beyond their own species—hence biological identity is central and cannot be omitted. Unlike Kafka's simian and canine narrators, the protagonist of "The Burrow" does not deal with social relations, within or outside the species; the burrower does not have such relations at all. The story actually presents a radical autodiegetic narrative, in which the narrator is not only the main, but also the sole character of the story.

The solitary nature of the burrower is widely regarded by critics as abnormal, and often even in a judgmental manner, as the burrow-dweller has been broadly "blamed" for inappropriate asocial behavior.[23] However, criticizing the protagonist's asocial behavior imposes a human model on a nonhuman figure. Humans are indeed social creatures, and building social connections seems natural and necessary for them, but it is not the case for some other animals. Like many other ground-dwelling beings, who are solitary animals by nature, the burrower here is also a solitary being, living without any social interactions, and the lack of sociability does not indicate any problem with personality or behavior. "The Burrow" is, in fact, a study in solitary existence. The narrator is the only character in the story and does not interact with any other being. The noise the burrower hears could come from someone approaching the burrow, but that being never makes an appearance and the reader never finds out the source of the noise.

This ultimate solitude is also reflected linguistically, by the frequent use of German reflexive verbs throughout the story: *sich rühmen*, *sich stricken*, *sich drehen*, *sich zusammenrollen*, *sich wärmen*, *sich wälzen*, *sich schleppen*, and so on. The burrower is both the subject and the object of these actions, as there is no other being around. This extreme solitude amplifies the protagonist's anxiety and helplessness. Indeed, other characters in Kafka's oeuvre, like Josef K. and Gregor Samsa, also find themselves in situations beyond their control and are beset by anxiety vis-à-vis the unknown, but the burrower is even more powerless. Unlike Josef K. and Gregor, the

burrow-dweller has no acquaintances who, at least to some extent and for a specified period, can assist.

This burrower's radical solitude is translated to a speciesless or aspecies existence. Following the well-established distinction between sex and gender, Carmen Dell'Aversano suggests, as discussed in the first chapter, an analogous difference between "biological species" and "species identity."[24] The Butlerian notion, that gender is not an essence but a performance, which "has no ontological status apart from the various acts that constitute its reality,"[25] might lead to the equivalent notion, that species identity does not exist without a species discourse. In the lack of any species discourse, the burrower is aspecies.

The aspecies burrow-dweller is equivalent to a nameless narrator-protagonist, who is also common among many autodiegetic narratives. However, alongside the narratological justification that persons do not tend to refer to themselves by their name, in many cases the absence of a personal name also serves a thematic purpose, indicating their asocial status. For example, Dostoyevsky's novella *Notes from the Underground* (1864) and Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* (1952) are known for their nameless outcast narrators. Interestingly, these two nameless narrators—like Kafka's aspecies narrator—live below ground, where the social order is neutralized. In the underground of both Dostoyevsky and Ellison, the social identity is suspended, but their unnamed lonely narrators still keep their human identity. In "The Burrow," on the other hand, the underground being includes also suspension of species identity; its unnamed lonely narrator is also an aspecies being. Unlike the underground human narrators, who used to live above ground, the underground existence of the aspecies narrator in "The Burrow" is not only temporary. It is rather a total asocial existence, as Kafka's burrower neither recalls a past life nor foresees any future existence aboveground.

The underground in modern literature is, in fact, an extreme and darker version of the forest, which has a long literary tradition of marking, both physically and symbolically, the edge of the domain of human civilization:

> The forests were *foris*, "outside." In them lived the outcasts, the mad, the lovers, brigands, hermits, saints, lepers, the *maquis*, fugitives, misfits, the persecuted, the wild men. Where else could they go? Outside of the law of human society one was in the forest. But the forest asylum was unspeakable; one could only rise above or sink below the human level.[26]

The Forest of Arden, wherein Shakespeare's pastoral comedy *As You Like It* is set, is prototypical for such a literary woodland, where social dynamics radically changes.

In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1886), the transgression of power relations, which was sparked in a sylvan setting (in this case, the wood "where things have no name"), also involved a fundamental shift in interspecies dynamics:

> Just then a Fawn came wandering by: it looked at Alice with its large gentle eyes, but didn't seem at all frightened. "Here then! Here then!" Alice said, as she held out her hand and tried to stroke it; but it only started back a little, and then stood looking at her again.
>
> "What do you call yourself?" the Fawn said at last. Such a soft sweet voice it had!
>
> "I wish I knew!" thought poor Alice. She answered, rather sadly, "Nothing, just now."
>
> "Think again," it said: "that won't do."
>
> Alice thought, but nothing came of it. "Please, would you tell me what YOU call yourself?" she said timidly. "I think that might help a little."
>
> "I'll tell you if you'll move a little further on," the Fawn said. "I can't remember here."
>
> So they walked on together through the wood, Alice with her arms clasped lovingly round the soft neck of the Fawn, till they came out into another open field, and here the Fawn gave a sudden bound into the air, and shook itself free from Alice's arms. "I'm a Fawn!" it cried out in a voice of delight, "and, dear me! you're a human child!" A sudden look of alarm came into its beautiful brown eyes, and in another moment it had darted away at full speed.[27]

When entering this magical woods, the characters lose their personal names, but also their species identity, allowing interspecies interactions that would not occur in the ordinary world of social order and hierarchies. As Carmen Dell'Aversano notes:

> Carroll's fleeting but haunting portrayal of life and love in the "wood where things have no name" leads us to investigate what things are like in the rest of the world, where things do have names.

> More specifically, it leads us to an analysis of the words "human" and "animal," of the way they work and of the harm they do.[28]

Likewise, Kafka's underground world suspends not only the social identities within humanity but also the species identity. While the forest offers a radical shift in social dynamics, the underground offers an asocial, or even antisocial, zone, with nil social dynamics. As the term "human" gains sense only through its opposition, the animal, so do other species terms. This notion also explains why the burrower cannot self-define species-wise. The analogy between the emblematic forest and the underground calls for paraphrasing the famous philosophical thought experiment, asking, "If someone is in a burrow and no one is around to observe them, do they have a species?"

Humanimal Indeterminability

The Burrower as a Humanimal Hybrid

Apart from the fact that the species of the protagonist in "The Burrow" cannot be defined, the burrower cannot even be generically labeled as a nonhuman animal, as it is even unclear if we are dealing here with a nonhuman animal. Preoccupied with the authentic concerns of subterranean burrowing animals (such as digging a warren, storing food, hunting, hauling prey to the burrow, sleeping, and warding off invaders) the burrower, more than any other nonhuman figure in Kafka's fiction, is characterized animalistically. Correspondingly, the explorations of the burrower are based mostly on the senses of hearing, smell, and touch, and not on sight. The burrow-dweller, however, also has distinctive human traits, foremost among them human cognitive abilities.

As discussed in the introductory section, it is unclear if anthropomorphism can be entirely circumvented in the literary representation of nonhuman animals.

Nonetheless, when the nonhuman animal figure is also the narrator of the story, the animal is inevitably anthropomorphized, as the act of narration requires, of course, the use of human language. While autodiegetic narratives are not common in Kafka's poetics (i.e., in most of Kafka's narratives the narrators are not the protagonists), autodiegetic narratives are prevalent among Kafka's animal stories, such as "Report to an Academy,"

"Researches of a Dog," and "The Burrow." It is then reasonable to assume, that Kafka's choice of autodiegetic narration for his animal stories is aimed at creating a humanimal effect, achieved by eliminating the mediating character of a human narrator.

As several commentators have shown, the burrow is a mathematical design, for it requires theoretical and methodological calculations that exercise the intellect, not only in terms of architecture, but also regarding logistics.[29] Furthermore, in one case, the burrower makes a direct reference to the act of writing:

> What is it, then? A slight hissing, audible only after long pauses, a nothing, though I don't mean to say that you could get used to it, no, you could not get used to it, but you could notice it for a while without for the present taking any steps against it, e.g., every few hours listen for it occasionally and patiently register the results. (KSS, 181–82)

The act of "patiently register[ing] the results" (*das Ergebnis geduldig registrieren*, E, 494) is, of course, a distinctly human activity with no parallel in other species.

Moreover, the burrower also seems to have hands, saying, "This shortcoming was created by my own hands" (KSS, 168).[30] Referring to the forelegs of the burrower with the word "hands" (*Hände*), a human physical attribute, instead of paws (*Pfoten*), as expected when dealing with a mole-like animal, is uncommon, and hence draws the reader's attention. In "Jackals and Arabs," as shown in the third chapter, the animality of the jackals is crucially embodied through their lack of hands, whereas humans are described as the animals with hands (though, as underscored, in a different way than Heidegger conceptualizes it). Kafka's counter-human-normative reference in "The Burrow," ascribing hands to the burrower, has been described by a few commentators as a "slip of the pen"—that is, not intentional.[31] When Kafka describes the Statue of Liberty at the opening of his novel *America*, Lady Liberty is holding a sword, not a torch, in her hand (A, 3). This is of course neither a mistake nor a slip of the pen, but an intentional deviation from the convention of realism in order to produce a certain rhetorical effect. By the same token, such deviation in "The Burrow," manifested in ascribing hands to the burrower, should also not

be read as a slip of the pen, but rather as a deliberate literary choice, aiming at undercutting the all-embracing idea that humans are fundamentally different from other animals in more than one way.

One way to reason the narrator's hands and other human features is seeing the burrower as a humaninal hybrid, as also suggested by Hermann Weigand:

> What kind of creature is the builder of this borrow? Generically speaking, he is a hybrid of man and animal, a large, furry, tailless carnivore with a powerful dome of a forehead that constitutes his chief tool. His wants and needs are strictly those of an animal. However, his powers of abstract reasoning and introspection and the sensitive differentiation of his emotional life are on a high human level.[32]

The burrower is portrayed as an interspecies being, a humanimal hybrid, by virtue of intertwining of human and nonhuman features (both physical and mental). Humanimal hybridity has a long history in Western literature, dating back to various mythological beings, such as centaurs, Minotaurs, and sirens. Sirens, the woman-bird hybrid in Greek mythology, are also found in Kafka's "The Silence of the Sirens" ("Das Schweigen der Sirenen"), wherein they are described as follows: "They, more beautiful than ever, stretched and twisted their limbs, let their ghastly hair blow freely in the wind, spread their claws on the rocks" (KSS, 128). Another winged human being appears in Kafka's second *Octavo Notebook*:

> An old man came towards us out of a long empty passage. A strange old man—he had wings. Wide, outspread wings, the tips taller than himself. "He has wings," I called out to my brothers-in-arms, and those of us in front fell back somewhat, as far as we could for those behind, who were pushing on. "You are amazed," the old man said. "We all have wings, but they have not been of any avail to us, and if we could tear them off, we would do so." (BON, 12)

Leni, Herr Huld's nurse in *The Trial*, is another human figure, who has a distinctly animalistic feature; she has a webbed hand, which Josef K. finds very attractive:

> "I've got a little defect like that. Look." She held the middle and ring fingers of her right hand apart; the skin between them went up almost to the top joint of her little fingers. "What a trick of nature," said K., adding, after he had examined the whole of her hand, "What a pretty claw!" It was with a kind of pride that Leni watched as K., in wonderment, kept pulling her two fingers apart and putting them together again, until finally he gave them a brief kiss and let go. (T, 78)

And, of course, Kafka's transformed figures—Gregor Samsa in "The Metamorphosis" and Red Peter in "A Report to an Academy" —are humanimal beings, as elaborated in the first two chapters. Another humanimal figure is Dr. Bucephalus, the protagonist of Kafka's short tale "The New Lawyer" ("Der neue Advokat"), who previously was the war horse of Alexander of Macedonia (KSS, 59–60). The narrator in "The Wish to Be a Red Indian" ("Wunsch, Indianer zu warden") merges with the horse he is riding (CS, 390), becoming a horse-man.[33] The protagonist of "The Burrow" should thus be read in the light of all these aforementioned humanimal hybrids in Kafka's fiction. Not only is the burrower unaligned with any specific species, but this fictitious humanimal can also be viewed as a hermeneutical category, ultimately undermining and subverting the discursive human/animal binary.

