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Of Jews, Animals, Women, and Cyborgs: Writing Beyond 'Man', from Kafka to Coetzee

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ABSTRACT IN GREEK

Ο διαχωρισμός μεταξύ των όρων "ανθρώπινο" και "ζωικό" ή ακόμα καλύτερα "ανθρώπινο" και "μη ανθρώπινο" επινοήθηκε πριν από την επινόηση του χρόνου, σε ένα "χρόνο πριν από το χρόνο". Αντιπροσωπεύει ένα όριο εντός του οποίου κατασκευάζονται και προσδιορίζονται όλαα τα μεγάλα οντολογικά, ηθικά και πολιτιστικά ζητήματα, καθορίζοντας κατά συνέπεια την ίδια την ουσία και το μέλλον της ανθρωπότητας. Αυτό το χάσμα, το οποίο παρουσιάζεται ως ένας θεμελιώδης κινητήριος μηχανισμός ο οποίος είναι εγγενής στις κυρίαρχες μορφές καταπίεσης όπως ο αντισημιτισμός, ο σεξισμός, ο ρατσισμός και η αποικιοκρατία, πρέπει να αμφισβητηθεί αναλυτικά αν θέλουμε να αντικρούσουμε τους ποικίλους τρόπους καταπίεσης. Σκοπός αυτής της διατριβής είναι να καθιερωθεί η κεντρική θέση του ζητήματος του μη ανθρώπινου άλλου, όχι μόνο στο φιλοσοφικό αλλά και στο λογοτεχνικό λόγο κατά τον 20ό αιώνα. Συγκεντρώνει μια ποικιλόμορφη ομάδα συγγραφέων και καλλιτεχνών, στα έργα των οποίων οι διαφορετικές ενσαρκώσεις του μη ανθρώπινου κατέχουν εξέχουσα θέση. Η ενασχόληση όλων αυτών των συγγραφέων με το μη ανθρώπινο δεν είναι συμπτωματική. Αντιθέτως, είναι μια ένδειξη της περίπλοκης, αλλά αναπόσπαστης σχέσης μεταξύ της (ειδολογικής) διαφοράς και της λογοτεχνικής παραγωγής, και, ταυτόχρονα, των διακειμενικών δεσμών που καθίστανται εφκτές από τη σχέση μεταξύ τους.

Η διατριβή είναι δομημένη σε τρία μέρη: το πρώτο αφορά μυθοπλαστικές και μη μυθοπλαστικές αποκρίσεις στο ζήτημα του ζώου και του πλάσματος εντός της εβραικής λοινότητας, το δεύτερο αφορά τις φεμινιστικές λογοτεχνικές εξερευνήσεις μορφών του ζώου και του μετα-αμθρωπινου, και το τρίτο, τη λογοτεχνική αναπαράσταση του ζωικού στοιχείου μέσα σε ένα μετααποικιακο πλαίσιο που καθορίζεται από τη φυλή. Το πρώτο κεφάλαιο εξετάζει πώς ο Φραντς Κάφκα και ο Βάλτερ Μπένγιαμιν ως Εβραίοι διανοούμενοι που δεν βρέθηκαν σε θέση να αγκαλιάσουν την εβραϊκή παράδοση και τη θρησκεία χρησιμοποιούν τα ζώα και τα μη ανθρώπινα πλάσματα για να εκφράσουν τισ ανησυχίες τους ως προς τη προσπάθεια της εβραϊκής κοινότητας για αφομοίωση σε μια δυτική κοινωνία που ήδη βρισκόταν σε διαπάλη για εξουσία. Ταυτόχρονα, υποστηρίζω ότι λόγω του ημιτελούς χαρακτήρα και των ιδιοτήτων και των χαρακτηριστικών των ζώων, μερικά από τα πλάσματα του Κάφκα επενδύονται με "άπειρη ελπίδα" για μεσσιανική λύτρωση. Στο δεύτερο κεφάλαιο διερευνώ τις αφηγήσεις του Πρίμο Λέβι και του Άρτ Σπίγκελμαν, εκπροσώπων της πρώτης γενιάς και δεύτερης γενιάς του Ολοκαυτώματος, μέσα από το φακό της θεωρίας του Τζόρτζιο Αγκάμπεν για το κυρίαρχο κράτος εξαίρεσης και τη δημιουργία *homines sacri* σε ένα χώρο όπου είναι αδύνατο να διακρίνει κανείς το ανθρώπινο από το μη

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ανθρώπινο και το απάνθρωπο. Στο τρίτο κεφάλαιο, εξετάζω τις αναδιατυπώσεις των παραδοσιακών παραμυθιών της Άντζελα Κάρτερ και προτείνω ότι γι 'αυτήν, το γίγνεσθαι ζώο είναι συχνά ένα σημάδι ενδυνάμωσης, ελευθερίας και αυτοπεποίθησης. Αναφέρομαι επίσης στους τρόπους με τους οποίους η Κάρτερ συνδυάζει τα είδη του παραμυθιού και της πορνογραφίας, προκειμένου να εξετάσει τις περιοχές εγγύτητας μεταξύ γυναίκας και ζώου και να αμφισβητήσει τις υποθέσεις για το γυναικείο μαζοχισμό και την παθητικότητα. Το τέταρτο κεφάλαιο επικεντρώνεται στην εξερεύνηση του λογοτεχνικού και πολιτικού έργου της Μάρτζ Πίερσι και του μετα-ανθρώπινου φεμινισμού της Μάργκαρετ Άτγουντ – ενός φεμινισμού ταυτόχρονα γοτθικού και κριτικά δυστοπικού. Εστιάζοντας συγκριτικά στα υβρίδια της Άτγουντ και στο *cyborg* της Πίερσι, αυτό το κεφάλαιο επιχειρεί να εξερευνήσει τις συνθήκες παραγωγής και τις συγκεκριμένες ιδιότητες του μετα-ανθρώπινου φεμινισμού των συγγραφέων. Το πέμπτο και τελευταίο κεφάλαιο περιστρέφεται γύρω από την έννοια της ζωικότητας και τις μετααποικιακές αφηγήσεις των Μπέρναρντ Μάλαμουντ και Τζ. Μ. Κούτσι. Υποστηρίζω ότι ο πρώτος αποδομεί την ιστορικά καταστροφική απεικόνιση των μαύρων σωμάτων ως πρωτευόντων και ασκεί κριτική στα κριτήρια που επιτρέπουν τον φυλετικό διαχωρισμό και τις διακρίσεις. ενώ ο δεύτερος χρησιμοποιεί τη ζωικότητα για να διερευνήσει την ψυχολογική και ηθική επιβίωση και απολύτρωση μέσα στο αβέβαιο και διφορούμενο πλαίσιο της Νότιας Αφρικής μετά το Απαρτχάιντ.

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ABSTRACT

The human/animal or better yet the human/non-human dichotomy was constructed during a time before time; it represents a limit upon which all great ontological, ethical, and cultural questions are constructed and determined, defining as a result the very essence and future of humanity. This divide, which presents itself as a fundamental driving mechanism inherent in dominant forms of oppression like anti-Semitism, sexism, racism and colonialism, must be meticulously challenged if we are to contest varying modes of oppression. The aim of this dissertation is to establish the centrality of the question of the non-human other not only in philosophical but also in literary discourse during the 20th century. It brings together a diverse group of authors and writers in whose writings different incarnations of the non-human occupy a prominent position. The preoccupation of all these writers with the non-human is not coincidental; rather, it is an indication of the complicated but inextricable link between (species) difference and literary production, and, at the same time, of the intertextual, *affiliative* links their relation enables.

The dissertation is structured around three parts: the first explores Jewish fictional and non-fictional responses to the figures of the animal and the creaturely; the second concerns feminist literary explorations of animal and of posthuman figures; and the third, literary articulations of animal figures within a racialized, postcolonial context. The first chapter examines how Franz Kafka and Walter Benjamin employ animals and non-human creatures in order to express their anxiety over the struggles of the Jewish community to assimilate in a Western society that was already at war for power, as well as the isolation experienced by Jewish intellectuals who found themselves unable to embrace Jewish tradition and religion. At the same time, I argue that due to their unfinished character and animal qualities and characteristics some of Kafka's creatures are infused with "an infinite amount of hope" for messianic redemption. In the second chapter I explore Primo Levi's and Art Spiegelman's first-generation and second-generation Holocaust narratives through the lens of Giorgio Agamben's theory of the sovereign state of exception and the creation of *homines sacri* in a space where it is impossible to distinguish the human from the non-human and the inhuman. In the third chapter, I look at Angela Carter's rewritings of traditional fairy tales and suggest that for her, becoming-animal is often a sign of empowerment, of strength, of freedom and of self-assertion. I also address the ways in which Carter combines the genres of the fairy tale and pornography in order to examine the areas of proximity and affiliation between woman and animal and to contest assumptions about female masochism and passivity. The

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fourth chapter focuses on the exploration of the poetics and politics of Marge Piercy and Margaret Atwood's posthuman feminism, at once Gothic and critically dystopian. In fact, by focusing comparatively on Margaret Atwood's hybrids and on Marge Piercy's cyborg this chapter attempts to tease out the conditions of production and the specific qualities of the authors' posthuman feminism. The fifth and final chapter revolves around animality and the postcolonial narratives of Bernard Malamud and J. M. Coetzee. I argue that the former deconstructs the historically destructive link between simianization and black bodies and critiques discourses that enable racial segregation and discrimination; while the latter uses animality to envision psychological and ethical survival and redemption in the uncertain and ambiguous context of post-Apartheid South Africa.

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Introduction

For centuries, the definition of the human, or of mankind, has necessarily been mediated by an understanding of what establishes the ontological category of the non-human, beginning with "the animal" or with animals as plural singularities. For philosophy, what differentiates – and at the same time relates or links together – humanity and animality has been a subject of debate that continues to unfold to this day. Let me briefly lay out three of the key moments in this long philosophical and theoretical debate that served as points of reference and/or critique for most thinkers exploring the link between humanity and animality. The first to systematically explore the alleged differences between man and animals was the founding figure of ancient Greek philosophy, Aristotle. In his *Politics*, Aristotle maintains that animals are best understood as belonging to a naturalistic tripartite schema in which they are positioned between plants and human beings. With plants having only life and animals combining life and perception, human beings are positioned at the top of the philosopher's hierarchy since they also possess *logos*, the capacity for rational thought as well as its expression in speech. Since Nature creates nothing in vain, the philosopher maintains, one can assume "that after the birth of animals, plants exist for their sake, and that the other animals exist for the sake of man, the tame for use and food, the wild, if not all at least the greater part of them, for food and for the provision of clothing and various instruments" (Aristotle 13). Even though Aristotle's distinctions between humans and animals appear outmoded to contemporary readers, they undoubtedly influenced Western philosophy to a great extent, becoming one of the bases upon which all fundamental distinctions between humans themselves have been constructed.

The second and equally influential moment comes during the 17th century, when René Descartes, the father of modern Western philosophy, revisited the link between humanity and animality based on their capacities for reason. In his *Discourse on the Method* in 1673, Descartes disputed the fact that an animal is an embodied soul and instead argued that an animal is like a machine, an automaton: the soul in an animal – if it can be called such – works like a battery, giving it the spark necessary to keep it alive. Animals, he suggested, have no consciousness or self-consciousness and no moral feeling and their behaviour could be easily explained in mechanistic terms. Thinking beings, according to Descartes, are capable of novel behaviour and speech, both stemming from their ability to reason and from their use of logic; consequently, a living creature that does not think is in various ways inferior. In effect, due to their limited mental capacities, animals are significantly inferior to man. As with Aristotle's, Descartes' views on the differences

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between humanity and animality might appear untenable today given contemporary research on animal cognition. Yet, according to Matthew Calarco,

> The notion that there is a sharp difference between human beings and animals; that rationality, mind, and self-consciousness are the chief markers of that difference; and that such differences justify the exclusion of animals from ethical consideration are ideas that remain hegemonic in certain quarters today. (Calarco 9)

The third and final example comes from the Enlightenment and from the German thinker, Immanuel Kant. In his *Lectures on Ethics*, Kant, agreeing with Aristotle and Descartes, denies that animals have any form of rationality or self-consciousness; indeed, humans' capacity for rational and reflective thought renders them higher in "rank" and "dignity" from all animals and other nonrational beings. Because they lack autonomy and moral agency, animals can justifiably be used as "man's instruments", mere means to ends: as meat for human consumption or organisms for medical experimentation for instance (Kant 213). However, Kant does not believe that animals' lack of autonomy sanctions any amount of cruelty; on the contrary, he maintains that cruelty should be avoided as much as possible not only because animals who serve well deserve their rewards but also because the mistreatment of animals might lead to mistreatment of other human beings. As the philosopher maintains,

> If a master turns out his ass or his dog, because it can no longer earn its keep, this always shows a very small mind in the master. The Greeks were high-minded in such matters, as is shown by the fable of the ass, which pulled by accident at the bell of ingratitude. Thus, our duties to animals are indirectly duties to humanity. (Kant 213)

It is necessary, therefore, to cultivate humane behavior towards animals because, according to Kant, such behavior cultivates humane feelings towards mankind in general. Even though "Kant presents another philosophical framework that seeks to justify the exclusion of animals from the ethical and political community based on their supposed lack of a particular capacity", he formulates at least in an originary form the link – already there in Aristotle – between human cruelty towards animals and towards other human beings, usually ones constructed as somehow animal-like, as less-than-human (Calarco 10).

This very brief overview provides an illustration of the "disappointing and uninspiring" ways the human/non-human binary has been constructed and developed in Western philosophical tradition (Calarco 10). The persistent investment in animal inferiority has provided justification for many of the most violent and cruel modes of human/animal

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interactions including – without being limited to – hunting, skinning, butchering, and scientific testing. At the same time, it has also paved the way for the creation of another imaginary hierarchy among humans, leading to the marginalization, oppression, and even extermination of certain groups of people considered closer to animals. According to Rosi Braidotti, the link between humanity and the non-human constructed and enforced since the beginning of literary and philosophical history – at least in the West – created an "inherently anthropocentric, gendered, and racialised" sense of "normativity"; in fact, it established the dominant subject as much in what he included as his core features as in what he excluded as *other* (Braidotti, "Animals, Anomalies, and Inorganic Others" 526). Braidotti maintains that "the metaphysics of otherness rested on an assumed political anatomy, implicitly modelled on ideals of whiteness, masculinity, normality, youth, and health" (Braidotti, "Animals, Anomalies, and Inorganic Others" 526). All other possibilities of embodiment, as Braidotti adds,

> in the sense of both dialectical otherness (nonwhite, nonmasculine, nonnormal, nonyoung, nonhealthy) and categorical otherness (zoomorphic, disabled, or malformed), were pathologized and cast on the other side of normality that is, viewed as anomalous, deviant, and monstrous. (Braidotti, "Animals, Anomalies, and Inorganic Others" 526)

By establishing the proximity of specific groups of people to animality, bestiality, or non-humanity, the dominant (white, male, Western) culture has been able to construct and justify a variety of forms of discrimination and oppression reaching unprecedented levels of brutality during the 20th century.

Undeniably, the 20th century's violent upheavals including genocide, authoritarian state experiments, and the globalization of warfare exposed the need for the radical re-evaluation of notions such as humanism and humanity, since they have proven inadequate and even dangerous in dealing with those that do not fully qualify for inclusion within the "norm". Such re-evaluation, in turn, has found occasion to explore new hopes and new anxieties, whether relating to the subhuman or the posthuman. Consequently, it may be said that during the 20th century, contemporary thinkers, writers, and artists have by and large found it essential to investigate the question of the non-human, since it represents a limit upon which all great ontological, ethical and cultural questions are judged, determining, in effect, our very appraisal of the role and future of humanity. Keeping Aristotelian, Cartesian, and Kantian approaches in the rear-view mirror, thinkers like Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, Carol J. Adams, Donna Haraway, Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer and authors like Franz Kafka, Primo Levi, Art Spiegelman, Angela Carter,

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Margaret Atwood, Bernard Malamud, and J. M. Coetzee, have seen fit to revisit the topic of the nonhuman other and the repercussions of the human/animal binary in order to not only explore socio-political questions and prejudices surrounding ethnicity, gender, race, religion but also expose this binary's artificiality, destabilize its foundations, and reshape it. This dissertation attempts to trace several aspects of this significant debate in a field of growing importance in the humanities, where eco-criticism, posthumanism and animal studies – emergent fields in recent years – enter into dialogue and contestation with each other.

The aim of this dissertation, therefore, is to establish the centrality of the question of the non-human other not only in philosophical but also in literary discourse. I will attempt to bring together a diverse group of authors and writers in whose works different incarnations of the non-human occupy a prominent position. This preoccupation is not coincidental; rather, it is an indication of the complicated but inextricable link between (species) difference and literary production, and, at the same time, the intertextual, affiliative links their relation enables. As Edward Said suggests in the introduction to his book *The World, The Text and The Critic*, 20th -century critical consciousness and scholarly work is indeed shaped by relationships of *affiliation* rather than *filiation*: "the only other alternatives seemed to be provided by institutions, associations, and communities whose social existence was not in fact guaranteed *by biology*, but by affiliation" (Said 17; emphasis added). In the introduction to her book *Affective Communities*, Leela Gandhi maps such *affiliations* under the rubric of a "politics of friendship"; she builds her book's theoretical claims "upon the narrative and historical scaffolding of multiple, secret, unacknowledged friendships and collaborations" while at the same time privileging "the trope of friendship as the most comprehensible philosophical signifier for all those invisible affective gestures that refuse alignment along the secure axes of filiation to seek expression outside, if not against, possessive communities of belonging" (Gandhi 9-10). The critique of such "possessive communities of belonging" seems to be motivated not merely by abstract philosophical, aesthetic and ethical concerns but also by a concrete lived experience in marginalization and exclusion; tellingly, nearly all the writers and authors discussed in this dissertation are linked together by a commonly shared engagement with difference and otherness that is attempted from an othered or marginalized subject position: Kafka and Benjamin were Jewish intellectuals living in highly anti-Semitic cultures, Levi and Spielman's father were survivors of Auschwitz, Coetzee is a white South-African openly opposed to Apartheid and racism, Carter and Atwood are female and feminist writers.

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This dissertation is divided into three parts, each exploring a different facet of the question of the non-human in 20th-century prose. The first part, comprised of two chapters, focuses on the intersections between Judaism and animality and the destructive evolution of the human/ non-human binary for the Jewish community at the time. The first chapter explores the notions of tradition and messianic redemption in the works of Kafka and Benjamin. The puzzling and tortuous nature of Kafka's work renders him the quintessential figure for the study of 20th-century literature in Europe. Benjamin, an equally difficult author, is undeniably one of Kafka's most prominent exegetes. He addressed the secrets of Kafka's dark and gloomy world the way no other commentator could, while exploring how the notions of tradition, isolation, individuality, community and messianic redemption are to be understood in Kafka's extremely enigmatic writing.

The affiliative links between Benjamin's and Kafka's works, on the other hand, owed much to a shared experience of alienation and ambivalence toward filiative belonging. Written in the beginning of the 20th century, while World War I was in progress and nobody could predict when it was going to end, a number of Kafka's writings can be interpreted in a manner that was of great significance to Benjamin's own experience in the interwar years: as referring to the struggles of the Jewish community to assimilate in a Western society that was already at war for power and therefore as also relating to the isolation experienced by Jewish intellectuals who found themselves unable to embrace Jewish tradition and religion and leaned toward a break from traditional notions of Judaism. In the first section of this chapter, I explore how some of Kafka's stories like "The Metamorphosis", "A Report to an Academy", "Josephine, The Singer or the Mouse Folk", and "Investigations of a Dog", could be interpreted as reflections of the author's anxiety and possible hopelessness over these issues.

Moving from issues concerning Jewish tradition to those regarding messianic redemption, the second section of the chapter focuses primarily on a group of figures which encompass the hope for some kind of messianic redemption in the midst of otherwise abject circumstances. In a rather famous reported exchange with Max Brod on whether there is hope outside the "manifestation of the world that we know", Franz Kafka supposedly replied: "oh, plenty of hope, an infinite amount of hope – only not for us" (Benjamin, *Selected Writings* 798). As these words suggest, the hope for the coming of the Messiah, which is foretold by the letter of Judaic law, is in Kafka understood in terms of an infinite deferral and the impossibility of completion and fulfilment. I explore how this insight allows readers to better understand the import of stories like "Jackals and Arabs", "The Cares of a Family Man", and "A Crossbreed" in Kafka's oeuvre, while at the same time exploring the

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relationship between such animal figures and the nominally human figures Benjamin refers to, the assistants in Kafka's *The Castle*, for instance. Ultimately, I argue, it is precisely their unfinished character and animal qualities and characteristics that infuse them with "an infinite amount of hope". Because they lack finished form and purpose, they themselves are filled with infinite potential; hence they can claim the "infinite amount of hope" Kafka has in store for them. But if it is precisely their unfinished form that bears the imprint of hope, one may well posit an affiliative link between the "creaturely" and literature itself. The novels, just like the assistants, Odradek, the Crossbreed, Red Peter, Gregor Samsa, and even Blumfeld's bouncy balls, belong to an intermediate world, perpetually waiting to be finished, but also defying finitude; it is for them, too, in such a reading, that there is "an infinite amount of hope".

Though the connection of animality to Jewishness is a crucial dimension of both Kafka and Benjamin's works, this link becomes catastrophically overdetermined after the rise of fascism, wherein it obtains a genocidal valence. The second chapter explores this transition, as reflected in the works of Giorgio Agamben, Primo Levi, and Art Spiegelman and through the defining historical legacy of the Holocaust. Agamben's *Homo Sacer* originally attempts to explore the "logic" of sovereignty and the figure of the *homo sacer*, who cannot be sacrificed but can be killed with impunity. Since the life that is caught in the sovereign ban becomes "sacred" in the original sense, the originary activity of sovereignty is, in Agamben's argument, the production of "bare life". Bare life is the aim of sovereign power, but at the same time the result of the sovereign decision on the state of exception. Sovereign power is, therefore, based on the "exclusive inclusion" of bare life in the state and its first and immediate referent is the *homo sacer* (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 64). For Agamben, the Jew under the Nazi regime became a perfect example of the *homo sacer*, someone who could be killed with impunity, but not sacrificed. Jews were exterminated "as lice" since within them already existed a "capacity to be killed" that is neither religious nor legal per se but, becomes, using Michel Foucault's term, "biopolitical" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 68). This chapter focuses on the importance of first-generation and second-generation Holocaust narratives (more specifically, Primo Levi's *If this is a Man* and *The Truce* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus I* and *II*) within this historical and theoretical framework.

In his two works of witness Levi shows that the prisoners in the Lager had to become animals in order to survive yet retain some sense of human dignity in order to avoid being selected for the gas chambers. At the outer limits of bestialization lies the figure of the *Muselmann*, a limit-figure between the human and the inhuman, or better yet, a space where it is impossible to distinguish one from the other. At the same time, animal figures in Levi's

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writing continue to function, as they had in Kafka, as receptacles of hope, this time hope for the retrieval of a lost humanity and for survival. Just like Emmanuel Levinas' dog Bobby installed in the prisoners a sense of humanity that seemed to have been lost, the horses and other animals in Levi's narrative salvage the possibility of survival in the midst of terror.

The memory of the concentration camp as a space of bestialization but also – and therefore – symbolic significance for figures of the non-human also shapes Art Spiegelman's graphic novel Maus. The novel depicts the writer's interview with his father concerning his experiences as a Polish prisoner in Auschwitz. What is of particular importance for this dissertation is the fact that the different races of humans are depicted as different animals: the Jews as mice, the Germans as cats, the Americans as dogs, and the non-Jewish Poles as pigs. Interestingly enough, Kafka's final story, "Josephine, The Singer or the Mouse Folk", depicts mice as an allegory of the collectivity, while his *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors* contain a series of remarks on the link between Jews and mice, that "mute and noisy race" (Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors* 168). If one takes into account Kafka's relationship to Jewishness as one of linguistic impossibility and his pre-Holocaust ascription to mice of the traits of a "race" and a "collectivity", Spiegelman's focus on mice becomes both historically and intertextually revealing. Indeed, I am arguing that Spiegelman's preoccupation with animal figures and especially with mice must be read both historically in relation to Nazi propaganda and intertextually or affiliatively in conjunction with Kafka's reflections on mice, silence, sound, communication, and community approximately seventy years earlier.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer highlight the fact that the reasoning behind the justification of the brutality and violence used against the Jews is akin to that deployed against women and animals. Women's perceived weakness, Adorno and Horkheimer suggest, links women with Jews and animals under a shared exposure to the violence of domination and oppression, which produces the position of the "master" (race, gender, subject). This link of affiliation between animals and the feminine can already be traced in Kafka, whose female figures appear to be especially revealing in this respect: in *The Trial*, Leni offers K. her webbed, creaturely fingers in an effort to gain his affections. Instead of being repelled, K. appears to be pleased by this sign of animality. The connection of femininity to animality and the sexual pleasure derived from consorting with Leni are indivisibly associated, as Elvira Bennet shows, with K.' s degradation and guilt, and finally with his execution "like a dog" (Kafka, *The Trial* 165). The second part of the dissertation, comprised again of two chapters, focuses on feminist theory and the non-human and explores

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both the patriarchal correlation of femininity and animality and its positive revaluation and resignification within feminist writing.

In the first of these two chapters I turn to the work of Angela Carter focusing specifically on her postmodern revisions of the classical tales of "Beauty and the Beast" and "Little Red Riding Hood"; in her feminist rewritings, Carter exposes the failure of masculinist assumptions about gender, race, and power. In this way, she not only reconfigures readers' expectations and assumptions about the genre of the fairy tale, but also remobilizes its originally transgressive potentiality. In other words, given the co-presence, within the fairy tale, of elements both the patriarchal and the "hetaeric" (Bachofian) worlds, Carter's project is to undermine the operation of patriarchal ideological and interpretive containment, bringing back to the surface of her texts a number of largely buried transgressive and monstrous elements and reconnecting them with their original – if we follow Bachofen – motive force: female agency and female empowerment.

At the turn of the 20th century, the political and philosophical discourse merged questions about femininity and feminism to interrogations about the future of humanity and the utopian/dystopian imaginary. Perhaps the most privileged genre to address questions of the inevitably dystopian future of humanity has been science fiction; many contemporary writers have delved into the futuristic world of bio-technology and militaristic authoritarianism to bring forth their critiques of the present. Tom Moylan and Rafaella Baccolini have asserted that whereas traditional dystopian narratives serve to present the inevitable destruction of the cosmos, contemporary critical dystopias not only offer astute critiques on conventional modes of thinking and authoritarian socio-cultural conditions but also present the oppositional spaces and possibilities from which the next round of political activism can derive imaginative sustenance and inspiration. In fact, critical dystopias present possible hopes and sites of resistance in the midst of dystopian nightmares. The fourth chapter focuses primarily on the works of two of these science fiction authors, Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy and Marge Piercy's *He, She and It*. It thereby addresses the ways in which the two authors question current patriarchal hegemonic discourses and socio-political environments while presenting an alternative utopian future of unhampered inclusion, cooperation, and equality.

In order to aim their works towards a critique of authoritarian presents and dystopian futures, both Pearcy and Atwood revive a subgenre of science fiction that already encloses some of the same ambiguities as the critical dystopia: the Gothic. Whereas most contemporary literary works address external fears of anonymous terrorists, creatures from outer space, or technological and cybernetic annihilation, some contemporary Gothic

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literature, including Atwood and Piercy's, seems to focus on threats that come from *within*, since the danger is not embodied in an external machine-like creature or life form but in the human itself who becomes an internal force of destruction. For the two authors, the Gothic becomes an opportunity to explore instances of otherness that not only inspire varieties of fear and terror but also subvert readers' expectations by hinting, however paradoxically, at a sense of optimism and of faith in the future.

In the first section of this chapter, I therefore argue that with their works, Piercy and Atwood present Yod and the Crakers as figures of the posthuman that embody not only the fears but also the hopes for the future of humanity and all life on the planet. In the second section I analyse the ways in which the writers not only expose the dangerous deceptiveness of traditional origin stories that set white masculine authority at the top of an illusionary hierarchy but also create their own originary narratives based on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the *ur*-text of both the Gothic and the "critical dystopia" and the first fiction on the posthuman. Finally, I interrogate what such feminism asks readers to imagine as a response to the posthuman condition and what the implications – aesthetic, ideological, ontological – of what it asks us to imagine are. In fact, I am suggesting that even though what allows for the possibility of a utopian future is the figure of the posthuman, what manages to overcome the dystopian present and build a utopian future is, for both narratives, women's capacity for innovative thinking, willpower, open-mindedness, tolerance, and adaptability. Essentially, through their constant questioning of the boundaries between utopia and dystopia and the disruption of the rigidity of classifications of gender, class, race, and even species differences, Atwood and Piercy's works serve as a warning toward humanity's impending doom as well as a possibility of what we might become.

While the first and second parts explore the intersections between Judaism and animality and feminism and the posthuman, the third part focuses around questions concerning animality, race, and postcoloniality. Thus, the final chapter addresses the marginalization and oppression of specific groups of people – especially black South Africans and African Americans – based on their racial descent. Indeed, from Aristotle, Euripides, and Thales to pseudoscientific evolutionary theorists of the 18th and 19th centuries, the notion of race was used to mark people's proximity to animals and to justify their marginalization, oppression, exploitation, and eventual extermination. The authors discussed in this part not only question the philosophical discourses that rendered black bodies inferior, primitive, bestial, and savage but also take an ethical stance against authoritarian regimes founded on racial segregation and sanctioned violence.

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The first work that is discussed in this chapter is Bernard Malamud's 1982 novel *God's Grace*. Resonating with the apocalyptic, Sci-Fi and utopian/dystopian elements in Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, Malamud's last work is set in a post-apocalyptic wasteland where Calvin Cohn, the sole survivor, and a group of primates try to co-exist and even create their own civilized, moral, educated utopian enclave. Originally, these apes appear to be primitive and savage, in many ways inferior to both the human Cohn and the genetically enhanced Buz. As a result, Cohn feels it is his obligation, as the last member of a superior species, to teach and train the apes in order for them to acquire human-like behavioural and mental attributes. In other words, the human Cohn takes it upon himself as the last of the species to employ his rational thought, language, creative invention, and moral understanding to "elevate" the apes to something resembling humanity. In essence, the first section of this chapter explores the way Malamud's narrative negotiates the link between Western ideas of human superiority over the other animals (especially the apes, who are traditionally considered humanity's closest relatives) and the white man's often violent attempts to educate and civilize them under the pretence of a God-given mandate.

The second section of this chapter examines the ways in which Malamud (and later J. M. Coetzee) question the Aristotelian distinctions between *logos* and *phone*, which have dominated Western thought for centuries. In Malamud's novel, the asymmetrical distinction between speech and voice not only strengthens the link between sub-humanity and animality but also works as the foundation of a critique against racial discrimination that takes the specific form of the simianization of black bodies. In order to further explore this binary, I also turn to Coetzee's novel *Foe*, a rewriting of Daniel Defoe's 1719 novel *Robinson Crusoe*. In this work, Coetzee presents readers with the figure of Friday, a speechless cannibal, who is Robinson Cruso[e]'s slave and who allegedly had his tongue severed by slave-traders.[1] Soon enough, it becomes apparent that Friday's bestialization and his peculiar position within the narrative are inextricably linked to his status as a nonspeaking character. Nevertheless, even though his silence may be thought of as a sign of oppression or subjugation, passivity or defeat, I argue that in Coetzee's narrative it becomes a sign of conscious resistance to the oppressive power that tries to define him and incorporate him within the narrative of the white male author, Foe. Therefore, I am arguing, neither Coetzee nor his female protagonist Susan can determine, identify, or define the figure of Friday

[1] Defoe's protagonist is called Crusoe whereas Coetzee deliberately calls his rendition of the same character Cruso while his fictionalization of Defoe is the title character named Foe.

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simply because it is through this failure that Friday's silence can gain meaning and agency, opening up its void to the possibility of a justice to-come.

In order to further explore the ways in which Coetzee employs the notion of animality to raise the possibility of restitution and redemption and the conversation surrounding guilt and shame in the aftermath of the Apartheid, the third and final part of this chapter turns to his 1999 novel *Disgrace*. In *Disgrace*, Coetzee narrates the story of David Lurie, an English professor in post-Apartheid South Africa, who loses his job and his reputation when he is implicated in a sexual scandal involving one of his female students. Ashamed and disgraced, Lurie flees to the Eastern Cape on his daughter's farm, where he overstays his welcome. After his daughter is raped by Petrus, the black South-African who takes care of the farm's dogs, Lurie finds himself completely demoralised and broken, but is on his way towards redemption through his work at an animal clinic, putting unwanted animals to sleep. In this final section, therefore, I analyze the ways in which Coetzee's novel negotiates different kinds of shame in the postcolonial context and the ways in which the protagonist is able to deal with them. In a context wherein shame saturates all social relations and modes of relating to self, sexual violence becomes the primary means of perpetuating shame even in the post-Apartheid era. Nevertheless, the situation is not entirely hopeless since the animal becomes an avenue to deal with the multiple narratives of shame the novel mobilizes; in the company of stray, abandoned, and injured dogs who must be put to death, dogs whose death functioned in Kafka as the ultimate expression of shame ("Like a dog!"), Lurie is faced with the possibility of redemption. By witnessing the suffering of the miserable and discarded animal bodies, Lurie takes the time to reflect on and come to terms with his own situation; much like in Kafka, Benjamin, Levi, Agamben, or Spiegelman, therefore, redemption for Coetzee can only be achieved through empathetic affiliation with the suffering, vulnerable, and abject non-human other.

In essence, each literary work discussed in this dissertation explores a different aspect of the human/non-human binary and its link to different modes of oppression – anti-Semitism, sexism, racism and colonialism. Together, they form an initial constellation around which a different literary history might be imagined; one based on an affiliative network of authors and writers whose employment of the non-human throughout their works has sought to interrogate the historico-political and cultural structures that sanctioned the oppression of the other-than-human. Said states that "to recreate the affiliative network is therefore to make visible, to give materiality back to, the strands holding the text to society, author, and culture" (Said 175). In other words, whereas modes of filiation are hereditary, biological, authorially patriarchal, and strictly anthropocentric, modes of affiliation enable

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"the joining together of people in a nongenealogical, nonprocreative but social unity" based on "social and political conviction, economic and historical circumstances, voluntary effort and willed deliberation" (Said 118 & 25). The philosopher claims that "to study affiliation is to study and to recreate the bonds between texts and the world, bonds that specialization and the institutions of literature have all but completely effaced" (Said 175). Evidently, this kind of research is consciously and explicitly adversarial, since it calls for the denunciation of patriarchal hegemony, the status quo, and traditional notions of humanism. Instead of merely exposing and criticizing Western society and culture at specific moments throughout the 20th century, I am arguing that the writers discussed propose the redemptive quality inherent in different modes of affiliation between the human and the non-human. In other words, whereas biological filiation excludes cross-species contamination, this dissertation presents instances where the only path to redemption, resistance, empowerment, and/or utopia is through the non-human. The claim this dissertation ultimately wishes to register is that we need to think of the non-human as the vehicle of expression of these truly adversarial politics, the glue that holds this affiliative network together, creating what Gandhi would call dissident, cross-cultural, collaborative "friendships" that transcend their individual time periods (Gandhi 10).

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Part I: The Jewish Question and the Non-Human

Chapter 1

Animality, Judaism, and Messianic Redemption in the Works of Franz Kafka and Walter Benjamin

There are very few literary writers in whose works animals and other creatures have occupied such a prominent position as in the writings of Franz Kafka. Kafka's vast "zoopoetics" include an array of different creatures: from burrowing animals to mice, insects, apes, jackals and dogs, to humans who have lost their humanity, animals who have lost their animality, mysterious hybrids, or even strange bouncing balls, ghosts and angels; all these fantastic creatures demonstrate Kafka's continued obsession with non-human creatures. As Marc Lucht asserts, these creatures are given the abilities to think, investigate, sing, speak, and burrow their unique ways into the epicenter of the concerns explored in his literature:

> [T]he nature of power, the inescapability of history and guilt, the dangers and promise and strangeness of the alienation endemic to modern life, the human propensity to cruelty and oppression, the limits and conditions of humanity and the risks of dehumanization, the nature of authenticity, family life, Jewishness, and the nature of language and art. (Lucht 3)

Kafka's unique concern for nonhuman animals becomes further evident through a reading of his diaries, biographies, and letters. For example, after espousing vegetarianism, according to his friend and biographer Max Brod, Kafka visited an aquarium in Berlin and reportedly addressed the fish by saying: "Now I can look at you in peace. I don't eat you anymore" (Brod 74). His preoccupation with animals extends even to his dreams: in a "disgusting" dream from December 13th, 1911 Kafka saw a dog lying "on my body, one paw near my face. I woke up because of it but was still afraid for a little while to open my eyes and look at it" (Kafka, *Diaries* 136). In one of his last letters to his fiancé at the time, Felice Bauer, on October 1st, 1917, Kafka points out that his "ultimate aim" is not really to "be good and to fulfil the demands of a Supreme Judgement, but rather very much the contrary": "to know the whole human and animal community, to recognize their basic predilections, desires, moral ideals, to reduce these to simple rules and as quickly as possible trim my behaviour to these rules" (Kafka, *Diaries* 386). Evidently, by exploring a multiplicity of different dimensions of Kafka's incorporation of nonhuman creatures into his work, while focusing primarily on the works of Walter Benjamin, one of Kafka's most prominent

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exegetes, this chapter is an attempt to examine how the notions of tradition, isolation, individuality, community, and, most importantly, messianic redemption, are to be understood in Kafka's extremely dark and enigmatic writing.

Benjamin's and Kafka's lives, however, were connected on a level that did not concern solely their bodies of work, but also their shared experience as Jews in the late 19th – early 20th century. As Clement Greenberg notes, even though much of the strangeness in Kafka's writing has been attributed to his "neurosis" and to his unique personality once the neurosis has been "explained away", "beyond both personality and neurosis there lie more general antecedents and causes" (Greenberg 320). For one thing, there was the literary tradition of writing in the German language – then, there was the past and present of the Jewry of Prague and to that extent, the larger past of all Central and East European Jewry. As Greenberg asserts, "Kafka carried with him a kind of 'racial' memory of the past. Though he was an emancipated Jew, he was still its product and after-effect" (Greenberg 320). Much like Kafka's, Benjamin's work was defined and shaped by his experience as a German-Jewish writer at the dawn of the darkest era Central and East European Jews were to ever experience. In order to fully grasp their complex relationship to Judaism, one needs to initially reflect on the historical background of the situation and self-definition of Jews during their time, as it has an important bearing on the topic.