The Burrower as a Performative Humanimal

The reading of the burrower as a humanimal hybrid, as shown above, is based on both human and nonhuman features that Kafka ascribes to the protagonist of "The Burrow," like other humanimal hybrids in his writing. Nonetheless, unlike Kafka's other humanimal hybrids, the burrower is not explicitly described as such, and the humanimal thesis is merely a hypothesis, suggested by the reader as an explanation for the inconsistency in the depiction of the burrower. According to an alternative explanation, the humanimal transgression in "The Burrow" does not transpire ontologically, but rather linguistically—that is, through the subversive use of language. As examined at more length in the third chapter, Kafka often uses animalistic terminology to describe humans and vice versa, drawing attention to the anthropocentric premise of ordinary language. Kafka's counterconven-

tional choice to classify the burrower's forelegs as "hands" can be taken as equivalent to describing the killing of nonhuman animal as murder in "A Crossbreed" and human eating activity as *fressen* in "Jackals and Arabs." In this context, the word "hands," instead of "paws," does not refer to human organs, but stands for Kafka's deliberate disruption of language conventions (and not biological categories), seeking to rethink human and other animals in a nonbinary manner.

The burrow-dweller might then be an anthropomorphized nonhuman, analogous to the canine protagonist of "Researches of a Dog," but might also be an animalized human. Like humanized animals, animalized humans (namely, human figures whose behaviors include some distinguished animalistic features) are also omnipresent in Kafka's fiction. Together, the humanization of nonhuman animals and the animalization of humans bidirectionally disrupt the human-animal boundary.

Leni's amphibian trait in *The Trial* is intensified by her animalistic behavior, as she soon bites Josef K.'s hair. As discussed in the third chapter, the nomads in "A Page from an Old Document" are also depicted animalistically:

> True to their nature they camp under the open sky, for they detest houses, . . . You cannot talk to the nomads. They do not know our language; indeed, they hardly have one of their own. They communicate with each other like jackdaws. Again and again we hear this screech of jackdaws. They are indifferent to our way of life, our institutions, and find them incomprehensible. As a result they are also ill-disposed to any sort of sign language. You can dislocate your jaw and twist your hands out of joint, but they have not understood you, and they will never understand you. They often grimace: then their eyes roll up in their heads and foam flows out of their mouths, but these are not meant either to convey anything or to frighten people; they do it because that is how they are. What they need, they take. You cannot say that they use force. When they make a grab at something, you step aside and let them have it. (KSS, 66–67)

Not having language, the nomads here lack the one critical feature, which makes one human, traced as far back as the ancient Greek determination of *zoon echon logon*. If not human (not even animalistic humans), what

are they? Neither animals nor humans, the nomads are liminal beings, overturning the human/animal binary, upon which Western culture rests.

In Kafka's short story "A Country Doctor" ("Ein Landarzt") the groom also behaves in a beastly manner, "crawling out on his all fours," and then forcefully biting the poor maid, leaving red marks imprinted on her cheek (KSS, 61). Likewise, in "Building the Great Wall of China" ("Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer") the people of the northern lands, from whom the wall is meant to protect, are rendered animalistically: "In artists' paintings, faithful to the truth, we see these faces of damnation, the gaping maws, the jaws equipped with long, pointed teeth, the scrunched-up eyes that seen to squint at the victim whom their maws will crush and rend" (KSS, 118). Among other human characters who are distinctly animalized are the sailors in "A Report to Academy," as well as the condemned man in "The Penal Colony" and the attorney in *The Trial*, as demonstrated in the second and third chapters respectively.

The reader of "The Burrow" cannot be sure what kind of animal the burrow-dweller is, or if this creature is human, nonhuman, or a humanimal hybrid. It is important to note that some of this ambiguity in the text is inevitably lost in translation. The German title of this story, "Der Bau," is equivocal, an ambiguity that does not exist in the English title "The Burrow." Whereas the word *Bau* can indeed refer to a hole or tunnel dug in the ground by a small animal for dwelling, and is indeed equivalent to the word "burrow," it also has a broader meaning of "construction" or "building." Discussing this translation issue, Stanley Corngold observes:

> Once we have committed ourselves to this "burrow," however, we have sacrificed an element of tension that is a constitutive part of the story: the doubleness of a structure that is built horizontally underground but is represented in the mind of the badger-narrator in "higher" terms, terms more suitable to a structure built vertically above ground.[34]

Not only is the ambiguity of the *Bau* lost in translation, but also the obscurity of the protagonist, as the word "burrow" indicates that its builder is a nonhuman animal, an indication that does not exist in the original German text. As most stories are written from a human perspective and their characters are human, the reader tends to assume that the narrator/protagonist is human, even if this is not mentioned explicitly, as long as

there is no reason to assume otherwise. Accepting the protagonist as human, then, is the cultural default position. Due to this default assumption, the reader first presumes that the burrower is human; only later on, with accumulating references indicating that the narrator is a nonhuman animal (or rather a humanimal hybrid), does the human context change into a nonhuman one.

This change unfolds gradually, throughout the process of reading. The further the reader progresses into the text, the more bizarre the framework becomes, as it turns out the protagonist resides in a subterranean structure, is fearful of predators, and does a lot of sniffing. About five pages into the "The Burrow," the narrator mentions that "on awakening [I] find still hanging from my teeth a rat, perhaps, as incontrovertible proof of night work that already seems almost dreamlike" (KSS, 166). Later, the narrator says: "Sometimes it seems to me as if my coat were growing thin" (KSS, 168). Whereas the word "coat" in English can refer to both nonhuman natural hair and an item of clothing, in the original German text Kafka uses the word *Fell*,[35] which typically refers to an animal pelt or to fur. This word further reinforces (perhaps even confirming) the hypothesis that we are dealing with a nonhuman animal, and not with a human protagonist.

The inability to determine conclusively—at least at the outset—whether the protagonist is human or nonhuman derives from the fact that each of the two hypotheses is an exception to the conventional realistic model. If we are dealing with a human figure, then it is a very animalistic one who has animal characteristics and behavior, such as dwelling under the earth, relying chiefly on its sense of smell, feeding on rats, and referring to its coat as a pelt. Conversely, the nonhuman animal hypothesis is equally outside the conventional scheme of realism, for the protagonist, as mentioned before, possesses distinct human attributes: first and foremost, language skills, which is a corollary of the animal's function as both protagonist and narrator.

Both options—the humanized animal and the animalized human—blur the human-animal divide, creating "performative humanimality." Unlike "ontological humanimality," which derives from the duality of animal and human elements in the diegetic world, "performative humanimality" derives from the inability of the reader to decide whether the protagonist is a human being or another animal. During that period of indecision, until the human framework is exchanged for the nonhuman one, the reader simultaneously envisions two contradictory views, inducing an effect of hy-

bridity: the figure is part animal, part human. Walter Benjamin famously rendered this idea:

> It is possible to read Kafka's animal stories for quite a while without realizing that they are not about human beings at all. When one encounters the name of the creature—monkey, dog, mole—one looks up in fright and realizes that one is already far away from the continent of man.[36]

Just as the narrator of "The Burrow" feels their way through the dark, listens attentively, and gleans crumbs of information about a possible invader, the reader also fumbles in the dark through the story, picking up morsels of hints strewn throughout the text, trying to figure out who the narrator is and what the burrower is all about. But just as the identity of the invader remains unknown to the protagonist, so the protagonist's identity remains unknown to the reader. The failure of the narrator in "The Village Schoolmaster" to unveil the mole enigma is analogical to the inability of the reader in "The Burrow" to elucidate the conundrum of the burrower.

The attempt to trace the identity of the burrow-dweller is a hopeless pursuit in both texts. In the opening of "The Village Schoolmaster" the narrator discusses the obscurity of the giant mole, "which has remained quite inexplicable" (CS, 168). The burrower also remains mostly inexplicable, either a humanized animal, an animalized human, or a humanimal hybrid. In the "The Burrow" Kafka does not aim at consolidating or stabilizing any species identity. Through his refusal to portray species identity as a fixed, coherent, and natural category, Kafka displaces the normative dualism of human/animal. The "species-bender" burrower presents a "species rainbow," a broad spectrum of possible species manifestations and roles.

CHAPTER 6

Josefine the Singer, or Performing Humanimality

"Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" ("Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse") is Kafka's last story, which he wrote in 1924, just a few months before his death. The story centers on the relationship between the singer Josefine and the community where she lives, a relationship fraught with admiration and contempt, anxiety and abandonment. The fact that Kafka, on his deathbed, wrote a story about an artist who disappears from the public arena corroborates the autobiographical interpretations of Josefine as a stand-in for Kafka himself.[1] Kafka published this story in a collection entitled *The Hunger Artist* (*Ein Hungerkünstler*) with three other stories, two of which deal with art: "The Hunger Artist" and "First Sorrow" ("Erstes Leid"). This led to reading "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" allegorically, as a story about art,[2] or—more specifically—about Jewish art.[3] In addition, it has been widely held that Kafka here subversively uses antisemitic stereotypes, as the mouse people represent the Jewish people.[4] In his biography of Kafka, Max Brod regards the identification of the mice with the Jews as a foregone conclusion, arguing "to what particular people this picture of the baited, helpless host of mice most nearly refers need not be expressly stated."[5]

Brod's statement can be broken down into four different arguments: (1) the literal level of the story deals with mice, (2) the function of these mice is allegorical; they stand for something else, (3) these mice stand for the Jewish people, and (4) arguments 1–3 do not need to be expressly stated, as they are obvious. The interpretative dispute, if at all, is over Brod's third

argument.[6] However, I would like to question Brod's very first point—which is typically taken for granted—that the literal level of the story deals with mice. The examination of the nature of the story's characters on the literal level is preceded by the discussion of mice in Kafka's writings.

Kafka's Mice between Allegorical and Mimetic Poles

Mice appear in two short texts by Kafka that were not published in his lifetime. One was written in 1920 and published posthumously by Max Brod, who gave it the title "A Little Fable" ("Kleine Fabel"). The second text was probably written in 1918 and is included in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* (*Die Acht Oktavhefte*).

Kafka's Allegorical Mouse

> "Alas," said the mouse, "the whole world is growing smaller every day. At the beginning it was so big that I was afraid, I kept running and running, and I was glad when I saw walls far away to the right and left, but these long walls have narrowed so quickly that I am in the last chamber already, and there in the corner stands the trap that I must run into." "You only need to change your direction," said the cat, and ate it up. (CS, 445)

It is important to note that the title for this piece, "A Little Fable," allegedly indicating the genre it belongs to, was given by Max Brod, and not by Kafka, hence it does not indicate that Kafka indeed considered it a fable. Roy Pascal argues that Brod's title is "appropriate enough," as speaking animals, as appear in this text, invoke the association of fables, linking it directly to the fable tradition and leading the reader to interpret the text allegorically. The mouse and the cat symbolize human qualities, stand for weakness and power, the hunted and the hunter, victim and victimizer, and so on. Nonetheless, Pascal also points out that the story does not yield a moral, as unlike traditional fables that purport to teach us how to behave, Kafka's fable offers no illumination; it only confounds us more.[7]

Interestingly, this short piece by Kafka not only deliberately mimics the style of Aesop's animal fables, but is, in fact, remarkably similar to a particular Aesopian tale, entitled "The Stag at the Spring and the Lion":

> A stag, oppressed by thirst, came to a spring to drink. After having a drink, he saw the shadowy figure of himself in the water. He much admired his fine antlers, their grandeur and extent. But he was discontented with his legs, which he thought looked thin and feeble. He remained there deep in reverie when suddenly a lion sprang out at him and chased him. The stag fled rapidly and ran a great distance, for the stag's advantage is his legs, whereas a lion's is his heart. As long as they were in open ground, the stag easily outdistanced the lion. But they entered a wooded area and the stag's antlers became entangled in the branches, bringing him to a halt so that he was caught by the lion. As he was on the point of death, the stag said: "How unfortunate I am! My feet, which I had denigrated, could have saved me, whereas my antlers, on which I prided myself, have caused my death!"
>
> *And thus, in dangerous situations it is often the friends who we suspect who save us, while those on whom we rely betray us.*[8]

The two texts certainly share a similar structure; at the center of both is a nonhuman animal fleeing from the danger of open spaces into a worse peril in a closed area; out of the frying pan into the fire. But whereas the Aesopian text implies that the stag has made a tactical error that could be avoided, Kafka's version suggests an inevitable, existential predicament.