Centuries of Jewish struggle for emancipation had begun to yield results in the 19th century in Europe and in the 20th century in America. Whereas before, the Jewish populations of the Christian and severely anti-Jewish allied nations of Germany and Austria-Hungary were restricted, confined in ghettos, and overburdened with unbearable taxation, their emancipation gave the Jews complete equality under the eyes of the law and absolute freedom of movement. Of course, as Walter H. Sokel claims in "Kafka as a Jew", this emancipation can be by no means attributed to a change of sentiment towards the Jews but is instead primarily the result of the belief that there were "enormous advantages" in "utilizing their talents" (Sokel 839). Up until that point, Austria-Hungary presented itself as an anachronism to the rapidly modernizing Europe of the turn of the century, since it was "a multinational state, consisting of numerous, mutually antagonistic ethnic groups, all of which wanted to get away from an empire held together by dynasty, army, bureaucracy, the Church, and last – but not necessarily least – its Jews"; undeniably, Jewish emancipation provided the emperor with an opportunity to consolidate the empire (Sokel 839). Along with the financial advantages that such a gesture would facilitate therefore, the Austro-Hungarian empire would be able to benefit from the Jews' resources, their international connections, and above all, "their exclusion from any of the ethnic groups, for the purpose of modernizing

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and unifying the empire" (Sokel 839). At the same time, taking advantage of their desire for belonging, the Jews' emancipation would render them not only very grateful, but also exceedingly loyal subjects with a newfound sense of communal responsibility. Hence, Jewish capitalists would become much more inclined to invest money and resources for the advancement of the state while the empire would be kept together moving towards an age of modernization.

Unsurprisingly, the Austro-Hungarian Jews reacted with much eagerness to this call since, as Gershom Scholem claims in his book *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, their struggle for emancipation was not so much a desire for equal rights as people, as it was a longing for assimilation in the society they lived in. Their enthusiastic response to anti-discriminatory state reforms caused a mass migration from the rural ghettos to the cities so they could start new businesses and rise both socially and economically. In fact, they were so effective in this endeavor that in the popular mind they became a symbol of wealth, prosperity and capitalism. Both Benjamin and Kafka's fathers, like many Jews during that time, focused on financial success, threw themselves at business ventures, and became highly successful. Benjamin's father, Emil Benjamin, an assimilated Ashkenazi Jew, relocated from France to Germany and became a highly successful banker turned antique dealer and businessman. Kafka's father Herman, who had named his son Franz as a token of respect and affection to the Emperor Franz Joseph, moved to Prague – then the capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – and opened a fancy goods store, becoming a prosperous middle-class businessman. Indeed, the Jews dominated the financial world of the Austro-Hungarian and German empires with their single-minded commitment to those occupations that were within their reach, especially banking and business.

Even though this financial success and economic prosperity served as a progressive force in the development of Jewish national society, they came at a very high cost; as Sokel notes,

> [They] were substitutes for lost roots and traditions, compensation for a language, culture, and religious faith that had sustained their ancestors in centuries of persecution, and compensation as well for the lack of that full civic participation which gentile society increasingly withheld from them. (Sokel 842)

The price of Jewish emancipation and assimilation, Scholem likewise asserted, was quite high: "a resolute disavowal of Jewish nationality – a price the leading writers and spokesmen of the Jewish avant-garde were only too happy to pay" (Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* 75). In order to assimilate, therefore, Jews had to make changes in the way they

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dressed, their use of Yiddish, and the performance of their religious practices in order to change people's opinions, in response to popular anti-Semitic views which held that they were a sly, cheap, pale-skinned, and money-loving people. As Sokel notes, Jews sought nothing more than "to forget and wipe out all associations that could implicate them in those despised and therefore odious origins" (Sokel 850). In the explicitly and implicitly anti-Semitic environment in which they lived, they urgently desired to eliminate any reminder of the state from which they came. He adds: "With a scorn bred from near panic, they rejected anything that, or anyone who would threaten to direct attention to their and their families' past" (Sokel 850). This, however, gave rise to a very dangerous and sinister paradox: on the one hand, the Jews were expected and, in a way, commanded to give up their Jewish heritage, while at the same time they were scorned for the ease with which they obliged. Hence, though the self-abnegation of the Jews was "welcomed and indeed demanded", as Scholem notes, it was at the same time perceived as an indication of their "lack of moral substance" (Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* 76). Instead of eliminating their problems and their misery, therefore, their readiness to disavow their "peoplehood" impelled the onset of a new form of anguish: "assimilation did not, as its advocates had hoped, dispose of the Jewish question in Germany; rather it shifted the locus of the question and rendered it all the more acute" (Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* 77).

Thus, despite their constant efforts for assimilation – even at the cost of their own tradition – the Jews' hope for political and social stability proved illusory to say the least. As Scholem asserts, after the formal emancipation and the continuous attempts at integration into European society, the German Jew "was held to blame for his own estrangement or alienation from the Jewish ground that had nourished him, from his own history and tradition, and was blamed even more for his alienation from the bourgeois society that was then in the process of consolidating itself" (Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* 82-83). In essence, the fact that she/he was never really "at home" during a time when "alienation was still a term of abuse", constituted "a powerful accusation" (Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* 83). Though the great majority of Jews "aspired to or claimed a deep attachment to all things German and a sense of being at home" in Germany with great fervor, the majority of Germans were not willing to accept Jews into German society since they were not prepared, as the philosopher asserts, "for the turbulent tempo of this process, which struck them as uncanny" (Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* 83). Hence, the "love affair" between Germans and Jews became severely "one-sided and unreciprocated" (Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* 86). This, along with the continuous financial and intellectual advancement of Jews, fueled the pre-existing anti-Semitic sentiment that was

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beginning to assume disparaging and catastrophic dimensions in the progressively volatile relationship between the Jews and the Germans, only to culminate a few years later into the most catastrophic period of Jewish history. At the same time, as if the majority of Jews had "learned nothing and forgotten much" about the long prehistory of anti-Semitic sentiment, Scholem wryly notes, they "distinguished themselves by an astounding lack of critical insight into their own situation and went about their daily routines pretending not to register the imminent danger that was surrounding them" (Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* 88 & 89).

Kafka's family was a dramatic illustration of the situation at the time: his parents, on the one hand, presented the image of the typical Jewish couple of their region of the world during that time, trying strenuously to assimilate and advance economically "in an environment which provided a deceptive appearance of equality, prosperity, and security, a false picture of social integration which in actuality they did not enjoy", while Kafka, on the other hand, scorned those of his fellow Jews who were more than willing to give up everything in order to assimilate (including his father) and saw himself as an outsider in his own community (Sokel 838). In *A Letter to My Father*, one of the most characteristic and explicit examples of Kafka's revolt against his father's practices, Kafka writes:

> But what sort of religion did I get from you? […] As a child you reproached me for not going often to the temple. I thought I had injured you (not me) through this, and I felt guilty – as I always did, for I was guilty through and through. Later, as a young man, I couldn't understand why you reproached me for not having any Jewish sentiment, given that your religion meant nothing to you: for, unlike you, I couldn't force this nothing into faith (though you told me I should, out of piety). It was truly a nothing as far as I could see: a joke – not even a joke. You went to the temple four times a year, and you were indifferent, you weren't like those who prayed earnestly, your prayers were a formality […] And I yawned and dozed throughout the long hours. (Kafka, *Letter to My Father* 49-50)

Kafka viewed his father's Judaism as the embodiment of a perfunctory, insincere, and egocentric compromise, "a hollow ritualism which enshrined pretense in the place of faith and mistook self-regarding conventionality for a sense of community and tradition" (Sokel 842). The supposed Jewishness of Hermann Kafka only reinforced his son's alienation and finalized his distance from both his father and the rest of the Jewish community. Kafka's novella "The Metamorphosis", one of his most popular pieces, and by his own admission, a text ranking among his best work, could also be interpreted as referring to his own alienation

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from his family and his feelings of shame and repugnance towards them – especially his father – and his community.

An Ape, a Dog, a Mouse, and a Cockroach: Animality, Isolation, and Jewish Tradition

Written in 1915, the novella features the story of hard-working salesman Gregor Samsa, who is transformed one day into a giant insect: "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 75). Introducing Gregor's fused, animal-human identity from the very first line, the novella thrusts readers into a world where it is possible to wake up one morning and find oneself transformed into vermin. In such a world, Gregor's identity becomes a fascinating case study since he maintains, on the one hand, elements from his previous humanity and, on the other, assumes traits from his new, hybrid existence. The events of the story are transmitted to readers by an omniscient narrator who is in a position to present readers with Gregor's train of thought, his feelings, and his intentions regarding both his family and his work. According to the narrator, Gregor can think in a comprehensively "human-like" manner, constantly drawing attention to his own situation. Initially, he goes to sleep hoping that the transformation will pass once he reawakens, but that is simply not the case. He attempts to excuse himself to the porter for not going to work that day, but when he tries to utter the words, "no human voice" comes out: "the words he uttered were no longer understandable" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 85). After the initial shock, he realizes that there is no way to undo his transformation and is overcome with dread. In an effort to facilitate his new state by giving him different foods to taste, his sister Grete triggers his vermin instincts through the tasting of rotten cheese. Later on, the removal of the furniture enables Gregor to become better acquainted with his own body and to exploit his animal mobility; he even finds pleasure in the small act of hanging from the ceiling (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 102). Nonetheless, his transformation is not without its costs: he completely loses the ability to speak, the only thing he can eat is rubbish and decaying food, he is afflicted by "slight attacks of breathlessness", his sight gradually becomes impaired, and the mere sight of him repulses even those closest to him (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 95). He is eventually reduced to an amorphous brown spot that deforms the flowery wallpaper.

Admittedly, the story is beleaguered with ambiguities surrounding its meaning: it can be read either through Gregor's perspective as the tragic tale of a man who lost everything when he was suddenly transformed into an insect, or through the Samsas' perspective as the comic story of a family being pestered by a harmful insect that they eventually get rid of.

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However, it can also be interpreted as the ironic tale of a man who is so oppressed and alienated by his family and their demands and expectations, that he literally turns into an insect; according to Margot Norris, it is "equally an insect's story of noxious humans" (Norris, "Kafka's Hybrids" 21). Even as a human, Gregor was "subjected to rigorously oppressive working conditions by his firm, exploited by a parasitic family that feeds shamelessly off his labor, and tormented by a self-punishing scrupulosity"; these facts rendered him as much a suffering animal before he was transformed into an insect as they did afterwards (Norris, "Kafka's Hybrids" 20). After losing his job by failing to communicate with the clerk in any comprehensible way, Gregor realizes that his family is not as supportive as he might have hoped. In fact, as soon as his family become aware of his metamorphosis their treatment towards him becomes brutal: he is locked in his room, neglected and ignored and is kept hidden from their house guests at all costs. His father, especially, is so appalled by him that he chases him around the house with a broom hissing at him like a venomous snake: "Pitilessly Gregor's father drove him back, hissing and crying 'Shoo!' like a savage […] If only he would have stopped making that unbearable hissing noise! It made Gregor quite lose his head" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 90-91). Eventually, he has apples thrown at him – one of which lodges in his back and starts rotting, infecting his insect-body from the inside; "there was no point in running on, for his father was determined to bombard him" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 109-110). At some point, even his sister turns against him – since she realizes she might have to start working for a living – and implores her parents to dispose of "it": "we must get rid of *it*, we've tried to look after *it* and put up with *it* as far as possible, and I don't think anyone could reproach us in the slightest" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 121; my emphasis). Later on, she tells Gregor's father:

> 'That's the only solution, Father. You must just try to get rid of the idea that this is Gregor. The fact that we've believed it for so long is the root of all our trouble. But how can it be Gregor? If this were Gregor, he would have realized long ago that human beings can't live with such a creature, and he'd have gone away on his own accord. Then we wouldn't have any brother, but we'd be able to go on living and keep his memory in honor. As it is, this creature persecutes us, drives away our lodgers, obviously wants the whole apartment to himself, and would have us all sleep in the gutter. Just look, Father,' she shrieked all at once, 'he's at it again!' And in an access of panic that was quite incomprehensible to Gregor she even quitted her mother, literally thrusting the chair from her as if she would rather sacrifice her mother than stay so near to Gregor, and rushed behind her father, who also

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> rose up, being simply upset by her agitation, and half spread his arms out as if to protect her. (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 122-123)

The ending to this story is particularly ambiguous since one cannot be sure if it is nightmarish or happy. Soon after his sister's outburst, Gregor realizes that the best thing to do is simply give up and die, since he soon becomes unable to move his limbs, the pain from his injuries slowly subsides, and the rotting apple in his back along with the inflamed area around it are covered in soft, moldy dust. Gregor's eventual death is presented as a selfless act of extreme love for his family, a sacrifice: he thinks of his family with love and tenderness, so "the decision that he must disappear was one that he held to even more strongly than his sister, if that were possible" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 124). He remains in this state of "vacant and blissful meditation" until the clock strikes three in the morning, at which point "his head sank to the floor of its own accord and from his nostrils came the last faint flicker of his breath" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 124). This is unquestionably one of the most moving passages of the novella – and perhaps even of Kafka's entire body of work. Soon after that, however, during their first stroll since Gregor's death, the family appears to be relieved, joyous, and even hopeful over their new-found "freedom": "Leaning comfortable back in their seats they canvassed their prospects for the future, and it appeared on closer inspection that these were not all bad, for the jobs they had got […] were all three admirable and likely to lead to better things later on" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 128). While talking about their visions and the new apartment they would now purchase, the parents suddenly realize that Grete "bloomed into a pretty girl with a good figure" and that it "would soon be time to find a good husband for her" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 128).

On the one hand, Frederic Jameson focuses on a rather optimistic reading of the ending; in his essay "Kafka's Dialectic", the philosopher asserts that with Gregor's death and eventual disappearance "the very tonality of the novella is transformed" and "the world is reborn": "from death we shift to life, the springtime, the walk in the country, the very rebirth of the daughter herself" (Jameson 98). Thus, as Jameson maintains, "what should have been a study in unrelieved dreariness becomes a joyous and redemptive celebration of life itself" (Jameson 98). Even though the ending could be read as a tragic instance of the unjust murder of Gregor through indifference and malice, it is transformed, Jameson asserts, to "the most euphoric and paradisal moment in Kafka, a vision of a new heaven and earth" (Jameson 98). On the other hand, however, the disturbing images of Gregor being shoveled away like garbage by the cleaning lady and the family's casual stroll permeated by their evident joy over their liberation from his existence and their new prospects for the future, render Gregor's motives for sacrificing himself rather naïve and entirely unappreciated. In

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fact, these images only highlight the readers' feelings of abhorrence towards the family and reinforce the narrator's idea that "family duty required the suppression of disgust and the exercise of patience, nothing but patience" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 110).

In the same essay, Jameson maintains that "Kafka's stories fatally lend themselves to interpretation, which is not only the question about what they mean, but also and even more fundamentally, what they are about" (Jameson 96). Jameson summarizes conventional interpretations of Kafka narrowing down their deeper subject matter into three options: "the Oedipus complex or at least the guilt of subalternity; bureaucratic dictatorship or the dystopia of modernity; or, finally, God and our relationship to him or to his absence" (Jameson 96). Effortlessly, these three levels can be overlaid and merged into one: "authority now staged as the father, the state, or God himself" (Jameson 96). Indeed, "The Metamorphosis" appears to be no exception since it could be about Kafka's ambiguous relationship with his own father and family, his anxiety and insecurity over non-belonging to either his family or his community, and his desire for disappearance. More specifically, Kafka, like Gregor, harbored a deep aversion towards his father and his practices while at the same time he felt trapped and unable to breathe or move in his environment. Trying desperately to please his strong and overbearing father, Kafka took on an ordinary, though well respected, job at the Worker's Accident Insurance Institute, even though he deeply despised it. According to Hannah Arendt, "possibly because he really was something like a genius", Kafka "was quite free of the genius mania of his environment, never claimed to be a genius and ensured his financial independence by taking a job at the Prague's workmen's compensation office" (Arendt, "Introduction" 26). It was for Kafka a "running start for suicides", as though he was forced to "earn" his "grave" through a job he loathed but which nonetheless provided him with a lot of free time to focus on his writing (Arendt, "Introduction " 27). As if waiting every day to be transformed into a repugnant insect himself, in his self-imposed isolation, Kafka felt that he alone "was cursed" to sense the volatility of the situation regarding Jewish assimilation at the time, while the rest of the community, and above all his parents, were blithely and willfully ignorant of all threats (Sokel 842).

Contrary to Kafka, Benjamin was always unable to make ends meet, lived at home on monthly stipends from his parents, and his doctoral study on German Tragic Drama was rejected for being incomprehensible. His father viewed him as somewhat of a disappointment and their relationship was "extraordinarily bad" (Arendt, "Introduction" 26). Unaware of – or better yet intentionally oblivious to – the tremendous threat that the rise in anti-Semitic sentiment posed, both Kafka's as well as Benjamin's fathers longed for their sons to have steady jobs in order to make an honest living and they were unable to understand

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or accept their sons' search for intellectual – and not simply material – nourishment. In other words, the fact that many Jewish intellectuals of the younger generation were concerned with preoccupations that surpassed the material need for making money deeply disappointed their fathers, who viewed this as a mere excuse to be idle and not make an honest living. At the same time, faced with their fathers' disappointments, many young intellectuals found the opportunity to question their fathers' notions of tradition and religion the only way they knew how: through their writings.

Given this problematic and frustrating situation, neither Benjamin nor Kafka wanted to embrace the Judaism passed on by their parents, or even espouse Jewish tradition as it manifested itself at the time. This rejection of Judaism as it was "handed down" by their parents and the constant oscillation between doubt and faith did not occur because the two thinkers believed in the misguided notion of bourgeois "progress" and the automatic disappearance of anti-Semitism, nor because they were too assimilated or too estranged from Jewish tradition, but rather "because all traditions and cultures as well as all 'belonging' had become equally questionable to them" (Arendt, "Introduction" 36). Arendt, whose own Judaism and sense of belonging was also particularly contentious, made famous one of Kafka's quips about his Jewish contemporaries: "My people, provided that I have one" (Kafka quoted in Arendt, "Introduction" 36). In a diary entry written in 1914 Kafka unambiguously articulates his aversion towards the Jewish community, wondering: "What have I in common with Jews? I have hardly anything in common with myself and should stand very quietly in a corner, content that I can breathe" (Kafka, *Diaries* 252). Robert Alter maintains that Jewish intellectuals at the time, and most prominently Kafka and Benjamin, "saw the new century in which they had come of age as an era in which the old sustaining structures of belief, value, and community had been shattered" (Alter 21). This might explain the note of melancholic contemplation and personal despair that manifests itself so unequivocally in Benjamin's and Kafka's writings respectively, since they portray a dark and depressing world at a moment when Judaism was finding itself in dissolution and decay.

Evidently, these feelings of dissatisfaction and disappointment, expressed through several of their works, were shared by a great number of Jewish intellectuals at the time, giving rise to what had since the 1870s or 1880s been called the Jewish question in German-speaking Central Europe. As Arendt asserts, "today this question has been washed away, as it were, by the catastrophe of European Jewry and is justly forgotten", partly because it solely concerned the Jewish intelligentsia and had no significance for the majority of Central European Jewry (Arendt, "Introduction" 30). For Kafka, Benjamin, Karl Kraus and many other Jewish intellectuals of their generations, however, the Jewish question was exceedingly

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important since their own Jewishness – "which played hardly any role in their spiritual household" – regulated their social lives to a great extent and thus, "presented itself to them as a moral question of the first order" (Arendt, "Introduction" 30). In a letter to Scholem, Benjamin, on the one hand, defined the Jewish question as "a major part of the vulgar anti-Semitic as well as Zionist ideology"; however, it would be rather simplistic and indeed misleading to attribute these feelings merely to the anti-Semitic milieu of the time and thus to an expression of Jewish self-loathing. According to Arendt, what gave Benjamin's and Kafka's criticism its bitter sharpness "was never anti-Semitism as such, but the reaction to it of the Jewish middle class, with which the intellectuals by no means identified" (Arendt, "Introduction" 32). Kafka, on the other hand, rightly identified the Jewish question as the point of inspiration for many German-Jewish intellectuals at the time who aspired to become writers – and indeed writers in German – within a culture that could never accept them. Since German was their language, literature meant above all literature mediated to them through German; but German culture, Sokel notes, "had become thoroughly impregnated with a nationalist and racist ideology, a substitute religion, in which anti-Semitism played a dominant part" (Sokel 844). Consequently, in their attempt to flee from their Jewish "families" towards German culture, they essentially traded "one alienation to another even worse" (Sokel 844). In a letter to Max Brod, Kafka provides one of his most often referenced extracts: "the despair over it [Jewish question] was their [German-Jewish writers'] inspiration – an inspiration as respectable as any other but fraught, upon closer examination, with distressing peculiarities" (Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors* 289). Therefore, such writers oscillated "among three impossibilities […]: the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German and the impossibility of writing differently" (Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors* 289). Kafka concludes that "one could almost add a fourth impossibility: the impossibility of writing for this despair was not something that could be mitigated through writing", but was indeed the inspiration behind writing (Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors* 289). Scholem notes that writers like Kafka "did not fool themselves. They knew that they were German writers – but not Germans. They never cut loose from that experience and the clear awareness of being aliens, even exiles […] They truly came from foreign parts and knew it" (Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* 191). In order to explore Kafka's reflections on Judaism and Judaic assimilation, we need to turn to some of Kafka's animal stories, but not before raising the fundamental link between Jewishness and animality even before Nazi propaganda and the extermination of Jews in mid-20th century Europe.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer maintain that in the course of European history, "the idea of the human being has been expressed in contradistinction to the animal"; the latter's alleged lack of language, consciousness and/or self-consciousness and of the ability to transmit culture attested to the former's dignity and superiority (Adorno and Horkheimer 203). In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno asserts that the animal delineates the limits of the human, operating as the alterity of humanity and as the threatening possibility of a disturbing inhumanity. Following Adorno's thought, Derrida notes that man's sovereignty or mastery over nature is in truth "directed against animals" (Derrida, *Paper Machine* 180). Adorno, Derrida notes, seems to be blaming Kant[2] for not allowing any place in his concepts of "dignity" and "autonomy" of man to any sense of compassion between man and the animal: "Nothing is more odious to Kantian man, says Adorno, than remembering a resemblance or affinity between man and animality" (Derrida, *Paper Machine* 180). During his discussion of Kant, Adorno makes a very bold leap, liking the role that animals play for the Kantian "idealist system" to the role the Jews play in a fascist regime. According to Derrida, "Animals are the Jews of idealists, who are thus just virtual fascists. Fascism begins when you insult an animal, including the animal in man. Authentic idealism consists in insulting the animal in man or in treating a man like an animal" (Derrida, *Paper Machine* 181). Through his reading of Adorno's study on Kant, Derrida reminds readers that since animals highlight the structure of alterity and are thought as inferior to man, animal metaphors are used in every discourse surrounding the dominant forms of oppression, such as anti-Semitism.

Ironically, the Jews' rigorous efforts to assimilate into European modernity only reinforced their inferior status in the eyes of anti-Semitic propaganda since mimesis was a testament of primitiveness. In his article "Of Mice and Mensa", Jay Geller asserts that the Jews' imitation of European manners was perceived as a "mediation made necessary by primitive linguistic skills" and their assimilation was "but an extension of this penchant for mimetic gesturing" (Geller 368). Basing their suppositions on Darwin's observations on

[2] Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), a fundamental figure in modern philosophy, synthesized early modern rationalism and empiricism. According to Michael Rohlf's entry in the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Kant's "critical philosophy" — especially his three Critiques: the Critique of Pure Reason (1781, 1787), the Critique of Practical Reason (1788), and the Critique of the Power of Judgment (1790) — revolves around the notion of "human autonomy". In effect, Kant maintains that the general laws of nature that structure all our experience originate in human understanding; and that moral law, which is our basis for belief in freedom, God, and immortality depend on human reason. Hence, notions such as morality, ethics, scientific knowledge and religious belief are based on the same foundation of "human autonomy", "which is also the final end of nature according to the teleological worldview of reflecting judgment that Kant introduces to unify the theoretical and practical parts of his philosophical system" (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant/).

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nonhuman – albeit natural – mimesis, anti-Semitic writings solidified their connection between Jewishness and animalistic mimicry: Jews possessed the animalistic talent for imitation in order to ensure their survival and conceal their presence in a hostile world. The results of this kind of propaganda, according to Geller, were twofold:

> On the one hand, when analogies were drawn between the adaptations of animals to their environment (as described by Darwin) and Jewish assimilation into European society, natural, value-free, animal behavior was equated with typical Jewish deceit. On the other hand, Darwin's work was a primary source for analogies between the Jews and those tiny animals that camouflage or otherwise hide themselves among us – insects, vermin, rodents. (Geller 369)

Indeed, Austro-Hungarian and Jewish anti-Semitic political propaganda referred to Jews as "dogs", "mice", "vermin", "roaches", and "lice". Geller identifies several examples from German and Austrian political publications written around Kafka's time that particularly embody this notion: In his *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben*, written in 1911, and his even more controversial *Zukunft der Juden* (1912), historical economist Werner Sombart claimed that the assimilation of Jews would ruin the character of Western people because Jews were *Duckmäuser*, sly and cowardly like mice. Geller traces this dehumanizing gesture further back, approximately thirty years earlier, with German publicist and agitator Wilhelm Marr – the man who coined and popularized the term "antisemitism" – and his *Golden Rats and Red Mice*, representing Jewish capitalists as golden rats and members of the purportedly Jewish social democratic movement as red mice. Geller asserts that "the association of Jews and mice actually dates to medieval church inscriptions" and provides the example of an inscription on a wall of the Freising cathedral that reads: "As surely as the mouse never eats the cat so surely can the Jew never a true Christian become" (Geller 376). Under this light, considering both the depiction of Jews as animals in anti-Semitic propaganda and the centrality of animals and other non-human creatures in his works, some of Kafka's animal stories such as "A Report to an Academy", "Josephine, The Singer or the Mouse Folk", and "Investigations of a Dog", could be interpreted as reflections of the author's criticism towards the insufficiency of the Jews' social and religious practices in their attempt to assimilate, as well as his own feelings of loneliness, isolation, and eventual distance from the Jewish community at the time and his dissatisfaction and anxiety over the impossible position of non-belonging to either community.

In "A Report to an Academy", written and published in 1917, Kafka writes the story of the self-description of an ape, Rotpeter (Red Peter) who, after his capture somewhere in

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the West African jungle, becomes acquainted with behavior according to European standards: he first imitates the manners of the crew of the ship transporting him and later acquires all the features of civility, intellect, and even rational learning of his teachers. This renders him able to tell his story at a meeting of scientists, describing his journey towards humanity and his current in-between state of hybridity. Through Rotpeter's narration of his subjection to his human captors, one can identify three stages in his path to assimilation, which result in shaping his eventual identity. Rotpeter begins his narration with a rather detailed reference to the way he was pursued, tracked, and finally captured by the human hunters: "A hunting expedition sent out by the firm of Hagenbeck […] had taken its position in the bushes by the shore when I came down for a drink at evening among apes" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 196). The hunters – hired guns from a company – track the apes, hunt them down and shoot them in order to capture them. This is the first form of subjection and the first stage in Rotpeter's submission to his human captors: through the use of brute, physical force and weapons, the animal is hunted, captured and caged in order to be experimented on later.

The second stage of Rotpeter's assimilation comes in the form of the naming of the animal by his human captors: Rotpeter receives his name as an allusion to the "large, naked, red scar" on his cheek made from the first bullet that hit him during his pursuit (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 196). This link between name and scar is significant. In *The Animal that Therefore I Am,* Jacques Derrida maintains that the naming of the animal by humans is a violent act that bears witness to the animal's subjection. The power of language to name becomes the divinely granted power of Man over animals. Derrida argues that Adam's God-given privilege to name the animals in the narrative of Genesis constitutes an act of foundational violence: "God destines the animals in an experience of the power of man in action, in order to see the power of man in action, in order to see the power of man at work, in order to see man take power over all the living beings" (Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am* 16). By combining an apostolic name (Peter) with the aspect of his animality that is an explicit evidence of his subjection to the humans – the red patch on his cheek left by the bullet wound – Rotpeter's very name encompasses the two battling natures inside him: the religiously and hence culturally inflected human and the animal. Red Peter's naming, which arises as the result of the first stage of submission, is a sign of violence no less brutal for not being physical. Rotpeter himself despises his name since he finds that his life as an ape belongs to his distant past, a past that he cannot even remember at this point: "To put it plainly […] your life as apes, gentlemen, insofar as something of that kind lies behind you, cannot be further removed from you than mine is from me" (Kafka, *Collected*

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Stories 195). The name he was given bears witness not only to his subjection by the humans, but also to the fact that he is an animal that has been deprived of its animality. He thinks it is "a horrible name, utterly inappropriate, which only some ape could have thought of" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 196). In an ironic reversal here, Kafka subverts the previous statement: while Red Peter's self-distancing makes him no less human than his interlocutors, his interlocutors themselves belong to a species that is no less ape-like than apes; a species so crude as to have given him a name "only an ape could have thought of".

The third and final stage of his assimilation comes in the form of "brainwashing": Rotpeter is trained to relinquish his animal nature, to act like a human, to put on clothing, hide his nakedness and socially behave in a humanly acceptable manner. This is perhaps the most insidiously violent of the three forms of subjection, since Rotpeter is now trapped in an in-between stage of hybridity, not belonging either to the human realm (given his animal appearance) or to the animal (given his humanized intellect). Following the hunt and the naming of the animal, the human scientists have now assumed an "educational" role and have taken it upon themselves to teach Rotpeter humanity. They experiment on Red Peter "in order to see" what he will do and whether he will be able to act "like" a human, even though he will never be able to fully become one. Readers become witnesses to just how effective the experiment – or Rotpeter's performance for that matter – actually is, during the final part of his report; Rotpeter tells the Academy that when he comes home from banquets, from scientific societies, or from social gatherings in someone's home (namely, from his human responsibilities), a small half-trained female chimpanzee is waiting for him so he can take his pleasure with her "as apes do" (Kafka 204). He admits however that during the day he does not want to see her, "for she has the insane look of the bewildered half-broken animal in her eye; no-one else sees it, but I do and I cannot bear it" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 204). Evidently, Rotpeter recognizes the animality within him which has never completely gone away, despite his extensive training. On the other hand, he recognizes in these feelings of disgust towards the female of his own species his own, newly acquired humanity: he is disgusted and ashamed because he does not want to admit kinship with the animal. Thus, Rotpeter is an individual who becomes doubly isolated: once, from humanity that he is indeed alien to, not only because of species difference but of the history of his subjection and twice, from the ape family that he has outgrown and left behind, inhabiting in that nether zone between humanity and apishness.

It becomes obvious that Kafka's choice of the ape as his protagonist is a conscious and intentional decision on the writer's part since, as Burkhard Müller asserts, "Kafka has chosen a chimpanzee, man's closest relative among the animals": "The distance between the

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two species is so small, it has been suggested, that they might both belong to the same genus" (Müller 105). At the same time, it is important to note that even though Rotpeter's assimilation to humanity is presented at times in terms of an "evolution", it signifies, according to Norris, the loss of innocence: "becoming human, the *sapiens* acquired by the ape takes the form of wily intelligence, an originally 'doubled' rationality, a linguistic and rhetorical (rather than integumentary) camouflage" (Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* 68). As a result of his new-found "wily intelligence", Rotpeter realizes that his only "way out" is by mimicking human behavior: "I repeat: there was no attraction for me in imitating human beings; I imitated them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 203). Admittedly, Red Peter proves to be an excellent subject in imitating human behavior – perhaps too good for his own good – since he quickly learns how to smoke, drink alcohol, and spit until he successfully manages to appropriate, as he sarcastically notes, "the cultural level of an average European" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 204). According to Naama Harel. "here human existence is described ironically" since the differences between an average European and an ape are roughly reduced to smoking, drinking, and spitting; "humanity", she asserts, "is identifiable in the story by images connected with vice and trickery" (Harel 61). Evidently, Rotpeter's does not describe his assimilation in positive terms; as Harel asserts, "he was not illuminated, and even after he discovered a few aspects of the human experience, he is not enthusiastic about continuing to explore it" (Harel 61). Rather, becoming human, or, more precisely, mimicking human behavior was a matter of survival since conversion to humanity was his best option; "No, freedom was not what I wanted. Only a way out; right or left, or in any direction" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 199). As Müller rightly asserts, "humanity [is] added on to the animal's basic existence like a saddle put on its back" (Müller 104).

At the same time, Rotpeter's apishness now appears to him to be rather primitive, even savage, a situation which he cannot bear; however, this renders his imitation of the humans constitutive of his identity. To make matters even more complex, as Norris maintains, "as part of Rotpeter's devious strategy of narrating his victimization as a triumph, he resorts to a technique of appropriating violence to art and science, that is, to culture and reason" (Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* 70). Evidently, his most brilliant mimetic performance is the report to the academy itself, since it becomes a theatre in which "violence is rational, and it consists in its own negation of violence" (Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* 71). While Rotpeter eloquently disavows his own pain and suffering, his rather abusive relationship with the female ape serves as the final stage of his assimilation to humanity, since abusing females and non-human animals is presented as a distinct feature of

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human behavior. The realization that he inhabits the dual position of victim/victimizer, allows readers to glimpse at "a mask behind the mask" (Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* 72). As Norris asserts, "Rotpeter is to the academy as the chimpanzee is to him" (Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* 72). His *Ausweg*, however, namely, his "way out", can only be achieved if he maintains his performance: he must "not only camouflage himself as a non-victim", disavowing, or better yet consciously ignoring, the history of violence and subjugation he has experienced, but he must "also camouflage his audience as nonvictimizers in his imitation of them" providing them with "the cultural and rational motives consistent with the self-congratulatory vanity that allowed post-Darwinian man to consider himself the pinnacle of creation" (Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* 72 & 70). This use of cunning and flattery in order to achieve his goals, however, clearly indicates that Rotpeter's assimilation is no longer merely an act of imitation in order to secure his survival, but rather an integral and intrinsic aspect of his newly-formed and now partially assimilated identity.

Undeniably, "A Report to an Academy" can be interpreted as referring to the isolation of a number of Jewish intellectuals, and especially Kafka himself, from both the Jewish community and the Austro-Hungarian and German empires in which European Jews had to live in. At the same time, it can be read as an allegory of the journey of the Jewish community towards emancipation and assimilation – a journey riddled with violence, oppression and a false sense of accomplishment – and their placement in a space of in-betweenness, of non-belonging. While it has become one of Kafka's most popular works, "A Report to an Academy" has also been considered as a compositional "stepping stone" to other texts such as "Josephine, The Singer or the Mouse Folk" and "Investigations of a Dog" that not only negotiate the isolation of an individual from the community and the reasons behind it, but also describe the communities as such and the reasons why they persevere (Müller 106).

Written in March 1924, "Josephine, The Singer or the Mouse Folk" ("*Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse*") is Kafka's last story and can be interpreted as referring to the apparent failure of the Jewish community to assimilate in a Western society structured around relations of power, to the isolation of some Jewish intellectuals and their inability to embrace Jewish tradition and religion, and to unease with traditional notions of Judaism and law. Interestingly, the narrator of this story is not Josephine herself, but a member of the mouse folk speaking on behalf of the community and viewing Josephine as both part of the collective while, at the same time, as both part of the collective and as an isolated singularity. This enables the speaker to describe the mice community and the ways in which the

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community perceives and treats Josephine and her singing and not so much Josephine's thoughts on her treatment by the community. At the same time, it enables a kind of "narrative layering" which, according to Andrea Baer, gives rise to different levels of performativity: "Josephine sings to her public, which responds to her act in dramatic ways; the narrator tells his tale to yet another audience; and Kafka works behind the curtains to create the acts of Josephine, the folk, and its storyteller" (Baer 139).

From the very beginning, the narrator describes the mouse folk as an industrious, hardworking community (*ein Arbeitsvolk*) which works daily for the collective good and has no time to waste on trivialities such as music or art: "our life is hard, we are no longer able, even on occasions when we have tried to shake off the cares of daily life, to rise to anything so high and remote from our usual routine as music" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 233). It is important to note that in Kafka's *Diaries*, there are several remarks on the Jews' indifference to art and, more specifically, to folk theatre – a "lack of interest" that Kafka found utterly "incomprehensible" (Kafka, *Diaries* 168). In Kafka's eyes, the people around him looked like "coarse, savage beings who could not be appeased" and were characterized by "sheer ignorance" (Kafka, *Diaries* 172). Similarly, the mouse folk are "not in general a music-loving race" and Josephine the singer is "the sole exception" since "she has a love for music and knows too how to transmit it" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 233). Indeed, the narrator explicitly admires Josephine's singing, all the while establishing her distance from the mouse folk, since she "is the only one" and "when she dies, music – who knows for how long – will vanish from our [their] lives" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 233). Josephine's mouse folk are unable to fully understand what Josephine is up to, sometimes calling her singing "nothing out of the ordinary", at other times suggesting that it resembles "a kind of piping", (an activity that can be performed by all the mice: not a skill but a "characteristic expression of life"), and ultimately reducing it to the meaningless act of cracking nuts in public (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 234). Hence, the mice's attitudes towards Josephine and her singing are highly ambivalent. On the one hand, the whole "assembly of the people" come together and huddle together before her "in mouselike stillness" as if they "had become partakers in the peace" they long for after a troublesome time, or if they are drinking hastily from a "cup of peace in common before the battle" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 240, 235 & 240). On the other hand, the narrator suggests that Josephine's singing is not the reason that the mouse audience is filled with stillness and concentration burying its face in the "neighbor's fur"; rather, her piping appears to be "a mere nothing in voice, a mere nothing in execution" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 241). For the narrator, this "mere nothing" both provides proof that Josephine is not really a singer and marks the ground of her appeal to the "people": "a really

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trained singer, if ever such a one should be found among us, we could certainly not endure at such a time and we should unanimously turn away from the senselessness of any such performance" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 241).

As the narrative unfolds it becomes apparent, however, that the story is as much – if not more – about an unnamed danger that surrounds the mouse folk as it is about Josephine. This becomes especially evident when the narrator attempts to explain the reasons why the mice attend Josephine's performances when it is so blatantly obvious that they think them meaningless: as he explains, the mouse folk do not gather round Josephine so much to enjoy her performance, but rather to "relax and stretch" themselves "at ease in the great, warm bed of the community" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 243). In times of great tension and peril, when the mice huddle around Josephine in order to feel the safety and comfort of the community, only the very young are interested in her singing as such because they have not yet fully immersed themselves in the demands of everyday livelihood and are still unaware of the dangers that encircle them. As the narrator asserts, life in the mouse community is such that

> a child, as soon as it can run about a little and distinguish one thing from another, must look after itself just like an adult; the areas on which, for economic reasons, we have to live in dispersion are too wide, our enemies too numerous, the dangers lying everywhere in wait for us too incalculable. (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 242)

Thus, children cannot be sheltered from "the struggle for existence" since that would surely lead them to an "early grave". In a sense, he explains, their lack of musical gifts might have something to do with the fact that as a race the mice are "prematurely old": the troubles of everyday existence rid them of their youth and they become "all at once grown-up" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 243). As a result, staying grown-up too long leaves them with a sense "of weariness and hopelessness" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 243). The people have become "too old for music" since "its excitement, its rapture" do not suit their heaviness; even if there are talents among the people – and the narrator is not denying of that possibility – the "character" of the mouse folk "would suppress them before they could unfold" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 243). Thus, the mouse folk neither acknowledge Josephine's demand for exemption from work, nor bother to disprove the assumptions on which it is based; they quietly refuse it, going about their daily routines as usual. Eventually, the community's rejection and dismissal lead Josephine to disappear, to desert the mouse folk entirely and inevitably "die into silence" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 250).