Scholars differ on the rhetorical effect of the fable. It is unanimously agreed that fables teach us something, but opinions are divided regarding the nature of their lesson.[9] Many define fable as a didactic story, designed to instruct the reader how to behave and how to avoid mistakes and pitfalls,[10] while others are less rigorous, suggesting it embodies an ethical truth, which is open to interpretations and not necessarily limited to a concrete didactic moral.[11] As presented in the introductory section, Kafka's work, which is never didactic, is regarded as an "open parable" or "sliding paradox." Nevertheless, although "A Little Fable" does not have an explicit moral, the text does seem to convey a certain message or an ethical truth. Depicting a tiny, feeble, powerless creature trapped in a hopeless situation—whichever route is chosen, she is bound to get hurt—this text reflects an ethical truth, a very Kafkaesque *Weltanschauung*. In a letter to Milena on July 18, 1920, Kafka makes similar use of a mouse, describing himself as one: "I really am just the mouse in the 'big house' which is allowed to run freely across the carpet once a year" (LM, 92). In both "A

Little Fable" and the letter to Milena mice stand for the ultimate weak and vulnerable creature.

The description of the mouse in "A Little Fable" as a weak, helpless, constantly threatened creature is, at least in part, a realistic depiction that fits mice in general. In this respect, the text does not deviate from the fable norm. The stereotypical role of mice in fables, then, is rooted in some basic characteristics of mice in the real world—being small, weak animals, always fearing for their lives. Thus, for example, in Aesop's "The Lion and the Mouse Who Returned a Kindness," a lion captures a mouse, who pleads to be released, and later gnaws the rope snare where the lion is caught. Fables use the animals' typical characteristics, not in reference to real mice, but to highlight the weakness of humans. The small, frail creature in the fable symbolizes the weaker members in human society, as the moral tagged to the fable makes clear: "Through the changes of fortune, the strong can come to depend on the weak."[12]

Characterization of nonhuman animals in fables does not necessarily conflict with their real nature. Nonhuman animals in fables, as well as in other allegorical texts, are considerably anthropomorphized, yet minimal adherence to realistic models is still required; their size, anatomy, and function in the ecological system are maintained, even in fables. Thus, the lion in fables is always a predator, the hare is a fast runner, the turtle is slow, the stork has a long beak, and so on. In "A Little Fable," Kafka uses the conventions of fables, in which the anthropomorphized speaking animals still possess some of the authentic characteristics of their species.

Moreover, "A Little Fable" conforms with the definition of fable—"a brief tale that conveys a moral lesson, usually by giving human speech and manners to animals and inanimate things"[13]—not only in content (bestowing human speech and manners on nonhuman animals) and effect (conveying a kind of moral lesson), but also in extent (a brief tale). The terseness and brevity of Kafka's "A Little Fable" does not evoke much empathy for the mouse; the laconic description of the mouse's death, for example, is very concise: "said the cat and devoured it." Nor is the mouse characterized as an individual or as representative of a distinct group. The description does not encourage the reader to see the mouse as significant, but only as a means of conveying a message. All this facilitates the conversion into a human object on the correlative level. Being "a brief tale that conveys a moral lesson, usually by according human speech and manners to animals and inanimate things," it seems that, unlike Kafka's other tales

of talking animals, "A Little Fable"—regardless of its title—is a fable par excellence.

Kafka's Mimetic Mouse

> When the little mouse, which was loved as none other was in the mouse-world, got into a trap one night and with a shrill scream forfeited its life for the sight of the bacon, all the mice in the district, in their holes, were overcome by trembling and shaking; with eyes blinking uncontrollably they gazed at each other one by one, while their tails scraped the ground busily and senselessly. Then they came out, hesitantly, pushing one another, all drawn towards the scene of death. There it lay, the dear little mouse, its neck caught in the deadly iron, the little pink legs drawn up, and now stiff the feeble body that would so well have deserved a scrap of bacon. The parents stood beside it and eyed their child's remains. (BON, 69–70)

This untitled text describes a realistic event: a mouse caught in a mouse-trap while other mice stand around looking at the corpse. Unlike most of the nonhuman animals in Kafka's stories, this mouse does not possess human characteristics. And yet he evokes empathy, unlike Kafka's other non-anthropomorphized animals, such as the protagonists of "The Tiger" ("Der Tiger"), "The Vulture," "Leopards in the Temple," and "A Cross-breed." Compared to the matter-of-fact report of the demise of the mouse in "A Little Fable," the mouse here dies with great agony and drama. This is an unusual passage in Kafka's oeuvre—one of the few cases of animal representation that is both realistic and empathetic.

An empathetic, yet realistic, representation of mice is rare not only in Kafka's work, but in literature overall. Fictional mice seem to be, for the most part, anthropomorphized and allegorized. Thus, the most famous mouse in Western culture, Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse, walks on his hind legs, wears clothes, speaks human language, and even owns a dog. Unlike pets, with whom humans are familiar, but also unlike wildlife animals, who intrigue us and evoke reverence, mice are considered vermin. In fact, Kafka himself had a musophobia, as he described in a letter to Felix Weltsch in November 1917: "My health is quite good, assuming that mouse phobia does not carry me off before tuberculosis does" (LFFE, 169). In December 1917 he similarly wrote to Max Brod:

> My reaction towards the mice is one of sheer terror. To analyze its source would be the task of the psychoanalyst, which I am not. Certainly, this fear, like an insect phobia, is connected with the unexpected, uninvited, inescapable, more or less silent, persistent, secret aims of these creatures, with the sense that they have riddled the surrounding walls through and through with their tunnels and are lurking within, that the night is theirs, that because of their nocturnal existence and their tininess they are so remote from us and thus outside our power. (LFFE, 174)

In the wide spectrum between texts representing nonhuman animals realistically and texts in which they serve as a mere metaphor for human content, Kafka's untitled mouse tale and "A Little Fable" are at opposite poles. Although the content of "A Little Fable" is reminiscent of the text about the mouse in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*—in both cases the mouse is a feeble creature, who gets killed—the narrative in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* refers to the subjectivity of mice and fosters empathy for them, while "A Little Fable" is allegorical, reducing mice and their experience to intrahuman content. It is against the background of these two polarized representations of mice, which span the range between the mimetic and the allegorical, that I propose to examine "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People."

The Mouse People between Mice and People

Various studies have described "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" as a fable,[14] although this story certainly does not match the common definition of a fable, as it is neither a brief tale nor ended with a moral. In fact, this text is substantially different not only from classical fables, such as Aesop's, but also from Kafka's own fable, "A Little Fable." Unlike the laconic "A Little Fable," which presents a distinct, easily decipherable theme, "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" cannot be reduced to one theme. Furthermore, the relatively large scope of the text—albeit marked by paucity of detail—is a result of the attempt to create a complex world, with a purpose and focus of its own, which is not to be found in fables. On the other hand, this is certainly not a story about real mice—like the one in Kafka's *Octavo Notebooks*—since the mice (or putative mice) here are utterly anthropomorphized; their description is undoubtedly not of real

mice. Although it has been widely taken for granted, I examine the story closely, asking whether the figures in "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People," on the very literal level, are indeed mice.

Masking Species Identity

As some interpreters have recognized, there is no direct statement in the story to clearly indicate that the characters are, in fact, mice.[15] This is in contrast to the specific indication of the characters' biological species in "Report to an Academy," "Jackals and Arabs," "Researches of a Dog," and "A Crossbreed," as well as many other shorter works, such as "A Little Fable," "The Vulture," "The Tiger," and "Leopards in the Temple." Indeed, the biological species of the nonhuman animal protagonists are not always mentioned in Kafka's oeuvre; in "The Metamorphosis," as I noted in the first chapter, there is no specific biological reference to describe Gregor Samsa's incarnation, only the generic definition of "vermin" (*Ungeziefer*). Similarly, the species of nonhuman animal at the center of "In Our Synagogue" is also unspecified, but—as discussed in the fifth chapter—the creature is "about the size of a marten" (PP, 49). In both cases it is expressly indicated that the figures are not human. "The Burrow" casts doubt on whether or not the protagonist is a human, as shown in the previous chapter, but the ambiguity exists only in the first part of the story. The reader, without being explicitly told, soon figures out that the burrower is indeed a nonhuman creature, as the cumulative details clear the fog of this uncertainty.

"Josefine, the Singer," on the other hand, contains indications that the creatures might be mice, yet they are all inconclusive. In fact, apart from the title, the word "mouse" appears only once, and it is used metaphorically. It appears in conjunction with describing the silence of her audience: "But her audience does not squeak, we are as quiet as mice" (KSS, 96). The mice in "quiet as mice," or *mäuschenstill* (E, 521) which Kafka uses in the original German, function only as a figure of speech, without being present, just as saying "dog tired" does not involve any concrete dog. The reference to mice here, then, is neutral—it does not support nor does it undermine the hypothesis that the protagonists of the story are mice.

Besides this one figurative reference, the only place mice appear is, as aforesaid, in the title "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People," where it is

qualified by "or." The word "or" that separates the two parts, "Josefine, the Singer" and "the Mouse People," can be understood as inclusive, suggesting that the two parts are alternative depictions of the story, but also as an exclusive "or," suggesting that only one of the two alternatives is relevant, as if the title ended with a question mark. It is important to recognize that unlike Kafka's stories that were published posthumously, this title was given by Kafka himself, for the story was published during his lifetime. However, interestingly, Kafka added the second part of the title, "or the Mouse People," only when preparing the story for publication in his story collection.[16] Max Brod reports finding a note in which Kafka states that "sub-titles like this are not very pretty, it is true, but in this case, it has perhaps a special meaning. It has a kind of balance."[17]

The significance of this unusual title has been widely contemplated. Is there negative tension in the phrase (namely, an exclusive "or"), as Deborah Harter maintains, or does it suggest not contrast but rather coexistence (in other words, an inclusive "or"), as Heinz Politzer claims? Clayton Koelb argues that the nature of the "or" is indeterminable, and Jay Geller stresses that the force of the title is directed at maintaining both form and content as undecidable.[18] In any event, it would seem that the use of "or" lessens the concrete reference of the phrase "mouse people," as it is only one option, and not even the first (the story is not called "The Mouse People or Josefine, the Singer"). Moreover, a title is fundamentally extraneous to the story and can also be perceived as a metaphor, as in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, a novella that does not portray mice.

It seems that the only evident nonhuman element in "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" is the fur (*Pelz*) that the characters have: "many who are present do not bother to look up, instead of pressing their faces into the fur of their neighbors" (KSS, 100). Nevertheless, the meaning of the word "fur" here is ambiguous. It can be used literally, referring to the natural body hair coverage of various mammals, but it can also serve as a synecdoche for a coat, or other pieces of clothing, made of the natural skin and body hair of dead mammals. The reference to the neighbors' fur may indicate that these neighbors are nonhuman, as they have natural fur, but it may also refer to a fur coat that these neighbors wear, and in this case it means that they are human.

Kafka often uses the word "fur" as a synecdoche for a fur coat. This is a common linguistic usage, in both German and English, as in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's famous 1870 novella *Venus in Furs* (*Venus im Pelz*), but it

is often lost in Kafka's translations to English. For example, at the beginning of "A Country Doctor," the narrator describes himself as bundled up in fur, "in den Pelz gepackt" (E, 253). Likewise, in the story "The Married Couple" ("Das Ehepaar") we are told that a man was standing in his fur: "Der alte N. . . . stand noch, so wie er eben gekommen war, in seinem Pelz da" (E, 452). And in "A Fratricide" a woman in an open fur collapses on top of her dead husband, and the fur spreads over the two of them: "Der Pelz öffnet sich, sie stürzt über Wese" (E, 263).[19] In other words, the use of "fur" in itself, as well as the context in which it appears in the story, cannot determine whether the figures who wear fur are their original owners.