Contrary to Rotpeter's narrative, where he explicitly names the physical danger he was under, the narrator of "Josephine" frequently hints at a danger looming around the

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mouse community, a threat that is always present even though it is never explicitly mentioned or examined by those it concerns; it is as if everybody is well aware of the danger but it has become such an integral part of everyday life that it is mentioned casually in conversation. Kafka himself recognized fairly well the feelings of constant insecurity and eminent danger: growing up, the young Kafka could sense – though he was not fully aware of yet – the deep-seated inconsistency between the illusion of stability and the reality of alienation and the threat of potential violence. In fact, when he was only 14 years old, Kafka lived through his first extremely violent pogrom by the Czech populace in Prague, a circumstance that the young author found exceedingly disturbing and traumatizing. In a letter to his non-Jewish girlfriend, Milena, in July 1920, Kafka wrote: "But there is one thing: When you talk about the future, don't you sometimes forget that I'm Jewish? (*jasné, nezapletenég*) Even at your feet [a reference to the crouching posture like an animal's perhaps] Jews and Judaism remain dangerous" (Kafka, *Letters to Milena* 116). Undoubtedly, Sokel asserts, Kafka "felt a hopeless split between what seemed to be solid ground under his feet and the suspicion that things were really not holding together very well and might fly apart at any moment" (Sokel 838). In a later letter to Milena written in mid-November 1920, Kafka describes three different occasions when he felt threatened: one afternoon walking in the streets of Prague, which were "wallowing in anti-Semitic hate"; another day when he heard someone call Jews a "mangy race" and contemplated: "Isn't it natural to leave a place where one is so hated? (Zionism or national feeling isn't needed for this at all). The heroism of staying on is nonetheless merely the heroism of cockroaches which cannot be exterminated, even from the bathroom"; and a third occasion when he looked out the window and saw "mounted police, gendarmes with fixed bayonets, a screaming mob dispersing", and from his window he felt the "unsavory shame of living under constant protection" (Kafka, *Letters to Milena* 213). Obviously, it is difficult to ascertain whether Kafka meant the story to be read as an allegory of the Jews' willful ignorance of the anti-Semitism of the time, with the mouse community representing the Jewish community which focuses on the routine of daily life unquestioningly and with himself (or other Jewish intellectuals at the time) occupying the position of someone who is different and ends up misunderstood and ostracized by the rest of community. What is certain, however, according to Burkhard Müller is that the story casts a sharp, analytical, and almost sociological glance at the interdependence between the constitution of a *Volk* and the practice of exclusion (Müller 111).

Along with "Josephine, The Singer or the Mouse Folk", the term *Volk* is most central in another of Kafka's stories, "Investigations of a Dog". In this story, written in 1922 and

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published posthumously, a dog finds himself – assuming it is a male dog – in a world beyond the empirical one and attempts to employ rational and quasi-scientific ways to decipher basic existentialist and ontological questions that the rest of the community are comfortable leaving unanswered. At the same time, contrary to the previous story's third-person perspective, the dog's first-person narration "inadvertently" describes the dog community (*Volk*) as he experiences it presenting the ways in which he is rendered an outsider with regard to his fellow dogs. According to Matthew T. Powell, the dog seeks to answer "the fundamental questions of a canine existence" and to address "the narrative account of his inquiries to dogdom" (Powell 135). From the very beginning, the story reads like a parody of human anthropocentrism: the narrator admits to once having been a member of the canine community and is convinced that careful and systematic investigation into the "race of dogs" is the key to an understanding of all reality, since "all knowledge, the totality of all questions and all answers, is contained in the dog" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 432). All that the narrator cares for is – and can only ever be – the race of dogs, "for what is there actually except our own species?" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 432). If only all the members of the dog community could collaborate in order to find answers to these questions, then they might be able to liberate themselves from what the narrator calls "this world of falsehood" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 456).

Continuing in this playfully ironic mode, the narrator asserts that "the hardest bones, containing the richest marrow, can be conquered only by a united crunching of all the teeth of all dogs" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 434), a statement which is reminiscent of human calls to concerted action towards some "high" purpose. Therefore, despite his peculiarities that set him apart from the rest of his species, he realizes that "dogdom is in every way a marvelous institution", with all the dogs attempting to satisfy their "communal impulse" by attempting to find the great bliss of "being together" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 421). This renders the notion of community as an end synonymous with happiness and safety. As he asserts, "[o]ne can safely say that we all live together in a literal heap, all of us, different as we are from one another on account of numberless and profound modifications which have arisen in the course of time" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 421). In spite of their distinctions of kind, of class, and of occupation – distinctions that are too vast to number comprehensively and that more often than not estrange them from one another – the dogs hold firmly to laws that "are not those of the dog world, but are actually directed against it" in order to maintain group cohesion, like the Jews whom anti-Semitism served to lump together despite other differences (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 422). The fact that rules and regulations are imposed on the dog community from an outside force, along with the fact that the dogs themselves

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follow these laws blindly without questioning their origins or their meaning, render the protagonist's quest extremely challenging and even impossible.

The canine investigator begins his inquiries with the simplest of things, such as "what the canine race nourished itself upon" or "whence does the earth procure this food" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 430). To his great delight, the conclusions to some of the questions are in accordance with his comrades' beliefs: this is the way things are according to "dog law" and there is "nothing else that is fundamental to be said on the question" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 430). Regarding other questions, however, he realizes that his inquiries need more investigating and "scientific" experimentation necessitating his withdrawal during feeding time and his refusal of nourishment. Soon enough, he realizes that he is indeed separated from his fellow dogs not merely by a short stretch, but "by an infinite distance"; it is as if he would not die by hunger itself but by their complete neglect and indifference (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 455). Thus, his quest to find answers proves to be extremely challenging, even impossible, given the fact that his fellow dogs have no interest in asking any questions. In fact, the questions he poses "did not please them and were generally looked on as stupid" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 431). His fellow dogs, as he asserts, "thrive on silence": willfully ignorant of how the world around them works, they go about their daily routines barking and greeting each other, "stubbornly resisting" these questions, "dour out of fear" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 440, 441 & 433).

Having detected this problematic situation within his community, the narrator feels isolated, as if he is the only one who can detect a situation that should be blatantly obvious to all:

> Why do I not do as the others: live in harmony with my people and accept in silence whatever disturbs the harmony, ignoring it as a small error in the great account, always keeping in mind the things that bind us happily together, not those that drive us again and again, as though by sheer force, out of our social circle. (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 422)

Discontented and uneasy to such an extent that he abandons the dog community entirely to live in "distant isolation", the narrator is filled with anxiety and shame with the fact that he was indeed part of the dog community:

> When I think back and recall the time when I was still a member of the canine community, sharing in all its preoccupations, a dog among dogs, I find on close examination that from the very beginning I sensed some discrepancy, some little maladjustment, causing a slight feeling of discomfort which not even the most decorous public functions could eliminate; more, that

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> sometimes, no, not sometimes, but very often, the mere look of some fellow dog of my own circle that I was fond of, the mere look of him, as if I had just caught it for the first time, would fill me with helpless embarrassment and fear, even with despair. (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 420)

Though the canine narrator lives a solitary life barely understood by any of his fellow dogs, he keeps a vigilant eye on his people, learning news of the community and even allowing news of himself to reach them. He declares that he is treated with respect from the others, who bear him no grudge and do not deny him a "reverential greeting" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 421). Perhaps, he asserts, the mere fact that he asks these questions, even though they are thought of as stupid and delusional, is what wins their attention to begin with. Regardless, his quest is destined to fail because, in all honesty, he is but a dog and "in essentials just as locked in silence as the others" and has, like every dog, "the impulse not to answer" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 433). At the same time, he also has the "dog knowledge" that needs to be brought out "not merely in the form of a question, but as an answer" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 433).

The discrepancy between being locked in silence and having knowledge is especially important since it reveals another dimension of Kafka's complex relationship with Jewish tradition and law. On the one hand, silence in itself is a form of internal anxiety and cowardice that characterizes Kafka's dogs; at the same time, breaking the silence is a dangerous act that would possibly destroy the "foundations of our existence" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 433). As Rainer Nägele maintains, "it is not up to the decision of any individual to break the silence" and Kafka – and his dog – "does not succumb to pronounce the knowledge that afflicts and presses us all" (Nägele 28). This knowledge also has a rather paradoxical status: on the one hand, it seems to exist "only collectively, a kind of knowledge of a chorus, present in all the dogs", but, on the other, it has the potential to destroy the community of dogs since it would interrupt them in what the narrator calls their "hard work" (Nägele 28; Kafka, *Collected Stories* 429). The narrating dog certainly leaves the possibility of pronouncing the secret knowledge open:

> If you utter it, who will think of opposing you? The great choir of dogdom will join in as if it had been waiting for you. The you will have clarity, truth, avowal, as much of them as you desire. The roof of the wretched life, of which you say so many hard things, will burst open, and all of us, will ascend into the lofty realm of freedom. (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 433)

However, the dog asserts, there is another possibility: things could become "worse than before" and the whole truth could "be more unsupportable than the half-truth" eliminating

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any possibility for hope. Even if the second comes to pass and the "faint hope that we still possess" turns "to complete hopelessness, the attempt is still worth the trial, since you do not desire to live as you are compelled to live" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 433). Nägele maintains that in order to break the limits of "dogdom" and gain more than the life others allow him to live, the narrating dog must find the strength to speak the truth, but he doesn't. Asked then why he reproaches the others while remaining silent himself the dog's answer is, as Nägele rightly points out, "as easy as it is cynical": "Because I am a dog" (Nägele 28; Kafka, *Collected Stories* 433).

On the other hand, the fact that the narrating dog does not speak the truth might not signal merely his or the community's inability but a general impossibility of transmitting a coherent truth today. In *Illuminations*, Benjamin contends that Kafka's works present a loss of "truth as doctrine"; they contain the *Haggadah* to a *Halakhah*[3] that was empty, without content and hence absent from his work becoming pieces of scripture whose interpretive key has been lost. This is a crucial part in Benjamin's interpretation and one of the major points of his disagreement with Gershom Scholem, who maintained that Kafka was a Halakhist who set out to attain the "linguistic paraphrase of divine judgment" (Scholem quoted in Hanssen 137). For Benjamin, on the contrary, "the doctrine (*Lehre*) to be sure, nowhere is pronounced as such in Kafka. One can only try to read it from the astounding behavior of his humans, a behavior that either originated in fear or produces fear" (Benjamin quoted in Hanssen 139). In his *Correspondence* with Scholem, Benjamin clearly states that in the works of Kafka, the "haggadic" consistency of truth has literally vanished, as if these works represent "tradition falling ill" (Benjamin, *Correspondence* 565). This illness of tradition, this loss of the doctrine, is a fundamental element in the themes of Kafka's narratives. Not unlike the villagers of the Castle who, though they knew that the truth of the castle would never be revealed, continued to make speculations about its nature and to construct dissenting narratives, so Kafka "sacrificed truth for the sake of clinging to transmissibility" (Benjamin, *Correspondence* 565). Benjamin wrote that when it comes to Kafka, "we can no longer speak of wisdom", since "only the products of its decay remain": "the *rumor* about the true things (a sort of theology passed on by whispers dealing with matters discredited and obsolete)" and "*folly* – which to be sure has utterly squandered the substance of wisdom, but preserves its attractiveness and assurance, which rumor invariably lacks" (Benjamin,

[3] Benjamin underlines the traditional differentiation between *Halakhah* and *Haggadah*, effectively, doctrine and story, for the understanding of Kafka's works. Halakhic statements directly relate to questions of Jewish law and practice, whereas Haggadic statements are not legally related but rather assume a more exegetical, ethical and interpretative form.

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*Illuminations*144). This might begin to explain Josephine's retreat in silence and the dog's inability to speak "the truth" even as he claims to have knowledge of it.

At the same time, this loss of doctrine provides an interesting entry point into an examination of Kafka's understanding of the concept of Jewish law. This notion of law in Kafka's oeuvre, appears to be a multifaceted and complicated concept causing a lot of debate amongst his most prominent scholars, including Benjamin and Scholem. In a letter to Benjamin on September 20, 1934, Scholem refers to the "nothingness of revelation": "a state in which revelation appears to be without meaning, in which it still asserts itself, in which it has *validity* but no *significance*" (Scholem, *Correspondence* 142). Following Scholem's thinking, Jessica Whyte asserts that the law appears only in the form of its own nothingness, which nevertheless does not amount to a lack of law, but rather to a powerfully present absence: "the fact that the law is not formulated in prohibitions *intensifies* its power over life, ensuring that no act can be understood to be in accordance with the law and no space can safely be assumed to be outside its grasp" (Whyte 103). The *being in force without significance* that Scholem identifies becomes, in Agamben's thought, the structure of the empty law that resides in the state of exception, "the pure potentiality of the law, which is not the application of a rule but an abandonment" (Whyte 103). As Agamben underscores in *Homo Sacer*, "Everywhere on earth men live today in the ban of a law and a tradition that are maintained solely as the 'zero point' of their own content, and that include men within them in the form of a pure relation of abandonment" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 28). An example of this formulation could be found in *The Trial*, a work which describes a generalized sense of ensnarement by the law.

As the novel famously opens: "Someone must have been telling tales about Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything wrong, he was arrested" (Kafka, *The Trial* 5). Just like the "Metamorphosis", where Gregor wakes up one day to find himself transformed into a giant insect, *The Trial* narrates the story of a man, Josef K., who finds himself accused for no explicitly stated reason. Despite the fact that Josef K. is able to move freely, the fact that everyone has already considered him guilty of something unclear, unstated, and unidentified renders him trapped in a prison without walls. As Dimitris Vardoulakis asserts, "The reason for the law's omnipresence and omnipotence in *The Trial* is that the law is empty" (Vardoulakis 34). Having never been told what he is accused of, or which law the accusation is based on, Josef K. has no means of defending himself and knows not who to defend himself against; this renders the law both invisible and thoroughly pervasive. As Vardoulakis writes, "the dispersal of an empty law makes judgement legitimate and yet also completely arbitrary and thus an instrument of the exercise of

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unlimited authority" (Vardoulakis 40). The absolute and arbitrary authority of the empty law that can only be possible if the law becomes dissociated from truth eliminates any possibility of freedom and leads to Josef K. dying "Like a dog!" when he is executed at the end of the story (Kafka, *The Trial* 165). This sentence at the end of the novel and at the end of Josef K.'s life not only reiterates the erasure of the distance between man and animal but also highlights the origination of the erasure in the oppressive emptiness of the law.

In *The Trial,* the law – and its doorkeepers – is presented as a functionally disintegrating, corrupt institution, permeable in its processes by all kinds of confusions, venality, illegitimacies, and intervening human desires. As Paul Alberts notes, "*The Trial* becomes a catalogue of parodies of legal procedure, rather than fulfilling a picture of modern rationalized oppression, where domination is calculated and directed by explicit political purpose" (Alberts 186). Indeed, throughout the novel, there are several instances depicting the decay of the legal system: arresting officers eat Josef K.'s breakfast, meddle with his personal belongings, and get drunk in storerooms; officials seduce and take advantage of women; law books are essentially pornographic texts; legal offices are actually attics, slums, and tenements; and courts employ every means at their disposal, including children, while typically remaining opaque and distant to defendants. Likening Josef K. to a "Yiddish *schlemiel* (the loser routinely mocked)", Alberts maintains that "*The Trial*'s legal system is thus a heterogeneous mess, a bundle of dreamlike motifs about life under law that subverts logical detection" (Alberts 187). As Rodolphe Gasché rightly asserts, "as a law that undermines all true distinction, hierarchy, and order, Kafka's law can, indeed, be said to be the law of lawlessness" belonging perhaps to what Bachofen calls the "hetaeric world age" (Gasché, *The Stelliferous Fold* 276). In *Mother Right,* J. J. Bachofen had described this world as a stage defined by "unregulated sexual relations", "promiscuity", "prostitution", "swamp procreation", "swamp cult" and "wild growth", which serve as the hetaeric world's law[4] (Bachofen 95-97). Thoroughly promiscuous and lacking any stable delineation, this law is omnipresent and omnipotent.

In his "Franz Kafka" essay, Benjamin similarly claims that "Kafka did not consider the age in which he lived as an advance over the beginnings of time. His novels [and especially *The Trial*] are set in a swamp world. In his works, created things appear at the stage which Bachofen has termed the hetaeric stage" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 130). In this

[4] A more thorough analysis of Bachofen's exploration of the different stages of cultural evolution found in *Mother Right* is found in Chapter 3 during the discussion of Angela Carter's feminist rewritings of traditional fairy tales.

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respect, he asserts, “holders of power in Kafka's works”, the judges who live in the attics or the secretaries at the castle, “no matter how highly placed they may be, they are always fallen or falling men, although even the lowest and seediest of them, the doorkeepers and the decrepit officials, may abruptly and strikingly appear in the fullness of their power” (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 112). Even though there is a vast diversity of interpretive approaches to Kafka’s oeuvre, one must constantly keep in mind the historical reality of his time: he was not speaking metaphorically. According to Hadea Nell Kriesberg, in her essay “Czechs, Jews and Dogs Not Allowed”, Kafka lived in dangerous times and the fact that “the Zeitgeist of peril was a subtext of most of his literary works” means that he was well aware of it. In Kafka’s world, Kriesberg asserts, “a man could go to sleep an employed Jew and wake up the next morning as vermin. A Jew could study at the university and yet find himself called a dog” (Kriesberg 34). As if taking that ever-present possibility of being referred to as some kind of animal, Kafka pondered, like no other writer of his time, “what it would be to truly become an animal” (Kriesberg 34). Thus, with his three animal stories among a number of other texts, Kafka embarked on an “introspective meditation on the nature of being a Jew in Europe at the turn of the century” which simultaneously became “an exercise in contemplating what sort of human being one might become if we truly questioned our own identity” (Kriesberg 34). Just like in the cases of his three protagonists, to contemplate becoming an animal or as an animal leads to a profoundly human self-questioning.

In the midst of this political and social unrest, Kafka, as well as Benjamin, sought to find solace and hope in the rediscovery of Judaism, not as something that has been “handed down”, or that possesses a binding, sovereign authority but rather as a newly reconfigured idea devoid of any claims to absolute truth and wisdom. As Robert Alter maintains in his book *Necessary Angels*, Kafka, Benjamin and many other Jewish intellectuals of their time

> [V]ariously launched on a daring experiment in the recovery of Judaism under historical circumstances that made such an undertaking difficult, ambiguous, fraught with spiritual dangers, perhaps unfeasible. They shared a sense that the route of assimilation which their fathers had followed led to a dead end. They all perceived a sustaining power of visionary truth and an authenticity in Jewish tradition while fearing that this truth and this authenticity might no longer be accessible to them. (Alter 22-23)

Of course, there are also differences in the positioning of Kafka and that of his near contemporary and critic. As Michael Löwy asserts in his book *Redemption & Utopia*, the major difference between Kafka and Benjamin was that whereas the former appeared to

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stand on a rather marginal position and "actually seemed to be on the outside" with respect to other authors or movements of his time, the latter stood at the crossroads, "torn by contradictory movements" (Löwy 71). Benjamin, Löwy goes on to add, stood "at the crossing of all the ways as well as at the center of a complex set of relationships that were woven within the German-Jewish milieu" (Löwy 95). The singularity of his work set him apart from, yet deeply immersed him in, the main political or intellectual trends of early 20th-century Europe: from assimilation to Zionism, from theology to historical materialism and from libertarian utopia to Jewish Messianism. Unlike Benjamin's, Kafka's relationship with Judaism developed rather late in his life and came about after a period of rigorous engagement with German culture. Throughout his life, Kafka's approach towards Jewish culture and religion was ambivalent to say the least. It was only after the Yiddish theatre performed in Prague in 1910 that Kafka began to be more actively involved with Judaism. Along with his "moral and religious hostility towards industrial/capitalist 'progress'" – a critique of which can be found in his novel *Amerika* – "there was a longing for the traditional community, the organic Gemeinschaft" (Löwy 73). This is the main reason why Kafka was fascinated by Yiddish language and culture, and especially by Yiddish theatre, and why he was so attracted to his sister's projects for rural living in Palestine, to his friends' romantic/cultural Zionism in Prague, and to the Czech peasant community who lived in peaceful harmony with nature. Under the influence of his friend Max Brod, he begun studying Hebrew and made some rather vague plans to travel to Palestine. Nonetheless, he still maintained a rather reserved and contradictory approach towards Jewish religion and Zionism.

Thus, Kafka's and Benjamin's reconfigured conception of Judaism not only signified, according to Sokel, "a liberation, that is, the possibility of breaking out from stifling, oppressive, and deeply flawed patriarchal tyranny", but also offered them "the vision" of their own "liberation" from their family and "its spiritual emptiness and hypocritical conventionality" (Sokel 851). Especially for Kafka, the rediscovery of Judaism seemed to offer the integrity he desired, which in this case was following his own "deepest bent, to live a life of literature" (Sokel 851). Through his literature, Kafka devises animal protagonists, such as Rotpeter, Josephine, and the canine investigator in order to use them as tools to navigate through the swampy terrain of Judaism, anti-Semitism, and the politics of community and belonging. While he condemns them to ugly and tragic fates (loneliness, isolation, silence, and/or death), they become eligible to receive what Kafka reportedly called "an infinite amount of hope" (Benjamin, *Selected Writings* 798). In order to better

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explore this formulation, the second part of this chapter focuses around an exploration of the nature of Kafka's hope and the creatures to whom hope relates.

The Jackals, the Assistants, Odradek, and the Crossbreed: Animality and Messianism

In a rather famous exchange with Max Brod on whether there is hope outside the "manifestation of the world that we know", Franz Kafka supposedly replied: "oh, plenty of hope, an infinite amount of hope – only not for us" (Benjamin, *Selected Writings* 798). Signifying a hope that is both endless and inexhaustible as well as non-finite and unfinished, Kafka's enigmatic formulation structurally involves an impersonal and absolute affirmation, "there is an infinite amount of hope", and a negation, "not for us". This forces one to wonder however: who is the subject that is making this statement? What kind of subject is this? If it is included in the "us" then how is it in a position to possibly identify the existence of this "hope"? And most importantly, for whom is there an infinite amount of hope? As Antonis Balasopoulos notes, "for if what is there is not for 'us', then how could one who demonstrably includes oneself in that subset possibly be capable of perceiving and registering the existence of an infinity of hope? For what kind of imaginable subject-position does such a statement become possible?" (Balasopoulos 4) Whether the subject, namely, the "us", incorporates European Jews, Kafka's generation or humankind in general, one cannot know for sure. Yet, since the "us" is negated – that is to say, it doesn't include the individual subject in its recognizable form – then the subject for whom there is an "infinite amount of hope" may well be the non-human. Thus, the constant preoccupation with the "predication of radical political energies on the non-human – and more particularly the animal – in Kafka's work" is an essential element of any analysis of Kafka's work and it is what Balasopoulos identifies as the starting point of all three dominant strands of Kafka interpretation: in effect, the Marxist and anarchist strains of Messianism which are best represented by Adorno, Benjamin, and to some extent Agamben, the Deleuzian/Guattarian privileging of thresholds of intensity and lines of flight, and Dolar and Agamben's interstitial and in some ways meta-critical position (Balasopoulos 6). Focusing primarily on the former, one might be able to trace how "Kafka sought – on the 'nether' side of 'nothingness', in its inside lining, so to speak – to feel his way through redemption" (Benjamin, *Correspondence* 449).

In order to better understand the nature of Kafka's "hope", one has to consider the village from Talmudic legend Benjamin describes in the "Franz Kafka" essay. This legend

was told by a rabbi to answer the question as to "why Jews prepare a festive evening meal on Fridays":

> The legend is about a princess languishing in exile, in a village whose language she does not understand, far from her compatriots. One day, this princess receives a letter saying that her fiancé has not forgotten her and is on his way to her. The fiancé, so says the rabbi, is the Messiah; the princess is the soul; the village in which she lives in exile is the body. She prepares a meal for him because this is the only way she can express her joy in a village whose language she does not know. This village of the Talmud is right in Kafka's world. For just as K. lives in the village of Castle Hill, modern man lives in his body; the body slips away from him, is hostile towards him. It may happen that a man wakes up one day and finds himself transformed into vermin. Exile – his exile – has gained control over him. The air of this village blows about Kafka. (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 126)

The soul inhabits a body that is alien, and at times even hostile. With the coming of the fiancé, that is to say, the Messiah, the princess is connected with the village just as the soul is united with the body. The hope for the coming of the Messiah, which is foretold by the letter of Judaic law, is a hope for something that will bridge the gap between the princess and the village, the soul and the body. Modern man, according to Benjamin, also lives trapped in a body that has become alien and even hostile toward him. One's inability to communicate with it renders him an exile, an outcast. The "infinite amount of hope" that Kafka speaks of could therefore represent the longing and desire for the coming of the Messiah, who would renegotiate humans' relationship with their own selves, reuniting the soul and the body.

For Judaism, in all its forms and manifestations, there has always existed a concept of redemption; in his exhaustive study in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, Scholem describes it "as an event which takes place publicly, on the stage of history and within the community" (Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* 1). Thus, the coming of the Messiah is an occurrence that takes place in the visible world and cannot be regarded apart from such a visible appearance. At the same time, he maintains, the messianic idea in Judaism has emerged out of two contradictory, but at the same time intertwined, forces within Judaism itself: the restorative and the utopian. To begin with, within rabbinic Judaism as a religious and social phenomenon, Scholem identifies three kinds of forces that are active in Judaism: conservative, restorative, and utopian. As he asserts, "the conservative forces are directed toward the preservation of that which exists and which, in the historical environment of

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Judaism, was always in danger" (Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* 3). Having established themselves effectively in the world of *Halakhah*, these forces are the "the most visible and immediately obvious forces" in the construction, preservation, and development of religious law (Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* 3). The restorative forces, on the other hand, are primarily aimed at the recovery and recreation of a past situation that comes to be felt as ideal; in Scholem's words, "more precisely, they are directed to a condition pictured by the historical fantasy and the memory of the nation as circumstances of an ideal past" (Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* 3). In this context, "hope" is focused in the past, in the re-establishment of an original ideal state of things. There are, however, forces that "press forward" towards a vision of a future and a utopian inspiration; as the philosopher notes, "they aim at a state of things which has never existed" (Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* 3). Thus, whereas the conservative forces – however great and crucial their significance might have been for the existence of the religious community of Judaism – had no part in the development of Messianism within the community, the restorative and the utopian tendencies, in different variations, developed and crystallized the messianic idea. As Scholem maintains, there has never been a balance between the utopian and the restorative factor within Judaism since "even the restorative force has a utopian factor, and in utopianism restorative factors are at work" (Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* 4). Even though, as Scholem upholds, "the dialectically linked tension between the utopian and restorative factors provides us also with deep tensions in the forms of Messianisms crystallized in rabbinic Judaism", there is a "common ground" in the existence of messianic hope and the certainty for the coming of the Messiah (Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* 4).

Under this light, one can re-appreciate Benjamin's fascination with Paul Klee's enigmatic watercolor, Angelus Novus. In his ninth thesis in the "Theses on The Philosophy of History", Benjamin describes the figure as "an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 257). The angel stands between past and future, drawn by contesting forces; he incessantly stares at the past from which he is about to remove himself, but he turns his back to the future into which a storm from Paradise propels him. This angel no longer sings any hymns in praise of God; his mission rather is to "awaken the dead and make whole what had been smashed" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 257). It is important to note that in the second and final version of "Agesilaus Santander", Benjamin describes this new angel as having "claws" and "knife sharp wings" – elements that point to the animal aspect of the angel in

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Klee's painting (Benjamin quoted in Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* 207). Thus, Benjamin's angel is not represented in terms of spirituality but rather in terms of animality, "creatureliness". The word "creature" which follows from the Latin *creatura*, signifies a being undergoing a process of creation. In his book *On Creaturely Life*, Eric Santner claims that "it is the name of a determinate state of being, as the signifier of an ongoing exposure, of being caught up in the process of becoming creature through the dictates of divine alterity" (Santner 28). Not fully formed but still created by God, the creaturely angel comes to signify the boundaries of the monstrous and the unnatural while also functioning as intermediary between the earthly and the divine. In Benjamin, the angel becomes the "advocate for created things and at the same time […] their highest embodiment" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 104). In essence, therefore, one might argue that what for Benjamin invests the angel with a divine, redemptive quality is precisely its very "creatureliness", namely, its ontological and functional ambiguity.

Benjamin's interpretation of the redemptive quality of his angel distinctly echoes his interpretation of Kafka's creatures, especially the assistants and messengers in his last novel, *The Castle*. Written in 1926, Kafka's novel narrates the story of a man, a land-surveyor known only as K., who arrives at the village and struggles relentlessly – but futilely – to gain access to the elusive, inscrutable authorities who live at the castle. Not long after his arrival at the castle, the officials assign two assistants to K., Arthur and Jeremiah. However, instead of aiding K., the assistants are such a constant source of annoyance and frustration for him that he brutally discharges them from his service. The assistants are originally regarded by K. as "good, cheerful companions on a walk" but later on they are described as being "as like as two snakes" (Kafka, *The Castle* 16 & 20). The most accurate description, however, does not come from K. but rather from Frieda, with whom the assistants share a rather enigmatic bond:

> They're also silly young fellows, they need a good thrashing to teach them a lesson. What ugly, grubby lads they are, and how I hate the contrast between their faces, from which anyone might think they were adults or maybe students, and their foolish, childish conduct! Do you think I don't see that? I'm ashamed of them. And that's just it; they don't actually repel me, but I'm ashamed of them. I can't help looking at them all the time. When I ought to be cross with them I can't help laughing. When they should be getting a thrashing I can't help caressing their heads instead. (Kafka, *The Castle* 123)

The absurd figures of the assistants, therefore, embody different sets of ambiguities: they are both childlike and mature, foolish and somehow wise, they attract and repel you,

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and they annoy and amuse you. If there is one certainty about Kafka's world, Benjamin asserts, it is: "first, that someone must be a fool if he is to help; second that only a fool's help is real help" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 144). These foolish yet magnetic creatures include the curious figures of the assistants and messengers of *The Castle,* whose foolishness in Benjamin's reading is explicitly linked to hopefulness, and is thus a clear marker of their redemptive quality; they are in Benjamin's terms "the creatures for whom this hope is intended and yet who on the other hand are also the creatures in which this absurdity is mirrored" (Benjamin, *Correspondence* 135). The irresolvable ambiguity that characterizes the assistants' existence is absolutely vital in unpacking Benjamin's understanding of the redemptive quality of Kafka's creatures: hope is always also "absurdity" in creaturely existence.

In contrast to the other figures that populate Kafka's works, Benjamin affirms that the assistants are in a way "celestial creatures, beings in an unfinished state" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 117). They are viewed by Kafka himself as resembling Barnabas, who is a messenger of the castle. As Benjamin notes, "They have not yet been completely released from the womb of nature" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 117). Evidently, the assistants live in an intermediary world, free from the rule of the family, neither suffering from the violence of the law nor exercising it. Since they are neither holders of power nor subjects of the law, Benjamin asserts that for them, the burden of the law is much lighter; "it is for them and their kind, the unfinished and the bunglers, that there is hope", he notes (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 117). As Gasché upholds, "they are the only ones who have not been accused" (Gasché, "Kafka's Law" 974). Due to their lack of completion, Gasché notes, their world is presented as a twilight zone. Their external physiologies, as well as their moral existence, are marked by a state of murkiness. Tellingly, Benjamin recalls a scene from *The Castle* where the assistants are presented huddling together in a corner, so that "in the twilight all you could see in their corner was a large and indeterminate mass of arms and legs" (Kafka, *The Castle* 43). The image suggests that the assistants are not completely formed, and that, therefore, the purpose of their existence is not altogether clear; they resemble caricatures of creatures striving for something they can never quite attain or understand. In an attempt to define that "something" that the assistants and messengers lack, in order to attain finished form, Benjamin notes:

> None has a firm place in the world, firm, inalienable outlines. There is not one that is not either rising or falling, none that is not trading qualities with its enemy or neighbor, none that has not completed its period of time and yet is unripe, none that is not deeply exhausted and yet is only the beginning of

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> a long existence. To speak of any order or hierarchy is impossible here. (Benjamin, Illuminations 117)

The "unfinishedness" and ontological ambiguity of such figures are precisely the reasons why there is hope for them: this ambiguity is the mark of an intermediary state, "a stage in advance or in transition to possible distinctness" (Gasché, "Kafka's Law" 975). The "something" that they lack in order to be finished is exactly the same "something" that binds all the finished beings to the obscene and violent dimension of the law. Essentially, contrary to all the finished creatures in Kafka's works, what these creatures lack holds promise and thus enables the possibility of redemption. Because they are incomplete creatures that inhabit an intermediate world, "at once unfinished and commonplace, comforting and silly", the assistants, consequently, are the only ones who have the right to claim Kafka's in-finite amount of hope and thus redemption (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 118). In the first of the aphorisms he wrote in Zürau, Kafka said that "The true way is along a rope that is not spanned high in the air, but only just above the ground. It seems intended more to cause stumbling than to be walked upon" (Kafka, *Zürau Aphorisms* 3). For Kafka, the "true way", the road to redemption, is not presented by some elusive, holy and divinely created figures that are literally "spanned high in the air", but by the clumsy and frustrating characters of the assistants and messengers who appear to be there only to make one stumble; they are angels, but of a different kind.

In his *Profanations*, Giorgio Agamben dedicates an entire chapter to Kafka's assistants in an effort to elucidate what they mean for both Kafka's and Benjamin's works. These creatures, who are referred to also as helpers, seem to have no knowledge or skill; they are "pests" and at times "cheeky" and "lecherous", they often engage in foolish and childish games and the last thing they seem to be doing is actually helping. They just lie and watch with radiant eyes and adult faces like "angels, messengers who do not know the content of the letters they must deliver, but whose smile, whose look, whose very posture 'seems like a message'" (Agamben, *Profanations* 29). They are intelligent and gifted but at the same time their attempts seem to always result in failure. Perhaps, Agamben speculates, they give help even though one cannot clearly identify the nature of this help. The philosopher goes on to introduce the figures of the *wuzara* (plural of *wazir*), namely, "the helpers of the Messiah" from Chapter 366 of the Meccan Revelations. They are creatures who in profane time already have the characteristics of messianic time; they belong, that is, to the last day. They are non-Arabs who speak the language and help the Messiah make his judgments, understand the language of the animals and "extend his justice over both men

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and jinn" (Agamben, *Profanations* 33). They are the operators of a "continuous revelation" of the divine language (Agamben, *Profanations* 33).

Of course, such intermediary figures do not only appear in Islamic theology but in several other traditions. In Greco-Roman tradition for example, the god Hermes (otherwise called *Angelos*) was considered to be the messenger of Zeus and in the Judaic one, the angels were the messengers of God who conveyed His wishes to the people and sang hymns to praise His name. The Greek word for angel (*ἄγγελος*) literally means "messenger" and "envoy" and in Hebrew the word for "angel" is identical to that of "messenger" (*malakh*). The differences, however, between traditional representations of angels in Judeo-Christian tradition and Kafka's messengers and assistants revolve around both their appearance and their inner nature. Firstly, it is significant to note that traditionally, angels have been presented as having a human form with wings and often, a radiant aura. Kafka's assistants, however, are presented as beings whose very outlines are indefinable. They are a continuous source of frustration for K., since they always fail to achieve the task assigned to them. In actuality, Kafka's messengers do not seem to be reminiscent of either the physiology or the air of obedience, reverence, virtue, humility, and somberness of traditional theological conceptions of the angels of God. Quite the contrary, one might argue that despite the fact that they could be viewed as the messengers of the divine, that is, creatures who already belong to the last day, they appear to be closer to earth rather than to heaven.

In his *Parables and Paradoxes*, Kafka provided readers with one of the most frequently quoted sentences in his works regarding the notion of redemption and the coming of the Messiah: "The Messiah will come only when he is no longer necessary; he will come only on the day after his arrival; he will come, not on the last day, but on the very last day" (Kafka *Parables and Paradoxes* 81). The implications of these statements are striking: the coming of the Messiah as such is no longer viewed as a temporal event that will inevitably happen at any moment in time in the visible world, as traditional notions of Judaism have suggested. On the contrary, the coming of the Messiah is seen as a process that extends *ad infinitum*, exhausting the very idea of "lastness". In his essay "The Last Night of All", Michael Wood suggests that the end in Kafka's world is always something about to-come; nothing is final since his works appear to be "marvelously unteleological" (Wood 1400).

In order to explore this assertion, one can take the examples of Kafka's three unfinished novels – *Amerika (Der Verschollene), The Trial (Der Process)* and *The Castle (Das Schloss)* – since the novel was for Kafka the genre in which the Messiah might always come but didn't. His first novel, *Amerika*, for example, is abruptly discontinued with a chapter on the Nature Theatre of Oklahoma. In the last scene of *The Trial*, Josef K. dies "like

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a dog". Depicting K.'s end through a brutal and vicious murder rather than a formal execution, it is "as if Kafka wants to force the Messiah to come, if only through violence and horror" (Wood 1400). His third novel, *The Castle*, breaks off in the middle of a sentence but it is rather obvious at that point that K. is never going to get into the castle and that even if he did, it would not mean much to him anyhow.

It can thus be argued that for Kafka, the novel was a form than not only fell short of any kind of closure but was directly opposed to it; as Wood asserts, it is as if the "novel as a genre took the weight of his aphorism about the Messiah and refused to end as a consequence" (Wood 1401). Wood rightly proposes that such works can end, only when no one is any longer interested in their ending, at a time after they have already ended. They inhabit that space between the "last day" and the "very last day". The homology between the form of the assistants and that of Kafka's own novels is significant: one can maintain that just like the assistants' incomplete form, the novels' "unfinishedness" entitles them to "an infinite amount of hope". If one is to see precisely in their unfinished form the imprint of hope rather than frustration or despair, then he/she might be in a position to link literary form to the "redemptive" quality of the creaturely itself. The novels, just like the assistants, belong to an intermediate world, perpetually waiting to be finished, but it is precisely for this reason that for them, Kafka's own writerly creatures, there is "an infinite amount of hope". Wood suggests that in a world waiting for the coming of the Messiah, what is final "is what is always about to come" (Wood 1401) and the novels' inability to reach an ending invests them with hope. Possibly, Wood suggests, Kafka cannot write the ending because he doesn't know how many "last days" there will be until the "very last day", or even whether the "very last day" is anything but a "theological fantasy" (Wood 1401). The messianic is therefore a structure of experience that depends entirely on being open to a future: not a future that will one day become present, but rather a future as perpetual openness towards an event that is, as Derrida formulates, always to-come.