The descriptions of the community are equally ambiguous. The word *Volk*, which appears in the original German title and throughout the story, appears in the English translation as "people." Yet, the word *Volk*, unlike the word "people," may actually refer to various nonhuman species, whose social structures is reminiscent of human societies, such as ants (*Ameisenvolk*), termites (*Termitenvolk*), and bees (*Bienenvolk*). However, the term *Mäusevolk* is not used in German; when Kafka refers to the community of mice in his *Octavo Notebooks*, he uses the phrase "mouse-world" (*Mäusewelt*), and not "mouse-folk" (*Mäusevolk*).

While referring to the community in the story as "people" is common in the English translations, Kafka circumvents using exclusively human terms (*Menschen* or *Leute*) and typically uses the ambiguous word *Volk*. In few cases throughout "Josefine, the Singer" Kafka uses other polysemous terms to refer to the community, such as *Geschlecht* (E, 518), translated as gender, race, or lineage, and *Stamm* (E, 528), a word meaning tribe that can also be used in a zoological context, referring to phylum. In fact, the word *Leute* (people) appears only once throughout the story, as part of the idiomatic construct *gewöhnliche Leute* (E, 531), which means common or ordinary people: "But it is a far cry from this to Josefine's claim that she gives us new strength, etc., etc. Ordinary people think so, at least, not Josefine's flatterers" (E, 103). The usage of the word *Leute* within this idiomatic construct and particular context, wherein the term does not actually refer to the community but is used to stand in opposition to Josefine, allows Kafka to retain the biological ambiguity.

Additionally, we are told that when Josefine faces a small audience, "she grows angry, then she stamps her feet, curses in the most unmaidenly manner; indeed, she even bites" (KSS, 98). Describing Josefine's behavior as unmaidenly (*unmädchenhaft*) bolsters the hypothesis that she is a human

being, since one does not expect a mouse to behave maidenly. However, the word "unmaidenly" can be construed as a reference to Josefine's gender, and not to her biological affiliation. In other words, Josefine's behavior is unbecoming for a female. Following the description of her behavior as unmaidenly, we are told that she even bites, which is typical of a nonhuman, but on the other hand, her biting is described as inappropriate, so it does not clearly indicate whether Josefine is human or nonhuman. As presented in the previous chapter, biting human beings appear in Kafka's novel *The Trial* as well as in his short story "A Country Doctor."

In another instance the narrator indicates that "if one individual stood in the place of the people here, you could imagine that all this time he had given in to Josefine with a continually burning desire to stop once and for all being so indulgent" (KSS, 105). In the original German, this individual is defined as a man (*Mann*).[20] Again, the use of "man" and "human" seems to reinforce the hypothesis that this is a story about a human community, not a mouse community, even concerning the literal level of the story. And yet it should be noted that the sentence does not refer to any concrete person—the grammatical mode of the phrase is an unreal condition (if one individual stood . . .), which is merely hypothetical, and the use of the conjunctive weakens the effect of the statement.

The narrator also characterizes the effort made by this individual as "superhuman" (*übermenschlich*). Yet this equivocal description still leaves the reader guessing. In "Researches of a Dog," as discussed in the fourth chapter, human terms and expressions are converted to nonhuman terms and images, due to the canine perspective of the narrator. For example, the expression *ein Mensch unter Menschen*—"a man among men"—becomes "ein Hund unter Hunden"—"a dog among dogs." In contrast, as shown above, it might be the case that in "Josefine, the Singer," the narrator discussing nonhuman animals (mice, in this case) leaves human expressions as they are, without converting them into parallel animal terms.

In addition to descriptions of Josefine's community and audience, various references to her body, which Jay Geller rightly characterizes as "anthropomorphic anomalies,"[21] also raise questions regarding her biological nature. Human body parts, which mice do not have —such as arms (*Armen*), a neck (*Hals*), and lips (*Lippen*) —are ascribed to Josefine. Moreover, her arms are described as "not extended as usual, but hanging lifelessly at the sides" (KSS, 107). Thus, even if we consider arms, a neck, and lips as the body parts of a mouse, situated roughly where they are in the human

body, the description of these arms hanging lifelessly prevent us from regarding the arms as forelegs, as it indicates standing on two legs.

Elias Canetti quotes a letter from Kafka to Felice where he uses the phrase "the terror of standing upright."[22] For Kafka, as for the characters in Orwell's *Animal Farm*, standing upright signals the power of humans over other animals. In Kafka's poetics, the identification of human beings with standing upright and of other animals on all fours is more essential than any other trait, including the ability/inability to speak. In view of this, the description of Josefine as standing upright reinforces the hypothesis the Josefine is wholly human—not a humanized mouse, but simply a human being.

The voice that the mice in the story produce is described as *pfeifen*, which means "piping" or "whistling" and not *piepsen* (squeaking), as the voice of mice is commonly portrayed. Yet piping is not singing or chanting either—it is not an applicable term for human singing. Like other terms in the story, the term *pfeifen* maintains the ambiguity about the identity of Josefine and the rest of the characters in the story. Unlike Kafka's other animal stories, where there is a certain confusion of human and animal characteristics (such as using the word "hands" to describe the paws of the animal in "The Burrow"), in "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" the human content is not the exception that proves the rule, but the rule itself. Apart from the fur, which could also be a reference to a fur coat, the characters are not endowed with a mousy anatomy, rather with a human one. And yet none of these indications is specific and convincing enough to entirely cancel out the framework of the original reading (namely, the mice story), which has been formed at the outset of the reading, based on the title, as well as preliminary acquaintance with Kafka's writings, where nonhuman animals abound.

The fact that the figures in "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" are not endowed with even basic characteristics of real mice, seems to mark this story as allegory. But although nonhuman animals in fables and allegories are significantly anthropomorphized, there must be at least some correlation between the animals and their literary representation. As shown earlier in the discussion of "A Little Fable," the prevailing convention in allegorical animal stories, including animal fables, is that although the nonhuman animals are anthropomorphized (in terms of their cognitive abilities, behavior, volitions, etc.), their basic biological features remain those of their species. This is despite the fact that the literal level

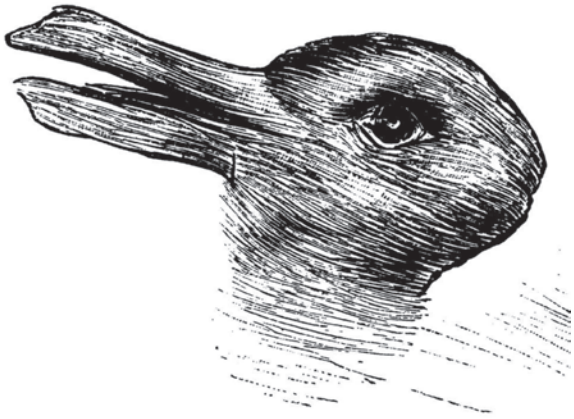
in animal allegories might be not important per se, since on the thematic level of the story the nonhuman animals are exchanged for humans. This conventional structure does not exist in "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People," since already on the very literal level the species identity of the characters is nebulous. This obfuscation is a result of employing human body parts and pronouns on the one hand, and a lack of explicit indications as to the animal nature of the characters on the other. Thus, the literal level of the story is unresolved; consequently, it calls for closer examination of its details.

If the context of the story is human society on the literal level as well, then the title is metaphoric, and the phrase "mouse people" refers to a human community. As mentioned before, literary mice—including Kafka's representation of mice—are emblematic of weak beings, perennially threatened by danger. Therefore, the title should be metaphorically interpreted to indicate that the story is about a frail community in constant peril. The narrator's comment underlines this aspect: "Our enemies too numerous, the dangers that confront us on all sides are incalculable—we cannot shelter our children from the struggle for existence, and if we did so, it would mean their premature end" (KSS, 101).

Nevertheless, "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" differs from Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, in which the fact that the title is metaphoric and the text does not deal with mice at all is evident to the reader from the very start and is never questioned. In Kafka's story the premise suggested by the title, that the story revolves around a community of mice, is not placed in doubt in the initial stages and never unequivocally denied throughout the story. The uncertainty arises, if at all, later in the story and—as I argued earlier—most commentators have not raised doubts about that premise at all.

Performing Species Fluidity

The ambiguous nature of the story's characters can be illustrated by the well-known duck/rabbit illusion, in which an ambiguous image can be seen as a head of either a duck or a rabbit. This image was first utilized by the psychologist Joseph Jastrow as a perceptual experience, indicating that perception is not merely a product of the stimulus, but fundamentally interpretive.[23] Ambiguous figures draw the attention of the viewer to this



interpretative component; we become aware that we are not simply *seeing* something, but rather *seeing as* something, as Wittgenstein notes in his *Philosophical Investigations*.[24] Ernst Gombrich applies the image of the duck-rabbit to the interpretation of artworks:

> We can see the picture as either a rabbit or a duck. It is easy to discover both readings. It is less easy to describe what happens when we switch from one interpretation to the other. Clearly we do not have the illusion that we are confronted with a "real" duck or rabbit. The shape on the paper resembles neither animal very closely. And yet there is no doubt that the shape transforms itself in some subtle way when the duck's beak becomes the rabbit's ears and brings an otherwise neglected spot into prominence as the rabbit's mouth. I say "neglected," but does it enter our experience at all when we switch back to reading "duck"? To answer this question, we are compelled to look for what is "really there," to see the shape apart from its interpretation, and this, we soon discover, is not really possible.[25]

Kafka's Josefine can be regarded as a woman/mouse, the textual equivalent of the visually ambiguous image of the duck/rabbit. We can read her and the other characters in the story as either human beings or mice, or—more precisely—either as humanlike mice or mice-like humans. In the previous chapter I presented the ambiguity in the protagonist of "The Burrow," whose species cannot be identified by the reader. Yet gradually,

throughout the story, it turns out that the burrower is a humanized animal and not an animalized human.

In "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" such ambiguity is not merely temporary, as a constant tension persists until the very end of the narrative, and the human/mouse enigma is not resolved. Juxtaposing the details that support seeing the characters are nonhuman animals with elements in support of perceiving them as humans, does not allow a conclusive decision between the two hypotheses: does the diegesis deal with a community of mice or rather of humans? The ambiguity demands focusing on the literal level of the story with a meticulous examination of all details, which is not required in typical allegorical texts.

The story does not provide the answer to the question "Who is Josefine and who is her audience?" which is prior to the question "What do they stand for?" It only offers constant vacillation between the two readings. In light of this reading, one can understand the title differently—the title, with its qualifying "or," creates tension, not between the mouse singer and the mouse people within the diegesis, but between the two rival hypotheses in the act of reading; whether the characters are humanized animals or animalized humans.

In *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) John Austin distinguishes between constative utterances, which are descriptive and either true or false, and performative utterances that are not descriptive but rather perform a certain kind of action.[26] The act performed when a "performative utterance" is issued belongs to what Austin calls "speech acts." John Searle has extended Austin's notion of speech acts, introducing a taxonomy of five different speech act categories: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative.[27] To the long list of declarative speech acts, which constitute—and not merely reflect—reality (such as naming, appointing, and firing) Judith Butler adds gendering, arguing that the doctor's statement "It's a boy" or "It's a girl" when a baby is born is an act that constructs, through the declaration, the sex gender of the child.[28]

Unlike the doctor's act of gendering by declaring, "It's a boy" or "It's a girl," by not declaring, "These are mice" or "These are people," Kafka in "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" refrains from the speech act of "speciesing." Moreover, Kafka refrains not only from *telling* whether the characters are mice or humans, but also from *showing* it to the reader, as the consistently ambiguous description does not allow the reader to construct the characters' species. Kafka's ambiguous and antiauthoritarian

utterances reject singularity and a static fixity of meaning in general, and of species identity in particular.