Clearly influenced by Benjamin's interpretation of Kafka's understanding of redemption, Derrida re-interprets the notion of the coming of the Messiah based on a clear distinction between the notions of "Messianism" and the "messianic". In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida speaks of a "messianic without Messianism", linking this to his formulation of a future that is always to-come (*à-venir*) (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 74). Contrary to the concrete, historical Messianisms of traditional religious cultures (Judaism, Christianity, or Islam), Derrida's messianic is a universal structure. Although it still refers to the word Messiah, it does not belong to any specific culture. In *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, Derrida notes that: "This universal structure of the

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promise [of the coming of the Messiah], of the expectation for the future, for the coming, and the fact that this expectation has to do with justice – that is what I [he] call[s] the messianic structure" (Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* 23). Derrida's messianic invokes the "altogether other" who is always to-come and who continually "haunts" the human (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 10). This invocation of the wholly other to-come (his Messiah, if one is allowed to call Him/Her/It that), however, is not a call for a particular other with identifiable characteristics; his other is indeterminable, ungraspable and can never actually arrive. Derrida suggests that "as soon as you address the other, as soon as you are open to the future, as soon as you have a temporal experience of waiting for a future, of waiting for someone to-come: that is the opening of experience" (Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* 22). In order to explore this formulation, Derrida often recounts a story by Maurice Blanchot: The Messiah stood at the gates of Rome dressed in rags. But one man, who recognized him as the Messiah, went up to him and asked: "When will you come?" (Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* 24) This, Derrida asserts, accurately demonstrates that the Messiah, even though He/She/It might be "here", is always yet to-come: "there would be no experience without the waiting of the coming of the other, the coming of the event, and justice" (Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* 24). What Derrida underscores, therefore, in his re-appropriation of Benjamin's Messianism, is the notion of the infinite deferral of the Messiah's arrival and the opening up "to an affirmative thinking of the messianic and emancipatory promise as promise: as *promise* and not as onto-theological or teleo-eschatological program or design" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 94). This promise, therefore, can simultaneously take the form of an expectation, a pledge, and a commitment to the event of what is coming, an urgency, a potentiality, and a hope that is "turned toward the future, going toward it" but also "comes from it, it proceeds from [*provient de*] the future" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* xix).

Similarly to Derrida's understanding of the coming of the wholly other as an act of perpetual postponement, in a lecture titled "Who Owns Kafka?", Judith Butler suggests that the coming of the Messiah will not happen at a moment in time, but only "after the sequence of all moments is completed" (Butler 7). Coming does not belong to the calendar of days, and the Messiah will not come within any temporal sequence since "if he comes on the very last day, but not the last, he comes on a 'day' – now hyperfigurative – that is beyond any calendar of days, and beyond chronology itself" (Butler 7). In the *Parables and Paradoxes*, Kafka notes that "[t]he Messiah will come as soon as the most unbridled individualism of faith becomes possible – when there is no one to destroy this possibility and no one to suffer its destruction; hence the graves will open themselves" (Kafka, *Parables and Paradoxes* 80).

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As Butler asserts, "the Messiah will come only when there is 'no one' to destroy the possibility or to suffer the destruction, which means that the Messiah will not come when there is one, only when there is no one, and that means as well that the Messiah will not be anyone, will not be an individual" (Butler 8). Thus, the Messiah comes not as an individual and definitely not within any temporal sequence that can be understood in chronological terms, since "arrival is a concept that belongs to the calendar of days but coming (*das Kommen*) apparently not" (Butler 8).

Evidently, whereas Derrida's focus on the concept of the messianic revolves around its infinite deferral and perpetual openness to futurity, Butler's interpretation includes the possibility that when He does come, no individual will experience His coming. Hence, Butler and Derrida's interpretations of the messianic seem to complement Balasopoulos' assertion that Kafka's statement of infinite messianic hope does not only involve an instance of infinite deferral but also the impossibility of defining the subject position; to an "anything but desperate 'not yet', Kafka's work juxtaposes an anything but sterile 'not for us'" (Balasopoulos 5). In order to further elaborate on Kafka's multifaceted revision of Jewish Messianism, it is essential to turn to his short story "Jackals and Arabs" ("*Schakale und Araber*") which can be read as subtly ironic criticism of vulgar constructions of Messianism among the Jews.

Written and originally published in 1917 in Martin Buber's German monthly *Der Jude*, "Jackals and Arabs" narrates the story of a European traveler from the North who travels through the desert with his Arab guides. While camping in the desert, and with his Arab companions at a distance, the narrator is addressed by the leader of a group of jackals, who says: "I am delighted to have met you here at last. I had almost given up hope, since we have been waiting endless years for you; my mother waited for you, and her mother, and all our foremothers right back to the first mother of all the jackals" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 175). The jackals, which as Judith Butler asserts, are "a thinly disguised reference to the Jews", after treating him as the messianic figure they have been waiting for generations, describe their longstanding hatred for the Arabs, whom they have associated with uncleanliness: "the mere sight of their living flesh makes us turn tail and flee into cleaner air, into the desert"; and later, "filth is their white; filth is their black; their beards are a horror; the very sight of their eye sockets makes one want to spit; and when they lift an arm, the murk of hell yawns in their armpit" (Butler 8; Kafka, *Collected Stories* 176-177 & 177-178). The jackal leader highlights the difference between the jackals and the Arabs by referring to the way in which the latter kill animals for food: whereas the former practice kosher slaughter (*shehitah)* by eating what dies naturally – an aspect of the story which

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would have been easily recognizable to the Jewish readership of Kafka's time – the latter knife and butcher the animals. Due to the fact that they despise the Arabs with fervor, the jackals live in a self-imposed exile "among such creatures" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 176). In the original Kafka describes this exile as *Volk verstoßen (*people offended/outcasted). As Kriesberg notes, since "*Volk* is a nation, a people, a crowd, the masses, with a subtext meaning of colony", aside of the "obvious metaphor for the Jewish Diaspora, there is the inference that the jackals live in a kind of Diaspora as well, but theirs is a forced exile among human beings" (Kriesberg 45). Described, therefore, as a marginalized population, "courageously existing in Diaspora" and having "nothing but" their "teeth", the jackals think they have no other choice than to wait for the coming of the Messiah to save and purify them (Kriesberg 47; Kafka, *Collected Stories* 177).

Thus, the jackals attempt to enlist the narrator's help in ridding the world of the plague of Arabs and provide him with a rusty pair of scissors in order to "slit their throats through" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 178). As Butler jokes, "They don't want to do it themselves, since it would not be 'clean', but the Messiah is himself apparently unbound by kosher constraints" (Butler 8). At that moment, the Arab leader cracks his whip and disperses the jackals while gaily informing the narrator that

> [I]t's common knowledge; so long as Arabs exist, that pair of scissors goes wandering through the desert and will wander with us to the end of our days. Every European is offered it for the great work; every European is just the man that Fate has chosen for them. They have the most lunatic hopes, these beasts; they are just fools, utter fools. (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 178)

The fact that every European traveler is offered the scissors implies that jackals don't know how the Messiah looks like and, most probably, won't even recognize Him if He does come, since He might not offer the kind of help that they want, that is, bloody and violent retribution. As Löwy maintains, the jackal's "passive expectation of a Supreme Saviour" and "the dream of bloody vengeance on the [non-believing] nations (*goyim*)" are precisely those aspects of Jewish religious tradition that Kafka mercilessly criticizes in this story (Löwy 78). The fact that they are "utter fools" means that their ridiculous choice of weapon will keep "wandering through the desert" eternally since the jackals will never give up passively waiting for the Messiah, no matter how "lunatic" their hopes might seem. At the same time, it is "common knowledge" that the messianic figure that the jackals are waiting for is marked only by His absence because his arrival is conditioned by their expectations of violent reprisal against their enemies.

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Recalling a rabbinical Jewish saying, Benjamin suggests that the Messiah will not come to "change the world by force but would only make a slight adjustment in it" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 134). Here, the double function of distortion is extremely important since, on the one hand, the Messiah is expected to remedy the distortion but, on the other hand, the only way He can do that is through a "slight adjustment", that is, a distortion of a kind, of what already is. Benjamin identifies the figure of the "hunchback" as the "prototype of distortion" and the constant reminder that the Messiah has not come yet. A very frequent image in Kafka's works, asserts Benjamin, is "the man who bows his head far down his chest: the fatigue of the court officials, the noise affecting the doormen in the hotel, the low ceiling facing the visitors in the gallery" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 133). Agamben identifies the figure of Benjamin's "hunchback" as a figure of the intermediate between the angels and the assistants: "just as [the assistant's] carelessness is a precursor to redemption", the hunchback's "share of oblivion has something to do with the end of time" (Agamben, *Profanations* 33). On the other hand, the hunchback represents the forgotten; he presents himself in order to lay claim "to the aspect of oblivion that resides in everything" (Agamben, *Profanations* 33). As Benjamin claims, Kafka's creatures are "the receptacles of the forgotten" since they inhabit a state of oblivion (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 132).

What has been forgotten, asserts Benjamin, is never something purely singular, since "[e]verything forgotten mingles with what has been forgotten of the prehistoric world, forms countless, uncertain, changing compounds, yielding a constant flow of new, strange products" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 131). These "new, strange products" are Kafka's creatures; it is not therefore accidental that Josephine will be "redeemed from the earthly sorrows" and "rise to the heights of redemption" only by being "forgotten like all her brothers" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 250). Maybe this is the reason Kafka's final gesture was to express a wish to consign his works to the flames, since "forgetting always involves the best, for it involves the possibility of redemption" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 136). This "oblivion", he asserts, "is the container from which the inexhaustible intermediate world in Kafka's stories presses toward the light" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 133). This is the reason why Kafka's creatures become distorted: their distortion comes as a direct result of "a tempest that blows from the land of oblivion" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 138). This is one of the reasons why the hunchback, a figure that embodies distortion, is directly linked to the notion of the creature and more specifically to Kafka's creatures.

The fundamental example would unquestionably be the Crossbreed, a being whose nature oscillates between two different animal species. The narrator, who is also the owner/custodian of that creature, begins as follows: "I have a curious animal, half kitten,

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half lamb. It is a legacy from my father, but it only developed in my time; formerly it was far more lamb than kitten" (Kafka *Collected Stories* 393). The Crossbreed is a hybrid, a being that stands at the intersection, at the crossing, of two family lines – the German for crossbreed being *Kreuzung*, which literally means "crossroad" or "intersection". The narrator's Crossbreed exists at the boundary of two different and, at the same time, antithetical species: the cunning cat and the innocent lamb. It inherits the restlessness of the two species and the narrator maintains that "for that reason its skin feels too tight for it" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 395). Its very existence is an irregularity, an unnatural anomaly; this makes the creature unique. The fact that it is not even given a name bears testimony to the narrator's (and his ancestors') inability to put it under a species category. "Sometimes", he asserts, "the children bring cats with them; once they actually brought two lambs. But against all their hopes there was no scene of recognition. The animals gazed calmly at each other with their animal eyes, and obviously accepted their reciprocal existence as a divine fact" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 394). Another such creature is Odradek: "the flat star-shaped spool", whose pointless – and immortal – existence burdens the narrator and baffles the reader (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 183). It belongs to no identifiable species and one finds great difficulty in attempting to imagine or describe it. It cannot even be called an animal; it is rather a "creature" or a "thing". The narrator recognizes aspects in Odradek that he can identify with, such as its laughter; but even that seems non-human, since it "has no lungs behind it" and "sounds like the rustling of fallen leaves" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 184). Benjamin notes:

> Odradek is the form which things assume in oblivion. They are distorted. The 'cares of a family man', which no one can identify are distorted; the bug, of which we know all too well it is Gregor Samsa, is distorted; the big animal, half lamb, half kitten, for which 'the butcher's knife' might be 'a release' is distorted. These Kafka figures are connected by a long series of figures with the prototype of distortion, the hunchback. (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 133)

While the assistants already belong to the last day then, the hunchback will lose its burden with the coming of the Messiah; thus, the "little man" who "is at home in distorted life", the archetype of the creaturely life, "will disappear with the coming of the Messiah" since the coming of the Messiah will straighten the distorted, will smoothen the obstacle and "the forgotten will be remembered of its own accord" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 134; Agamben, *Profanations* 34). Benjamin affirms that "Even if Kafka did not pray – and this we do not know – he still possessed in the highest degree what Malebranche called 'the natural prayer of the soul': attentiveness" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 134); Kafka's prayer-

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like attentiveness, I want to argue, is ultimately oriented at messianic hope. As Benjamin notes, Kafka's attentiveness includes all living creatures "as saints include them in their prayers" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 134). In Kafka's case, one could go as far as to argue that his rethinking of Jewish messianism highlights the affinity between animality – or better yet creatureliness – and the messianic by taking his non-human creatures into a dimension where they have an enhanced rapport with the Messiah.

In *The Open: Man and Animal*, Agamben provides readers with a beautiful image of how the relationship between humans and animals will be transfigured in the afterlife of humanity. In the first chapter of this book, entitled "Theriomorphous", he embarks a discussion that revolves around a miniature illustration of a narrative from a 13th-century Hebrew Bible of the last day of the history of humanity. On that day, under the shade of paradisiacal trees and in the sound of hymns played by two musicians, the righteous will be presented with a messianic feast. What Agamben finds fascinating is that the righteous, like the musicians, are not presented with human faces but rather with animal heads. One cannot only recognize the heads of three eschatological animals in three of the righteous men: "the eagle's fierce beak, the read head of the ox, and the lion's head", but the other two are presented with the head of an ass and a leopard (Agamben, *The Open* 2). This forces Agamben to wonder why the righteous, that is, those who have spent their lives according to the prescriptions of the Torah, are represented with unmistakably animal characteristics: "Why are the representatives of concluded humanity depicted with animal heads?" (Agamben, *The Open* 2) This is a question, Agamben goes on to add, that various scholars have attempted to address, though no one has come to a convincing explanation. It is important to note that the righteous in question are not the dead who shall rise again but the righteous that are alive at the time of the Messiah's coming, "the representatives of the remnant of Israel" (Agamben, *The Open* 2).

Agamben concludes that the theriomorphous depiction of the righteous might refer to a "shadowy kinship between animal macrocosm and human microcosm" and a reshaping of the human-animal relationship at the end of days. He goes on to support his argument with a well-known messianic prophesy from Isaiah II: 6 "the wolf shall live with the sheep, / and the leopard lie down with the kid; / the calf and the young lion shall grow up together, / and a little child shall lead them" (Agamben, *The Open* 2). It is therefore possible and quite probable that the miniature illustration might imply that "on the last day the relations between animals and men will take on a new form and man himself will be reconciled with his animal nature" (Agamben, *The Open* 3). In essence, Agamben seems to be arguing that with the coming of the Messiah, the human/animal relationship will take on a new form,

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with the first coming to terms with his own animality. One could argue that this is also Kafka's world vision and it is in this world vision that the Messiah is most needed; the coming of the Messiah could bring forth a reconciliation of the contrasting natures that lie within the human and render him/her whole once again. The "infinite amount of hope" that Kafka speaks of could therefore represent the longing and desire for the coming of the Messiah, in order to renegotiate humans' relationship to their animality, to the divine and to redemption. In the chapter "Cognitio Experimentalis" Agamben suggests that the messianic end of history, with the righteous depicted with animal heads, "defines a critical threshold", in which the distinction between humans and animals, that has been so pivotal for our culture, threatens to disappear (Agamben, *The Open* 21). The relationship between humans and animals "marks the boundary of an essential domain, in which historical inquiry must necessarily confront the fringe of ultrahistory which cannot be reached without making recourse to first philosophy" (Agamben, *The Open* 21). In other words, the question of the border of the human/animal relationship is not merely one question among others; it is rather an essential metaphysico-political question that has enabled philosophers and theologians to define and produce concepts such as "Man" or "subjectivity". Indeed, Agamben suggests if humanity and animality could be superimposed perfectly then notions such as "Man", "animal" or even the "divine" would be unthinkable.

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Undoubtedly, in Kafka and Benjamin, the "animal" – or better yet the "creature" – becomes a site of perpetual reflection, not only on the being of animals but also that of humans. This blurring of the boundaries between humans and animals, aided and abetted by Kafka's insistence in using protagonists whose humanity or animality are always in question (Rotpeter, Josephine, the canine investigator, or even Gregor Samsa) serves to further reinforce the view that Kafka's work presents a subtle yet irreversible break with tradition and with its conception of law, doctrine and messianic redemption. His animal stories and parables "unfold" before the reader, "the way a bud turns into a blossom" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 122). It is possible, according to Benjamin, to read his animal stories for quite a while before one realizes that they do not involve human beings at all. At that moment, the reader "looks up in fright" as if jolted by an electric current, only to realize how far away she/he truly is from the realm of man (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 122). This is why Kafka's animals occupy such a prominent position in his works: because they provide "the greatest opportunity for reflection" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 132). Such reflection, however, is bereft of the guiding light of doctrine. Benjamin asserted that "Kafka might have said that these are relics transmitting the doctrine, although we could regard them just as well as

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precursors preparing the doctrine", simultaneously encompassing contradictory but intertwined forces that give rise to two temporal horizons: the traditional-restorative and the future-oriented utopian messianisms (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 122). Therefore, they enable the possibility for a tradition-to-come so that perhaps, in the end, or after the end, there can really be "an infinite amount of hope" for "us" as well.

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Chapter 2

The Less-than-Human and 20th-Century Catastrophe in the works of Giorgio Agamben, Primo Levi, and Art Spiegelman

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the publication of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis", in May 2015, BBC Radio 3 offered a week of varied programmes collectively entitled *In The Shadow of Kafka*, exploring the legacy of the novella and his other works. The series opened with a documentary, presented by Misha Glenny and entitled *In the Shadow of Kafka: Prophet of Prague*, which visited locations associated with the author and sought to identify the ways in which Kafka's reputation and visibility in his city had varied following changes in the Czech political climate. Along with several Kafka experts, Glenny discussed whether the writer had truly been a "prophet" of the 20th century, since the themes in his writing – alienation, bureaucracy, anxiety, panic, power, and peril – rendered his works so dangerous in the years of Nazi occupation and post-1968 socialism that they were suppressed. In line with Bertolt Brecht, who viewed Kafka's work as "prophetic", it is as if Kafka's arbitrary, alienating, bureaucratic, and oppressive legal world, which crashes people like dogs or turns them into giant cockroaches, foretold some of the century's most horrendous events (Benjamin, *Aesthetics and Politics* 91). In fact, approximately 17 years after his death, Kafka's three sisters were tortured to death in a German penal colony (Elli and Valli perished in the Polish ghetto at Lodz in 1942 and his favourite, Ottla, was sent to the gas chamber in Auschwitz in 1943), and he would have probably joined them, had he been alive (he died of tuberculosis in 1924 at the age of 41).

On the other hand, we might be projecting too much on Kafka by calling him a prophet; truth be told, even though he might have sensed the impending danger for the Jewish community, history definitely surpassed even his most "Kafkaesque" nightmares. Although he wrestled with the temptation of assigning Kafka a "prophetic eminence", according to Russel Samolsky, "Benjamin desisted" from doing so (Samolsky 33). Instead, his insight "comes from a certain deep listening or auscultation of tradition" and not from some prescience or prophetic vision (Samolsky 33). According to Benjamin, "his experience was based solely on the tradition, to which Kafka surrendered; there was no far-sightedness or 'prophetic vision'. Kafka listened to tradition, and he who listens hard does not see" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 143). In effect, despite the fact that Kafka is traditionally viewed as a dystopian writer and a prophet of catastrophe, in his revisited notion of messianic tradition, the animal, or, better yet, the creaturely, is, as I have tried to show, also connected to hopefulness and messianic redemption. Nonetheless, regardless of whether we can

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perceive Kafka as a "prophetic" figure or not, one thing becomes evident: during WWII, the connection between humanity and animality, – or more specifically, between Judaism and animality – that Kafka so brilliantly elucidates in his writings, becomes perverted, obtains a violent and catastrophic valence, and transforms into a genocidal connection in ways that Kafka could not have anticipated.

An event of such catastrophic proportions (approximately six million Jews are calculated to have been exterminated) has obviously called for explanation – a task which a number of philosophers, historians, and political theorists have undertaken since the end of World War II. In light of Kafka's own engagement with the non-human specifically, however, I would like to focus the explanatory import of the work of Giorgio Agamben, especially his most influential but also his most controversial text, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben originally attempts to explore the "logic" of sovereignty as presented by Carl Schmitt: "The paradox of sovereignty consists in the fact the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 17). Having the legal power to suspend the law, the sovereign places himself outside the law while declaring that there is nothing outside the law. The state of exception is the situation that arises from the suspension of law; it "has the peculiar characteristic that it cannot be defined either as a situation of fact or as a situation of right, but instead institutes a paradoxical threshold of indistinction between the two" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 18). In essence, as Schmitt asserts, the exception does not only "confirm" the rule, but the rule as such "lives off" the exception alone (Schmitt qtd in Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 17). As Agamben clarifies in his *State of Exception*, the significance of the exception within this formulation is that the exception provides the conditions for the application of the law precisely through its capacity to bring about its suspension. As he asserts,

> In the decision on the state of exception, the norm is suspended or even annulled; but what is at issue in this suspension is, once again, the creation of a situation that makes the application of the norm possible. That is, the state of exception separates the norm from its application in order to make its application possible. (Agamben, *State of Exception* 36)

This is the true *paranomia* (unlawfulness), as Stathis Gourgouris calls it, that resides at the heart of the law, since it reveals "law's intrinsic outlaw nature" (Gourgouris 122). As Agamben asserts, the state of exception "introduces a zone of anomie into the law in order to make the effective regulation of the real possible" (Agamben, *State of Exception* 36). If the exception then is the true structure of sovereignty, sovereignty becomes "the originary structure in which law refers to life and includes it in itself by suspending it" (Agamben,

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Homo Sacer 23). Agamben gives the name *ban* to this ability of the law to "maintain itself in its own privation, to apply in no longer applying" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 23).

Since for Agamben, "the relation of exception is a relation of ban", the one who has been banned is simultaneously inside and outside the juridical order (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 23). In fact, Agamben maintains, "he who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather abandoned by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 23). The human being caught in the sovereign ban, becomes, then, stripped of legal status and transformed, in relation to sovereign power, into "bare life". Based on the Aristotelian distinction, between natural life – *zoe* (*ζωή*) – and a particular kind of life – *bios* (*βίος*) – "bare life" is not simply natural life *per se*, but rather a politicized form of natural life that is simultaneously included and excluded from the political realm. In order to illustrate this formulation, the philosopher analyses the figure of the *homo sacer*, an obscure figure from Roman history who has been found guilty by the people of committing a crime. Reiterating Pompeius Festus' analysis of the *homo sacer* in his treatise *On the Significance of Words,* Agamben identifies two traits that constitute the specificity of this figure: "the unpunishability of his killing and the ban on his sacrifice"; in other words, he cannot be sacrificed, but is killed with impunity (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 48). The *homo sacer* becomes, therefore, the paradigm of the state of exception: "the sovereign sphere is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice, and sacred life – that is, life that may be killed but not sacrificed – is the life that has been captured in this sphere" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 53). Since the life that is caught in the sovereign ban becomes "sacred" in the original sense, the originary activity of sovereignty is the production of "bare life". Sovereign power is, therefore, based on the "exclusive inclusion" of bare life in the state, while its first and immediate referent is the *homo sacer* (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 64).

Interestingly, however, Agamben identifies another figure from ancient Germanic law, approximating that of the *homo sacer*, the "wolf-man" (*wargus, werewolf*). Referring to Rodolphe Jhering's analysis of the link between the two figures, Agamben maintains that the "wolf-man" precedes the *homo sacer;* in fact, this figure can be traced all the way back to a period of "pre-social life" (Jhering qtd in Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 63). In essence, the outlaw or the bandit that in the collective unconscious was seen as having a wolf-head was banned from society and could be killed with impunity "outside a judge and law" (Jhering qtd in Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 63). In its origin then, the wolf-man was seen as "a monstrous hybrid of human and animal, divided between the forest and the city" suspended between

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law and lawlessness (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 63). As Gourgouris maintains, he becomes a *paranomos*: "one who is simultaneously beside the law and on the other side of law" (Gourgouris 137). Agamben underscores the fact that this figure is identified as a wolf-man instead of simply a wolf. This is crucial since it suggests that: "The life of the bandit, like that of the sacred man, is not a piece of animal nature without any relation to law and the city. It is, rather, a threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man, *physis* and *nomos*, exclusion and inclusion" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 63). The life of the *homo sacer* thus parallels the life of the werewolf, the *loup garou*, who "is precisely neither man nor beast, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 63).

Translating the genealogy of these figures into contemporary secular terms, Agamben suggests that "the fundamental categorical pair of Western politics" is that of "bare life/political existence, *zoe/bios*, exclusion/inclusion" indicating a kind of politics that has constituted itself as "biopolitics" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 12). In his *History of Sexuality I*, Foucault, who coined the term, identifies a transition in modernity through which the care and regulation of biological human life becomes the task of the state. In the classical age, as Foucault maintains, the "right of death" and the "power over life" was a completely asymmetrical one: "the sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring" (Foucault 136). Power in this case was essentially "a right to seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself", which culminated in the privilege "to seize hold of life in order to suppress it" (Foucault 136). What used to be the sovereign's right to put to death has now transformed into the "right of the social body to ensure, maintain, or develop its life" (Foucault 136). Wars, as the philosopher asserts, "are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended", but rather, "entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity", in the name of the common good, "for the biological existence of a population" (Foucault 137). Genocide then becomes the dream of modern powers, not due to a recent return of an "ancient right to kill" but because power "is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race and the large-scale phenomena of population" (Foucault 137). In this sense, Foucault distinguishes biopower from sovereign power and locates the origins of biopolitics at the time of the emergence of biopower in modernity as a historical paradigm shift.

In his discussion of Foucault's theory, Agamben attempts to "correct", or at least "complete" Foucault's thesis of the temporality of the emergence of biopolitics by claiming that

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> [W]hat characterizes modern politics is not so much the inclusion of *zoē* in the *polis* – which is, in itself, absolutely ancient – nor simply the fact that life as such becomes a principal object of the projections and calculations of State power. Instead the decisive fact is that, together with the process by which the exception everywhere becomes the rule, the realm of bare life – which is originally situated at the margins of the political order – gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, *bios* and *zoē*, right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction. (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 12)

Since sovereign power already belongs to the realm of biopolitics, for Agamben, the rise of the technology of biopower signifies the extension of the existing biopolitical imperative of the state and not a break in the history of Western Politics. Bare life passes from the periphery to the centre of State's concerns and the state of exception increasingly becomes the rule, or better yet, the distinction between exception and rule becomes completely effaced. For modernity, then, the *homo sacer,* as Zygmunt Bauman asserts, "is the principal category of human waste laid out in the course of modern production of orderly (law abiding, rule governed) sovereign realms" (Bauman 33). In effect, throughout the age of modernity, "the nation-state has claimed the right to preside over the distinction between order and chaos, law and lawlessness, citizen and *homo sacer,* belonging and exclusion, useful (legitimate) product and waste" (Bauman 33). Since the main "preoccupation" and "metafunction" of modern states have involved the segregation and disposal of waste, in tandem with the foundation of their own claims to legitimacy and authority, concentration camps have undeniably become the biopolitical paradigms of a modern state of exception that has become the rule. For Agamben, Jews under the Nazi regime became a perfect example of the *homo sacer* – someone who could be killed with impunity, but not sacrificed. The Nazi extermination of the Jews "as lice" was, therefore, "the actualization of a mere 'capacity to be killed' inherent in the condition of the Jew as such" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 68). It belonged neither to the realm of religion nor to law *per se*, but to the realm of a modern biopolitics turned into "thanatopolitics" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 83). Fundamental to Agamben's exploration is the figure of the *Muselmann,* a figure that marks the threshold of the human and the inhuman in such a way that it questions the idea that there is a "humanity to the human" that inherently extends beyond biologically belonging to the species and thus gives rise to a new form of ethics. Essentially, then, Agamben views the concentration camp as the paradigmatic space of a loss of humanity that emerges as the fundamental result of the operation of modern sovereignty. For this reason, his work is essential for comprehending

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the ties between Kafka's oeuvre (to which Agamben has dedicated a number of important reflections) and first-generation witness Holocaust accounts; hence, Primo Levi's *If this is a Man* and *The Truce*, in turn, become paradigmatic expressions of the place and significance of the creaturely or less-than-human among Kafka's post-war progeny.

Bestialization and First-Generation Holocaust Writing: the works of Primo Levi

Levi's first book, *If this is a Man* (United States title: *Survival in Auschwitz*), written in 1947, describes the author's arrest as a member of the Italian anti-fascist resistance, his deportation to Poland, and his twenty-month incarceration in Auschwitz. In his "Introduction" to Levi's books, Karl Miller notes that *If this is a Man* becomes the *Inferno* of Levi's experience of the Holocaust, likening the writer's captivity at the concentration camp to Dante's depiction of the nine circles of suffering in Hell. Assimilating the book into the genre of the epic, Miller asserts, might be "technically inappropriate but morally justifiable" given the fact that they are "communal, tribal, as well as universally human in their implications" (Miller xii). At the same time, despite the differences of style, age, religion, or orientation between Levi and Dante, there is a strange affinity that connects the two writers. This should not come as a surprise given that fact that Levi received a classical education in Italy at a time when both Homer and Dante still occupied a prominent position in secondary schooling. As Risa B. Sodi affirms, "Levi draws on Dante in such a knowledgeable and meaningful way as to make their connection more than just circumstantial" (Sodi 1). Inspired by Dante's journey, Levi provides the account of his own descent in "the house of the dead", of his "journey towards nothingness", of his "journey down there, towards the bottom", in a realm of unending pain and suffering (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 14). But what happens to the man who reaches "the bottom" and how much of his humanity survives the descent?

The title of Levi's first book already presupposes a state where the prisoners' humanity is not only suspended but systematically stripped away in order to render them disposable "bare lives". Even language, Levi asserts, lacks the words to express the offence perpetrated in the camps: "the demolition of a man" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 26). In effect, the main purpose of the concentration camp was the disintegration of any sense of humanity in the prisoners' mind. The Lager, as Levi affirms, "was a great machine to reduce us into beasts" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 44). In order to do so, it deprived prisoners of everything:

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their clothing, their *logos*, their history, their conception of ethics and justice, their laughter, and their dignity.[5]

What Levi describes, then, is the extreme destitution and degradation of human life into a "bare life" subject to mass extermination. Upon his arrival at the concentration camp, he, along with many other prisoners, is stripped from all his clothing and belongings, disinfected, shaved, and then given a uniform and a pair of wooden shoes. Nothing belongs to them anymore; as he notes, "they have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair; if we speak, they will not listen to us, and if they listen, they will not understand" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 26). The camp's inmates are stripped of language and even of their names; those who want to keep it will have to find in themselves the strength to do so, "to manage somehow so that behind the name something of us, of us as we were, still remains" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 26). Extreme starvation, physical exhaustion, and untreated pneumonia and diarrhoea exacerbated the situation; camp prisoners were methodically turned into slaves "deprived of every right, exposed to every insult, condemned to certain death" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 44). Instead of maintaining their names, the prisoners have numbers tattooed on their arms and are put to endless work till their anonymous death by exhaustion, a bullet, starvation, or the gas chamber. As Levi maintains, "We are the slaves of the slaves, whom all can give orders to, and our name is the number which we carry tattooed on our arm and sewn on our jacket" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 84).

Like many other intellectuals of the time, Levi describes the dehumanizing effect of the Nazi treatment of Jewish prisoners as a process of "bestialization". According to Belpoliti and Gordon, Levi's narrative establishes "the category of the 'bestial' as the prime referent for the non/sub-human residue envisaged by the title *If This is a Man*" (Belpoliti & Gordon 54). The animal, then, stands in for all the horrific, dissocializing, dehumanizing humiliations imposed upon the prisoners, from nakedness to the loss of language and identity, and from the deprivation of private space to extreme starvation. As Belpoliti and Gordon maintain, "Levi uses animals ethologically, that is, as a means to understanding complex behavioural mechanisms which can be mapped onto both prisoners and guards (and

[5] In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida suggests that what conventionally separates man from animals are certain elements that man "installs or claims" as "*his property*", marking "his *superiority* over what is called animal life" (Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* 20). The need to put on clothes to cover their nudity, the notions of ethics, historical temporality, laughing, and mourning are only a few of the concepts that are traditionally considered as "proper to man" (Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* 5) and once they are removed, man is "reduced" to animal or "exposed to animality" (Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* 73).

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the many 'grey' levels in between) in the extreme, altered reality of the camps" (Belpoliti & Gordon 54).

References to dogs for example appear often in Levi's work, from the "curt, barbaric barking of Germans in command which seems to give vent to a millennial anger" to "the old ferocious longing to feel myself a man" that attacks Levi "like a dog" the moment his conscience "comes out of the gloom" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 16 & 169). Behind all the animal references and imagery there lies, according to Belpoliti and Gordon, "a larger analogy, or affinity (if not identity) between animals and mankind" (Belpoliti & Gordon 55). The prime example of this affinity would be the figure of Null Achtzehn, a young person who is not even "worthy of a name" since he is "no longer a man" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 45). His name, the number zero eighteen, has a double significance: on the one hand, the first digit, zero, signifies nothingness itself; on the other, the name-as-number reflects the annihilation of identity that occurs in the camps. In this bestial state, Null Achtzehn seems to encompass the characteristics of three different animals: his emptiness and his indifference resemble "the slough of certain insects which one finds on the banks of swamps, held by a thread to the stones and shaken by the wind"; his astuteness is even less than that of a "draughthorse, which stops pulling a little before it reaches exhaustion"; and his ability to carry out orders work endlessly remind Levi "of the sledge-dogs in London's books, who slave until the last breath and die on the track" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 46). In Levi, it is possible for Man to become an animal, sharing several characteristics with other species but also possessing "many specificities or unique zoological attributes of its own" (Belpoliti & Gordon 55). The writer explores the permeable borders and exchanges between the human and the animal, "thereby defining what is human ('if this is a man') and posing profound metaphysical questions as a result" (Belpoliti & Gordon, 55). The epicentre of his work of witness, therefore, is inhabited by the hybrid creature he calls the "human animal" (*l'animale-uomo*) (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 102).

The first time Levi uses the term "human animal" is when he refers to the Lager as "pre-eminently a gigantic biological and social experiment" with thousands of individuals of differing ages, conditions, origins, languages, cultures and customs dragged from their homes, enclosed in a space with barbed wire and armed guards, and forced to work under horrendous conditions, only to be disposed of at any time their captors see fit (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 102). As Agamben maintains, "insofar as its inhabitants were stripped of every political status and wholly reduced to bare life, the camp was also the most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized, in which power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 97). The prisoners are thus included in the

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political realm "by means of an exclusion", simultaneously becoming the referent of the state of exception and the target of sovereign violence. As Levi notes, in the Lager, people "live a regular, controlled life which is identical for all and inadequate to all needs, and which is much more rigorous than any experimenter could have set up to establish what is essential and what is adventitious to the conduct of the human animal in the struggle for life" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 102). With politics having become biopolitics, the prisoners, stripped of political significance and exposed to murderous violence, undergo a transformation from citizens to *homines sacri*, that is, disposable lives that could be eliminated at any given moment with impunity. The concentration camps, then, become the "fundamental biopolitical paradigm" that demonstrates the "thanatopolitical face" of a power that turns the exception into a thanatopolitical norm (Agamben *Homo Sacer* 86).

Even though in the eyes of the Nazi state all camp inhabitants were considered disposable, not all of them perished; it was possible to survive. "Precisely because the Lager was a great machine to reduce us to beasts", Levi maintains, "we must not become beasts" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 44). What separates the survivors from the dead is primarily a will to survive that is directly connected with resisting the turning into a beast, an ability to maintain life without being reduced to bare life. As Levi notes, "even in this place one can survive, and therefore one must want to survive" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 44). In his study, *Primo Levi and the Politics of Survival*, Frederic D. Homer asserts that "The prisoners in the Lager had choices to make, even though they were narrowly based upon upbringing and a limited and confined reason" (Homer 16). The "paradox", as Homer calls it, in Levi's work is that while he refers to the "destruction of man at the bottom", he simultaneously describes how, "even in this cruel universe", some survivors "grasp shards of strategies to cope with overwhelming circumstances" (Homer 17). Even though the choices that the survivors were forced to make might be considered as "demeaning", "unethical", or even "evil" (living in cesspools of their own excrement, ignoring the pain of others, stealing from one another, swindling others of their rations) one thing is certain: they were necessary ones. As Levi upholds,

> We do not believe in the most obvious and facile deduction: that man is fundamentally brutal, egoistic and stupid in his conduct once every civilized institution is taken away, and that the Häftling is consequently nothing but a man without inhibitions. We believe, rather, that the only conclusion to be drawn is that in the face of driving necessity and physical disabilities many social habits and instincts are reduced to silence. (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 102-103)

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In this environment, where the struggle for survival is brutal and without respite, "because everyone is desperately and ferociously alone", the will and resolve to do whatever it takes to survive is essentially what marks the boundary between "the drowned and the saved" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 103).

In a chapter that carries the very "Dantesque" title "The Drowned and the Saved" (which, incidentally, was the original working title of the first book), Levi depicts three different types of prisoners based on their states of mind while in the Lager and their determination to survive. The first category of prisoners Levi identifies are the "martyrs and saints": a very small group of prisoners who were able to survive without surrendering to the new (im)morality of the Lager. As Levi notes, "Survival without renunciation of any part of one's own moral world apart from powerful and direct interventions by fortune was conceded only to very few superior individuals, made of the stuff of martyrs and saints" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 109). Even though he clearly expresses his admiration towards these few who managed to maintain their dignity throughout their ordeal, Levi realizes that he does not belong to this category; as Homer asserts, "If Levi wanted to start a personal campaign for martyrdom, he could have emphasized will and courage in survival over chance and craven opportunism. Instead, he emphasizes the latter and concludes that those who survived were not the best" (Homer 92).