This device, which organizes "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" entirely, is defined in the literary theory of Mikhail Bakhtin as hybridization. Bakhtin sees hybridization, the intentional fusing of two utterances that are socially distinguished from one another into a single utterance, as the peculiar mark of artistic texts, and stresses that their double-voicedness is not meant to be settled.[29] The hybridization governed in Kafka's ambiguous text takes place also in the literal sense, as the two conflicted meanings brought together here belong to different biological species—mice and humans.

In Kafka's poetics, boundaries that are seemingly absolute and rigid are quite often shaken and undermined. Thus, for example, in "The Married Couple" the borderline between life and death is obliterated when a corpse comes to life, and in the story "A Guest of the Dead" ("Bei den Toten zu Gast") the narrator pays a visit to the realm of the deceased. Similarly, in "The Hunter Gracchus" ("Der Jäger Gracchus") the hunter is caught in the limbo between life and death, after the mythic death ship that was to take him to the realm of the dead went off course, and as a result he is destined to sail eternally between the living and the dead. The boundary between a living creature and an inanimate object is also problematized in Kafka's fiction, where inanimate objects behave like animate creatures. For example, "The Cares of a Family Man" ("Die Sorge des Hausvaters") tells the story of Odradek, a spool of thread capable of walking and talking.[30] In the same vein, "The Bridge" ("Die Brücke") is narrated by a conscious bridge, who aches when people walk on it, and also has organs, such as feet, hands, and teeth. Similarly, in "The Bucket Rider" ("Der Kübelreiter") a bucket "behaves" like a riding animal, and in "Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor" two celluloid balls act as if they are little animals.

The human-animal divide is often presented as fluid in Kafka's stories, an effect that has been extensively discussed throughout this book. Kafka's oeuvre is replete with characters that are partly nonhuman, partly human. Some of them have undergone metamorphoses, such as Gregor Samsa in "The Metamorphosis" and Dr. Bucephalus in "The New Lawyer," or changed their species identity, like Red Peter in "Report to an Academy." Other protagonists that have a dubious status between nonhuman and human are humanimal hybrids, like the sirens in "The Silence of the Sirens."

Like all these figures, the characters of "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People," Kafka's swan song, challenge boundaries by being of uncertain status: human or animal. Yet the uniqueness of these characters is in the fact that the doubt concerning their biological nature derives from the inability of the reader to decide, based on the text details, whether they are human or mice. Comparable to the duck/rabbit, Josefine and the other characters in the story are human/mice, for as much as some details in their representation support the contention that they are mice, others indicate they are humans.

Unlike the ontological humanimality commonly found in Kafka's literary corpus, another kind of humanimality, a performative one, is presented in his last story. This distinctive form of humanimality does not emanate from the dual nature of the protagonist in the diegetic universe, but is instead the result of ambiguous representation, which does not allow the reader to fix the biological nature of the creature. However, both ontological and performative humanimality have a similar effect; both blur the anthropocentric contradistinction between the human animal and all other animals.

Conclusion

The Kafkaesque Humanimal Machine

An ancient Indian parable tells of six blind men who set out to determine what an elephant is like, each feeling a different part of the animal. The first man, who held the trunk, stated: "An elephant is like a snake." The second grabbed the tusk and thought an elephant is like a spear. "It's like a fan," announced the third, who felt the elephant's ear. The man who hugged a leg said: "An elephant is like a pillar." Touching the side uttered, the fifth man believed an elephant is like a wall, and the sixth, who grasped the tail, declared, "An elephant is like a rope."

This tale, which has provided insights into a wide range of topics, came to mind when reflecting on Kafka's poetics, and his zoopoetics in particular. Whereas this image can be applied to any intricate work of art, it essentially illustrates the writing of Kafka, due to its open and elusive nature. Like the blind men, each critic typically focuses on one aspect of Kafka's oeuvre, and hence is inherently limited by the failure to account for other aspects and develop a coherent idea of the whole. The psychoanalytic critic maintains that Kafka's writing embodies the Oedipal complex; for the Marxist it faithfully mirrors the socio-historical condition, whereas through a Jewish prism it revolves around Jewish identity or theology. This book does not undertake to provide an exhaustive account of Kafka's canon, not even of his animal stories, recognizing that any interpretive description thereof is a priori fragmentary. My humble attempt is thus to join the other blind observers, groping an area in the elephant's body that has not been comprehensively explored. The zoopoetic analysis

does not contradict the allegorical interpretations, inasmuch as they do not rule each other out, but instead complements them. The zoopoetic reading of Kafka's animal stories is, however, different from allegorical interpretations. Indeed, like the psychoanalytic, Marxist, and Jewish interpretations, it also examines the nonhuman animals on the literal level of the texts through the lens of, and in dialogue with, theoretical and critical frameworks. Yet, unlike other extradiegetic frameworks, the zoopoetic one does not reduce the nonhuman animals to intrahuman issues by virtue of allegorization. Alternatively, it transgresses the human/animal binary and undermines anthroparchy.

Kafka's first two animal stories, "The Metamorphosis" (1915) and "A Report to an Academy" (1917), deal with species transition. In the first one, a man turns into a nonhuman animal, and in the second, a nonhuman animal turns into a man. Unlike traditional metamorphosis narratives, the rift at the center of Kafka's cross-species transformation tales is not between the animal body and the human psyche, but is rather within the psyche itself, having animal and human elements alike, which engage in a constant dynamic. Kafka's humanimal trans-species protagonists, the human-vermin Gregor Samsa and the ape-human Red Peter, are both liminal beings, situated on the threshold between humanity and animality, and thereby transgress the human/animal binary. By portraying the human figures in these stories as inhumane, Kafka's narratives of species transition dismiss both the perception of human existence as superior to animal existence and the correlation between being human and being humane. Both stories also reject the essentialist dimension of the contradistinction between human and other animals by depicting human and animal identity as a social construct rather than a pure biological actuality. Whereas in "The Metamorphosis" species identity is largely socially constructed, as it appears alongside the corporal component, in "A Report on an Academy" the physical aspect of the species transition is eliminated, and species identity is radically redefined as a mere social construction. In both cases, species identity is generated through biopolitical practices of segregation, exclusion, confinement, and violence.

The canine protagonists of Kafka's next two animal stories, "Jackals and Arabs" (1917) and "Researches of a Dog" (1922), unlike his earlier nonhuman protagonists, were born and raised and lived all their lives as nonhuman animals. The canine figures, however, are humanized, first and

foremost by their verbal ability to tell their stories (to the narrator, in the case of the jackals, or directly to the reader in Kafka's dog tale), an ability that nonhuman animals in the real universe essentially lack. Both the jackals and the dog reflect on interspecies power relations, and the perspectival shift subverts anthropocentric presumptions. The jackals in "Jackals and Arabs" challenge anthroparchy—human dominion over other animals—aspiring to end the slaughter of animals for food, as well as to reverse the humanimal power relations, aspirations that are doomed to fail. Such a reversal in the humanimal power dynamics has allegedly taken place in the diegetic universe of "Researches of a Dog," wherein dogs seem to be the dominant species, due to their technological and intellectual superiority. Yet the reader quickly becomes aware that these power relations mirror the real world, while only the canine narrator does not recognize (or does not wish to acknowledge) this. While it turns out that the power relations between humans and dogs are not inverted, the dog's caninocentrism critically reflects anthropocentrism and thereby undermines it.

Kafka's last two animal stories, "The Burrow" (1923–4) and "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" (1924), differ from their predecessors, since they do not posit a conflict between humans and animals. "The Burrow" features one sole character, who is also the narrator, and in "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People," the entire cast of characters is of the same species. Nevertheless, both stories cast doubt on the nature of this species. Unlike Kafka's first two animal stories, where the protagonist's humanimal hybridity is ontological (i.e., exists in the fictional world), his last two animal tales produce a performative humanimal hybridity, resulting from the reader's inherent inability to discern whether the characters are human or nonhuman animals. In "The Burrow" this performative humanimal hybridity occurs only in the first stages of reading, whereas in "Josefine, the Singer or the Mouse People" this unique case of hybridity sustains until the final word.

Against the humanization of the nonhuman characters, Kafka also presents a complementary effect of animalizing his human figures. In the first three animal stories I have examined in depth, "The Metamorphosis," "A Report to an Academy," and "Jackals and Arabs," Kafka posits the nonhuman characters (the vermin, the ape, and the jackals, respectively) as victims that arouse empathy, whereas the human figures are portrayed in a negative light. Morally speaking, the nonhuman animals are humane crea-

tures, whereas the humans, in their immoral behavior, are bestial. Kafka's bestial humans are not merely metaphorical but are expressed physically as well. For example, in "A Country Doctor" the groom behaves in a beastly way, biting the servant girl; in "A Page from an Old Document" the barbaric nomads feed on a live ox, and in "Building the Great Wall of China" people are described as wild creatures.

The animalization of humans and the humanization of other animals also ensues in Kafka's poetics through the subversive use of language. German, more than English, introduces a terminological differentiation between the human world and the terrain of other animals. Kafka, however, consistently dismisses this separation by choosing words whose German denotation is strictly animalistic (such as *fressen*, which refers to nonhuman eating activity) when dealing with humans, and German words that are restricted to human context (such as *Mord*, which means "murder," the killing of a human by a human), when referring to nonhuman animals. By transgressing the conventional use of language Kafka destabilizes the oversimplified polarity between the human and the nonhuman world.

Despite the rich diversity of thematic and formative elements in his various stories, one central motif runs throughout Kafka's entire corpus: species boundaries are mutable and obscure, as Kafka radically disregards the barrier between humans and other animals. Kafka's overarching zoopoetics, therefore, stands in opposition to the Agambenian conception of the anthropological machine. Whereas the anthropological machine repeatedly draws a line between humans and other animals, Kafka abolishes this line altogether. Fusing together human and nonhuman features, Kafka's humanimal beings undermine the hegemonic contradistinction between humans and other animals. Using rhetorical, narratological, linguistic, and thematic means, Kafka complicates the nonhuman experience, the human experience, and the differences between them. These differences in experience, which are paradigmatically perceived as biologically unequivocal and sweeping value judgments, presented throughout his writings as subject to cultural construction.

Constituting a model of species fluidity between the human and the nonhuman, Kafka's zoopoetics undermines the stark barrier, installed by the anthropocentric hegemony, between human and other animals. Through denying the animalistic elements in humans and disavowing other animals' agency, excluding them from social life, as well as neutraliz-

ing compassion for them, the human-animal barrier has been designed to regularize both humanity and animality. Kafka's zoopoetics is thus the anticipated fictional manifestation of the critical zoopolitical theories evolved at the turn of the third millennium. Reading Kafka's zoopoetics in dialogue with contemporary zoopolitical theories engenders a poetic-political post-anthropocentric space, which is simultaneously imagined and very real.

Notes

Introduction

1. Throughout the book I use the term "nonhuman animal" instead of "animal," in order to complicate the human/animal binary (as humans are, of course, animals). Likewise, I refrain from referring to nonhuman animals as "it."
2. Citati 1990: 59–60.
3. Benjamin 1969: 132.
4. Adorno 1981: 252.
5. Seyppel 1956: 69.
6. Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 34.
7. Asker 2011: 25; Balazs 2015: 85; Driscoll 2011–12: 25; Geier 2016: 1; Johnson 2011–12: 50; Ortlieb 2007: 339.
8. Derrida 2008: 6.
9. Fingerhut 1969: 287.
10. Allen 1983: 3.
11. Norris 1985: 17.
12. McHugh 2011: 6.
13. Ortiz-Robles 2016: 2
14. Chabris and Simons 2010.
15. Campbell 1983: 55.
16. Weitzenfeld and Joy 2014: 4–5.
17. Adams 2011: 42; Armstrong 2008: 3; Donovan 2016: 110; Fudge 2002: 7; Richter 2011: 1; Scholtmeijer 1993: 259; Shapiro and Copeland 2005: 344; Simons 2002: 7.
18. Haraway 1991: 21.
19. Lévi-Strauss 1963: 89.
20. For a detailed account of the "animal turn" see Weil 2012: 3–24.
21. Armstrong 2008: 2; Cadman 2016: 162; McHugh 2011: 3.
22. Moe 2012: 30.
23. Rolleston 2002: 30.

24. Sontag 2001: 5.
25. Dungey 2014: ix; Goodbody 2016: 258; Saur 1992: 51; Schwarz 1986: 84–85; Stuart 1969: 413; Taylor 1965: 337; Todorov 1982: 90; Troscianko 2014: 35.
26. Benjamin 1969: 124, 127.
27. Adorno 1981: 246.
28. Brod distinguishes here between allegory, in which the literal level is insignificant, and symbol, whose literal level also stands for itself. See Brod 1975: 193.
29. Camus 1991: 124.
30. Politzer 1962: 22.
31. Neumann 1968: 726.
32. Barthes 1972: 135–36.
33. Haacke 2013: 146.
34. Bloom 1989: 171; Geddes 2016: 3–5; Koelb 2010: 1.
35. Agamben 1995: 137.
36. Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 22.
37. Empson 1961: 140.
38. Fletcher 1993: 317.
39. Frye 1957: 89, 25.
40. Levinas 1998: 6.
41. Descartes 1969: 44–46.
42. Scientific evidences for nonhuman consciousness include striking physiologic, neuroanatomic, and behavioral similarity to humans, as well as evolutionary continuity. See, for example, Dawkins 2008 and DeGrazia 1996.
43. Boggs 2013: 20; Lippit 2010: 165–66; Nelles 2001: 188.
44. Inability to tell one's story is not restricted to nonhumans. For example, Kari Weil draws a parallel between animal studies and trauma studies, since "both raise questions about how one can give testimony to an experience that cannot be spoken or that may be distorted by speaking about it." See Weil 2012: 6.
45. Beer 2005: 313.
46. Forster 1985: 43–44.
47. Wolfe 2009: 567–68.
48. Lorenz 1952: 148.
49. Carol Adams defines "absent referent" as anyone whose original meaning is undercut as it is absorbed into a different hierarchy of meaning. She particularly reflects on nonhuman animals as absent referents, inasmuch as their existence is commonly transmuted into a metaphor for human existence. See Adams 2011: 42.
50. Regan and Linzey 2010: xviii.
51. Richards 1976: 201. Richards uses here "personification," which in literary studies is perceived as equivalent to "anthropomorphism." "Personification," however, implies that nonhuman animals are not persons, an implication strongly rejected by many animal studies scholars. See, for example, Francione 2009.
52. Cadman 2016; Hogan 2009: 3–5.
53. Fudge 2004: 76–77.
54. Aesop 1998: 47.
55. Douglass 1995: xv.

56. Kant 1987: 314.
57. Arendt 1994: 76–77.
58. Lukács 1963: 77.
59. Allen 1983: 10; Loba 2014: 161–62; McHugh 2011: 212; McShane and Tarr 2007: 9; Norris 1985: 54; Richter 2011: 3; Rohman 2009: 1–6; Scholtmeijer 1993: 55–62; Youngs 2013: 5–6.
60. Grant 2016: 51.
61. Janouch 2012: 11.
62. Eisner 1950: 35–36.
63. Anders 1965: 18.
64. Dodd 2002: 131; Dowden 1995: 96; Reitter 2015: 37.
65. Nash 2015: 5–6.
66. Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 18.
67. Canetti 1988: 53.
68. Canetti 1979: 88.
69. Brod 1975: 109. Kafka's vegetarianism is discussed at length in the third chapter.
70. Adorno 1981: 270.
71. Agamben 2004: 16.
72. Santner 2006: 12. Creaturely representations in literature have been further theorized in Herman 2016; Pick 2011; and Ohrem and Bartosch 2017.
73. Geller 2018: 25.

Chapter 1

1. Bouson 1990; Caldwell 1987: 48; Eggenschwiler 1986; Geller 2018: 62–64; Gilman 2006: 85–87; Kaiser 1972; Pfeiffer 1962: 58; Rowe 2002; Sokel 2002: 217–25; Tiefenbrun 1973.
2. Todorov 1975: 172. This concept fits not only "The Metamorphosis" but also Kafka's poetics as a whole, and it is examined at more length in the introductory section.
3. Kluge and Seebold 1999: 848.
4. Agamben 1998: 71–73.
5. Agamben 2004: 23; Heidegger 1995: 196. This lacuna in Agamben's work is at the heart of Derrida's *The Beast and the Sovereign*. See Derrida 2009: 305–34.
6. Before modern times, nonhuman animals were not only ritually sacrificed but also considered as bearing legal responsibility and as such could be prosecuted. See Oldridge 2005: 40–55.
7. Baudrillard 1994: 133–35.
8. Heidegger 2009: 74.
9. Arendt 1994: 69.
10. The different ways men and women approach nonhuman animals are also depicted in Kafka's short story "The Animal in the Synagogue": "It is only the women who are afraid of the animal, the men have long ceased to bother about it. . . . Their excuse is that the animal is usually much nearer to them than to the men, and this is

true. The animal does not dare to go down below where the men are, it has never yet been seen on the floor" (PP, 51, 53). In fact, this description also fits Gregor, who does not dare to show himself to his father, but only to his mother and sister. The notion that patriarchy and anthroparchy are interconnected is central to ecofeminist thought. For intersectional perspective of feminist animal studies see Adams and Donovan 1995; Adams and Guren 2014; and Birke 2002.

11. Foucault 1990: 135, 139–40.
12. Schiller 1972: 82.
13. Wolfe 2013; Braverman 2016.
14. Gray 1973: 89; Pascal 1982: 44–45.
15. In his literary-entomological account of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" Nabokov calculates that Gregor must be dog-sized. See Nabokov 1982: 259.
16. Boggs 2013: 21; Perkins 2003: 13; Ritvo 1987; Tester 1991; Thomas 1983; Turner 1980.
17. Tsovel 2004: 338–39.
18. Clark 1991: 24–25; Thomas 1983: 92–99. Interestingly, Thomas More describes a similar scenario in his 1516 work *Utopia*. In his utopian society, slaughtering is done by slaves only, as citizens are not allowed to do such work. "The Utopians feel," says More, "that slaughtering our fellow creatures gradually destroys the sense of compassion, the finest sentiment of which our human nature is capable." See More 2016: 58.
19. Elias 1994: 95–99. See also Timothy Pachirat's discussion in Elias's in his account of industrialized killing from a participant's point of view: Pachirat 2011: 9–10.
20. Elias 1994: 121.
21. Dawkins 1998: 152.
22. Freud 2001: 147.
23. Fudge 2004: 70–74.
24. Dell'Aversano 2010: 82. See also Cole and Stewart 2014, who focus on the cultural construction of human-animal relations in childhood.
25. Dell'Aversano 2010: 83.
26. Donelson and Nilsen 1997: 117.
27. McAndrew 1969: 387; Pedot 2005: 417; Rolleston 1974: 61; Thiher 1990: 44.
28. Koelb 2010: 117.
29. Carmen Dell'Aversano defines humanormativity as a term analogous to heteronormativity: "Just as heteronormativity grotesquely maintains that any member of the 'opposite sex' is more appropriate, suitable and attractive as a sexual partner than any member of one's own, humanormativity maintains that *all* members of one species (*Homo sapiens*) have more in common with one another than any of them can have with any member of any other species." See Dell'Aversano 2010: 76. Lori Guren sees "humanormativity" as a parallel term to "speciesism." See Guren 2013: 223. The term "speciesism" was coined by the psychologist and animal rights advocate Richard Ryder in the 1970s and subsequently popularized by the philosopher Peter Singer. Analogous to racism and sexism, speciesism is defined as discrimination and/or prejudice based on species. See Cavalieri 2001: 69–85.
30. The fact that this is a metamorphosis story is given in most English versions of the story even before the opening sentence—already in the story's title, "The Meta-

morphosis." This, however, is not unequivocally given in the original German title, *Die Verwandlung*. See n. 69 on p. 64.

31. Giaccherini 2005: 62; Gildenhard and Zissos 2013: 347. The story of Io's transformation into a heifer is one of the few exceptions to this Ovidian pattern, as Io's story does not conclude with the transformation but follows her post-metamorphosis life and ends when she regains her human form.

32. Certainly, not all metamorphosis narratives focus on cross-species metamorphosis. For example, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the blind prophet Tiresias is transformed into a woman, Daphne is turned into a laurel tree, Atlas becomes a mountain, and Medusa's gaze turns those who see her to stone. Nevertheless, it seems that the most common type of metamorphosis tale is from a human into a nonhuman animal.

33. Ovid 2000: 195.

34. Hogan 2009: 192.

35. Greve 2011: 44–45. Etiological tales typically conclude with the metamorphic event, and therefore the effect of the metamorphosis on the person's mind—whether the mind has been also transformed or not—is not specified.

36. Homer 1991: 142.

37. Apuleius 1994: 54.

38. Marx 1971: 20.

39. Gildenhard and Zissos 2013: 346.

40. Bermejo-Rubio 2013: 280; Nabokov 1982: 258; Schubiger 1969: 55–57; Sweeney 2013: 96.

41. Deleuze and Guattari 2000: 96–97.

42. Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 205–6.

43. Beicken 1987: 25; Emrich 1984: 141.

44. Peters 1966: 267–68.

45. Harzer 2000: 171.

46. Eggenschwiler 1986: 204; Gilman 2006: 200; Scholtmeijer 1997: 136; Sokel 2002: 223; Stine 1981: 64; Witt 1971: 43.

47. Politzer 1962: 66.

48. Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 13.

49. Mill 2002: 10.

50. Plutarch 1927: 499. A better-known version of Plutarch's idea can be found in Jean de La Fontaine's fable "The Companions of Ulysses to the Lord Duke of Burgundy." In this fable Odysseus asks his friends if they would like to return to their human state, but all prefer their nonhuman lifeforms: "Ulysses persevered; but one and all / Gave the same answer, great or small. / Freedom, the forest, passion uncontrolled—/ These were the only goods they craved: / The meeds of fame and honour left them cold: / They followed Lust, and called it Liberty: / To their own selves they were enslaved." See La Fontaine 1952: 284. It is interesting to note that whereas Plutarch's version undermines the anthropocentric view, La Fontaine reinforces it, as the narrator in his fable condemns the choice of Odysseus's friends.

51. Nabokov 1982: 280–81; Natarajan 1993: 121; Tiefenbrun 1973: 115.

52. Booth 2002: 281.

53. Sokel 2002: 34.

54. Gregor is classified as a cockroach in Ben-Ephraim 1994: 457; Booth 2002: 281; Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 13; Fast 1981: 12; Geier 2016: 41; Leavitt 2012: 141; Luke 1964: 28; Massumi 2014: 56; and Thiher 1990: 41. He is identified as a beetle in Caldwell 1987: 47; Emrich 1984: 136; McAndrew 1969: 386; Taylor 1965: 238; Thorlby 1972: 34; and Weninger 1993: 271. The hypothesis that Gregor is a dung beetle appears in Leadbeater 1986: 169; Ryan 2001: 81; and Swinford 2010: 215.

55. Nabokov 1982: 259–60.

56. In his extensive study of translations of Kafka, Patrick O'Neill compares twelve English translations of "The Metamorphosis," many of which inaccurately translate *Ungeziefer*, the German word chosen by Kafka, as "insect" or "bug," which—unlike "vermin"—are biological categories. See O'Neill 2014: 60.

57. Stanley Corngold and Benno Wagner add to this list also "Jews in the Third Reich, mountain lions in Colorado, and wild boars in contemporary Berlin—all have had the distinction of being defined as vermin: are judged to be non-beings, outside the pale of the law, as good as dead." See Corngold and Wagner 2011: 57–58.

58. Borges 1964: 103.

59. Foucault 2002: xvi.

60. Foucault 1990: 143.

61. Derrida 2008: 34.

62. Derrida 2008: 48.

63. Patrick O'Neill also examines the translations of the German epithet *ungeheuer* in "The Metamorphosis," which in many English versions loses its full denotation, as it is translated as "enormous" or "gigantic" instead of "monstrous." See O'Neill 2014: 60.