Instead, Levi identifies with the majority of the survivors who had to become unscrupulous in order to claw their way out of the bottom. According to Levi, the Lager is run by an "unjust" and "ferocious" law that states: "to he that has, will be given; to he that has not, will be taken away" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 104). Homer refers to this majority as the "Hobbesian men"[6] since they adopt "the view that the universe was one of scarcity" and that they "must selfishly do anything" they can to survive (Homer 103). The prisoners'

[6] Homer makes a clear reference to English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, whose 1652 book, *Leviathan*, set the foundation for modern political philosophy and science highlighting the necessity for a strong central authority in order to avoid discords and civil war. According to Hobbes, human life – that is seen as purely mechanistic – without government lapses into what he calls "the state of nature". In that state, each person has a right to all things inviting serious divisive struggle and conflict; he asserts, "In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes 113). This state of war, "of every man, against every man" (Hobbes 113), can be avoided if people accede to a social contract with the sovereign authority, in order to establish civil society. With the people's renunciation or transfer of right based on fear, either of their fellow men or of a conqueror, sovereign authority becomes authorized, indisputable, and absolute. A more extensive analysis of Hobbes' philosophy in the *Leviathan* occurs in Chapter 5 in reference to Piercy's futuristic dystopian in *He, She, and It.*

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actions can no longer be judged as just or unjust, ethical or unethical, since the notions of justice, ethics, or morality had no substance in the Lager – only power mattered. According to Homer, "Slaves had to forget their prior moral universe, because in this state of nature, if they were to survive, former moral strictures got in the way. It was counterproductive to think of the morally correct actions. Power ruled completely" (Homer 103). Indeed, this majority of prisoners understood that entrance in the Lager simultaneously entailed entrance into a "Hobbesian social contract of 'obedience or your life'" (Homer 104). Since Hobbesian contracts are based on power instead of obligation, these prisoners had to conform to the rules of the SS and "go through the prescribed motions of discipline and work" (Homer 104).

Among the "Hobbesians", however, one can further identify two distinct moral camps: the first is composed of those who would do anything to survive and even gain power, regardless of the damage they might inflict on others; the second involved those who could understand the necessity of moral backsliding but tried to compromise as few of their morals as possible. The former were, according to Levi, "pitiless, vigorous and inhuman individuals, installed (following an investiture by the SS command, which showed itself in such choices to possess a satanic knowledge of human character) in the posts of Kapos"; while the latter "had always succeeded through their astuteness and energy in successfully organizing, gaining in this way, besides material advantages and reputation, the indulgence and esteem of the powerful people in the camp" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 105).

In essence, even though users of both strategies ruthlessly pursued their own interests in order to survive, the latter were at least inclined to minimize causing harm to others if it were possible and felt guilty if they failed to do so. Levi views himself as belonging to the latter group of these "Hobbesians"; in order to provide the grounds to group himself with them, Levi describes an incident when he and other prisoners were forced to witness the execution of a prisoner who had allegedly aided in the destruction of a crematorium in Birkenau. Right before he died, everyone heard the cry of the "doomed man" piercing through "the old thick barriers of inertia and submissiveness" to the very core of whatever humanity was still left in them: "'*Kameraden, ich bin der Letzte*' (Comrades, I am the last one!)" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 178). No one raised his voice in solidarity, and there was not even a murmur or a nod of assent; nothing happened. As Levi recalls, "We remained standing, bent and grey, our heads dropped, and we did not uncover our heads until the German ordered us to do so" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 179). Even though he would get to survive where his comrade had perished, at that moment, Levi realised just how terrible the price of survival had been. As he affirms, "The Russians can come now: they will only find us, the slaves, the worn-out, worthy of the unarmed death which awaits us […] That man

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must have been tough, he must have been made of another metal than us if this condition of ours, which has broken us, could not bend him" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 179).

Aside from the "martyrs and saints" and the two types of "Hobbesians", there is a third category of camp inhabitants, one that has dominated Holocaust scholarship and art: the *Muselmänner*. If there is one thing that Levi feared more than the moral consequences of survival, it was his descent to the state of the *Muselmann,* whom he describes as a man "in decay" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 104). The *Muselmänner* have no acquaintances in the Lager, they do not get any extra rations on occasions, and they do not hold any profitable positions within the camp system. Levi asserts that it is not worth talking to them or befriending them because "one knows that they are only here on a visit, that in a few weeks nothing will remain of them but a handful of ashes in some near-by field and a crossed-out number on a register" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 104). Much like Null Achtzehn, the non-man Levi is sometimes paired with, most *Muselmänner* are "engulfed and swept along without rest by the innumerable crowd of those similar to them, they suffer and drag themselves along in an opaque intimate solitude, and in solitude they die or disappear, without leaving a trace in anyone's memory" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 104-105).

Interestingly, echoes of Kafka's "Josephine" and his description of the mouse folk are very prominent in Levi's description of the *Muselmänner*. Having envisioned an enclosed community where its (mice) citizens go about their daily lives unable "to rise to anything so high" as music, fearful of "enemies too numerous" and "dangers […] too incalculable" only to be "forgotten" in the "numberless throng" of the dead, Kafka could not have foreseen just how quickly his fictional rendering would become a reality (Kafka 233, 242 & 250). To sink to the bottom, according to Levi, "is the easiest of matters": all one has to do is to execute every order the Kapos and the SS give out, to eat only the ration provided, and to follow all the rules and regulations of the camp. All the *Muselmänner* who had entered the camp more or less revealed the same story: upon their entry into the Lager, "they are overcome before they can adapt themselves; they are beaten by time, they do not begin to learn German, to disentangle the infernal knot of laws and prohibitions until their body is already in decay, and nothing can save them from selections or from death by exhaustion" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 105-106). Even though their lives are incredibly short, at least in the camp, their numbers are terrifyingly endless; "they, the *Muselmänner*, the drowned, form the backbone of the camp, an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence, the divine spark dead within them, already too empty to really suffer" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 106). It is really telling how similar this is to Kafka's description of the short and hurried life of the innumerable and faceless mass of

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mice who scurry around "for reasons that are often not very clear" to them, forcing them to grow "prematurely old" (Kafka, *Collected Stories* 237 & 243). Hesitant to call the *Muselmänner* living or pronounce their death a death, Levi is haunted by the memory of the *Muselmänner* whose faceless presences enclose all the evil of the camp in one image: "an emaciated man, with head dropped and shoulders curved, on whose face and in whose eyes not a trace of a thought is to be seen" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 106). If the first two categories Levi describes, then, represent the "saved", the survivors, then the *Muselmänner* are undeniably the "drowned"; like "streams that run down to the sea", they follow the "slope down to the bottom" and are destroyed and forgotten (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 106).

Agamben identifies the figure of the *Muselmann* as "the most extreme figure of the camp inhabitant […] a being from whom humiliation, horror, and fear had so taken away all consciousness and all personality as to make him absolutely apathetic" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 103). In fact, references to the figure of the *Muselmann* can be found in several works by camp survivors: in his work about his experience with his father in Auschwitz and Buchenwald, Elie Wiesel refers to the *Muselmann* as someone who was "extremely frail" and "good for the crematorium" (Wiesel 70). In his own memoir as a Holocaust victim and survivor, Jean Améry refers to him as "the prisoner who was giving up and was given up by his comrades" and who "no longer had room in his consciousness for the contrasts good or bad, noble or base, intellectual or unintellectual" (Améry 9). In fact, the *Muselmann* resembled a walking corpse, a dehumanized "bundle of physical functions in its last convulsions" (Améry 9). In his fascinating book titled *The Order of Terror,* German sociologist Wolfgang Sofsky analyses the ways in which the concentration camp, which took the form of a "laboratory of violence" and "absolute power" founded on cruelty, starvation, slave-labour, and the systematic extermination of human beings, gave rise to this new category of existence, namely, the *Muselmann* (Sofsky 25). As a person "in the process of dissolution", the *Muselmann*, Sofsky asserts, "symbolizes the anthropological transformation of a human being under the conditions of camp existence" (Sofsky 25). The *Muselmänner,* these devastated wrecks, were the victims of "a stepwise annihilation of human beings" caught in a limbo between life and death; their physical appearance, the sociologist maintains, revealed the dehumanizing effects of extreme starvation and torture:

> In a final stage of emaciation, their skeletons were enveloped by flaccid, parchmentlike sheaths of skin, oedema had formed on their feet and thighs, their posterior muscles had collapsed. Their skulls seemed elongated; their noses dripped constantly, mucus running down their chins. Their eyeballs had sunk deep into their sockets; their gaze was glazed. Their limbs moved

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> slowly, hesitantly, almost mechanically. They exuded a penetrating, acrid odour; sweat, urine, liquid faeces trickled down their legs. The rags that covered their freezing frames were full of lice; their skin was covered with scabies. Most suffered from diarrhoea. They ate anything they could lay their hands on – mouldy bread, cheese wriggling with worms, raw bits of turnip, garbage fished from the bins. (Sofsky 199)

The *Muselmänner'*s extreme emaciation destroyed the dividing line between life and death, sinking them "below the animal level for survival" (Sofsky 199). Since their lethargy was mistaken by the Kapos for laziness, or a form of "passive resistance" against the regime, they became "the butt of crude jokes, humiliation and cruelty": they were given the hardest assignments; they were shoved aside during meal distribution and forced to watch as others ate; due to their uncleanliness, they were forced to sleep in the latrines or in the washrooms; and they were repeatedly shouted at, punched in the face, kicked, whipped and/or beaten (Sofsky 203). Thus, the *Muselmänner* experienced the full wrath of the functionaries who saw their apathetic stance as a provocation and an insult to their power.

Soon enough, however, the Nazis' fury and contempt turned into indifference and the *Muselmänner* were left to their own devices. Even for their fellow prisoners, though, they were a constant annoyance; they were entirely superfluous to camp life since they usually got in the way of daily routine and embodied an irreversible sense of hopelessness that afflicted everyone. What happened to the *Muselmänner* could befall any prisoner at any time; they anticipated, in a way, the future of others: "Because they demonstrated to the prisoners their helplessness, the prisoners failed to assist them. The prisoners wrote them off – in order not to have to write themselves off" (Sofsky 204). As Sofsky notes, the *Muselmänner* were not merely "shoved aside, shouted at, beaten, flogged, derided, and mocked" by the Kapos but "they called forth feelings of disgust and self-defence" and "provoked irritation and anger" to the other prisoners (Sofsky 202). Since to look at the *Muselmann* "was to preview one's own dying, a dying that was more frightening than death" the *Muselmänner* were originally "shooed away like unwanted stray dogs" and then completely abandoned and ignored (Sofsky 204 & 202). Thus, sinking to the lowest level of social hierarchy, they "vegetated at the periphery of camp society, isolated by their torpor and the indifference of the others", marked to die anonymous, nameless deaths (Sofsky 202). For Sofsky then, just like for Agamben, this figure is not only a limit between life and death; rather, "he marks the threshold between the human and the inhuman" (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 55). Consequently, he signals the complete triumph of absolute power over the human being:

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> The transformation of human beings into matériel and the fabrication of the *Muselmänner*, the waking dead, are its greatest triumphs. In sharp contrast with all earlier forms of power, absolute terror creates nothing. Its work is totally negative, a project of obliteration without a trace. It realizes its freedom in the complete and total annihilation of the human being. (Sofsky 281)

Thus, before becoming a "death camp", Agamben asserts in *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Auschwitz was primarily an experiment "that remains unthought today", an experiment that goes beyond life and death, transforming "the Jew into a *Muselmann* and the human being into a non-human" (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 52). The camps are not merely places of degradation, death and extermination; rather, their primary function in the system of Nazi biopolitics is the production of *Muselmänner*, namely, "the final biopolitical substance to be isolated in the biological continuum" (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 85). Echoing Arendt's question on the meaning of murder when we are confronted with the "mass production of corpses", Agamben writes that indeed, in Auschwitz we can no longer speak of the death of people, but rather of the manufacture of corpses, namely, "corpses without death, non-humans whose decease is debased into a matter of serial production" (Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* 441; Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 72). A few years prior to Arendt's usage of the expression, in Freiburg in the mid-20s, her teacher, Martin Heidegger, an active member of the Nazi party since 1933, had already used the formulation "fabrication of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps" (Heidegger 53). Of course, Heidegger never spoke of the Holocaust as such and never explained his support for the Nazis; but Arendt's usage of the term, much like Levi's, implies that in the case of extermination victims we can no longer speak of merely physical death but of the prisoners' complete mental and psychological annihilation. As she asserts, "the very thing that must be realized is that the psyche *can* be destroyed even without the destruction of the physical man"; this further implies that death loses all ontological significance since we can no longer speak of death as such, but rather of material being eliminated in an assembly line (Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* 441). As Agamben maintains, "the victims saw the dignity of death to be so negated for them that they were condemned to perish […] in a death that is not death" (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 74). The "death camps", then, mark the end and destruction of every "ethics of dignity" since the *Muselmann,* who is their most extreme expression, becomes, according to Agamben, "the guard on the threshold of a new ethics, an ethics of a form of life that begins where dignity ends" (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 69).

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Levi's first book of witness ends with the liberation of the camp evidenced by a "breach in the barbed wire"; "to anyone who stopped to think, it signified no more Germans, no more selections, no work, no blows, no roll-calls, and perhaps, later, the return" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 202). At the same time, however, the "pile of corpses" that was overflowing in the ditch outside the window served as a constant reminder that not everyone would get to go home and even those who did, would no longer be the same people (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 202). Even though they all told each other that the Russians would soon arrive, even though they proclaimed it on every occasion, deep down, nobody believed it "because one loses the habit of hoping in the Lager, and even of believing in one's own reason" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 205). For these men, the survivors, who had been trained not to expect much and to view sensitivity as a source of pain, emotions such as joy or hopefulness were exhausting; "with that ferocious world that still remained a world, most of us were too exhausted even to wait" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 205). As they lay "in a world of death and phantoms", Levi realizes that despite their defeat in the war, the Nazis had achieved a far greater victory that they could ever have anticipated:

> The last trace of civilization had vanished around and inside us. The work of bestial degradation, begun by the victorious Germans, had been carried to its conclusion by the Germans in defeat. It is man who kills, man who creates or suffers injustice; it is no longer man who, having lost all restraint, shares his bed with a corpse. Whoever waits for his neighbour to die in order to take his piece of bread is, albeit guiltless, further from the model of thinking man than the most primitive pigmy or the most vicious sadist. (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 205-206)

If Levi's first book is likened to Dante's *Inferno*, then his second book of witness, *The Truce* (US title: *The Reawakening*) written in 1963, resembles the *Odyssey* – his difficult and rather circular journey home does resemble Ulysses' own tumultuous voyage to Ithaca. In "Primo Levi's Odyssey", Isabella Bertoletti notes,

> The journey chronicled in *La Tregua*, a book that does not address the Holocaust as such but its consequences, was for Levi, as the *Odyssey* for the Greek hero, a period of truce between war and the struggle of human existence, a therapeutic necessity that prepared him to face the hazards of a future. (Bertoletti 112)

From the liberation of the camp by the Russians in Poland and his internment at a Soviet Camp for former prisoners to his visit of the Greek brothel at a Ukrainian camp and his eventual arrival home through German territory, Levi survives, against incredible odds,

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when others have perished, and attempts to deal with an overwhelming amount of shame and guilt. Shame and guilt are feelings that the survivors knew all too well. According to Laurence Simmons, shame "became the intimate and dominant experience of the camp survivor" (Simmons 27). Yet, each prisoner's individual and personal experience of shame and guilt over their feelings of relief after each selection, over the humiliations that they had to endure, and over the things that they had to do in order to survive, are overshadowed by the "collectivized shame associated with individual nakedness that was a condition of camp life" (Simmons 28). As Levi maintains,

> One entered the Lager naked: indeed more than naked, deprived not only of clothes and shoes (which were confiscated) but of the hair of one's head and all other hairs […] public and collective nudity was a recurrent condition, typical and laden with significance.[…] Now a naked and barefoot man feels that all his nerves and tendons are severed: he is a helpless prey. Clothes, even the foul clothes which were distributed, even the crude clogs with their wooden soles, are a tenuous but indispensable defence. Anyone who does not have them no longer perceives himself as a human being, but rather as a worm: naked, slow, ignoble, prone on the ground. He knows that he can be crushed at any moment. (Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* 113)

The extremes of discrimination and violence against humans become, according to Simmons, "but a dimension of the violence and discrimination against animals" (Simmons 28). When they are naked, the camp prisoners become worms, the "lowest of animals" and shame, "as if taken on like a mantle" defines every aspect of camp life (Simmons 28). The practices of the Nazis, therefore, foregrounded the inextricable link between shame, nakedness, and animality – a link reflected upon by several thinkers, including Jacques Derrida and, far earlier, Michel de Montaigne.

In *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, Derrida reflects on the feeling of shame when he is caught naked by the gaze of an animal and feels ashamed of his nakedness, but also reflexively ashamed for being ashamed.[7] Centuries before Derrida, Montaigne, in his *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, tried to identify the reasons why humans are so afraid of being naked. Montaigne concluded that what frightens humans is being naked before the animal, just like an animal; through their nakedness humans think they are "reduced" to animals. The shame over being violently reduced to worms, to lice, and to vermin – a shame

[7] Derrida's meditation on shame, animality, and nakedness is extensively explored in Chapter 3 during the discussion of Angela Carter's feminist rewritings of traditional fairy tales.

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that arose the moment they were stripped of everything – did not disappear with the liberation of the camps but resonated with every survivor long after that. Levi's odyssey then, begins, according to Langer, at the moment "when at war's end the world of the living faced in embarrassed silence the world of the surviving dead" (Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust* 93). In essence, marked by the experience of shame, it begins at the moment when the Russian soldiers enter Auschwitz and gaze at Levi and his comrades:

> They did not greet us, nor did they smile; they seemed oppressed not only by compassion, but by a confused restraint, which sealed their lips and bound their eyes to the funereal scene. It was that shame we knew so well, the shame that drowned us after the selections, and every time we had to watch, or submit to, some outrage: the shame the Germans did not know, that the just man experiences at another man's crime; the feeling of guilt that such a crime should exist, that it should have been introduced irrevocably into the world of things that exist, and that his will for good should have proved too weak or null, and should not have availed in defence. (Levi, *The Truce* 218)

There, on the "arid moral soil of Auschwitz" among the heaps of emaciated corpses, the foul smells of human excrement and death, the outside world came to contact with "the visible failure of good to carry out its historic mission of unmasking and overwhelming evil" (Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust* 94). The concentration camp, for Levi, presented itself not merely as a stain on an individual's soul that would be carried forever, but, as Langer maintains, as a badge of infamy "on time and history too" (Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust* 94).

After the end of WW II, nonetheless, a number authors and revisionist historians have denied the extent of the atrocities and even the existence of the Holocaust as such. In *The Differend*, Jean-François Lyotard refers to revisionist historian Faurisson's demands for proof of the Holocaust in order to establish it as a historical fact. According to Faurisson, proof of the gas chambers can only come from eyewitnesses who were themselves victims of the gas chambers. Since any such witnesses are necessarily dead and, thus, unable to provide testimony, Faurisson concludes that there have never been any gas chambers to begin with. In a sense, what is most disturbing about this otherwise preposterous claim is its share of a devastating truth: for Levi too, the "true witnesses" of the camps were not the survivors but the living dead, the *Muselmänner*. In *The Drowned and the Saved*, the last work he wrote before his death, Levi asserts:

> We, the survivors, are not the true witnesses […] We survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority: we are those who by their

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> prevarications or abilities or good luck did not touch the bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute, but they are the 'Muslims', the submerged, the complete witnesses, the ones whose deposition would have a general significance. They are the rule, we are the exception. (Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* 83-84)

For Levi, of course, the inability to speak is not proof that either they or the Holocaust has never existed; rather, their silence places an even heavier burden on the survivors to tell the story of the systematic "annihilation" of others. For Lyotard, "the 'perfect crime' does not consist in killing the victim or the witnesses (that adds new crimes to the first one and aggravates the difficulty of effacing everything), but rather in obtaining the silence of the witnesses, the deafness of the judges, and the inconsistency (insanity) of the testimony" (Lyotard, *The Differend* 8). Given the fact that the vastness of the moral chaos that gave rise to and sustained Auschwitz was so terrifying that neither justice nor morality would ever be able to define its limits, the task and obligation of the writer, according to Levi, is to bear witness to the Holocaust, whatever the cost. As he maintains,

> So for us even the hour of liberty rang out grave and muffled, and filled our souls with joy and yet with a painful sense of prudency, so that we should have liked to wash our consciences and our memories clean from the foulness that lay upon them; and also with anguish because we felt that this should never happen, that now nothing could ever happen good and pure enough to rub out our past, and that the scars of the outrage would remain within us for ever, and in the memories of those who saw it, and in the places where it occurred, and in the stories that we should tell of it. (Levi, *The Truce* 218-219)

Even though he did not consider himself a writer but a chemist, Levi became one in order to tell the story and speak for those who never made it out. Even though the *Muselmänner* were murdered, much like Kafka's Joseph K. and Gregor Samsa, like dogs, like mice, like lice, and like vermin, Levi tried to ensure that shame wouldn't outlive them. Levi wanted to live in order to "tell the story, to bear witness" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 44). As a survivor, he takes it upon himself to "bear witness to the drowned", to speak in their place and become the "cartographer of this new *terra ethica,* the implacable land-surveyor of *Muselmannland*" (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 69).

Unfortunately, however, even though, like Dante, he was able to escape from his inferno and, like Odysseus, managed to eventually get home, the shame he felt and the

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burden of the task to explain "the nature of the contamination that was Auschwitz" consumed and probably destroyed him (Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust* 94). On Saturday, April 11th, 1987, sometime after 10:00 a.m., Primo Levi, at age 67, jumped off his third-story building in Turin ending his life almost forty years after surviving the camps. One might suggest that he had already written the last act of his own existence in the last paragraph of *The Truce* when he describes a recurring dream, or better yet "a dream within a dream":

> I am sitting at a table with my family, or with friends, or at work, or in the green countryside; in short, a peaceful relaxed environment, apparently without tension or affliction; yet I feel a deep and subtle anguish, the definite sensation of an impending threat. And in fact, as the dream proceeds, slowly or brutally, each time in a different way, everything collapses and disintegrates around me, the scenery, the walls, the people, while the anguish becomes more intense and more precise. Now everything has changed to chaos; I am at the centre of a grey and turbid nothing, and now, I *know* what this thing means, and I also know that I have always known it; I am in the Lager once more, and nothing is true outside the Lager. All the rest was a brief pause, a deception of the senses, a dream; my family, nature in flower, my home. Now this inner dream, this dream of peace, is over, and in the outer dream, which continues, gelid, a well-known voice resounds: a single word, not imperious, but brief and subdued. It is the dawn command of Auschwitz, a foreign word, feared and expected: get up, '*Wstava'*. (Levi, *The Truce* 454-455)

Constantly reawakened by the nightmare of Auschwitz, Levi admits to being constantly plagued by the anguish, the shame and the guilt over his experience; this renders Elie Wiesel's comment that Primo Levi actually died at Auschwitz forty years before his physical death chillingly accurate (Wiesel qtd in Cicioni 171). To those in Italy and the rest of the world who appreciated Levi's works, the news of his suicide was devastating but not entirely unexpected; a Holocaust survivor's suicide is a story that is known all too well: there is a long line of suicides by intellectuals after their return from camps. For example, after spending the war in a slave labour camp in Romania and witnessing his parents' murder, Paul Celan drowned himself in the Seine River in 1970; after escaping Budapest and surviving Bergen-Belsen, Peter Szondi drowned himself in Halensee Lake in 1971; after surviving Gestapo torture and Auschwitz, Jean Améry overdosed on sleeping pills in 1978. In his last interview before he committed suicide by asphyxiation, psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, a Dachau and Buchenwald survivor, was asked to comment on Levi and the idea

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that survivors need to "make that incomprehensible experience remembered" (Fisher 131). Bettelheim's answer might easily have come from any of the survivors and, in a way, was a prelude to his own suicide: "It's an experience that is so overwhelming, so full of contradictions really that it's very hard to cope with. I think that anybody who spent time in a German concentration camp […] never gets rid of the feeling of guilt and shame" (Bettelheim qtd in Fisher 131). In his latest book, *Preempting the Holocaust,* Langer asserts that "all Holocaust art, whether memoir, biography, or fiction, is built on a mountain of corpses, so that it can never be a celebration, a triumph of form over chaos of experience" (Langer, *Preempting the Holocaust* 127). Evidently, these corpses are not merely the people who perished in the concentration camps or in the battlefields during the war; perhaps what we have to realize is that when it comes to their Holocaust experiences, there are no "saved" – only those who have drowned later, slower, and more visibly than others.

Through the survivors' works and testimonies, the Holocaust still refuses to disappear; as Alan L. Berger maintains, a "literary 'fire' illuminates the witnessing generation's determination to tell the tale and, in so doing, to both educate and warn future generations" (Berger, "Bearing Witness: Second Generation Literature of the 'Shoah'" 43). As the history of Holocaust literature evolves, Berger notes, "an international literary second generation has begun to transmit the *Shoah*'s memory with a compelling moral, existential, and religious urgency" (Berger, "Bearing Witness: Second Generation Literature of the 'Shoah'" 43). Unlike their parents' generation of witnesses, however, the second generation lacks first-hand experience of the Holocaust; hence, their writings intertwine their parents' testimonies with their own imagination, resulting in a "tapestry" that involves "the Holocaust's profound effect on questions of post-Auschwitz Jewish identity and authenticity" (Berger, "Bearing Witness: Second Generation Literature of the 'Shoah'" 43).

While their memory does not include the experience of witnessing the heaps of emaciated corpses, the piles of golden teeth or human hair, the mountains of shoes, clothes, and eyeglasses, or the smell of rotting flesh and burning corpses, second-generation writers live in the shadow of the *Shoah* while vigorously seeking their own voices and their own access to memory. As Berger notes in a different work, "this generation has its own distinctive images of Holocaust memory: observing their parents and hearing survivor tales, photos of murdered relatives, lighting yahrzeit (memorial) candles, compulsive reading about the Holocaust, pilgrimages to sites of death camps and to Israel, and a profound need to tell their own children – the third generation – about the Shoah" (Berger, "The Holocaust, Second-Generation Witness, and the Voluntary Covenant in American Judaism" 24). The last section of this chapter focuses on one of the most controversial and bold works of

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second-generation Holocaust literature, Art Spiegelman's two-volume graphic novel *Maus*, a work that explicitly thematises the genocidal link between Jewishness, the literal reduction of the human to animality and the importance of bearing witness.

Bestialization and Second-Generation Holocaust Writing: the works of Art Spiegelman

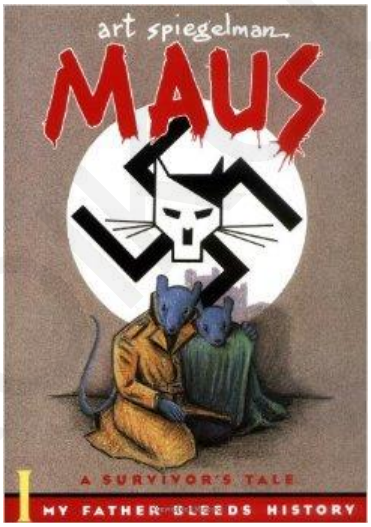

Fig. 1. *Maus I*, Cover Page.

Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* subtitled *My Father Bleeds History* (Vol.1, Fig. 1) and *And Here My Troubles Begun* (Vol.2, Fig. 2), serialized from 1980 to 1991, is a work that can hardly be categorized under a specific label; according to Deborah R. Geis, it "is not exactly a comic book, nor is it exactly a novel, a biography (or autobiography), or a work of oral history" (Geis, 1). In fact, when the *New York Times Book Review* put the book on the fiction side of the bestseller ledger, Spiegelman himself wrote them a letter saying: "Well, if you had a Literature and Nonliterature section, I'd be happy with this, but fiction means made up, and that would be a whole other book than the one I'm making" (Spiegelman, *Metamaus* 150). This actually initiated a heated debate amongst the editors of the *Review*, with one notoriously quipping: "Well look, let's go out to Spiegelman's house and if a giant mouse answers the door, we'll move it to the nonfiction side of the list" (Spiegelman, *Metamaus* 150). The brilliance of Spiegelman's work rests on the fact that *Maus* belongs to several different genres; according to Geis, "*Maus* is a 'graphic novel' insofar as Spiegelman uses pictures as well as words – in more or less the serial comic format – to tell his story, but the story itself is an imaginative rendering of years of his father's real-life oral narratives of the Holocaust, mixed in with the artist's own anguished, ironic personal musings" (Geis 1). Most importantly, *Maus*'s use of fictional and graphic novel conventions allows the artist to build up an elaborate metaphor only to deconstruct it throughout the work in order to take on a history too big for him to understand, focusing on the narrative without getting overwhelmed by the monstrousness of its significance (Spiegelman, *Metamaus* 73).

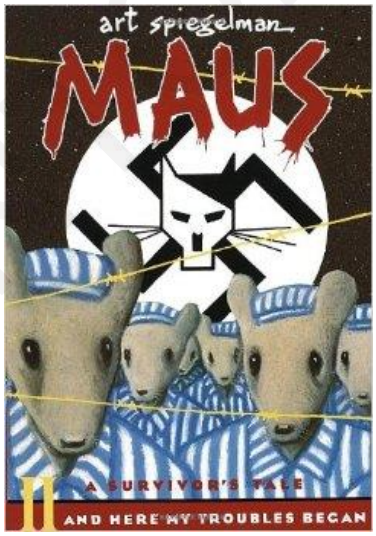

Fig. 2. *Maus II*, Cover Page.

In *Maus*, Spiegelman narrates two stories that occur in different timelines: on the one hand, the writer depicts the pre-war, Holocaust, and post-war experiences of his parents, Vladek and Anja, from their attempts to hide and evade capture in Sosnowiec to their arrest by the Gestapo and from their hardships in Auschwitz and Dachau to their eventual return home at the end of the war. At the same time, Spiegelman tells his own story, coming to terms with what it means to grow up in America, "in a survivor family where the dead are a haunting presence among the living": For example, Anja, like many other survivors, could not process the trauma, fell into a deep depression, took a bottle of pills, and slit her veins in the bathtub whereas Richieu, Spiegelman's European-born brother, was poisoned by their aunt, who also murdered her own children before committing suicide in order to avoid falling into the hands of the Nazis (Berger, "The Holocaust, Second-Generation Witness, and the Voluntary Covenant in American Judaism" 36). Hence, enmeshed in the depiction of his parents' ordeals, *Maus* is also the writer's attempt to come to terms with his own second-generation Jewish identity, his complicated and devastating relationship with his father, and his inability to understand either his father or the Holocaust. Thus, the story of *Maus* isn't simply the story of a son having problems with his father, nor the story of the ordeals of a father; it's about "the retrieval of memory and ultimately, the creation of memory" and "about choices being made, of finding what one can tell, and what one can reveal, and what one can reveal beyond what one knows is revealing […] putting the dead into little boxes" (Spiegelman, *Metamaus* 73).

Fig. 3. *Maus I*, p.33.

In order to tell his story, Spiegelman builds up a very interesting and controversial metaphor, depicting the different races of humans as different animals: the Jews as a "race" – not a religion but an ethnic group – are portrayed as mice (Fig. 3) and the Germans as cats (Fig. 4). Spiegelman's preoccupation with animal figures and especially with the depiction

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Fig. 4. *Maus I*, p.51.

of Jews as mice can be directly linked to Franz Kafka's story "Josephine, The Singer or the Mouse Folk". Indeed, Spiegelman's preoccupation with animal figures and especially with mice must both be related to Nazi propaganda and to Kafka's reflections on mice, silence, sound, communication and community approximately seventy years earlier. Spiegelman admits to having read Kafka's story but to not having focused on it specifically as a metaphor for the Jewish people at the time, even though "the image of Jews as defenceless scurrying creatures was in there somewhere" (Spiegelman, *Metamaus* 113). He asserts that the most abhorrently anti-Semitic work he came across during his research was Franz Hippler's *The Eternal Jew* (Fig. 5), a 1940 German "documentary" portraying Jews in a ghetto "swarming in tight quarters, bearded caftaned creatures" before cutting to "Jews as mice – or rather rats – swarming in a sewer, with a title card that said 'Jews are the rats' or the 'vermin of mankind'" (Spiegelman, *Metamaus* 115).

Of course, the term "vermin" is not a scientific term but a socially constructed one; as Richard De Angelis asserts, "it is applied to any animal humans have no use for, or worse yet, against whom humans must compete for resources. Labelling animals as vermin is the first step in justifying their eradication" (De Angelis 231). In fact, the killing agent used in the gas chambers, Zyklon B, was a pesticide designed to kill "vermin" like flees and roaches. This made it quite obvious to Spiegelman that the whole Nazi killing project rested on a process of dehumanization: "one murders people; one commits genocide on subhumans" (Spiegelman, *Metamaus* 115). Thus, for Spiegelman, the idea that Jews were vermin – toxic, diseased, and dangerous subhuman creatures – was an essential precondition for their extermination.

Fig. 5. *The Eternal Jew*, Poster (Dutch Version).

Once Spiegelman established the rendition of Jews as mice, then the cat and mouse pairing came rather effortlessly as part and parcel of the Tom and Jerry comics

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and cartoons that he grew up with: the images of grinning cats, especially ones dressed in SS uniforms, are contrasted to the images of the miserable mice being persecuted, victimized, and starved while dressed in prisoner outfits. Of course, at the beginning, the issue of scaling the animals in the drawings seriously preoccupied Spiegelman since, in reality, cats are significantly larger in size than mice; he minimised the disparity by rendering them approximately equal in size, hence making the cats and mice, more or less, overt masks of Nazis and Jews respectively. As he asserts, "To equalize them in scale didn't mean to give them equal powers, but it didn't put the mice necessarily at the total biological disadvantage that the metaphor otherwise implies" (Spiegelman, *Metamaus* 118). Even though drawing all animals at approximately the same size might be a conscious stylistic and convenient choice, the fact that it slightly disturbs the controlling metaphor adds another layer of complication to the work, one that was most welcome by the artist.

Fig. 6. *Maus II*, p.30.

In order to depict non-Jewish Poles Spiegelman looked for an animal that lies outside the cat-mouse food chain; thus, he employed his animated cartoon lexicon and drew them as pigs, inspired by Porky Pig. In truth, most Poles did suffer tremendously under Nazi regime and one must acknowledge Polish suffering; however, Spiegelman asserts, Jews were singled out for an even worse fate, one they often met not only at the hands of the Nazis but also at those of the Poles they would run into, as if both Nazis and Polish collaborators "could smell if a Polish Jew came in" (Spiegelman, *Maus I* 140). Vladek himself experienced several times the cruelty of his "fellow" Poles and was left extremely fearful and wary of them. Spiegelman accordingly describes an incident that involved a Polish Kapo furiously looking for Anja to punish her for getting a food package from Vladek (Fig. 6), and another, involving a Polish Kapo who tortured Jewish prisoners in the camps (Fig. 7). In a third episode, he tells the story of a survivor friend of Vladek's who went back to his house

Fig. 7. *Maus II*, p.66.

and his bakery after his release and was tortured and hanged by the Poles who lived there; "for this he survived" (Spiegelman, *Maus I* 132).

The most striking episode, however, occurs when Vladek and Anja try to run away wearing pig masks, and hence disguised as Poles. They are met with two contrasting attitudes (Fig. 8): on the one hand, they go to the house of their former nanny in search of refuge and she slams the door in their faces, whereas on the other, and on the same page, they go to the janitor of their building and he hides them in the barn at great personal risk (Spiegelman, *Maus I* 136-137). As if succinctly getting the two facets of the pig mask in one go, the animal masks seem to conceal far more complex faces, those of ambiguously predisposed human beings. As Spiegelman notes, the dualities of piggy/swine and mousie/rodent "enrich the simple-mindedness of my basic concept in *Maus*"; since the Poles were not destined to be exterminated, like the Jews, but rather worked to death, "they were slated to be the master race's work force of slaves" (Spiegelman, *Metamaus* 121-122). In Spiegelman's bestiary, the pigs are born and bred on a farm in order to be killed and eaten; if mice or rats are found on a farm the only thing you can do is exterminate them before they can eat your grain and spread diseases.

Fig. 8. *Maus I*, p.136.

Fig. 9. Maus II, p.111.

Besides the main figures of mice, cats, and pigs, Spiegelman's bestiary also extends to other animals/races: the Americans are depicted as dogs since they are the "the heroic vanquisher of cats" (Fig. 9), the British as fish from the association of Britain with "fish and chips, an island culture, fish out of water" (Fig. 10), and the Swedes as reindeer, since they are "far outside the loop of my [his] Eastern European narrative and finding an animal so totally out of scale with mice, cats, and mutts [like] those large galumphing and gentle reindeer" was an ideal choice (Spiegelman, *Metamaus* 129, 130 & 131) (Fig. 11). Interestingly enough, the Soviet animal is obviously absent from Spiegelman's text though Spiegelman never explains why and is never asked about it in any of his interviews.

Fig. 10. *Maus II*, p.131.

One of the biggest problems with Spiegelman's use of animal metaphors came when presenting mixed race couples having children; since Nazi propaganda usually portrayed the Jew as the "wicked seducer of German maidenhood, defiling the Aryan race", his visualization of Hitler's racist thinking through the casting of different races as different species necessarily meant that the different species cannot, of course, be seen to reproduce. Spiegelman describes an incident where after being freed, Vladek and his friend Shivek end up in Hanover in order to visit the latter's brother, a Jew who was kept safe during the war by his Christian wife. Since Vladek's narration mentioned them having children, the task that arose for Spiegelman was depicting a creature, a crossbreed, that looked like something in between a cat and a mouse (Fig. 12). Another major difficulty that arose from the demarcation of groups of people as different species was the arbitrariness of racism itself: hence, when relating an incident from Vladek's narration about a prisoner who was brought to Auschwitz as a "criminal" to be marked with a green triangle and was somehow marked as a Jew with a yellow triangle, Spiegelman draws the same prisoner first as a mouse and then as a cat (Fig. 13) (Spiegelman,

Fig. 11. *Maus II*, p.125.

Fig. 12. *Maus II*, p.131.

Fig. 13. *Maus II*, p. 50.

Maus II 50). This highlights the arbitrary, fabricated nature of racial division that is partially an apparatus of social control, dividing people into imagined groups only to secure its own power. According to Joshua Brown, "by drawing people as animals, Spiegelman evokes the stratification of European society that had seemed dormant but soon exploded into an orgy of racism. When you read *Maus*, you don't tend to identify the characters as animals. You decipher human beings, and then the metaphor takes hold. You are disrupted, upset. That is the effect Spiegelman hoped for" (Brown 8).