64. Weinberg 1963: 316–17.

65. Foucault 2003: 56.

66. "Wir müssen es loszuwerden suchen . . . es bringt euch noch beide um . . . Weg muß es" (E, 153).

67. Corngold and Wagner 2010: 71.

68. Canetti 1988: 81.

69. Freer 2015: 97; Koelb 2010: 117; O'Neill 2014: 141–42.

70. Dell'Aversano 2010: 80.

71. de Beauvoir 2011: 283.

72. Sartre 2004: l.

Chapter 2

1. Boa 1996: 158–63; Ferk 2011–12: 36; Garloff 2011: 95; Geller 2018: 131–36; Gilman 2006: 88; Iacomella 2015: 73–74; Kilcher and Detlef 2004: 63–70; Lorenz 2007: 159; Rubinstein 1964: 59–60.

2. Barney 2004: 19; Blyn 2000: 140–41; Kessler 1983: 20; Norris 1985: 68; Richter 1962: 158; Sokel 2002: 268; Tauber 1948: 70; Thiher 1990: 82.

3. One exception to this principle is Kafka's early story "Description of a Struggle"

("Beschreibung eines Kampfes"), which takes place in Prague and contains many references to sites in the city.

4. Roberts 1982: 5.

5. Hagenbeck is known first and foremost as an animal trader, but his shows not only displayed nonhuman animals, but also African people, whose "exoticism" enthralled the German audience. See Schilling 2014: 46, and Malamud 2017: 402–3.

6. Rothfels 2002: 99.

7. Bostock 1993: 30–31; Chrulew 2010: 200–202; Mullan and Marvin 1998: 50–51; Rothfels 2002: 162.

8. Adorno 1974: 115.

9. Malamud 2017: 400.

10. Rothfels 2002: 191.

11. Bostock 1993: 31.

12. Hagenbeck 1950: 136–39.

13. Wilson 2015: 157.

14. See my discussion of Norbert Elias's critique in the previous chapter.

15. Malamud 2017: 405.

16. Humans were so named because they are the only hominids whose body is not covered in hair. See Morris 1984.

17. Nietzsche 2008: 210. In his book about animals in the fiction of modernity Philip Armstrong suggests that Red Peter's remark on nudity echoes the Houyhnhnms' mystification over Gulliver's determination to hide his body from sight. See Armstrong 2008: 203.

18. Derrida 2008: 4.

19. A similar insight can be found in Albert Camus's 1951 philosophical essay *The Rebel*, where he states that "man is the only creature that refuses to be what he is." See Camus 1992: 11.

20. The status of this text is somewhat ambiguous: is Coetzee voicing his own views through Costello? The text deliberately blurs the boundary between reality and fiction, particularly since Coetzee, a South African author, originally read this text, about an Australian writer invited to give a lecture at an American university, at an American university. Moreover, in her lecture, Costello refers to an article written by Coetzee on Kafka's "The Burrow" (see Coetzee 1981) as her own.

21. Coetzee 2001: 27–29.

22. Köhler 1957: 226.

23. Hobbes 1996: 89.

24. Derrida's *The Beast and the Sovereign* is particularly focused on this theme.

25. At the turn of the third millennium a few countries recognized great apes as legal persons (*persona iuris*), providing them minimal legal protection. See Fitzgerald 2015.

26. Adorno 1974: 105.

27. Agamben 2004: 37.

28. Russell 1997: 33–35. Interestingly, Russell also turns to nonhuman animals when analyzing the conception of power: "These forms of power are most nakedly and simply displayed in our dealings with animals, where disguises and pretences are

not thought necessary. When a pig with a rope round its middle is hoisted squealing into a ship, it is subject to direct physical power over its body. . . . The case of the pig illustrates military and police power." See Russell 2004: 24.

29. Asker 2001: 58; Kilcher and Detlef 2004: 63; Norris 1985: 66; Sokel 2002: 284; Stuart 1969: 414–15.

30. Hogan 2009: 201.

31. Lippit 2010: 149; Schumacher 2008: 175; Sokel 1964: 330–31; Straus 2007–8: 100; Tyler 2010: 185.

32. Asker 2011: 26; Boa 1996: 158–60; Freer 2015: 95; Gray et al. 2005: 37; Kilcher and Detlef 2004: 61; Lippit 2010: 149; Lorenz 2007: 166; Norris 1985: 67; Sokel 1964: 383; Thiher 1990: 82.

33. Hayman 1981: 26; Wagenbach 1958: 60. In his book on the popularization of Darwinism in Germany, Alfred Kelly points out that Darwinism was more prevalent in the German-speaking world than anywhere else. See Kelly 1981: 4–5.

34. Eilittä 1999: 110–12.

35. Beer 2000: 104.

36. Sokel 2002: 272.

37. Corbey 2005: 5; Wiseman 1999: 215.

38. Haraway 1989: 10–11.

39. Agamben 2004: 23. In fact, Agamben's portrayal of the werewolf may also apply to the ape: "a threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man, *physis* and *nomos*, exclusion and inclusion . . . who is precisely *neither man nor beast*, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither." See Agamben 1998: 63.

40. Diamond 1994: 95.

41. Rohman 2009: 5.

42. Darwin 2007: 151.

43. Rachels 1991: 64–65; Scholtmeijer 1993: 56.

44. Weinstein 1962: 79.

45. Adorno 1997: 113.

46. Koelb 2010: 129. Jay Geller questions the idea that Kafka here simply reverses the moral hierarchy, which would still maintain the human/animal opposition. See Geller 2018: 135.

47. Asker 2011: 27; Freer 20015: 96; Garloff 2011: 91; Haacke 2013: 141; Koelb 2010: 129; Lorenz 2007: 162.

48. Butler 1990: 25.

49. Janouch 2012: 57.

50. Corbey 2005: 55.

51. Fingerhut 1969: 103; Geller 2018: 124–25; Kilcher and Detlef 2004: 54–56; Pascal 1982: 194–96; Thiher 1990: 81.

52. Butler 1990: 25.

53. Butler 1993: 126.

54. The academy members, to whom Red Peter's report is addressed within the diegesis, can in fact also be viewed as the audience of his show, but we cannot estimate the impact of Red Peter's drag on them.

55. Bergson 2007: 51.

56. Critchley 2002: 33. Critchley also remarks that unlike this pleasingly benign effect when nonhuman animals are humanized, "when the human becomes animal the effect is disgusting and if we laugh at all then it is what Beckett calls 'the mirthless laugh,' which laughs at that which is unhappy."
57. Aristotle 1996: 13.
58. Aristotle 1997: 22.
59. Bernhardt-House 2008: 159; Dell'Aversano 2010: 74; Gaard 1997: 115.
60. Jagose 1996: 99.
61. Lippit 2010: 150. The nonverbal sailors can be compared to Kafka's other animalized human figures, such as the nomads in "A Page from an Old Document" and in "Building the Great Wall of China," which will be presented in the next chapter, as well as the groom in "A Country Doctor," introduced in the fifth chapter.
62. Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 14.
63. In "The Metamorphosis" Gregor's transformation to vermin is also not the only metamorphic event in the story; it is accompanied, as suggested in the previous chapter, with Grete's metamorphosis. However, Grete's metamorphosis is not an cross-species one, and hence species transition there is not bidirectional.
64. Beicken 2011–12: 6; Lorenz 2007: 160; Snoek 2012: 11; Sokel 1964: 335.
65. Fanon 2004: 5.
66. Fanon 2008: 25.
67. Fanon 2008: 75.
68. Sokolowsky 1908: 17–21.
69. Fanon 2008: 106.
70. Lacan 1998: 99.
71. Bhabha 1994: 122.
72. Bhabha 1994: 172.
73. Weil 2012: 6.
74. Wittgenstein 2009: 235.
75. Speaking animals are, in fact, not merely a thought experiment; experiments attempting to teach sign language to nonhuman primates were conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, drawing increasing scholarly attention. See Radick 2007.
76. Spivak 1988: 308.
77. Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 205.
78. Lyotard 1988: 28.

Chapter 3

1. Fingerhut 1969: 103; Geller 2018: 170–78; Gilman 1995: 150–53; Geller 2015; Hanssen 2012; Kilcher and Detlef 2004: 54–56; Kriesberg 2010: 42–48; Pascal 1982: 194–96; Robertson 1985: 164; Rubinstein 1967: 14–17; Shumsky 2009; Spector 2000: 191–93; Thiher 1990: 81; Tismar 1975: 311–13. Like Kafka's other animal stories, "Jackals and Arabs" has garnered numerous parabolic interpretations. Alongside the Jewish readings, the conflict between jackals and Arabs has been also construed as a parable for numerous other interhuman issues, including the dialecti-

cal construction of human existence, the struggle of human beings against the laws of nature, and the tension between matter and spirit. See, for example, Eschweiler 1991: 87; Neider 1962: 81; Schwarz 1986: 83; Tauber 1948: 69.

2. Bruce 2007: 154–55; Fischer 1996: 353; Rubinstein 1967: 15. Sander Gilman, however, points out a reversal in the story, since the jackals/Jews eat only the flesh of animals (including nonkosher animals, like camels) that died of natural causes, against Jewish practice. See Gilman 1994: 24–31.
3. Judd 2003: 117–29.
4. Janouch 2012: 92–93.
5. Orwell 2005: 120.
6. Dunayer 2001: 2.
7. "Doch hat es noch niemals eine Mordgelegenheit ausgenutzt" (E, 320).
8. Canetti 1988: 88.
9. Nekula 2015: 54.
10. The original title of this story was actually "A Page from an Old Document from China" ("Ein altes Blatt aus China"), but in the final draft Kafka omitted this geographical reference, alluding to the invaders as nomads from the North. See Gray et al. 2005: 11. The original title points to the close relationship between "A Page from an Old Document" and "Building the Great Wall of China" ("Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer"), where the people of the northern lands, from whom the inhabitants wish to be protected by the wall, are also portrayed animalistically.
11. Canetti 1988: 89.
12. In a letter to Milena, Kafka mentions that he weighs 55 kilograms, which is about 120 pounds, while he was six feet tall (LM, 126). Deleuze and Guattari describe Kafka as anorectic. See Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 30. Kafka wrote in his diary that his body "hasn't the least bit of fat to engender a blessed warmth, to preserve an inner fire, no fat on which the spirit could occasionally nourish itself beyond its daily need without damage to the whole" (D, 124–25), and in a letter to his father he portrays himself as "skinny, weakly, slight . . . a little skeleton, unsteady" (LFBV, 19).
13. Norris 1985: 116.
14. Gilman 2006: 94.
15. Hayman 1981: 31.
16. Citati 1990: 8.
17. Brod 1975: 74.
18. Brod 1975: 109.
19. See n. 26 on p. 93.
20. Lemon 2011: 91.
21. Bridgewater 1987: 115; Gray et al. 2005: 244; Hanssen 2012: 184; Strong 1979: 474.
22. Sokel 2002: 136–37.
23. Koelb 1989: 26–27.
24. The term "anthroparchy" was coined by Erika Cudworth in analogy to patriarchy. See Cudworth 2005: 14.
25. Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 205.
26. Heidegger 1968: 16.

27. Derrida 1987: 173.
28. Searle 1985: 12–20. The theory of speech acts is further discussed in the sixth chapter.
29. Apes' anatomical capacity to hold weapons is famously realized in *Planet of the Apes*, Pierre Boulle's 1963 novel, and its numerous film and television adaptations.
30. Löwy 2016: 9–11.
31. Marx and Engels 2008: 53.
32. Robert Lemon suggests that the sewing scissors, which are called *Nähschere* in German, highlight the ambivalence between proximity and separation, since the prefix *Näh* (sewing) is semantically, etymologically, and homonymically related to the word *Nähe* (closeness). See Lemon 2011: 94.
33. The semiotics of dogs, in Western culture in general and in Kafka's poetics in particular, is examined in the next chapter, which focuses on Kafka's "Researches of a Dog."