At the same time, however, are we really speaking of "metaphors" at all? Since the "metaphor" only relates to the central dyad (cats and mice), isn't the trope already in suspension from its very foundation? As Charles Hatfield maintains, the text itself "takes pains to call attention to the inadequacy of the metaphor, over and over, as if to expose Spiegelman's artifice for what it is" (Hatfield 139). To begin with, aside from the animals involved in the metaphor, Spiegelman depicts "real" animals that appear along the metaphorical ones. For example, Germans/cats are drawn as having "real" police dogs chasing the Jewish mice in order to deport them to the camps (Fig. 14), whereas Anja and Vladek (as mice) appear to be afraid of a rat that they saw in the cellar while hiding from the Nazis (Fig. 15). There are also instances when literal animals are only mentioned in order to signify their distance from metaphorical ones; for example, on the way from Auschwitz to Dachau, prisoners are herded and transferred in "trains for horses, for cows" (Fig. 16), whereas on their way home,

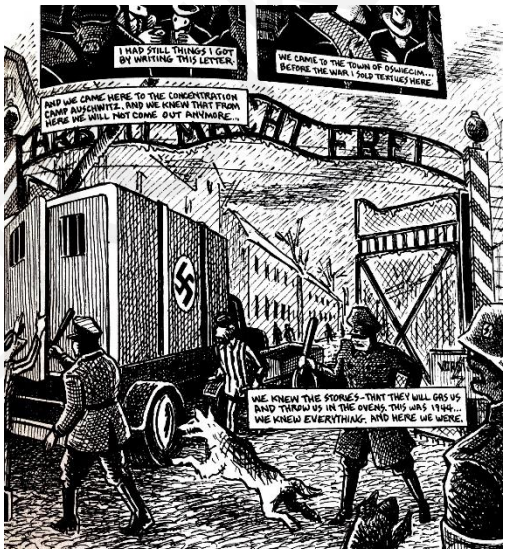

Fig. 14. *Maus I*, p.157.

Fig. 15. *Maus I*, p. 147.

Fig. 16. *Maus II*, p. 85.

Vladek and Shivek kill a chicken in order to survive (Fig. 17) (Spiegelman, *Maus II 85* & 111). In fact, as De Angelis notes, "both humans and animals shared essentially the same experience – from the use of clubs to drive the living cargo on board, to the trampling, heat prostration, starvation, and dehydration that resulted from the stiflingly cramped quarters in the cars. And the same fate awaited them all, whether animal or human, at the end of the line" (De Angelis 235).

On the other hand, and despite the fact that the animal metaphor seems to impact the visual text, in the written text there is no mention of characters being anything but human, aside from instances when animal imagery is used as a means of degrading someone; for example there is reference to "Jewish Rats" to refer to the Jewish council (Fig. 18) (Spiegelman, *Maus I* 112). This is "an inconsistency Spiegelman knowingly courted when creating the book" (Hatfield, 139). At the same time, three cases of Spiegelman's sketch rendering of photographs further dismantle the metaphor since the characters are drawn as humans and not animals: the first instance is that of a rendered photograph of Art and his mother Anja that "creeps in" as part of Spiegelman's interpolated underground comix short story, "Prisoner on the Hell Planet" (from 1972), which comes back to haunt Art in *Maus I* (Fig. 19); the second is a sketched photograph of his brother Richieu, the idealised ghost child with whom he could never compete, in the dedication of *Maus II* (Fig. 20); and the third is a sketch of the photograph of a post-war Vladek in "new and clean" striped uniform at the end of the book (Fig. 21). Photographs are among several objects that Spiegelman invokes and indeed "attaches" to his pages; others might include train tickets, maps and diagrams. According to Hatfield, "the presence of these drawn objects, mimicking found objects, reinforces the diaristic immediacy

Fig. 17. *Maus II*, p.111.

Fig. 18. *Maus I*, p.112.

Fig. 19. *Maus I*, p.100.

of *Maus* as an artefact: the pages resemble a scrapbook or album, in which heirlooms and personal narratives are interleaved" (Hatfield 149).

Fig. 20. *Maus II*, p.5.

Even though, throughout the text, Spiegelman takes great pains to call attention to the inadequacy of the metaphor he has set up, the moment when it completely disintegrates is particularly striking: Spiegelman himself is depicted as human, wearing a mouse mask and sitting on his drawing table, on top of the dead bodies of hundreds of mice, guilt-ridden by the fact that the success of his work was built on the corpses of millions of Jews (Fig. 22). On the one hand, the human face underneath the mouse mask betrays a sense of fraudulence regarding his own Jewish identity, as if he doesn't really belong to the "mouse folk". On the other hand, even though he dismantles his own animal metaphor by using the mask, Spiegelman is still unable to separate himself from his creation, feeling belittled by the significance and publicity of his work. As he admits, he had to put on a mouse mask in order to enter his father's story, but it was until much later that he fully realized the implications of this gesture. When in the next panels he depicts being interviewed by human reporters with different masks on, he wonders about the message of the book and whether his work can be reduced to a message. In fact, he categorically denies the view of *Maus* as an attempt to "convince" people of anything; it is not up to Spiegelman to assign blame or make people feel guilty but, as he notes, "a lot of the corporations that flourished in Nazi Germany are richer than ever. I dunno… Maybe


Fig. 21. *Maus II*, p.134.

Fig. 22. *Maus II*, p.41.

EVERYONE has to feel guilty. EVERYONE! FOREVER!" (Spiegelman, *Maus II* 42). Bombarded by questions on how he would draw Israeli Jews and other ethnic groups and on whether drawing *Maus* was cathartic and listening to business propositions on a line of products under the *Maus* franchise, Artie feels so belittled by the implications of the popularity of his work that he literally turns into a mouse-child crying for his mommy (Fig. 23).

Fig. 23. *Maus II*, p.42.

The Holocaust imagery, with the mice corpses and the flies buzzing around them, haunt Artie throughout the city as he walks to his therapist Pavel's place to talk about his feelings of inadequacy and possibly remorse. Pavel's place, interestingly, is overrun with stray dogs and cats (Fig. 24); Spiegelman admits that this might "louse up" his metaphor, even though he is not too bothered about it since this has been his agenda from the very beginning. In other words, the construction and constant deconstruction of the animal metaphor becomes key to deciphering and analysing the import of Spiegelman's work. Obviously, the reader, who sees the animal heads on the page, is very likely to be aware of the historical and cultural significance of portraying Jews as mice and Germans as cats (or the British as fish and the French as frogs). However, as De Angelis asserts, "there is no instance in *Maus* where the animal metaphor is meant to be taken at face value" and, therefore, it is constantly undermined throughout the text (De Angelis 232).

In essence, Spiegelman's aim is not to represent anthropomorphised animals but to tell the story of the humans that are symbolized by the animals. In other words, rather than representing anthropomorphised animals, the cat and mouse heads "are meant to be transparent, serving as windows into human – not animal – nature" (De Angelis 232). After forcing the readers to share the Nazi perception of Jews as less than human animals, Spiegelman thus reveals the

Fig. 24. *Maus II*, p.43.

absurdity of such notions, exposing, in De Angelis's words, "the lie behind the artificial genetic hierarchy that Aryan anti-Semitism sought to establish within the human race" (De Angelis 231). According to Hatfield, "*Maus*'s drawings succeed by indirection. By de-familiarizing the already familiar details of the Holocaust, Spiegelman's 'funny animal' drawings reacquaint us with the horrors of genocide in the most offhand and intimate of ways" (Hatfield 2551). The metaphor only works "by unravelling itself in sheer horror" since the value of Spiegelman's work "lies in our recognition of its complete inadequacy" (Hatfield 2553). In Spiegelman's words, "these metaphors, which are meant to self-destruct […] – and I think they do self-destruct – still have a residual force that allows them to work as metaphors, and still get people worked up over them" because they serve not only as a reminder but also as a warning for the ramifications of the link between animality and the less-than-human (Spiegelman qtd in Bolhafner 97).

This chapter concludes the first part of the dissertation that has attempted to trace different aspects of the link between Judaism and animality throughout 20th-century literature and philosophy. Spiegelman is the last, chronologically speaking, artist in a line of artists who sought, to both literalize and deconstruct the coupling of the animal to the figure of expendable life. *Maus* is a becoming-conscious of a trajectory present but largely unconscious in Kafka, a reflexive look at the risks and dangers in the very use of animal metaphors (hence the Brechtian, defamiliarizing use of the image of masks), a meditation on the importance of these metaphors in shaping 20th-century history, but also a reminder of the need to move beyond them, however unclear a positive direction of where to go after the deconstruction of the animalization of the human remains. In the epigraphs to his two-volume graphic novel, Spiegelman consciously uses quotes from popular anti-Semitic texts. For *Maus I* he quotes the greatest anti-Semite of all, Adolf Hitler, who proclaimed that "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human" (Spiegelman, *Maus I* 4). For *Maus II*, he references an article from a 1930s German newspaper claiming that

> Mickey Mouse is the most miserable ideal ever revealed […] Healthy emotions tell every independent young man and every honourable youth that the dirty and filth-covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom, cannot be the ideal type of animal […] Away with Jewish brutalization of the people! Down with Mickey Mouse! Wear the Swastika Cross! (Spiegelman, *Maus II* 3)

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During the Holocaust, the borders between humanity and animality became contaminated, gaining a homicidal and destructive valence, since the idea of designating a

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group of people as sub-human undoubtedly fuelled Nazi ideology and led to the systematic persecution and elimination of approximately six million Jews. In the epigraph to his own book, Primo Levi writes a poem about the existence of two different forms of existence: there are those "who live safe" in their warm houses and "who find, returning in the evening, hot food and friendly faces" and then there are the sub-humans, the human animals who work in the mud, who do not know peace, who fight for a scrap of bread, who have no hair or name, who die on a whim "like a frog in the winter" (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 7). At the same time, Levi issues readers with an imperative: "meditate that this came about", listen to the words, "carve them in your hearts", and "repeat them to your children", for the question of ethics has become explicitly related not simply to animality, but to the necessity to deconstruct, to uncouple a determinate, specific connection between humans and animals that was instrumental in the gestation of the Holocaust (Levi, *If This Is A Man* 7).

As Agamben suggests, the correct question to pose regarding the horrors perpetrated in the camps is not the "hypocritical one of how crimes of such atrocity could be committed against human beings"; rather, "it would be more honest and, above all, more useful to investigate carefully the juridical procedures and deployments of power by which human beings could be so completely deprived of their rights and prerogatives that no act committed against them could appear any longer as a crime" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 97). As the *Shoah* recedes in time, new generations struggle to comprehend precisely what happened, when, how, and by whom, why civilized countries in the midst of the 20th century dispassionately decided to exterminate all of Europe's Jews like vermin. They are also compelled to ask what processes rendered a specific group of people extinguishable without retribution. First- and second-generation Holocaust art is not about numbers, facts, or statistics but more about the crucial and immediate need to transform readers into witnesses, consciously infusing them with a sense of responsibility for the past as well as for the future.

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Part II: Feminist Theory and the Non-Human

Chapter 3

Animality, Pornography, and Subversion in Angela Carter's Feminist (Re)visions of Classic Fairy Tales

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* Adorno and Horkheimer assert that for thousands of years, Christian civilization has traditionally used the excuse of protecting "the physically weak" in order to justify a variety of forms of discrimination and oppression that reduce specific groups of people to a state of animality. The imperative of "protecting society", as Michel Foucault has shown in his lectures at the *Collège de France*, has not only enabled the extermination of approximately 6 million Jews, as I point out in the previous chapter, but has also led to the systematic oppression of women, arguably up to the present. As Adorno and Horkheimer assert, since "woman bears the stigma of weakness […] her weakness places her in a minority even when she is numerically superior to men" (Adorno & Horkheimer 86). Just like the original inhabitants in early forms of state, the indigenous populations of colonies, and Jews under Nazism, women's oppression has been mediated by their construction as humans who are "weaker in mental and physical power", and hence bear "the mark of domination on her [their] brow": "Women and Jews show visible evidence of not having ruled for thousands of years. They live, although they could be eliminated, and their fear and weakness, the greater affinity to nature, produced in them by perennial oppression, is the element in which they live" (Adorno and Horkheimer 88).

As with Jews and animals, Adorno and Horkheimer add, women's exposure to the violence of domination and oppression effectively produces as its counterpart the (raced and gendered) position of the "master": "The less the danger to the one on top, the more unhampered the joy in the torments he can now inflict: only through the hopeless despair of the victim can power become pleasure and triumphantly revoke its own principle, discipline" (Adorno and Horkheimer 88). In this argument, reduction to the defenseless life of the animal becomes the foundation of an extensible chain of practices of domination. The antithesis between human and animal, Adorno and Horkheimer argue, has been so persistently and unanimously recited by the earliest precursors of bourgeois thought from "the ancient Jews, the Stoics, and the Early Fathers, and then through the Middle Ages to modern times", as to have become one of the most fundamental ideas in Western culture (Adorno and Horkheimer 204). As Derrida rightly asserts in a 2004 interview with Elizabeth Roudinesco, "the 'question of animality' is not one question among others of course"; it is

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"decisive (as one says), in itself and for strategic value" for all the concepts that attempt to demarcate "what is 'proper to man', the essence and future of humanity; ethics, politics, law, 'human rights', 'crimes against humanity', 'genocide' etc." (Derrida and Roudinesco 62-63). The alleged lack of language, consciousness and/or self-consciousness and the inability to transmit culture that is traditionally attributed to animals has not only attested to Man's dignity and superiority but also to their weakness; "The whole earth bears witness to the glory of man" (Adorno and Horkheimer 204). According to Adorno and Horkheimer, "in war and peace, arena and slaughterhouse, from the slow death of the elephant overpowered by primitive human hordes with the aid of the first planning to the perfected exploitation of the animal world today, the unreasoning creature has always suffered at the hands of reason" (Adorno & Horkheimer 204). The conclusion drawn from the countless "mutilated animal bodies" is that precisely due to this lack and "unreasoning terror", "even the strongest animal is infinitely feeble" (Adorno and Horkheimer 205).

For the being endowed with reason, on the other hand, there is no need to consider the position of the unreasoning animal; "Western civilization has left that to the women" (Adorno & Horkheimer 206). Having no "autonomous share" of the capabilities that gave rise to Western civilization, "the woman", according to the philosophers, was "not a subject" (Adorno & Horkheimer 206). Whereas men had to venture into a hostile world and had to "act and strive", women were forced to look after the producers as living monuments "to the long-vanished time of the self-sufficient household" (Adorno and Horkheimer 206). This division of labor imposed on women by men has long rendered them "an embodiment of biological function", "an image of nature, in the suppression of which this civilization's claim to glory lay" (Adorno and Horkheimer 206). Man's boundless domination of nature not only "shaped the idea of man in a male society", but also became the "purpose of reason on which man prided himself" (Adorno and Horkheimer 206). When the domination of nature is the only true goal, "biological inferiority remains the ultimate stigma, the weakness imprinted by nature, the mark which invites violence" (Adorno and Horkheimer 206). Thus, the difference between men, who were thought of as biologically superior, and women, who were always considered as smaller and weaker, was rendered insurmountable, since it was "a difference set by nature, the most shaming, degrading agency possible within the male society" (Adorno and Horkheimer 206).

Interestingly enough, the gendered dimension of the question of the animal has existed, according to Derrida, from the moment the boundary was originally set: the moment of creation. According to the "second" creation narrative of *Genesis*, Derrida reminds us, Man, and he alone, Ish without Ishah, is the sovereign human subject who names the animals

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that come before him, under the watchful gaze of a God who granted him the power of "naming", "in order to see" and witness the enforcement of his power. Thus, the originary narrative of *Genesis* figures the origin of language as what divinely asserts Man's power in an already gendered sense. The power of language to name becomes a divinely granted power over animals: "God destines the animals to an experience of the power of man, in order to see the power of man in action, in order to see the power of man at work, in order to see man take power over all the other living beings" (Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am* 16). It is important to note that Ish, and he alone, is given sovereignty over living creatures; this unquestionable indication of God's partiality for his final creation (Man and not woman) marks the specific moment in time, at the beginning of time, when the boundary between Man and animal is set. Nomination, as ultimate proof of the superiority of the masculine human over both the feminine human and the animal inaugurates a "sacrificial war" against both that is "as old as *Genesis*" (Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am* 101).

This link of shared persecution between woman and animal can already be traced in Kafka, whose female figures appear to be especially revealing in this respect. Even though there are very few female characters in Kafka's universe, none is more fascinating than Leni in *The Trial*. Peering through the door with her "dark, slightly protuberant eyes", Leni is not only the nurse/maid of the lawyer Huld but also the woman who offers herself to all accused men (Kafka, *The Trial* 70). As Elvira Bennet notes, "[i]n the economy of the novel her role is noteworthy first of all because it seems unnecessary"; she is neither the conventional virgin nor the whore of nineteenth-century novels, nor is she an aggressive female connected to the Court like the usher's wife (Bennet 392). According to Bennet, "Leni appears to add to the novel's supererogatory muddle of girls" (Bennet 393). Even though her role within the novel's plot is unclear, Leni represents an instance of the writer's preoccupation with the link between femininity and animality. She admits to having a "physical defect" and offers Josef K. her webbed, creaturely fingers in an effort to gain his affection. Instead of being repelled, Josef K. appears to be pleased by this sign of animality: "What a pretty *claw*", he exclaims, while caressing her hands and finally kissing them (Kafka, *The Trial* 78; emphasis added).

In a sense, Leni seems to belong to what Bachofen calls the "hetaeric stage" of cultural evolution: a wild, nomadic, "tellurian" phase, characterized by the rejection of all restrictions and the abhorrence for all fetters, including that of sexual exclusivity, which is seen "as an offence" against the divinity of a proto-Aphrodite (Bachofen 95). For Bachofen, this primary, unregulated, communistic, and polygamous early phase where women were considered common property and children never knew their fathers "finds its principle

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embodied in the vegetation and animals of the marshy lowlands, which become its chief gods"; animality therefore becomes a sign of women's voracious and unfettered sexual appetite (Bachofen 97). As primitive civilisations sought to overcome the hetaeric stage and adopt a more regulated structure of society, on the other hand, any reversion to the matrilineal "life of the swamps" was considered an aberration to natural cultural evolution (Bachofen 97). Perhaps this is one of the reasons that Josef K.'s association with Leni is riddled with feelings of guilt and shame: in the masculinist modern bureaucratic dystopia that Kafka envisions in *The Trial*, and which already belongs to what Bachofen would call the patriarchal stage, Josef K's sexual relationship with the "animalistic", less-than-human, and promiscuous Leni might be the result of an irresistible attraction, but it is also blameworthy. As Bennet notes, the displacement of Elsa, Josef K.'s girlfriend, by Leni "confirms K.'s status as an accused man", since, by having intercourse with the "webbed Other" Josef K. gives in to his primal instincts and surrenders to the primitive, hetaeric state (Bennet 403). It is important to highlight that in Kafka's fictive universe, the act of intercourse is not the source of Josef K.'s guilt; it is rather a confirmation and an addition to his pre-existing guilt. As Bennet notes, Josef K. is not accused because he sleeps with Leni but rather sleeps with Leni because he is accused. In essence, "the condition of guilt itself, of being fallen, of giving in to instinct" precedes Josef K.'s sexual relationship with Leni, which in turn merely confirms and enhances his guilt and shame. Thus, as Bennet notes, "in fornicating with Leni, he belongs all the more deeply to the Court" that is, to his own guilt, shame, and degradation; it is only through his execution "like a dog" soon after that his link with the hetaeric world can be broken, though it still seems "as if his shame would live on after him" (Bennet 403; Kafka, *The Trial* 165).

The transition from one phase of cultural evolution to the next was, according to Bachofen, a natural, almost Darwinian, evolutionary inevitability with the suppression of the hetaeric stage by the "Demetrian mother right" followed by a "Dionysian" transitional phase, and then by the eventual predominance of the "Apollonian", patriarchal phase. As "the old era dies", Bachofen maintains, the Apollonian age and the establishment of paternal right "rises on its ruins" and spreads to the rest of the world through the civilisation of the ancient Greeks and Romans (Bachofen 110). The predominance and supremacy of patriarchy became so absolute, Bachofen speculated, that the Aphroditean-hetaeric and the Demetrian stages have been eradicated from world history only to find refuge in the realms of myth and fiction. As he asserts, "the progress from the maternal to the paternal conception of man forms the most important turning point in the history of the relations between the sexes",

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since it was the foundation for the establishment and evolution of modern society and for the position of women within it (Bachofen 109).

The Fairy Tale and Feminist Revisionism: The Context of Angela Carter's Literary Interventions

The fairy tale has arguably been one of the most significant vehicles of connecting the residual persistence of the Bachofian hetaeric stage to futural and utopian possibilities. In the pre-industrialized past, when "milk comes from the cow, water from the well, and only the intervention of the supernatural can change the relations of women to men and, above all, of women to their own fertility", women would tell stories of wisdom and wonder to children whose futures were hard, cruel and especially inimical if they happened to be born female (Carter, "Introduction" xxii). In these old wives' tales, as they would come to be called, thinking and talking animals, creatures with supernatural powers, kind-hearted monsters and beasts and inanimate objects would come to life before the eyes of amazed children, singing, dancing, or struggling to find their happy-endings in enchanted forests and castles. According to Jack Zipes, these originally oral fairy tales enable the speaker/writer to posit him/herself "against language"; "each word marks a way toward a future different from what has already been decreed, [with] freedom to play with options that no one has ever glimpsed" (Zipes, "The Changing Function of the Fairy Tale" 7). The fairy tale, therefore, allows for a space in which the gendered, racial, and social norms that structure our relationship to mythical traditions are both articulated and exposed to possible subversion, since the "laws" that regulate everyday life are themselves largely suspended. In effect, the originary "didactic" element of the early fairy tales has been the dismissal of the status quo and the pursuit of a different kind of life through change and transformation; as Zipes asserts, "this journey usually accounts for the Utopian spirit of the tales, for the miraculous transformation does not only involve the transformation of the protagonist but also the realization of a more ideal setting in which the hero/heroine can fulfil his or her potential" (Zipes, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* xix). In fact, the endings always find the setting and the protagonists transformed in some way, "opening the way to a different future or destiny than the hero or heroine had anticipated" (Zipes, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* xix). However, as Zipes adds, since the literary fairy tale allowed for new, transgressive, and even monstrous possibilities of subversion, "it was always looked upon with misgivings by the governing authorities in the civilization process" (Zipes, *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* xix).

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Of course, and as a result of the eventual domination of patriarchal culture, the fairy tale was transformed in order to reinforce the dominant ideology about gender and mating and correspondingly shorn of subversive elements and potentialities; it became "part of the intricate civilizing process in the Western world" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* xi). Powerful female figures were presented as evil matriarchs that strive for power and dominance at any cost by killing their husbands and plotting to overtake the throne or as villainous witches that break the rules of civility and social norms by attacking children or murdering unsuspecting, innocent, and naïve princesses. From Lady Tremaine ("Cinderella") and the Evil Queen ("Snow-white") to Maleficent ("Sleeping Beauty") and Ursula ("The Little Mermaid"), strong female figures become dreadful instruments of the destruction of all that is good and pure, whereas the fairies that introduce the male and female protagonists to an array of potential futures by helping them to overcome difficulties are reduced to mere plot devices. At the same time, the "good" female protagonists only appear as passive damsels in distress waiting for their knights in shining armor to save them from evil monsters and murderous beasts. In effect, fairy-tale authors such as Charles Perrault, Giambattista Basile, the Grimm Brothers and Hans Christian Andersen (all male) institutionalized "what we now call fairy-tale characters, topoi, motifs, metaphors, and plots" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 16).

Until the 20th century, therefore, the literary fairy tale for children "was designed both to divert as amusement and to instruct ideologically as a means to mold the inner nature of young people" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 30). During the 20th-century, however, there was a widespread realization that the idea that fairy tales offer simply "harmless amusement" is quite misleading. Especially during the 1960s, various feminist writers realized "the possible harm of harmlessness" and began attacking the conservatism of the "classical" fairy tales by revising them into innovative, emancipatory stories, more critical of changing conditions in advanced technological societies based on capitalist social relations (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 57 & 60). What became apparent to these writers and critics was that traditional tales, "though ingenious and perhaps socially relevant in their own times, contained sexist and racist attitudes and served a socialization process that placed great emphasis on passivity, industry, and self-sacrifice for girls and on activity, competition, and accumulation of wealth for boys" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 57 & 60). Prominent among these writers is British author Angela Carter, whose revisions of classical tales such as Madame de Villeneuve's and Madame Leprince de Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast" (1740 and 1756 respectively) and Charles Perrault's and the Grimm Brothers' "Little Red Riding Hood" (1697 and 1857 respectively) among

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others, generated new adult interest in fairy tales by infusing the genre with a dark and often erotic comedy.

An avid investigator and lover of the genre, Angela Carter was deeply aware that the origins of the fairy tale lay beyond the patriarchal inscriptions of didactic stories for children; thus, she originally began to collect these earlier oral old wives' tales as an homage to female creativity and expression that, much like the hetaeric stage in which they belong to, has been eliminated from history. In the "Introduction" to a collection she edited, entitled *The Old Wives' Fairy Tale Book*, Carter asserts that she offers these stories "in a valedictory spirit, as a reminder of how wise, clever, perceptive, occasionally lyrical, eccentric, sometimes downright crazy our great-grandmothers were, and their great-grandmothers; and of the contributions to literature of Mother Goose and her goslings" (Carter, "Introduction" xxii). These fairy tales, folk tales, and stories from the oral tradition, she maintains, form "the most vital connection we have with the imaginations of the ordinary men and women whose labour created our world" (Carter, "Introduction" ix). And, even though they are designed to please audiences and readers, "there is always more than meets the eye" (Carter, "Introduction" xii). In an effort to investigate what that "more" can be, Carter later started writing her own revisions of classical tales.

In her feminist rewritings, Carter takes traditional tales and strips them of the confines of patriarchal norms by exposing the failure of masculinist assumptions about gender, race, and power in the postmodern era. In this way, she not only reconfigures readers' expectations and assumptions about the genre, but also remobilizes its originally transgressive nature. In other words, given the co-presence of elements within the fairy tale of both the patriarchal and the hetaeric, Carter's project is to undermine the operation of ideological containment that patriarchy has imposed on the fairy-tale genre throughout the years, bringing back to the surface of her texts those largely buried transgressive and monstrous elements and reconnecting them with their original, if we follow Bachofen, motive force: female agency and female empowerment. According to Marina Warner, the fairy tale becomes for Carter one of the most significant sites of resistance to patriarchal authority since it offers the writer a means of finding and telling an alternative story, of shifting something in the mind, just as so many fairy-tale characters shift something in their shapes in their effort to discover their true nature (Warner ix).

In a sense, Carter's critique of the violent politics embedded in classical tales and her desire to rediscover their transgressive potential serves as the backdrop to her new, "adult" and arguably pornographic revisions. In order to tell her alternative "fairy" stories, Carter delves into the Bachofian swampy hetaeric world of unlimited sexual licence and

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promiscuity. Carter's venture found significant opposition not only from the adherents of the status quo but also from the Anglo-American feminism of her time, primarily due to her provocative stance in the debate about female sexuality and pornography, originally over issues of sadomasochism and other sexual practices, and later over questions of artistic representation. According to Robin Ann Sheets, most feminists of the time were polemical against the genre of pornography; American political theorist, activist, and feminist movement leader Robin Morgan "issued the rallying cry of the feminist antipornography movement during the mid-1970s", labeling pornography as "the theory" to which rape constituted "the practice", while Andrea Dworkin "opposed all heterosexual relationships, claiming that the violence and aggression of pornography are essential characteristics of male sexuality" (Sheets 637). In essence, antipornography feminists maintained that "pornography does not produce sexual pleasure" but, instead, "displays male power" (Sheets 637). It therefore constitutes "an action against women" since it "encourages sadomasochism by placing the male/viewer/reader in the sadist's active position while assigning the masochist's passive role to the viewer/reader" (Sheets 637). Feminists like Morgan and Dworkin decried the damage done to women through the production and circulation of pornographic works, considering women

> [A]s performers whose bodies are exploited on stages and in film studios; as victims of men whose misogynistic attitudes and hostile actions have been encouraged by their consumption of pornography and as readers/viewers whose autonomy and self-respect are threatened by exposure to the genre. (Sheets 638)

Differentiating herself from the dominant antipornography feminist movement of the time, Angela Carter aligned herself with a small group of writers who viewed pornography as a possible source of female erotic pleasure and maintained that it can serve "women's interests by offering them an escape from the repressions of bourgeois ideology", to the extent that it "counteracts romantic love, undermines heterosexual monogamy, and subverts procreative sex" (Sheets 638). In her controversial *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (1978), Carter begins by claiming that

> Pornographers are the enemies of women only because our contemporary ideology of pornography does not encompass the possibility of change, as if we were the slaves of history and not its makers, as if sexual relations were not necessarily an expression of social relations, as if sex itself were an external fact, one as immutable as the weather, creating human practice but

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> never a part of it. (Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* 3-4)

Whereas most feminists sought to define the genre of pornography as a type of violence against women and to register those representations which eroticize male domination as pornographic, Carter viewed the genre as a means of critiquing "current relations between the sexes" (Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* 19). In doing so, she reread and celebrated Marquis de Sade because "he treats all sexuality as a political reality" and "declares himself unequivocally for the right of women to fuck" as "aggressively, tyrannously and cruelly" as men (Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* 27). Even though she recognizes the misogyny of de Sade's fantasies of "women-monsters" and his "hatred of the mothering function", she praises him for "claiming rights of free sexuality for women, and in installing women as beings of power in his imaginary worlds" (Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* 25 & 36). The creation of heroines who not only agonize and suffer (like "the innocent and always abused Justine") but also cause suffering (like Justine's "sexually aggressive, whip-wielding sister, Juliette"), render de Sade "a visionary hoping to transform society and human nature" and create a world of total sexual license for all genders (Sheets 635). De Sade becomes, therefore, the quintessential figure of what Carter calls "a moral pornographer"; such a pornographer "would not be the enemy of women, perhaps because he might begin to penetrate to the heart of the contempt for women that distorts our culture even as he entered the realms of true obscenity as he describes it" (Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* 20). Indeed, Carter notes, it is only through the medium of sexual violence "that women might heal themselves of their socially inflicted scars, in a praxis of destruction and sacrilege" (Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* 26). Asking readers to "give the old monster his due", Carter maintains that de Sade "put pornography in the service of women, or, perhaps, allowed it to be invaded by an ideology not inimical to women" and envisioned an "absolutely egalitarian society" based on "fucking" as "the basis of all human relationships" (Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* 37 & 26).

Even though the initial reviews of her work were positive, "as the feminist antipornography movement gained momentum in England and North America, *The Sadeian Woman* was denounced" by feminist theorists such as Andrea Dworkin as "a pseudofeminist literary essay" (Sheets 636). With her raw material as such deriving largely from what had become degraded pop culture and with her writing style often being uncomfortably close to "purple" or cheap prose, she was frequently dismissed by feminist audiences; cultural

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historian and critic James Sloan Allen, for example, described her as an "author of pornography", while activist and feminist Amanda Sebestyen characterized her as "the high-priestess of post-graduate porn" (Sheets 641-642). However, I argue that with her explicitly pornographic works and especially with *The Bloody Chamber and Other Adult Tales* collection (1979), Carter becomes herself a "moral pornographer" of sorts; her attempt is to employ the genre as "a terrorist of the imagination", "a sexual guerilla" whose purpose is to overturn readers' most basic understanding of sexual relations and "to reinstitute sexuality as a primary mode of being rather than a specialized area of vacation from being" (Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* 22). In *The Bloody Chamber*, Carter retells classical fairy tales such as "Bluebeard", "Beauty and the Beast", "Little Red Riding Hood", and "Puss in Boots" which she associates with "subliterary forms of pornography, ballad and dream", whose latent content she considers violently sexual.

Undoubtedly, almost all of the traditional tales that Carter revises have been constructed on a foundation of implicit (and sometimes explicit) female abuse and sexual violence. In Basile's "Sleeping Beauty" (1637), for example, the sleeping princess is not woken up by the prince with a kiss, but is continually raped by him for years, giving birth to two children in the meantime. While the jealous queen is burnt to death, the king gets to live happily ever after with the princess who, despite her abuse, falls in love with him at the end. Similarly, in Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood", the wolf represents a sexual predator who rapes Little Red, whereas in "Bluebeard" the wealthy mysterious aristocrat brutally murders his wives, hanging their bloody corpses on hooks from the walls. Furthermore, in the Brothers Grimm's "Cinderella" the evil stepsisters cut off their toes and heels in order to fit into the glass slipper and pigeons peck out their eyes at the prince's orders to punish them for their deception. However grotesque, this violence is didactic in nature: it aims to instruct women on proper codes of conduct and warn them of the consequences of stepping out of line through the threat of physical and sexual violence. These myths and fairy tales, as Carter asserts, have always dealt in "false universals to dull the pain of particular circumstances", and hence reinforce conventional representations of "the archetypal male and female" (Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* 5-6). With her revisions, in turn, Carter aims to transform them into texts that "serve a meaningful social function not just for compensation but for revelation", since the worlds "projected by the best of our fairy tales reveal the gaps between truth and falsehood in our immediate society" (Zipes, "The Changing Function of the Fairy Tale" 29).

In this context, I will argue that in accordance with the analysis of sexuality and culture that Carter had initiated a year earlier with *The Sadeian Woman*, *The Bloody Chamber* not

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only links pornography to fairy tales (and both to psychoanalytical insight) but exposes, as Susanne Kappeler asserts, "the folklore nature of the pornographic plot", the tendency of traditional pornography to reproduce archetypes inherent in patriarchal culture at large. For Carter, this culture must be resisted to the extent that it "recites the same tale over and over again, convincing itself through these rearticulations of the impossibility of change" (Kappeler 146). Through her postmodernist and pornographic rewritings of classical fairy tales, especially "The Tiger's Bride", "The Company of Wolves" and "The Erl-King", Carter lifts her heroines out of the "pastel nursery" and the grips of patriarchy and thrusts them "into the labyrinth of female desire" (Warner ix). Hers is a Bachofian, hetaeric world where women discover and exploit their wild sensuality and their animalistic instincts for vengeance and self-preservation, as well as their great capacity for pity, empathy, and even love. In the remainder of this chapter, I will address the ways in which Carter combines the genres of the fairy tale and pornography in order to examine the areas of proximity and affiliation between woman and animal and to contest assumptions about female masochism and passivity.

Little Red and the Formation of a "Savage Marriage Ceremony"

In "The Company of Wolves", a rewriting of "Little Red Riding Hood", Carter engages in critical dialogue with literary and folkloric voices within the "Little Red Riding Hood" tradition; according to Christina Bacchilega, by interweaving traditional versions of the story by Perrault or the Grimm Brothers with "popular beliefs, proscriptions, and exhortations" from the oral tradition, Carter performs an ironic gesture that adds another level of intricacy to the story (Bacchilega 62). On the one hand, Perrault's version during the 17th century, which is the earliest known printed version, is quite sinister and moralizingly didactic with Little Red, an attractive lady from a good family, being deceived into providing the wolf with details to get to granny's house. The wolf eats the granny and lays a trap for Little Red, whom he later forces to get into bed with him before he consumes her. The story ends without a happy ending, since the wolf is the victor over both older and younger woman. The moral of the story is evidently that young girls should avoid talking to strangers, especially the "wolves" with an amicable disposition that want to take advantage of the naivete and weakness of virginal maidens. The Grimm Brothers picked up the story during the 19th century and revised the ending, having a huntsman who happens to be passing-by the granny's house save the two women by killing and skinning the animal. Their revision provided a "happy ending" by allowing a brave, strong, and handsome man to save the day

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just in time. This version has been by far more popular with audiences worldwide; in effect, however, both versions attest to the ideological work of patriarchal didacticism.

At the beginning of Carter's version of the story, the narrator announces herself as part of the village community and turns into the old wife telling stories of wonder and caution. Specifically, she addresses readers directly urging us to listen to a series of three old wives' tales. Like the children who were told cautionary tales in the Alps centuries ago, the narrator provides anecdotes of the viciousness and bloodthirstiness of wolves in order to demonstrate why humans have been fearing the wolf, the "carnivore incarnate", for centuries. Just like traditional renditions of "Little Red Riding Hood" that served as warnings to young, innocent girls, the extradiegetic narrator warns us that "we", the "benighted" travelers in both senses of the word, must be vigilant to spot the danger on dark winter nights: "the eyes of wolves shine like candle flames, yellowish, reddish, but that is because the pupils of their eyes fatten on darkness and catch the light from your lantern to flash it back to you – red for danger" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 212). By conjuring these oral tales, Carter alerts readers that she will not be basing her story on the "traditional", male-authored versions of the story but on the original, hetaeric old wives' tales that patriarchal culture suppressed throughout the years. As Wendy Swyt maintains, "the old wife-narrator pulls the narratee close to the fire with three of the werewolf legends that make up local lore" in order to lay the foundations for one of the biggest deviations from the classical tale and set the mood for what is about to come (Swyt 317). Essentially, the short tales that the narrator presents reveal one of the most significant elements surrounding the figure of the wolf: wolves are originally men. Lycanthropes become the most fearsome of all the villainous creatures that inhabit the forest at night precisely because their masculinity allies them with both ferocity and cunning. Hence, unlike in the traditional tales, the creatures that should be feared are not animals but in fact husbands, fathers, and other male authority figures that plague the female characters of the stories.

From this world of legends and warnings, Carter's Little Red, a "strong-minded child", begins her journey through the woods to her reclusive grandmother (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 215). Even though it is Christmas Eve and "the malign door of the solstice still swings on its hinges", the girl proceeds fearlessly, armed with a carving knife that her mother had packed with the cheese; "she has been too much loved to feel scared" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 215). Given that "her breasts have just begun to swell […] and she has just started her woman's bleeding", Little Red is explicitly shown to be involved in another kind of journey, that of female sexual maturation (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 215). According to Kimberly J. Lau, Carter plays up Little Red's "childlike desirability" and "her virginity is

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fundamental to that desirability" (Lau 85). In Carter's own words, "she is an unbroken egg; she is a sealed vessel; she has inside her a magic space the entrance to which is shut tight with a plug of membrane; she is a closed system" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 215). More importantly, Little Red herself embraces this sexual awakening. In effect, the fact that she is a virgin does not immediately indicate that she is also innocent; she might "not know how to shiver" but, as evident by her encounter with the hunter, this doesn't mean she does not want to (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 215).

From the first moment she lays eyes on the hunter in the forest, Little Red admits to being very much attracted to him. He is handsome and courteous and "he laughed with a flash of white teeth when he saw her and made her a comic yet flattering little bow" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 216). The hunter appears friendly and polite, and Little Red feels so safe with him that she gives him her basket even though her knife is inside it; she "forgot to be afraid of the beasts" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 216). Her flirtation with the "dashing huntsman" leads to the placement of a bet between herself and the hunter regarding who will get to granny's house faster (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 216). If she loses, she will have to give him a kiss; he proposes the stakes and she doesn't refuse. In a sense, Little Red experiments with the boundaries of herself and she doesn't hesitate to push them to their limit; as Lau maintains, "Carter casts Little Red Riding Hood in the role of sexual nymphet, typical object of male fantasy, in their flirtatious exchange" (Lau 86). At the same time, she is also conscious of the way she is captured by the male gaze and even plays up the role of the innocent young maiden in order to excite him even more. She is in fact "both innocent and knowing, and that is exactly what makes her so highly desirable in the typical male fantasy" (Lau 86). However, as Lau adds, Carter is just toying with that fantasy, "writing her own moral pornography as a way of further dismantling a world of sexual absolutes" (Lau 86). Actually, Carter's Little Red does not just passively receive the hunter's advances as an object of his fantasy and desire but eventually becomes "a sexual agent", actively seducing the man she is attracted to (Lau 86). Hence, she deliberately delays on the way to Granny's house in order to ensure that "the handsome gentleman would win his wager and claim his prize" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 216).

As expected, the hunter arrives at granny's house earlier and, in accord with the traditional tale, he uses his cunning in order to disguise his voice and fool the old lady into letting him inside. The pious old woman, who is "three-quarters succumbed to the mortality the ache in her bones promises her and almost ready to give in entirely" is propped up on several pillows on the bed, like a lamb waiting to be slaughtered (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 217). As soon as he comes through the door, the hunter removes all his clothing in order to

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transform into a wolf. This transformation of the hunter into a wolf and the consumption of the grandmother serve a double function: on the one hand, Carter destabilizes the stereotypical figure of the male savior, the hunter, since it is exactly he who turns into a beast and eats the grandmother: "The last thing the old lady saw in all this world was a young man, eyes like cinders, naked as a stone, approaching her bed. The wolf is a carnivore incarnate" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 217). The hunter and the animal turn out to be the same creature, and, therefore, the person Little Red should be hiding from is the exact same one she felt most secure with, the one she was so attracted to. This is reminiscent of the message conveyed by the old wives' tales at the beginning of the story: the werewolf, the man-turned-wolf, the lycanthrope are incarnations of the masculine enemy that seeks to subjugate and consume the female body. In effect, Carter picks up one of the most fundamental hetaeric elements of the oral tale – the depiction of the beastliness and savagery of man – and turns it into a foundation of her exposure of the impact of patriarchal culture on the genre of the fairy tale as such.

The wolf/hunter's nakedness, however, serves another very important function; it reveals an image of the wolf/hunter as a desirable sexual object subject to the female gaze. In one of the most dramatic departures from the classical tale, the narrator's depiction of the wolf/hunter's stripping becomes highly sexualized. Reading quite like the popular pornographic material that first inspired her collection, the description of the wolf/hunter makes explicit reference to his nipples and even to the size of his genitals:

> He strips off his shirt. His skin is the color and texture of vellum. A crisp stripe of hair runs down his belly, his nipples are ripe and dark as poison fruit but he's so thin you could count the ribs under his skin if only he gave you time… His genitals, huge. Ah! huge. (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 217)

This sensualized and eroticized representation of the wolf/hunter and the inability to tell whether it is the lecherous old wife-narrator or the innocent granny who exclaims in awe at the size of his genitals, are particularly important for any reading of the story since it is one of the most striking deviations from both the oral and classical tales. In Carter's ironic and intentional reversal of female objectification by the male gaze, it is man who becomes the objectified subject of female desires and pleasures of looking. As Laura Mulvey maintains, however, "according to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification"; indeed, men caught by the female gaze need to reassert themselves as the active agents within the relationship with the spectators and regain their power (Mulvey 838). Hence, even though he is caught and objectified by the female gaze, the wolf/hunter is never vulnerable,

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ashamed, or passive; immediately after he exposes himself to the granny he ferociously consumes her, reasserting his masculine strength and his superiority over her. In effect, the image of the naked alpha male with the hairy chest, the ripe nipples, and the huge genitals is coded both as object of desire and monstrous threat.

When Little Red enters the room, she is momentarily deceived into believing that her Granny is the one lying on the bed; soon enough, however, she realizes that she is in grave danger. She wants to reach for her knife but hesitates "because his eyes were fixed upon her – huge eyes that now seemed to shine with a unique, interior light, eyes the size of saucers, saucers full of Greek fire, diabolic phosphorescence" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 218). Seeing a tuft of white hair caught in the bark of an unburnt log she surmises that her grandmother has already been killed and that she would be next; a fleeting sense of fear comes over her and she pulls more closely her scarlet shawl, "although it was as red as the blood she must spill" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 218). As this phrase insinuates, Little Red will not easily submit to the fate reserved for her by patriarchy; she is prepared to do what is necessary to save herself. After deciding to act, Little Red takes a very bold decision: the blood that she has to spill need not come from her devoured corpse, but from the loss of her virginity instead; she will be "nobody's meat" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 219). Sensually removing her clothing and throwing it in the fire, Little Red entices and seduces the wolf/hunter experimenting with the limits of her own sexuality. In effect, Little Red becomes an exhibitionist, deriving pleasure out of consensually exposing her body to the other's gaze; but whereas Freud describes exhibitionism as the passive opposite of scopophilia, in Carter's tale, Little Red's "striptease" becomes a sign of her sexual liberation and empowerment. As Lau notes, "[i]t is as if Carter is once again describing Little Red Riding Hood for the script of a traditional pornographic film, the desirable young nymphet caught in the male gaze, and yet even as she zooms in on Little Red Riding Hood, she continues to grant her sexual agency" (Lau 87). Little Red does not expose herself as a "piece of meat" prepared for visual or, like the granny, physical consumption but rather as a sexually liberated agent ready to enjoy her first sexual experience; as Bacchilega notes, "by acting out her desires – sexual, not just for life – the girl offers herself as flesh, not meat" (Bacchilega 63).

The "savage marriage ceremony" between the woman and the lycanthrope that begun with their undressing and proceeded with the wolf's delousing and the girl's shocking consumption of the lice eventually culminates with the consummation of their marriage in the middle of a blizzard, under the sound of a "howling concert", on Christmas day – "the werewolves' birthday", when "the door of the solstice stands wide open" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 219-220). The ending of Carter's story is indeed very different from the

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traditional fairy tale as regards both the female and the male protagonist. On the one hand, the demonized other, who is both the villain and the hero, the beast and the hunter, the predator and the prey, is embraced and desired both as a man and as a wolf. Carter subverts the old wives' tales that depicted him as an unreasoning brute characterized solely by ferocity and an insatiable thirst for blood; he is able to transform from one's worst fear to one's greatest desire. On the other hand, the author offers her heroine a chance to save herself; with the "villain" and the "hero" being the same person, the woman is forced to "do or die" because if she does not step up and negotiate, manipulate her feminine charms to her advantage, she will be eaten and her bones will be crackling in the fireplace like those of her grandmother's. As Swyt maintains, "ignoring the old wives' warnings, the girl embraces this devourment", a willed loss that signals the loss of her maidenhood and her awakening as an active sexual agent (Swyt 321).

Evidently, the sexualized and explicitly pornographic depictions of the two protagonists, and especially Little Red, become the most vital aspects of the fairy tale; but it is equally significant that through the sensual undressing, the mutual seduction, and the long-awaited sexual consummation that brings the two together, Little Red discovers and reveals her own animality and animal drives as an active sexual agent. In other words, Carter's Little Red is not presented as the "desired object of patriarchal projections", but rather transforms into an "autonomous desiring subject", as bestial as the wolf she is sleeping with (Lau 88). As Bacchilega adds, "both carnivores incarnate, these two young heterosexual beings satiate their hunger not for dead meat, but flesh, while at the same time embodying it" (Bacchilega 64). In essence, Little Red is no longer a piece of meat, a commodity that satiates the werewolf's hunger, but living flesh that represents life, sexuality, and affirmation. The sullen and sinister endings of the oral and the traditional tales turn into a celebration of sexual affirmation and female empowerment, with the female heroine discovering her sexual agency and employing it to gain power and maneuver through the beastly world of man. The union between woman and animal, an affair between two equals, brings about a different kind of happy ending as the narrator issues her last imperative, urging readers to bear witness and to understand the implications of this union: "See! Sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 220).

Beauty and the Violation of the Gaze

This "alternative world" is, in Carter's revisionist fairy-tale writing, also inhabited by another subversive couple: the one found in "The Tiger's Bride", a rewriting of the

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traditional tale of "Beauty and the Beast". In this story, Carter highlights patriarchal assumptions about the relationship between men and women and the latter's place within society and the family in order to expose their violent nature. To begin with, whereas Beauty in the traditional tale is called Belle, Carter's Beauty – as she will be called henceforth – remains nameless; perhaps Carter wants to emphasize that she is not someone special or extraordinary but one of the many nameless and faceless women caught in the throes of patriarchal dominance. According to Patricia Brooke, the fact that she does not reveal her name could testify to the fact that she is "disallowed self-identification or signification by her father and his society" (Brooke 77). Evidently, her objectification follows a long tradition of female oppression in her family, with her mother "bartered for her dowry to such a feckless sprig of the Russian nobility that she soon died of his gaming, his whoring, his agonizing repentances" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 154). Now, Beauty is forced to sit silently and watch her father confidently wager her life at cards until he loses it. Even though Belle's father in the classical tale also engages in a pact with the Beast in order to gain his freedom by surrendering his daughter as a servant/prisoner, he is never presented in negative terms but rather as someone who is in a desperate time of need. Most importantly, Belle herself is never depicted as a commodity or currency but rather as a dutiful, loving daughter, sacrificing herself for her father and her family. In contrast, Beauty's father in Carter's tale is a degenerate gambler who not only caused his wife's death but the suffering and possible death of his daughter as well; in his case, "ownership prevails over affection" (Brooks 77).

After giving her "tear-beslobbered" father a white rose smeared with blood from her pricked finger as a sign of forgiveness, Beauty ceremoniously departs for the Tiger's mansion armed only with the old wives' tales and the superstitious fears of her childhood about the Tiger's violent ferocity and insatiable hunger for flesh. Contrary to the traditional tale, which does not present the Beast's ferocious appetite in sexualized terms, in Carter's tale the threat is more to Beauty's maidenhood rather than her life. In fact, based on her English nurse's tales as a young girl, Beauty's mind has conflated the image of the Tiger gobbling up the young girls who don't eat their boiled beetroot with that of the Tiger-man doing to the wagoner's daughter "what the bull did to the cows" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 158). Interestingly, Beauty approaches the prospect of being ravaged by the Tiger's ravenous appetite with a feeling of delighted terror instead of pure dread and becomes rather disappointed when she learns that the Tiger does not want to physically eat her nor engage in sexual relations with her. To Beauty's great surprise and in one of the most significant departures from the traditional tale, the Tiger wants to revel at "the sight of a young lady's skin that no man has seen before"; he demands to consume an image rather than actual flesh

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(Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 163). The pornographic overtones of the Tiger's demand and the girl's disappointment following her reserved excitement over the potential of becoming the Tiger's prey not only points to the objectification of women and the sexualization of their commodification but, at the same time, to the possibility of a female sexual awakening.

The pleasure in the visual consumption of the body through a process of objectification is a particularly prominent topic in the field of psychoanalysis. Originally translated from Freud's *Schaulust* (literally meaning curiosity), the term scopophilia refers to the experience of pleasure and sexual gratification from looking at other people naked or in compromising positions. As Freud maintains, it is one of several "instinctual components of sexual pleasure (or, as we like to say, of libido) which presuppose the taking of an extraneous person as an object" (Freud 2231). Freud maintains that even though scopophilia is based on the subject taking other people as objects of (sexual) pleasure by subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze, it is not necessarily a perversion. In fact, this pleasure in looking becomes a perversion only "(a) if it is restricted exclusively to the genitals, or (b) if it is connected with the overriding of disgust (as in the case of voyeurs or people who look on at excretory functions), or (c) if, instead of being preparatory to the normal sexual aim, it supplants it" (Freud 1484). Once it becomes a perversion, the gaze is viewed as penetrating the woman or the object of desire, providing the scopophiliac with sexual gratification; if the wish to see is not gratified then that person becomes fixated into what the Rat Man (one of Freud's patients and study subjects) described as "a burning and tormenting curiosity to see the female body" (Freud 2132). The reference to "the female body" and its fetishization by male desire is not uncommon, since in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, scopophilia, as Laura Mulvey remarks, "has been split between the active/male and the passive/female" poles (Mulvey 837). The often-invasive male gaze projects its fantasy and desire onto the female figure, which is constructed accordingly. As Mulvey maintains, in their traditional and often imposed exhibitionist role, "women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact" (Mulvey 837). The perception of the image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man has been one of the main foundations of patriarchal culture with important implications for the understanding of the dynamics within Carter's revisionist tale.

Nevertheless, the fact, that the Tiger is not simply male but also an animal adds a layer of complexity to any straightforwardly feminist reading of the story. At the beginning of the story, the Tiger is described as a carnivalesque figure "made of papier-mache and crepe hair" wearing an old-fashioned tailcoat, a mask with a man's face beautifully painted on it, and a wig with false hair tied at the nape with a bow (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 156).

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He soaks his shirts and under linen in scent, covers his throat with a chaste silk stock with a pearl on it, and masks his voice so that it is not audible to anyone but his valet. There "is a crude clumsiness about his outlines" that are on the awkward side, and he possesses "an odd air of self-imposed restraint, as if fighting a battle with himself to remain upright when he would far rather drop down on all fours" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 156). Evidently, he is a beast that attempts to pass off as a human within a society that dismisses and oppresses animals as well as women; his demand, therefore, can only be considered in terms of his position (present or aspired) within this society. Indeed, the Tiger's mandate to visually consume the virginal flesh of the girl is another step in his struggle to transform into a human male and assimilate within patriarchal culture; in order to become a "real" man he needs to suppress the animal within himself.

American writer, feminist and animal rights advocate Carol J. Adams maintains that animals and women are linked by what she calls "fused oppression" (Adams 102). As she asserts, "we live in a culture that has institutionalized the oppression of animals on at least two levels: in formal structures such as slaughterhouses, meat markets, zoos, laboratories, and circuses, and through our language" (Adams 94). Similarly, in this "racist, patriarchal world in which men still have considerable power over women, both in the public sphere (employment and politics) and in the private sphere", women are turned into commodities and their commodification is reflected and reinforced by language itself. This overlapping, intersectional domination of both women and animals leads to their consumption, physical for animals and visual for women; for Adams, being consumed amounts to the "fulfillment of oppression, the annihilation of will, of separate identity" (Adams 73). Once women are rendered "inert objects, with no attention paid to their feelings or needs" then it becomes relatively easy and even acceptable for them to be penetrated and violated by the male gaze, much like the dead flesh of animals is butchered, dismembered, and eventually pierced by the fork and knife of a meat-eater; "like hamburger", women are viewed as something that is objectified, without agency, that must be prepared, reshaped, acculturated to be made consumable in a patriarchal world (Adams 83). The final stage of the fulfillment of male sexual desire is the "consumption" of the female body and female-identified pieces of meat, which validates the virility of traditional male (human) masculinity and reinforces the triumph of male dominance over all creation (Adams 75). In his effort to confirm his membership within this dominant human masculinity, a process that commenced with the attempt to eliminate everything about him that exposes his (inferior) animal nature, Carter's Tiger attempts to turn Beauty into an inert object for his viewing pleasure.

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As Adams notes, "feminist critics perceive the violence inherent in representations that collapse sexuality and consumption and have titled this nexus 'carnivorous arrogance' (Simone de Beauvoir), 'gynocidal gluttony' (Mary Daly), 'sexual cannibalism' (Kate Millet), 'psychic cannibalism' (Andrea Dworkin), 'metaphysical cannibalism' (Ti-Grace Atkinson)" (Adams 89). If they want to regain their images, voices, power, lives, and freedoms, Laurie Pennie argues, women collectively need to remember the "language of resistance": "'No' is the most powerful word in a woman's dialectic arsenal, and it is the one word that our employers, our leaders and, quite often, the men in our lives would do anything to prevent us from saying" (Penny 66). "No" is precisely what Beauty says upon hearing the Tiger's demand.

But Beauty's refusal to the Tiger's mandate adds a further layer of complexity to the story since it is not a proclamation of resistance to patriarchal authority in the way that Adams or other anti-pornography feminists would have wished; in fact, Carter's agenda couldn't be further away from the notions of preserving female chastity or vilifying the exploration of female sexuality. Carter's Beauty, as all of her heroines, is neither naïve nor modest and her refusal does not stem from a sense of dignity or moral outrage but ironically from her indignation over "the perceived paucity of the exchange" (Brooke 80). In other words, Beauty, who grew up viewing her body and flesh as a commodity, as capital, had expected to give much more than the Tiger requested: "That he should want so little was the reason why I [she] could not give it" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 61). In reality, the girl was preparing to surrender her virginity to the Tiger since she thought that this was the only thing she *could* offer. In fact, Beauty knew well enough that her childhood had already ended; for now her skin was her "sole capital in the world" and today she would make her "first investment" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 159). Given that she knows that to lose her virginity before marriage "divests her of any capital worth for future paternal exchange", the thought fills her with a sense of "delighted terror" because it means that she will no longer be of any *use* to the men around her (Brooke 80). Holding her head up high and keeping her eyes at eye level with those of the man in the mask, she mockingly lets out a "raucous guffaw" and makes him a counteroffer:

> I will pull my skirt up to my waist, ready for you. But there must be a sheet over my face, to hide it; though the sheet must be laid on me so lightly that it will not choke me. So I shall be covered completely from the waist upwards, and no lights. There you can visit me once, sir, and only once. After that I must be driven directly to the city and deposited in the public square, in front of the church. If you wish to give me money, then I should be pleased to

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> receive it. But I must stress that you should give me only the same amount of money that that you would give to any other woman in such circumstances. (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 161)

Completely aware that she is objectified, Beauty has already realized that her position could be shared by any woman in the same circumstances, forced to give in to a man's demands. Thus, she refuses to accept from the Tiger anything other than what he would give to a prostitute. Her refusal to reveal her face during the process is significant because it implies an attempt to make her objectification even more explicit; she is prepared to lie in front of him like a piece of meat, a faceless object ready for visual consumption. While he will be able to see her genitals, he will not be able to see her face, her expressions, her feeling of possible humiliation or anger. In other words, she is ready to subject a part of her body to his gaze, but she will keep something entirely for herself as her last point of resistance, as her last attempt at saying that not all of her is for sale.

Beauty's counterproposal strikes "the Beast to the heart" to such an extent that "one single tear swelled, glittering, at the corner of the masked eye" and fell to the floor, turning into a diamond earring (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 161). After the Tiger repeats the original offer once more, Beauty exclaims that she would rather twist a noose out of her bedlinen and hang herself with it or roll in the hay with every boy on her father's farm than accept this "humiliating bargain" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 163). Her second outright refusal causes another tear to come out of the Tiger's eye, as he feels every sense of control slip from his fingers. As she refuses to acknowledge his dominance over her body, the Tiger begins to undergo his own transformation, shedding the artifices that make him resemble a human and coming to terms with himself. Accordingly, he sends her the earring as a gift the next day and decides to surrender completely to the girl, exposing himself as the object of her gaze. While Beauty, the Tiger, the valet, and the three horses ride towards the river, Beauty not only reinforces her view that the Tiger and his valet are indeed not "as other men" bus also starts to feel an affinity with them, especially with the former:

> I was a young girl, a virgin, and therefore men denied me rationality just as they denied it to all those who were not exactly like themselves, in all their unreason. If I could see not one single soul in that wilderness of desolation all around me, then the six of us – mounts and riders, both – could boast amongst us not one soul, either, since all the best religions in the world state categorically that not beasts nor women were equipped with [souls]. (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 165)

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Beauty's situation compels her to view the similarities between her and the Tiger rather than their differences. Both woman and animal are socially perceived as irrational, soulless, and, in many ways, inferior to men; this is perhaps why he "had chosen to live in an uninhabited place" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 160). As Brooke maintains, she realizes that the similarities between herself and the Tiger "move from material, external conditions to internal definitions of selfhood" (Brooke 82).

Once they get to the river bank, the Tiger prepares to disrobe; he takes off his mask and his clothes – those things that he has put on in order to look human – revealing his true figure in all its bestiality. Much like the hunter in "The Company of Wolves" who disrobes to assume the form of the werewolf, the Tiger in this tale has to undress in order to expose his true bestial nature and liberate himself from the constraints of human society and culture. Critics have not paid much attention to the Tiger's gesture of removing all artificiality from his body aside from dwelling on the implications that this has on the balance of power between the two protagonists; it is important, however, in its own right. At the beginning of the story, the Tiger felt the need to put on clothing; he wore a shirt and an old-fashioned tailcoat soaked in scent, a mask with a beautiful man's face painted on it, a wig with false hair tied at the collar with a bow, and a pair of gloves of blond kid that are so massive and awkward that they do not seem to cover human hands. According to Derrida, the consciousness of nakedness and the concurrent need to cover it is one of the things long thought to be exclusively proper to man along with properties such as *logos*, history etc. As the philosopher notes, "it is generally thought […] that the property unique to animals and what in the final analysis distinguishes them from man, is their being naked without knowing it" (Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am* 4-5). The animals' nakedness is thus directly associated with their lack of shame; being ashamed of one's nakedness and, therefore, the need to put on clothing, is one of the things that allegedly separates Man from animals. "There is no nudity in nature", the philosopher asserts; therefore, modesty or immodesty do not exist in the animal world, since animals do not have the awareness of the self that is involved in being ashamed of one's nakedness (Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am* 5). Though he physically resembles an animal the Tiger is thus (like Kafka's Red Peter) aware of his nakedness. This is why the gesture of his undressing becomes so vital for the narrative: it is the moment he gets rid of any elements that might be perceived as "human" and surrenders to his own animal nature. In order for him to expose himself and relinquish power over to the girl, he must first come to terms with and embrace his own animality unashamed, and without the reflexive shame at being ashamed. As soon as he does that, as soon as he liberates himself of the confines of the patriarchal culture he had previously embraced, he is

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able to show her his "great, feline, tawny shape", his "domed, heavy head, so terrible he must hide it", his "subtle" muscles, his "profound" tread, and his eyes, like "twin suns" in their "annihilating vehemence" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 166).

Interestingly, what Beauty feels at this sight is a mixture of awe and desire; to such an extent that she feels her "breast ripped apart as if [she] suffered a marvelous wound" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 166). At this point, it is not the animal that looks at the human but the human that stares at the animal body in all its glory, experiencing a mixture of dread at the sublime sight of pure raw power and of desirous amazement with radical difference: "nothing about him reminded me of humanity" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 166). In effect, it is precisely because he no longer resembles anything human but a creature of unadulterated bestial nature that Beauty becomes inspired to explore the limits of her own humanity. In this respect, after this rather revelatory moment for both her and the Tiger, Beauty decides to expose her body to his gaze. She hesitates at first, but it is pride and not shame that prevent her fingers from completing the task; this lack of shame is the first step towards her connection to her own animality. Her fingers pause momentarily, but she eventually finishes her task: "I showed his grave silence my white skin, my red nipples" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 166). In essence, the woman stands naked before the animal revealing, not what differentiates one from the other, but what connects the two through their "likeness". Unashamed of her nakedness, becoming both an active subject and a passive object of the other's gaze, she realizes that she has a close affinity with the Tiger and feels exhilarated with the idea of their shared experience; as she admits, "I felt I was at liberty for the first time in my life" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 166).

But this moment of mutual recognition and acceptance is only temporary, as they both have to return to their lives and their socially assigned roles. Upon her return, Beauty picks up a mirror, intending to put on her diamond earrings made out of the Tiger's tears. Instead, she sees her father, well-shaven, neatly barbered, newly clothed and smiling as he is counting a great pile of banknotes and drinking sparkling wine. It thus becomes apparent to her that her father had already received the Tiger's payment "for his glimpse on my [her] bosom […] as if it had not been a sight I [she] might have died of showing" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 167). What truly infuriates the girl is not so much her father's betrayal, however, since she was already accustomed to such behavior; instead, Beauty is enraged by a note left on the table, written by the Tiger: "The young lady will arrive immediately" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 167). This forces the girl to wonder if she meant to the Tiger only as much as "some harlot with whom he'd briskly negotiated a liaison in the strength of his spoils" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 167). The sense of betrayal is only exacerbated by the valet,

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who enters the room bearing a "handsome sable cloak" as her "very own little gratuity", announcing that she was free to leave at any moment (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 167). In retrospect, the revelatory moment by the river bank turns out to have been nothing more than a business transaction that was paid in full; now, she was to receive her "morning gift", pack her things, and leave. But Carter's Beauty is not one to let others dictate her actions nor to blindly accept her fate. Instead, she decides to act on her instincts. As Brook asserts, at the recognition that her "epiphanic action has been reduced to the level of economic exchange and hence recuperated by patriarchy, Beauty gains the strength to sever her final connection to her father's constrictive expectations" and "confront the Beast again, this time freely and uninvited" (Brooke 82-83). While she forsakes any kinship to her father, she storms into the Tiger's chamber, naked but for the diamond earrings, and faces him. In the process, she gains a deeper understanding of what it means to "be naked":

> I was unaccustomed to nakedness. I was so unused to my own skin that to take off all my clothes involved a kind of flaying. I thought the beast had wanted a little thing compared with what I was prepared to give him; but it is not natural for humankind to go naked, not since first we hid our loins with fig leaves. He had demanded the abominable. I felt as much atrocious pain as if I was stripping off my own underpelt […] peel[ing] down to the cold, white meat of contract. (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 168)

Clearly, Beauty realizes that to go naked, to get rid of one of the things that bound her to her humanity, to civilized society, to socio-cultural norms, and to the expectations imposed on her due to her gender is an extremely painful experience; at the same time, however, it is one that highlights her affinity to the creature rather than human society and gives her an opportunity to make difficult decisions regarding her own place within it. According to Brooke, no matter how terrifying and painful the experience of stripping down might be, she now "controls the terms of the transformation, stripping when she decides rather than returning to the civilization that would simply constrain and barter her again and again" (Brooke 83).

At the beginning of the story, Beauty had idealistically asserted that the Tiger's palace would be a place "where the lion lies down with the lamb"; she now realizes that the Tiger will never lie down with her as long as she remains a lamb. Even though she is pleasurably terrified of being physically devoured (or sexually ravaged) like a lamb on his "carnivorous bed of bone", Carter's heroine realizes that the only way the lamb can run with the tigers is by taking the situation into her own hands, becoming an active agent in the creation of her own future, and turning into a tiger herself (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 168).

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She thus squats on the wet straw and stretches out her hand, inviting the Tiger to come closer; as Brooke notes, "her offering is not that of the lamb on the altar, but rather one without fear, between equals" (Brooke 83). In the "bloody chamber" where the Tiger violently consumes his pray, next to their "gnawed and bloody bones", he touches her hand with his head and licks her with his tongue, "abrasive as sandpaper" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 169). Amazingly, her skin peels off to reveal the beautiful fur that is hiding underneath – her own inner animal: "And each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of shining hairs" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 169). Her magical transformation into a wild tigress, highlighted by the transformation of the diamond earrings back into water trickling down her shoulders and off her beautiful fur, finalizes her passage into the realm of the animal. Beauty chooses to relinquish her humanity and her unhappy human life with her father, lies next to the Tiger and becomes his animal Bride. In effect, by embracing the Tiger and her own animality, Beauty reclaims her sexuality. At the same time, she is reborn as a tiger in her own right: she is now not only stronger but aware of herself as active agent rather than as commodity to be passed down from father to husband. In the end, the Tiger and the Tiger's Bride, in true Sadeian fashion, reclaim sex as a consensual and collaborative, but also animalistic act of pleasure and creation and inhabit their own alternative realm away from traditional patriarchal norms that transform sex into an attempt to control and objectify women.

Sadomasochism and the Return of the Mother

Even though the first two stories feature heroines that break out of their socio-cultural constraints and empower themselves to create their own alternative worlds, the endings of both stories find them in the arms of their male partners. Not all fairy tales have a traditional "happy ending" however, and not all heroines are able to find happiness, love, and acceptance as equal and consenting members of primal mating rituals. This is the case with the female heroine of "The Erl-King", a story that describes an extremely abusive and destructive relationship that forces the heroine to go to extreme lengths to save herself, presenting, in the process, an alternative logic of affiliation between femininity and animality. "The Erl-King" is a direct allusion to *Erlkönig*, the name used in German Romanticism for the figure of a spirit or the king of the fairies. Originally derived from Danish folklore, the character of the Erl-King appears in Johann Gottfried von Herder's ballad "The Erlking's Daughter" (1778) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's poem "Erl-King" (1782) and has been associated with the ensnarement of human beings for the

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satisfaction of the Earl's sexual desire, jealousy, or lust for revenge. Nonetheless, Carter's revision of the classical myth of the Erl-King in Romantic poetics and ideology is devoid of any romantic connotations, offering, according to Harriet Kramer Linkin, "a more complex analysis than the simple identification of blatant oppression" of women by men in power while "seeking a larger understanding of the many manifestations of desire" (Linkin 306). In essence, as Linkin asserts, Carter examines "not only the ways in which male desire defines the female, but also the ways in which female desire colludes in erecting the bars of the golden cage for the Romantic as well as the contemporary writer" (Linkin 306). "The Erl-King", Carter's postmodern amalgamation of "Beauty and the Beast" and "Little Red Riding Hood", presents us with an instance of the writer's deliberate attempt to employ the genre of the fairy tale in order to reshape the Romantic ideals that consign women to passivity, silence, containment, absence, or death, restoring "speech to the subordinated or silenced female voice" (Linkin 307).

The story begins by introducing readers to a young girl who goes into the woods, "as trustingly as Red Riding Hood to her granny's house" but gets lost, since the "woods enclose and then enclose again, like a system of Chinese boxes opening one into another" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 186). With the narrative voice constantly shifting from first person to the third, the story itself becomes just as labyrinthic as the woods themselves, since it is impossible to distinguish between the heroine's perceptions and experience and the omniscient narrative voice. According to Gerardo Rodríguez Salas, "the whole story is going to be marked by an oneiric, fairy-tale atmosphere, which will lead the reader to doubt the female narrator's perceptions" (Salas 226). In this state of confusion and disorientation, the nameless heroine, who will henceforth be called Little Beauty, hears the song of a bird rising in the air and realizes that the piercing bird song is as melancholic and desolate "as if it came from the throat of the last bird left alive" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 187).

The birdsong eventually leads Little Beauty to a garden whose occupants, birds and beasts, seem to have been waiting for her from the moment she entered the woods, "with the endless patience of wild things, who have all the time in the world" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 187). In the middle of the garden, she sees the Erl-King, a non-human creature sitting on the chair, holding his pipe; his eyes, green as if having looked at the woods too long, are penetrating and alluring. At first glance, the Erl-King appears to be a symbol of nature since "he came alive from the desire of the woods" and is said to live in harmony with it; the bounty of nature provides for his food, shelter, and his clothing and he has intimate knowledge about the woods and all the creatures in it. His intimate relation with nature, however, is merely an illusion since it is primarily based on domination, including the

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domination of women and of animals (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 188). As most mythical narratives (including those of Judeo-Christianity) suggest, of course, hegemonic masculinity has been founded upon the imperative to control all that is placed under the term "nature". According to Derrida, what is proper to man, namely, "his subjugating superiority over the animal, his very becoming-subject, his historicity, his emergence out of nature, his sociality, his access to knowledge and technics, all that, everything (in a non-finite number of predicates) that is proper to man" would stem "from this default in propriety" endowed upon him by God at the beginning of time (Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am* 45).

One could argue therefore that Carter's allusions to the Erl-King's alleged harmony with nature are indeed ironic and addressed critically to traditional notions of masculinity that depict men as the authorial protectors and dominators of all things. In accordance with Adorno and Horkheimer, who establish the existence of an innate and intimate connection between the domination, oppression, and violation of both women and nature, Carter embraces an ecofeminist perspective,[8] forcing readers to read between the lines and rethink their assumptions about male authority and the natural world while also warning them of the dangers of taking things too literally, as nothing is what it seems in the forest. The Erl-King, therefore, can cause "grievous harm" not only to the characters in the story but to those readers who place trust in the idea that any form of masculine authority could ever be sanctioned by nature (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 187).

From the very beginning, the relationship formed between the girl and the Earl-King appears to oscillate between love and hate, desire and repulsion, gentleness and cruelty. Immediately charmed and seduced by the Erl-King's strange power, the girl/narrator describes a relationship of dominance and submission during which Little Beauty eagerly and almost compulsively surrenders herself entirely to "the mercy of his [the Erl-King's] huge hands"; in turn, he summons her whenever he wishes, ordering her to do his bidding and using her to satisfy his sexual urges (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 189). Their relationship is therefore grasped as a sadomasochistic bond between two individuals where one, usually the male, is the sadist and the other, usually the female in cases of heterosexual relationships, is the masochist. According to Freud, sadism and masochism are "the most common and the most significant of all the perversions", with sadists' sexual pleasure being entirely

[8] Ecofeminism is a philosophical and political theory as well as an academic and activist movement that combines feminist problematics with ecological concerns, viewing both as emanating from the legacies of male domination. Prominent theorists like Françoise d' Eaubonne and Judi Bari called upon women to rally to an ecological revolution. In effect, they argue that in order to save the planet, we need to revolutionize gender and human relations with the natural world.

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dependent on the infliction of humiliation and pain onto their object of desire, while masochists' sexual gratification is conditional upon their own suffering, physical and/or mental, at the hands of their object of desire (Freud 1485). Like scopophilia, sadism is said to be active in nature and its foundations lie in aggressiveness and the desire to objectify, subjugate, and control the other; whereas masochism's roots, at least according to Freud, lie in the individual's conscious subjection to the control and aggression of the object of masochistic desire. Even though consensual sadomasochistic practice is not to be confounded with acts of sexual aggression such as rape or bestiality, as Freud notes, "sadism and masochism occupy a special position among the perversions, since the contrast between activity and passivity which lies behind them is among the universal characteristics of sexual life" (Freud 1486).

Feeling as if she had fallen under some magic spell upon seeing him, the girl removes, at his bidding, all her clothing, which is said to come off like the skin off a rabbit; in effect, he becomes the "tender butcher" who shows her the "price of love" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 189). Evidently, the Erl-King's desire for the female flesh is linked to sexual cruelty and violence. As Freud maintains, the "aggressive element of the sexual instinct is in reality a relic of cannibalistic desires – that is, it is a contribution derived from the apparatus for obtaining mastery, which is concerned with the satisfaction of the other and, ontogenetically, the older of the great instinctual needs" (Freud 1486). The interplay between the literal and figurative consumption of the woman along with other cannibalistic allusions in the text, such as the Erl-King's vampiric impulse to sink his teeth into her throat until she screams, contribute to the presentation of the Erl-King "as a male praying mantis or spider intent upon devouring women, who, maybe due to a hypnotic effect, are surprisingly compliant with the annihilation of the female through the love act" (Salas 227).

On the other hand, Freud asserts, "every pain contains in itself the possibility of a feeling of pleasure", and the idea of letting the object of one's desire aggressively devour one physically or sexually can be a gratifying and sensual experience for the submissive pole. Indeed, the girl wishes "to grow enormously small" so that he can swallow her "like those queens in fairy tales who conceive when they swallow a grain of corn or a sesame seed"; that way, she could lodge inside his body so that she is always with him, a small part of him (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 190). His green eyes become, in the girl's view, a "reducing chamber" that render her and her will as small as her own reflection, diminishing to the point of vanishing; as she notes, "I will be drawn down into that black whirlpool and be consumed by you" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 191). His touch "both consoles and devastates" her while she begs him to "devour" her: "Eat me, drink me; thirsty, cankered,

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goblin-ridden, I go back and back to him to have his fingers strip the tattered skin away and clothe me in his dress of water" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 190-191). With her complete surrender to the Erl-King's sexual appetite, it becomes clear that the female narrator becomes submissive, trapped in a destructive relationship, afraid but simultaneously "enchanted". In this story, as Salas maintains, "Carter offers a victimized representation of women in the patriarchal realm of the forest" (Salas 226). In all aspects, her heroine is ready to become a member of the Erl-King's congregation of slave-birds.

The turning point in the story comes during the end of the first-person narrative, when the female protagonist appears to have broken the Erl-King's spell and woken up from her hypnotic state. As Salas notes, "suddenly, she becomes a visionary and has the capacity to see the truth behind the King's gentlemanly pose" (Salas 228). In essence, at that moment, the girl realizes that the singing birds which the Erl-King, "as the epitome of the patriarchal system", has been keeping caged as trophies on his wall are his former lovers, who have fallen victims to his enchantment (Salas 226). In effect, even though the sadomasochistic relation originally appears to be consensual, the Erl-King pushes things too far by wanting to completely erase his object of desire. Simply enacting dominant/submissive sexual relationships is never enough for the Erl-King, who can never be fully satisfied unless he completely possesses women, transforming them into his trapped pets. Indeed, the narrator soon realizes the birds the Erl-King keeps in cages were previously women who "have lost their flesh when they were dipped in the corrosive pools of his regard and now must live in cages" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 192). In the "reducing chamber" of patriarchal domination that is his penetrating and seductive gaze, therefore, the Erl-King freely enacts his predatory desires on the submissive women (including the narrator), who perform the role of perfect bird-like victims: "those silly, fat, trusting woodies with the pretty wedding rings round their necks" fall for the fantasy of marriage signified by the wedding ring that becomes a suffocating chokehold (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 189).

To make matters worse, the girl notices that the Erl-King is weaving a cage to put her in along with his other birds. Even though she realizes her impending doom, her feelings over this realization are somewhat conflicted: "I was shaken with a terrible fear and I did not know what to do", she admits, "for I loved him with all my heart and yet I had no wish to join the whistling congregation he kept in his cages" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 191). Her love and desire for him coexists with a sense of dread over her looming fate: "I have seen the cage you are weaving for me; it is a very pretty one and I shall sit, hereafter, in my cage among the other singing birds but I – I shall be dumb, from spite" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 191). The female protagonist's language reveals not only a knowledge of the extent

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of her existing and prospective objectification by and submission to the Erl-King but also her fear of her own complicity in falling victim to his seductive gaze and consenting to the erasure of her subjectivity. As Linkin maintains, "even as she articulates the master plot that her readings teach her to expect – this romantic subjugation of the female to the male – she acknowledges her susceptibility to his seductive song" (Linkin 317).

At her moment of clarity, the girl is able to see that behind the façade of the Erl-King's kind and affectionate treatment of his caged birds, hides his need to dominate and control beyond consent; his embraces are both "enticements" and "the branches of which the trap itself was woven" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 191). At that moment, she realizes the strong affiliative link between herself and these bird-women whom she is threatened with joining; they share a common history of objectification, oppression, and degradation. As Adorno and Horkheimer note, the metamorphosis of humans into animals in popular fairy tales is often viewed as "recurring punishment", a "damnation" (Adorno and Horkheimer 205). The animal form becomes the indication of a sort of punishment and torment which lasts until someone "can find the redeeming formula" to release the damned from the curse that traps them in animal bodies. In Carter's tale, to transform into an animal is indeed a form of damnation or punishment; but for what crime? The crime of the Erl-King's former lovers, it appears, was remaining silent when they realized that he wanted more than they could give him. Their offence was not resisting, not saying "No" until it was too late. Now, they have already lost themselves and "can't find their way out of the wood" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 192).