Chapter 4

1. Blackham 2013: 133; Fickert 1993: 189; Olshan 1999: 179–83; Politzer 1962: 319.
2. Bruce 1992: 5; Fickert 1993: 196; Geller 2018: 180–82; Heller 1980: 106; Leadbeater 1993: 145; Schwarz 1986: 84.
3. Corngold 2004: 111; Norris 2010: 24; Rettinger 2003: 131.
4. Pascal 1982: 202.
5. Caras 1996: 82; Clutton-Brock 2008: 10; Jackson 1997: 81; Serpell 2008: 126; Shepard 1996: 244; Zeder 2006: 171.
6. Darwin 2007: 136.
7. Homer 1991: 240.
8. Cervantes 2007: 137.
9. Laura Brown, in her study of animal representation in modern literature, states that in the first two decades of the nineteenth century dog-protagonist narratives were particularly common and become a popular subgenre, which contributed to the rapid development of the animal protection movement in this period. See Brown 2010: 129–30.
10. Derrida 1992: 143.
11. Serpell 2008: 159. Examining the role of dogs in Jewish society and culture, Sophia Menache argues that the negative biblical approach to dogs derives from both rejections of canine rituals in ancient Near Eastern societies and the ubiquity of rabies in the area. See Menache 2013: 40–42.
12. Bruce 2007: 44; Isenberg 1999: 37; Powell 2008: 137.
13. Serpell 2008: 200–201.
14. Freud 2005: 88.
15. Armbruster 2002: 353; Fudge 2004: 27–28; Haraway 2005: 11–12; Shepard 1996: 248.
16. Aesop 1998: 1.

17. Many Aesopian fables allow deallegorization and a focus on nonhuman animals, their condition, and their relationship with humans. See Harel 2009.

18. Budiansky 1992: 19–42.

19. Weil 2012: 56. This negative perception of dogs led Deleuze and Guattari to provocatively contend that "anyone who likes cats and dogs is a fool." See Deleuze and Guattari 2000: 240.

20. Danchev 2011: 173.

21. J. M. Coetzee echoes Josef K.'s last words in his 1999 novel *Disgrace*, explicitly defining their meaning. Lucy explains to her father why she decides to stay at her farm after the rape: "It is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity." Her father's reaction to this statement is "Like a dog," and Lucy agrees: "Yes, like a dog." See Coetzee 2000: 205. Similarly, in *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1999) Agamben quotes Josef K.'s famous last words, which are later echoed in Holocaust survivors' testimonies, where the *Muselmann* is "like a stray dog." See Agamben 1999: 104, 167.

22. In the original German text, there is no reference to people; Kafka uses here the German word *man*, which is equivalent to "one" or "someone." "Man rühmt oft den allgemeinen Fortschritt der Hundeschaft durch die Zeiten und meint damit wohl hauptsächlich den Fortschritt der Wissenschaft" (E, 435).

23. Pascal 1982: 23; Politzer 1962: 283; Robertson 1985: 279.

24. Shklovsky 1965: 14–15.

25. Roy Pascal mentions that Kafka read *Gulliver's Travels* shortly before writing "Researches of a Dog." See Pascal 1982: 189.

26. Swift 2003: 249.

27. Booth 2002: 158–59.

28. Anderson 1992: 72; Fickert 1993: 190; Koelb 2010: 140; Kuzniar 2006: 22; Lawson 1987: 128; Pascal 1982: 23; Robertson 1985: 276; Williams 2007: 104.

29. Kuzniar 2006: 24; Pascal 1982: 210.

30. Bruce 1992: 6; Pascal 1982: 209; Robertson 1985: 275.

31. Nägele 2013: 22.

32. Robertson 1985: 276–77.

33. Asker 2001: 29; DeKoven 2016: 38 n. 17; Höfle 1998: 247; Norris 2010: 24; Ziolkowski 1983: 87.

34. Riggan 1981.

35. Bergson 2007: 87.

36. Uhall 2016: 2.

37. Orwell 1996: 34.

38. Berger 1980: 2–3, 14. The animal gaze is central in Adorno's criticism, who claims that "philosophy exists in order to redeem what you see in the gaze of an animal" (cited in Claussen 2008: 255); see also n. 26 on p. 93. The animal gaze, as discussed in the second chapter, is also what has triggered Derrida to delve into the animal question. See n. 18 on p. 90.

Chapter 5

1. Boulby 1982; Corngold 1988: 283; Driscoll 2011–12: 23; Freer 2015: 89; Koelb 2002: 350–51; Maché 1982: 526–27; Menke 2000: 32; Politzer 1962: 318–22; Spurr 2011: 187; Thorlby 1972: 47; Türk 2007: 153; Wegmann 2011:361; Weigand 1972: 152. Other readings see the story as allegory of the human condition in modern society. See Emrich 1984: 224; Kurz 1980: 193; Nagel 1974: 370; Sokel 1964: 372; Stahman 2004: 19.
2. In the first book written on nonhuman animals in Kafka's work, *Die Funktion der Tierfiguren im Werke Franz Kafkas: Offene Erzählgerüste und Figurenspiele* (1969) Karl Heinz Fingerhut compares the enigmatic biological status of the protagonist of "The Burrow" to that of Gregor Samsa in "The Metamorphosis." See Fingerhut 1969: 190.
3. Ingarden 1980: 53.
4. Interestingly, not only the species, but also the gender, of the burrower is undefined.
5. McDonnell 2004: 24.
6. Sturc 1982: 84–85.
7. Ewing 2007–8: 29; Freer 2015: 89; Geier 2016: 39; Politzer 1962: 330; Snyder 1981: 11; Spurr 2011: 187; Sussman 1977: 130–31; Weigand 1972: 162.
8. A study of nonhuman narrators, which focuses largely on Kafka's "The Burrow," quotes ethological accounts of wasps' apparently mindless movements, which actually follow an instinctual logic closely reminiscent of the narrator's single-minded obsession with the burrow in Kafka's story. This wasp's behavioral account is widely used by philosophers of mind to demonstrate that innate mechanisms can result in behavior that looks, from a human vantage point, irrational or even absurd. See Bernaerts et al. 20014: 80.
9. Bangerter 1974: 12–13; Cohn 1978: 195–97; Pascal 1982: 190; Stahman 2004: 30.
10. Baldick 2009: 219.
11. Aristotle 1997: 24.
12. Bal 2009: 182.
13. Kundera 2004: 74, 298.
14. Clayton Koelb asserts that the original title of the story, "Der Bau," refers to Kafka's fiancée, Felice Bauer. See Koelb 2002: 350–51. Dora Diamant, with whom Kafka spent the last year of his life, claimed that the burrow is the apartment they shared in Berlin and that the castle court (*Burgplatz*) is her. See Fingerhut 1969: 169. Philip Roth associatively links the burrow to Dora Diamant's genitalia. See Roth 1975: 257.
15. Stahman 2004: 22; Sussman 1977: 107.
16. Dennett 1991: 174.
17. Forster 1985: 4318.
18. Agamben 2004: 37, Gross and Vallely 2012: 1, Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 203.
19. Derrida 2008: 23.

20. Menely 2015: 127.
21. Gray et al. 2005: 73.
22. Genette 1983: 245.
23. Bangerter 1974: 15; Henel 1986: 126; Nagel 1983: 370; Sokel 1964: 371; Stahman 2004: 20, 30; Sturc 1982: 84; Weigand 1972: 152–53.
24. Dell'Aversano 2010: 80.
25. Butler 1990: 185.
26. Harrison 1993: 61.
27. Carroll 2001: 59–60.
28. Dell'Aversano 2010: 86.
29. Meljac 2008: 70; Stahman 2004: 21.
30. "Von meinen Händen" (E, 474).
31. Boulby 1982: 175. In some English versions of the story, the abnormal element, which ascribes to the nonhuman animal human traits, is lost in translation, as "von meinen Händen" is translated as "for which I am responsible" (CS, 332).
32. Weigand 1972: 152.
33. Interestingly, Karl Rossmann, the protagonist of Kafka's novel *America*, is also a horseman, as his last name literally means horseman in German.
34. Corngold 2011: xi–xii.
35. "Mir ist manchmal als verdünne sich mein Fell" (E, 474).
36. Benjamin 1969: 122.

Chapter 6

1. Gray et al. 2005: 145–46; Gross 2002: 90; Robertson 1985: 283–84. Chris Danta states that Kafka identifies here with a nonhuman animal, because losing the ability to speak due to his illness reduced him to the level of a nonhuman animal; both share the burden of speechlessness. Additionally, Danta suggests that Kafka felt that he would die like an animal, reiterating the antihumanist sentiment of Ecclesiastes 3:19: "Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal." See Danta 2008: 153.
2. Baer 2010; Ellison 1998: 205; Emrich 1984: 200–206; Fickert 1993: 60; Harter 1987; Koelb 2002: 354; Norris 1983: 378; Pascal 1982: 231–32.
3. Beck 1971: 205–7; Boa 1996: 176; Bridgwater 1974: 143; Olshan 1999: 178; Woodring 1964: 72.
4. Anderson 1992: 204–5; Geller 2018: 68–78; Gilman 2006: 94; Grözinger 1999: 141–64; Harter 1987: 159; Olshan 1999: 175; Robertson 1985: 282; Tauber 1941: 185–86; Thiher 1990: 130; Weinberg 1963: 440; Woodring 1964: 72. The identification of the mouse people with the Jewish people is also based on a pun in German, as there is phonetic similarity between the words *Mäuse* (mice in German) and Moses, so "the mice people" sounds like "the people of Moses." See Gray et al. 2005: 146. For the association of Jews with mice in German literature see Geller 2018: 68–70. In

modern Jewish literature, this antisemitic metaphor is most famously depicted in Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus*, serialized from 1980 to 1991.

5. Brod 1975: 192.

6. For example, Heinz Politzer argues that while there is indeed a similarity between the mice and the Jewish people (both are threatened by the hostile world around them, both are waiting for a savior to deliver them, etc.), the fact that the mice are specifically described as lacking historical consciousness casts doubt on their identification with the Jewish people. See Politzer 1962: 315.

7. Pascal 1982: 146–47.

8. Aesop 1998: 80.

9. Carlson 1993: 11.

10. Ziolkowski 1990: 10.

11. Blackham 2013: xiii; Cranes 1992: 7; Perry 1959: 19.

12. Aesop 1998: 206.

13. Baldick 2009: 123.

14. Fickert 1993: 57; Kwon 1996: 109; Politzer 1962: 308; Richter 1962: 355; Zhou 1996: 157.

15. Ford 2010: 132; Minden 2009: 304; Politzer 1962: 309; Vizthum 1993: 274.

16. Geller 2018: 75.

17. Brod 1975: 205–6.

18. Geller 2018: 75–76; Harter 1987: 155; Koelb 2002: 356, Politzer 1962: 309.

19. In all these cases, the word "coat," which does not appear in the original text, is added in the English translation: "bundled up in my fur coat" (KSS, 60), "Old N. . . . was still wearing the fur coat in which he had entered" (CS, 452), and "Her fur coat falls open, she topples onto Wese" (KSS, 74–75).

20. "Stünde hier an Stelle des Volkes ein Einzelner: man könnte glauben, dieser Mann habe die ganze Zeit über Josefine nachgegeben unter dem fortwährenden brennenden Verlangen endlich der Nachgiebigkeit ein Ende zu Machen" (E, 534).

21. Geller 2018: 74.

22. Canetti 1988: 88.

23. Jastrow 2010: 291–95.

24. Wittgenstein 2009: 204.

25. Gombrich 2000: 5.

26. Austin 1975: 5.

27. Searle 1985: 12–20.

28. Butler 1993: 232.

29. Bakhtin 1981: 125.

30. In this context it is worth citing Adorno's remark, who brings into the dialogue the living/thing character of Odradek with the living/dead character of Gracchus: "The zone in which it is impossible to die is also the no-man's land between man and thing: within it meets Odradek . . . and Gracchus, the humble descendant of Nimrod. The understanding of these most advanced, incommensurable productions, and of several others that similarly evade current conceptions of Kafka, may one day provide the key to the whole." See Adorno 1981: 263.

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