Interestingly, the Erl-King's songs and whistles, "lullabies for foolish virgins" are contrasted to the clamorous cries of the birds for freedom; as Salas maintains, "[i]t seems that, in their imprisonment and chaos, women have not found a voice of their own, yet at least they show their rebellious side by crying for freedom" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 192; Salas 228). The protagonist, however, isn't about to make the same mistake; validating her initial self-warning against the Erl-King, she realizes that her relationship with him is bound to lead to her destruction and refuses to become a member of the caged congregation. Thus, she is given no other recourse but to embrace a different kind of "beastliness" and murder the oppressor in order to free herself and the other songbirds. As Linkin notes,

> Anticipating her entrapment in a cage of Romantic subjectivity that at best confines and at worst silences the female voice, the protagonist envisions, finally, an alternate ending […] in which she strangles the Erl-king with his own long hair before she loses her integral self to the image mirrored back in his mesmerizing eyes. (Linkin 308)

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Keeping her gaze away from the enchanting "greenish inward-turning suns" of his eyes, she therefore attempts to kill him. When he lays his head on her lap so that she can comb his lovely hair for him, she plans to take "two huge handfuls of his rustling hair as he lies half dreaming, half waking, and wind them into ropes, very softly, so he will not wake up, and, softly, with hands as gentle as rain" strangle him (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 192). The allusion to the biblical story of Samson and Delilah and to the man's hair as a symbol of virility and power that must be destroyed to weaken him suggests the importance of castrating the figure of masculine potency. According to Freud, it is not uncommon for the passive masochist to become an active sadist with the object of their desire; as he maintains, "the most remarkable feature of this perversion is that its active and passive forms are habitually found to occur together in the same individual" (Freud 1486). In effect, a person who experiences and enjoys pain as pleasure during a sexual relationship might also feel pleasure in causing pain to the person who sexually attracts them. Thus, a "sadist is always at the same time a masochist, although the active or the passive aspect of the perversion may be the more strongly developed in him and may represent his predominant sexual activity" (Freud 1486).

Of course, one might argue that the girl does not really become a sadist but rather kills her oppressor out of necessity; yet the fact that she decides to take a trophy of her victim is particularly revealing. In *Psychology and Crime,* Francis Pake sand Jane Winstone assert that "trophies are taken as an incorporation of the suspect's post-crime fantasies and as acknowledgement of his accomplishments" (Pakes and Winstone 25). It is important to note furthermore that these trophies are closely linked to an aspect of the murder that the killer finds important in order to strengthen the connection with the act and the feelings derived from perpetrating it. Evidently, using the Erl-King's own knife, the one he uses to skin the rabbits, the girl cuts off his great mane and strings an old fiddle with five single strings of ash-brown hair. This strongly implies that there is an element of pleasure in the killing that she will want to revisit every time the fiddle plays its "discordant music without a hand touching it" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 192). In a sense, the fiddle will not only represent the girl's victory and serve as testimony to her complete triumph over the Erl-King but also as a reminder of the sense of excitement, empowerment, and perhaps arousal that accompanied his elimination.

At the end of the story, the girl opens up the cages, releasing the birds, who, in turn, transform back into girls, "each with the crimson imprint of his love-bite on their throats" but repossessed of their own voices (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 192). The women's "new voice" is no longer the Erl-King's song, but a polyvalent, discordant music, played with the

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"renovated" fiddle. By killing the Erl-King, the girl not only destroys his strange hold over her and his other female victims but creates a community of liberated and empowered women. It can be argued that contrary to the previous two tales, where heroines found their empowerment by breaking patriarchal norms and inhabiting their alternative realms outside the patriarchal system, the heroine of "The Erl-King" destroys the system entirely, returning us to a Bachofian matriarchal stage, indeed to the "Amazonian extreme of matriarchy" (Bachofen 104).[9]

Using the example of the women of Lemnos and of Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon, Bachofen demonstrates that when degraded and oppressed by men's continued abuse, women yearn for a more secure position and a "purer life" – an impulse that results in the formation of female societies of warrior-women: "the sense of degradation and fury of despair spur her on to armed resistance exalting her to that warlike grandeur which, though it exceeds the bounds of womanhood, is rooted simply in her need for a higher life" (Bachofen 105). Much like the Amazons of old, Carter's heroine takes matters into her own hands and annihilates male oppression of violence, creating a new society for her and the other women. The tale ends with the Erl-King's final words to his killer: "Mother, mother, you have murdered me!" (Carter, *Burning Your Boats* 192); his words are very revealing of the connection of his murder to what Bachofen calls "mother right". The Erl-King's killing is a sacrifice that inaugurates a new era, that of the mother. According to Salas, "The rule of the Father is over; now we are in the new era of the Mother, who has murdered her husband, a new Clytemnestra who will liberate generations of bird-women" (Salas 229).

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The three revisionist tales I have discussed in this chapter – as well as most of the stories Carter creates and/or explores for that matter – have one thing in common: they all center around a female protagonist; "be she clever, or brave, or good, or silly, or cruel, or sinister, or awesomely unfortunate, she is center stage, as large as life – sometimes, like Sermerssuaq[10], larger" (Carter, "Introduction" xiii). Since Carter was explicit about viewing

[9] Bachofen maintained that the Amazonian stage, just like the hetaeric stage, was a universal phenomenon "interwoven with the origins of all peoples" (Bachofen 105). The intensification of female power and solidarity embodied in the amazons, the anthropologist asserts, "presupposes a previous degradation of woman" (Bachofen 104). Any assault on woman's rights, Bachofen speculates, would inevitably provoke her resistance which in turn "inspires self-defense followed by bloody vengeance"; hetaerism leads to Amazonism (Bachofen 104).

[10] *Sermerssuaq* is an Eskimo tale featuring a woman with immense power that could "could lift a kayak on the tips of three fingers", "kill a seal merely by drumming on its head with her fists" and "rip asunder a fox or

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femininity as a "social fiction", as "part of a culturally choreographed performance of selfhood", her female heroines, according to Edmund Gordon, wear their characters "like so many fancy-dress costumes", always inventing and refashioning themselves in order to survive and prevail (Gordon xiii). Through their exploits and their various adventures, these alternative heroines reveal aspects of the affiliative link between women and animals; they demonstrate that all oppression is interconnected, and no creature can be truly free unless all are free from "abuse, degradation, exploitation, pollution, and commercialization" (Adams & Tyler 120). As Adams maintains, if feminism only sought to establish women's "humanness" while maintaining the boundary between man and other animals, then its more radical potential would be defeated; with her heroines continuously exploring the limits of their own humanity in search of their true selves, Carter's postmodern[11] feminist agenda thus addresses not merely the relations between men and women but "helps expose the social construction of relationships between humans and other animals" (Adams, 9).

In order to construct her alternative fairy narratives and to critique traditional conceptions of gender norms, Carter links her consistent preoccupation with the affiliative link between woman and animal to a re-appropriation of the conventions of pornographic literature. In effect, rediscovering the hetaeric dimension of the oral tales that patriarchal renditions have suppressed and sanitized, the writer dismisses traditional portrayals of femininity and creates heroines who defy objectification and oppression to become autonomous sexual beings. Going against the predominant feminist movement of her time that condemned pornography as a phallocratic tool to demean and oppress women, Carter, much like de Sade's Juliette, is a "blasphemous guerilla of demystification" who celebrates the de-sacralization of the bourgeois ideals of purity and chastity. New and transgressive Beauties and Little Reds wield power, according to Gregory J. Rubinson, "by actively 'fucking' and thereby overturning the 'normal' dynamic of sexual relations" (Rubinson 718). By having a Beauty that first rejects and then willingly pursues and gets her Beast as an equal, a Little Red who performs a striptease and then aggressively sleeps with her wolf/hunter, and a girl who engages in a consensual sadomasochistic relationship but kills her object of affection when he has gone too far, Carter "upsets the bourgeois ideal of women

hare". Interestingly, Sermerssuaq, the mother of nine children, would show off her clitoris that was "so big that the skin of a fox would not fully cover it" (*The Old Wives' Fairy Tale Book,* 1).

[11] The primary characteristics of such a postmodern agenda are the constant resistance to reductive strategies of interpretation and easy definition, the expansive and inclusive assertion of difference and disjuncture that challenges and contradicts any move towards definition, and the continuous process of rewriting and reworking old forms, transforming them into something entirely new.

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as demure drawing-room objects and asserts their right to be part of a culture of 'fucking' – the society of activity – and shape history in the active sense" (Rubinson 719). Their ability to enjoy sex and sexual games, to take pleasure in becoming both sexual prey and predators, and even to relish killing their oppressors if need be, render Carter's characters the subjects of a reconfigured Bachofian world. Following the teaching of de Sade, Carter maintained:

> Women do not normally fuck in the active sense. They are fucked in the passive tense and hence automatically fucked-up, done over, undone […] [De Sade] urges women to fuck as actively as they are able, so that powered by their enormous and hitherto untapped sexual energy they will then be able to fuck their way into history and, in doing so, change it. (Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* 27)

By telling the old stories differently, Carter hence proposes a postmodern "utopian liberating feminism" that not only exposes the age-old patriarchal desire for specific types of heroines – weak, passive, and needy – but also presents an alternative model of "womanhood" that gestures toward a different future for women (Peach 160). This alternative future is one of empowerment, sensuality and strength, but not therefore and thereby an altogether more human(e) future; rather, one that is affirmative to the degree that is also unapologetically "beastly."

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Chapter 4

Posthuman Feminism and the Gothic Dystopian Imaginary in the works of Margaret Atwood and Marge Piercy

In an article published on April 17th, 2017 in *The New Yorker*, Rebecca Mead called Margaret Atwood "the prophet of dystopia" – a writer whose imagined worlds are riddled with "misogyny, oppression, and environmental havoc"; unfortunately, the reporter adds, "these visions now feel all too real" (Mead). Recent political events, including the election of a U.S. president whose campaign trafficked openly in the deprecation of immigrants and women and who, on his first day in office, "signed an executive order withdrawing federal funds from overseas women's health organizations that offer abortion services" while proposing Muslim immigration bans and mass deportations, have catapulted Atwood's science fiction dystopian novels to the top of best-sellers' lists worldwide (Mead). The 2016-2017 serialized adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale* for television and the subsequent development of a serialized version of *Alias Grace* on Netflix speak to the urgency with which women's dystopian fiction addresses contemporary concerns and fears. In one of the most revealing images taken at the Women's March on Washington the day after Trump's Inauguration, a protester held up a sign that read: "Make Margaret Atwood Fiction Again"; while in the Toronto Women's March a female protester around Atwood's age held a sign saying: "I Can't Believe I'm Still Holding This Fucking Sign". Contemplating why women would need to refuel the fire of resistance, Atwood herself has remarked: "After sixty years, why are we doing this again? But, as you know, in any area of life, it's push and pushback. We have had the pushback, and now we are going to have the push again" (Atwood qtd in Mead). In this context, feminist dystopian science fiction narratives such as Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy and Piercy's *He, She and It* not only pose the "essential" question "Could it happen here?" but also "suggest ways that it had already happened, here or elsewhere" (Mead).

Science fiction has always been regarded as a potentially subversive genre since it inhabits, as Marc Angenot suggests, "the space outside the literary enclosure, as a forbidden, taboo, and perhaps degraded product – held at bay, and yet rich in themes and obsessions which are repressed in high culture" (Angenot qtd in Parrinder 46). Raffaella Baccolini maintains that in its developments, the genre has come to "represent a form of counternarrative to hegemonic discourse"; in effect, in its exploration of the present, "it has the potential to envision different worlds that can work as a purely imaginative (at worst) or a critical (at best) exploration of our society" (Baccolini 519). Science fiction writers in mid-

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century, therefore, not only became adept at creating societies swarming in destruction, greed, violence, and death, but also employed dystopia's negative energies to shape a new critical stand within contemporary popular culture. As Thomas Moylan notes, "with its unfashionable capacity for totalizing interrogation, dystopian critique can enable its writers and readers to find their way within – and sometimes against and beyond – the conditions that mask the very causes of the harsh realities in which they live" (Moylan xii). In the hands of some authors who react against the present moment in a somewhat undialectical manner, Moylan adds, dystopia expresses a simple refusal of contemporary society; with the likes of Piercy and Atwood, however, "dystopian interrogation begins to sharpen as the modern state apparatus (in the Stalinist Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, social democratic welfare states, and right-wing oligarchies) is isolated as a primary engine of alienation and suffering" (Moylan xii). What is more, the works of these authors evolve into the most eloquent examples of what Lyman Tower Sargent terms the "critical dystopia" and which Moylan describes as:

> [A] textual mutation that self-reflexively takes on the present system and offers not only astute critiques of the order of things but also explorations of the oppositional spaces and possibilities from which the next round of political activism can derive imaginative sustenance and inspiration. (Moylan xv)

In other words, while they give voice and space to dispossessed, oppressed, and denied subjects, critical dystopias go on to explore ways of transforming the social system,

> so that such culturally and economically marginalized peoples not only survive but also try to move toward creating a social reality that is shaped by an impulse to human self-determination and ecological health rather than one constricted by the narrow and destructive logic of a system intent only on enhancing competition in order to gain more profit for a select few. (Moylan 189)

In order to aim their works towards an even sharper criticism of authoritarian presents and dystopian futures, both Pearcy and Atwood revive a subgenre of science fiction that already encloses some of the same ambiguities as critical dystopia, specifically, the Gothic. After the emergence of postmodernism as a global aesthetic style in the late 1970s, the resurgence of Gothic forms and figures seemed particularly appealing to feminist writers. For a newer generation of feminists, the Gothic became an opportunity to explore instances of otherness that not only inspire varieties of fear and terror but also subvert reader's expectations by hinting, however paradoxically, at a sense of optimism and of faith in the

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future. Such tonal ambiguity, of course, may be said to have always been inherent in the genre; Fred Botting suggests that the genre constitutes "an inscription neither of darkness nor of light, a delineation neither of reason and morality nor of superstition and corruption, neither good nor evil, but both at the same time" (Botting, *Gothic* 6). Equally ambivalent are the sentiments most associated with Gothic works, since what provokes horror and terror, revulsion and convulsion, simultaneously evokes fascination, curiosity, and attraction. As Botting asserts, associations "between real and fantastic, sacred and profane, supernatural and natural, past and present, civilised and barbaric, rational and fanciful, remain crucial to the Gothic dynamic of limit and transgression" (Botting, *Gothic* 6).

The ambiguity of the Gothic is an important reason why many critics have attempted to identify different Gothic subgenres in their efforts to address contemporary works. Maria Beville associates the emergence of the new and distinct genre of the postmodern Gothic with a "blurring of the borders that exist between the real and the fictional, which results in narrative self-consciousness and an interplay between the supernatural and the metafictional" (Beville 18). The sublime effects of terror and the Gothic thematic of haunting are linked to the "unrepresentable" features of subjectivity and reality and are related with a counter-narrative function. Botting suggests that the moment of intersection between the postmodern and the Gothic appears with "[t]he loss of human identity and the alienation of the self from both itself and the social bearings in which a sense of reality is secured" (Botting, *Gothic* 102). The result is a genre that, much like dystopian writing, is dominated by "the threatening shapes of increasingly dehumanised environments, machinic doubles and violent psychotic fragmentation" (Botting, *Gothic* 102).

Instead of addressing external fears of faceless terrorists, alien others, or technological and cybernetic annihilation, however, some contemporary Gothic literature seems to focus on threats that come from *within*. Michael Sean Bolton asserts that several recent works "indicate a shift in concern from external to internal threats to subjectivity and human agency" (Bolton 2). He goes on to add that "while a sense of terror arises from the external fear of being transformed into a machine-creature, a sense of horror emerges from the internal dread that the technological other already inhabits the human subject, that the subject is betrayed from within" (Bolton 5). To address and explore this shift, one needs to examine a specific form of Gothic literature: Gothic posthumanism. The term presents itself as a "distinct generic mutation in literature" as a means of communicating the extent to which two diverse literary modalities, the Gothic and the posthuman, "have come to be intertwined into a controversial mode of writing that could be referred to as a literary monster" (Beville 16).

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In an attempt to define posthumanism, Cary Wolfe begins with the following rather paradoxical formulation: "it comes both before and after humanism" (Wolfe xv). The preposition "before" is used in the sense that posthumanism names "the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world" (Wolfe xv). The "after" is employed in the sense that it names "a historical moment in which the decentring of the human" becomes "increasingly impossible to ignore", a historical shift that highlights the necessity of new theoretical paradigms and a new way of thinking; a thinking "that comes after the cultural repressions and fantasies, the philosophical protocols and evasions, of humanism as a historically specific phenomenon" (Wolfe xv-xvi). In a posthumanist world, the question of what it means to be human – who can be admitted to the category and what happens to those left on the outside – has been complicated in unprecedented ways; as Ryan Kerr maintains, "while philosophers have come to many different conclusions to this question over the millennia, they have at least been dealing with a relatively uniform basic experience of life" (Kerr 101). In the posthumanist era, however, when the boundary between the human and the non-human has become entirely blurred, it is that much more difficult to even define this fundamental question. In effect, when creatures such as cyborgs, or even an entirely new bioengineered race of people, call into question "the initial *premise* of humanity", then the question of what it means to be human must start at an even more basic level: "*who* can even be considered human?" (Kerr 102). On the one hand, since no pre-existent thought accounts for an entirely new species of creatures such as Atwood's Crakers or Piercy's cyborgs then, by default, none of them constitute a human subject; on the other hand, ironically, they act more "humanely" than most of the "actual" humans who inhabit these worlds.

Generally speaking, since the philosophical and theoretical frameworks that humanism has employed seem to set the ground for discrimination against nonhuman animals and the disabled, posthumanism is not seen as an extension of humanism to include non-human others within the concept. For although most people would agree that animals should not be treated with cruelty, and that people with disabilities should be treated equitably and with respect, the theoretical and philosophical frameworks employed by humanism to "make good on those commitments reproduce the very kind of normative subjectivity – a concept specific of the human – that grounds discrimination against nonhuman animals and the disabled in the first place" (Wolfe xvii). Thus, the posthuman is not a mere *extension* of humanism; rather, posthumanism should be seen as a major change or a radical mutation of the concept of the human. Such a mutation is, according to R.L. Rutsky, "ongoing" and "always already immanent in the processes by which both material

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bodies and cultural patterns replicate themselves"; it is a "pre-existing, external force" that serves to introduce an alteration to a "stable pattern (or code), and to the material world or body as well" (Rutsky 110-111). In other words, posthumanism needs to be understood as a repressed possibility of and within humanism with the posthuman being the site of a mutational, better yet, a viral way of thinking that calls for the necessity of a different logic, and "infects and mutates through the very structures, privileged terms, and discursive notes of power on which it is parasitical" (Wolfe xix).

At the same time, the posthuman becomes the hinge that that has allowed the fusion of critical dystopia and the Gothic; it not only presents the imminent future with its "privileging of corporate power, the redistribution of wealth, the degradation of labor, the dismissal of the poor, the violent abuse of those seen as different, and the destruction of the ecosystem", but also offers, in a limited fashion at least, "some kind of liberation from restraints, freeing classes, sexes and desires from the manacles of ideology" and enabling the discovery of "new and affirmative renderings of different sexual and racial identities behind the veils of monstrosity" (Moylan 185; Botting, *The Gothic* 4). This chapter focuses on the exploration of the poetics and politics of Piercy and Atwood's posthuman feminism, at once Gothic and critically dystopian. In fact, by focusing comparatively on Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy and Marge Piercy's 1991 feminist science fiction novel *He, She and It,* this chapter attempts to tease out and introduce the conditions of production and the specific qualities of the authors' posthuman feminism. At the same time, I interrogate what such feminism asks readers to imagine as a response to the posthuman condition, and what the implications – aesthetic, ideological, ontological – of what it asks us to imagine are. Essentially, through their constant questioning of the boundaries between utopia and dystopia and the disruption of the rigidity of classifications of gender, class, race, and even species, Atwood's and Piercy's works serve as a warning toward humanity's impending doom as well as a possibility of what we might become.

The first section of this chapter focuses on an analysis of the literal content of the "posthuman" in both Atwood's and Piercy's texts, dwelling on questions of posthuman bodies and their features, as well as on the analogies between posthuman and animal bodies, the gender dimensions of these bodies, the complications they bring to the question of human gendering and the possibilities they enable. Specifically, in the first part, I examine the figures of Yod, Piercy's cyborg, and the Crakers, Atwood's bioengineered creatures. I focus on the implications of the authors' choices regarding their creatures' physical appearance, attributes, capabilities, behavioral habits, and even possible weaknesses. At the same time, it is equally significant to analyze their position within their respective communities and the

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possible future communities that their presence enables. In effect, I am arguing that both Yod and the Crakers, as figures of the posthuman, are ambiguously monstrous figures, ones that embody not only the fears but also the hopes for the future of humanity and all life on the planet.

The second section concerns the discourse on origins in the two writers; much like many dystopian science fiction works that negotiate the end and rebirth of the world, Piercy's and Atwood's narratives employ many creation stories and myths, both Biblical and Hebrew. In this section I explore the position of these myths writing the narratives, their function and the importance of their revision within a posthuman context. Moreover, I investigate the two texts' metatextual kinship, specifically, their birth from the "mother text" that is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Their tribute to Frankenstein is significant on many levels since it is not only the *ur*-text of both the Gothic and the "critically dystopian" but it is also the first fiction of the posthuman. Frankenstein's monster both embodies and performs a tragic yet heroic transgression of the law and becomes the literary ancestor of Piercy's Yod. In Atwood's narrative, however, it is not the posthuman Crakers who are figured as monsters; instead, the monster appears to be their human guardian, Snowman. Simultaneously, the figure of the mad scientist bending the rules of nature for his own reasons – justice, the pursuit of knowledge, the defense of a city, or even the repopulation of the planet – raises issues of fatherhood, motherhood, biopolitical power, biotechnology, bioethics in both the original text and in Piercy's and Atwood's revisions.

The third and final section deals with the importance of female bodies for the realization of a posthumanist utopia in the face of virtually insurmountable odds; in essence, after the impending and inevitable demise of the hegemony of masculine authority represented by Avram, Crake, and Snowman, both Piercy's and Carter's narratives advocate the necessity for female empowerment and perseverance against the grain of existing circumstances. By standing up to the status quo and accepting and defending the figures of the posthuman, female figures such as Oryx, Toby, Ren, Shira, Malkah, Chava, Riva, or even Nili facilitate the establishment of different matriarchal communities and even theologies in the midst of otherwise nightmarish surroundings. These communities link the female and the posthuman and assert that both are vital in order to question the hegemony of anthropocentric humanism that brings about dystopian nightmares. Therefore, though what allows for the possibility of a utopian future is the figure of the posthuman, what manages to overcome the dystopian present and build a utopian future is, for both narratives, women's capacity for innovative thinking, willpower, open-mindedness, tolerance, and adaptability.

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Yod and the Crakers: Figures of Resistance and Embodiments of Hope

Undeniably, as Moylan and Baccolini assert, most critical dystopian narratives usually begin in "the terrible new world" that ensues after an apocalyptic event – usually man-made – destroys the world as we know it, or after an authoritarian capitalist government creates a repressive regime, or a technological advancement leads to oppressive and destructive consequences. In these worlds, "the material force of the economy and the state apparatus controls the social order and keeps it running" (Moylan and Baccolini 5). Piercy's 1991 *He, She and It* is typical of the generic strand Moylan and Baccolini describe in these terms: it is set in the near future of the year 2059, when power is held by a few massive multinational corporations and human beings are enslaved by a monstrous, capitalist, and technologically disfigured government. In this era of extreme social inequality, the elite is able to live in *multis* (huge multinational corporations with their own social hierarchy that have produced an affluent society) whereas the majority of the people inhabit the *Glop*, the area outside of the multis' enclaves, within an environment that has mainly been destroyed. In the Glop, life is dominated by extreme poverty, crime and the idea that "might makes right". An all-powerful social upper class that inhabits a "corporate fortress" controls the money, the technology, and thus power, using people for their skills and then discarding them to the "violent festering warren of the half-starved Glop" when they have outlived their usefulness (Piercy, *He, She and It* 1 & 6). One such arbitrary and abusive exercise of power even kickstarts the story and introduces Shira, the female protagonist who loses her custody battle with her ex-husband and is forced to leave her multi knowing that "had they wanted her as badly as they wanted a plasma physicist [her ex-husband] on Pacifica, she would have sole custody" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 16). This "company justice" as she calls it is the result of a relentless abuse of power by the corporate government, whose wish is to suppress the freedoms of the whole world, especially the few towns that have managed to maintain their autonomy and independence by selling their technology to the multis.

The description of the diseased and crime-infested Glops appears to be a reversion to the Hobbesian "state of nature" of war of all against all. In his *Leviathan,* Hobbes asserts that in the state of nature, all men are equal; however, as Hobbes maintains, all men are equal in their capacity to harm and kill each other:

> Nature have made men so equal, in the faculties of body, and mind; as that though there bee found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or

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> of quicker mind than another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himselfe any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, that are in the same danger with himself. (Hobbes 86)

Even though Hobbes doesn't deny that there are differences in the degree of bodily strength among people, what comes to equate them is the power of the mind; the stronger person can kill the weaker because of his bodily strength but the weaker can also kill the stronger with cunning and machinations. Therefore, all people are equal in their capacity to claim power over the other since what ultimately levels the playing field is the ability of human beings to destroy each other. No one can feel secure in the state of nature because there will always be someone stronger or smarter; all have to fear since they are all threatened by each other because it is in human nature to be base, corrupt, and untrustworthy. People, according to Hobbes, have no essential goodness but are inclined to mistreat and take advantage of each other and since not everyone can achieve what they want, in the Hobbesian state of nature they have the right to take what they want by force. In essence, it is a place where there is no morality or justice, but perpetual violence, ruthlessness, terror, and war. This is the dystopian society that the corporations want the whole world to become and this is what the resistance is fighting against; as the narrator maintains, "the multis ruled their enclaves, the free towns defended themselves as they could, and the Glop rotted under the poisonous sky, ruled by feuding gangs and overlords" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 33).

While Piercy's world, like most dystopias, seems bleak and inescapable, there are characters who question it and resist assimilation. As Moylan and Baccolini maintain, "the critical dystopia opens a space of contestation and opposition for those collective 'ex-centric' subjects whose class, gender, race, sexuality, and other positions are not empowered by hegemonic rule" (Moylan and Baccolini 7). Piercy's narrative appears to place the hopes for resistance on a group of humans who create an illegal cyborg, "a mix of biological and machine components" with human appearance, characteristics, and mannerisms (Piercy, *He, She and It* 70). Essentially, Yod is created in secrecy for the purpose of guarding against the appropriation of the Jewish free town of Tikva (meaning "hope" in Hebrew) into the Glop and of defending the city's independence from the government's interface attacks. Having built "the equivalent of minute musculature into *its* face area" and having applied "the elaborate technology of human implants and replacement organs and limbs to the creation of the cyborg", Avram had gone further than anyone could dream of (Piercy, *He, She and It*

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69; emphasis added). Yod's "extensive cybernetic, mathematical and systems analysis programming, probability theory, up-to-date scientific knowledge of an encyclopaedic width" and his boundless knowledge of "general history, forty languages, Torah, Talmud, halakhic law" render him the perfect weapon against any person, group, or organization that wants to cause harm to the city and its inhabitants (Piercy, *He, She and It* 70).

At the same time, in order to pass off as human and avoid detection, Avram has rendered Yod anatomically male, endowing him with fully functioning male sexual organs; all Yod needs to do now is "be educated in how to speak to humans, how to behave socially, how to handle his functions" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 71). The fact that Yod is a "fusion of machine and lab-created biological components", however, creates a very serious problem for Shira, who is called in to teach him the essentials of human interaction: how are people supposed to address him, as *he* or *it*? Avram continuously mentions Yod as a *he* and Yod himself identifies as a male hybrid, but Shira insists on referring to Yod as *it,* as she is unable to understand how he can be anything other than a machine;

> Surely it did not urinate through its penis, and what would it want to have sex with, presuming a machine could want, which she was not about to assume. Machines behaved with varying overrides and prerogatives. They had major and minor goals and would attempt to carry them out. But 'want' was a word based in biology, in the need for food, water, sleep, the productive drive, the desire for sexual pleasure. (Piercy, *He, She and It* 71)

The greatest challenge to Shira's beliefs at the beginning is to think that a machine could not only pass off as a human being but also become one. Soon enough, however, she realizes that "she was going to have as much difficulty as Avram obviously did in remembering that human form did not make a human creature" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 71).

Piercy's choice of a figure whose existence is laced in ambiguity as the only hope the resistance possesses to thwart the multis' attacks, overthrow the government, and change the dystopian present is particularly revealing since the cyborg is the quintessential figure for posthumanist thought. In "A Cyborg Manifesto", a work Cary Wolfe described as the "locus classicus" of posthumanism, Donna Haraway dwells on the boundaries between human/nonhuman and argues not only that there is something affirmative in their confusion and erosion, but also that there is culpability in their erection (Wolfe xiii). Haraway suggests that the breakdown of the human/non-human boundary inevitably results in the erosion of other boundaries, such as the border between physical and non-physical and the "leaky" distinction between human-animal (organism) and machine. At the point where this boundary is transgressed, the cyborg appears in myth, so the "cyborg myth is about

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transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work" (Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 154). Yod (the tenth letter in Hebrew and a symbol for God in the Kabbalah), the only cyborg that exists in Piercy's world, is manufactured by the biblically named Avram in order to do just that: to transgress boundaries, question the status quo, and explore new possibilities of existing within the world free of oppression and marginalization. As June Deery maintains, even though Piercy's novel is by no means a straightforward enactment of Haraway's manifesto, "she does share the latter's interest in cyborgs as boundary creatures, as hybrids, who deconstruct conventional gendering and create new subject positions" (Deery 36).

Whereas the cyborg is the ideal figure of resistance and hope in Piercy's technologically totalitarian regime, there is a different breed of creatures that exemplify these attributes in Atwood's critical environmental dystopia. In the trilogy consisting of *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013), Atwood thrusts readers into an environmentally destroyed world, a post-apocalyptic dystopia inhabited by a tribe of peculiar creatures and a few humans and gene-spliced animals attempting to survive a pandemic and cohabitate what is left of the planet. In essence, the near future is presented as an environmental dystopia where humans abuse the natural world to the fullest with the creation of gene-spliced animals, the establishment and perfection of eugenics as a science, and the extinction of most known species:

> Human society […] was a sort of monster […] it made the same cretinous mistakes over and over, trading short-term gain for long-term pain. It was like a giant lug eating its way relentlessly through all the other bioforms on the planet, grinding up life and shitting it out at the backside in the form of pieces of manufactured and soon-to-be-obsolete plastic junk (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 285).

This description, along with many others in the book, is both beyond our imagining and all too familiar, outlandish yet entirely believable, at least to those who have been paying attention to the warnings put forth by many environmental and social science researchers since the beginning of the 21st century. In his book *Environmental Social Science*, Emilio F. Moran maintains that during the past decade growing signs of "climate change, loss of biodiversity, rapid deforestation in the tropics, and an impending crisis in the availability of potable water have made scholars and policy makers aware of the need to address the causes and consequences of these global processes" (Moran 1). With the extinction and endangerment of more and more species, the rapid disappearance of wetlands, disturbances in the migration routes of birds, the destruction of local or even intercontinental biodiversity,

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the massive deforestation and alteration of land cover at huge scales, the toxic pollution of cities and the unprecedented growth of deaths by environmental causes, "there is very little evidence that governments are succeeding in implementing concrete strategic policies which ensure a sustainable earth system" (Moran 7). Carbon dioxide emissions are exponentially increasing, the ozone is being quickly depleted, nitrous oxide is reaching dangerous levels of concentration in the atmosphere, natural disasters occur much more frequently, and worldwide armed conflicts, wars and terrorism add further sources of endangerment for people and the environment worldwide.

At the same time, technological advancements and the massive increase of consumerism are making it even harder for people to care for the environment; as Moran asserts, "in larger, complex, and technologically advanced cultures, institutions and technology have created a distance between the population and its environment" to such an extent that the former has become numb, passive, or even blinded to the environmental situation (Moran 66). In Atwood's narrative, we catch a glimpse of the potential long-term results of this self-destructive spiral as the world has literally become a fully-functioning but faceless machine. Humanity has become an environmental parasite that plagues the planet leading it to its inevitable catastrophe. According to Michael Serres, "a parasite is an abusive guest, an unavoidable animal, a break in a message"; but history hides the fact that man has always been the "universal parasite, that everything and everyone around him is a hospitable space" (Serres 8 & 24). From the plants that he eats to the ones that provide oxygen and from the animals he consumes and wears to the ones that provide him with emotional help and fulfilment, man is always necessarily their guest, bending the logic of exchange and giving to suit himself, when dealing with nature as a whole. This, however, implies that man's parasitic relationship persists even when he is dealing with "his kind". In order to assert themselves at the top of the food chain, humans create the "explosive perception of animal humanity" according to which if some people are less than human (cattle, calves, pigs, or poultry) then man could quietly exploit them to the fullest with impunity (as evident by the discourses presented in the first three chapters); "Always talking, never giving, staying in a good position in irreversible logic. The louse is a man for the wolf" (Serres 25).

Having come to the realization of the parasitic nature of humankind, Crake, who is perhaps the most intelligent character in Atwood's world, consciously decides to create a pandemic to eradicate humans and then repopulate the Earth with a new species of creatures that he intentionally places under the custody of Jimmy, his best friend. The figures of the Crakers, a species of herbivorous human-like creatures bioengineered by Crake, are their creator's solution to the environmental parasite that is humanity. In exploring the

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consequences of Crake's literally posthuman scheme, Atwood's novel, much like Piercy's, calls into question traditional thinking about the boundaries between humans and technology. The aim of the novel, thus, is not so much to register the dead-ends of humanism but rather, through the construction of the figure of the Crakers, to bring forth a "re-evaluation of how we view humanity *within* the paradigm of posthumanism" (Kerr 100).

To begin with, Crake and his team are said to have been able to alter the "primate brain", eliminating those features that they thought responsible for "the world's current illness". Essentially, the scientists were able to eliminate racism (or "pseudospeciation", in the novel's terminology), by "switching the bonding mechanism" that enables the registration of skin colour (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 358). Furthermore, they have removed the neural complexes that would have created hierarchy and, "since they were neither hunters nor agriculturalists hungry for land, there was no territoriality: the king-of-the-castle hard-wiring that had plagued humanity had, in them, been unwired" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 358). The fact that their diet consisted strictly of grass, roots and the occasional berry meant that food would always be plentiful and available to them, and they wouldn't need to covet, steal, or lie. Atwood explains: "Except that they don't need commandments: no thou shalt nots would be good to them, or even comprehensible, because it's all built in. No point in telling them not to lie, steal, commit adultery, or covet. They wouldn't grasp the concepts" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 426).

Indeed, in order to achieve his utopian vision for the Crakers and the future, Crake has eliminated not simply emotions like fear, lust, hatred, and jealousy but also forms of cultural knowledge as history and religion; according to Stefan Herbrechter and Ivan Callus, after all, "culture, ironically, is precisely that which is designed to guarantee human 'nature'" (Herbrechter and Callus 101). Indeed, though they are named after major historical figures such as Abraham Lincoln, Napoleon, Sacagawea, and Empress Josephine, the Crakers themselves are completely unaware of the historical significance behind their names, which are for them merely empty signifiers; "Symbolic thinking of any kind would signal downfall, in Crake's view. Next they'd be inventing idols, and funerals, and grave goods, and the after-life, and sin, and Linear B, and kings, and then slavery and war" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 420). The Crakers, therefore, are originally born in a state of virginal purity devoid of all the constructs of man, free of all the evils of humanity; in other words, Crake's utopia involves, like much utopian fiction, the production of a *tabula rasa*: the complete effacement of humanity and its substitution by something entirely new and improved.

Undeniably, among the most interesting attributes of the Crakers' animal-like innocence is their mating habits: once every three years, the female goes into heat, something

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obvious "from the bright-blue colour of her buttocks and abdomen", a detail inspired by the physiologies of baboons (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 194). Once the males catch a "whiff" of what is happening, they present the females with flowers – just as male penguins present females with round stones, or male silverfish with sperm packets – and then burst in song, like songbirds. Then, their penises turn bright blue, and they engage in dance with their members erect, waving back and forth in unison, as in the sexual semaphoring of crabs. The female chooses only four flowers and the sexual appetite of the other candidates dissipates immediately, leaving no hard feelings behind. Then, the quartet would find a private space and "go at it" until the female gets pregnant; "and that is that" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 194). With one fell swoop and in an artful brushstroke, Crake has eliminated jealousy, prostitution, the sexual abuse of children, rape, and so many other crimes related to sexual competition; sex is no longer a cryptic rite but an "athletic demonstration, a free-spirited romp" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 195). While they exhibit Paradisaical innocence, however, the Crakers seem to also belong to a time *after* Man, for they emerge after humanity has managed to self-destruct. One is here strongly reminded of Agamben's notion of a redemptive theriomorphy that emerges at the end of history, an image I discussed in relation to the messianic dimension of creaturely life in Kafka (and Benjamin). This utopian vision, however, cannot yet prevail here; it is marred by a group of human survivors who ruin the dead scientist's plan and reveal the dystopian aspects of Atwood's posthumanist agenda.

Adam, Frankenstein, and the Golem: The Importance of Religion and Origin Stories

Rhetorically, in order to present an alternative future and promote their posthumanist agenda, many science fiction writers delve into the world of religion and myth; by revising traditional origin stories, these writers point to the inevitability of the coming dystopias and validate their rewriting of history and culture. Piercy, on the one hand, delves into her Jewish background and revises a story from Jewish folklore of the golem of Prague, a creature held by legend to have been created in 1600 out of mud by rabbi Judah Loew. The golem is created in order to defend the Jews of Prague against those who wanted to hurt them. This story, which runs parallel to the main plot of the relationship between Yod and Shira and the struggle for Tikva's independence from the multis who have declared cyber-war against it, is told to Yod by Malkah, Shira's grandmother. Its purpose is to provide him with an approximate literary or theoretical account of his existence. In a narrative concerning the anti-Semitic dystopia of the relatively distant past rather than the corporate one of the dystopic future, the Jews of Prague are noted as having been religiously persecuted, sent into

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exile, suddenly and forcibly expelled from their homes, and dumped into the hostile terrain to make their way elsewhere, anywhere else; "it is not many years since a mob came raging through the streets and in a matter of hours slaughtered a quarter of the inhabitants, maimed and torn bodies flung down like bloody trash in the streets, fallen over cribs, impaled as they prayed, slashed open in the birthing bed" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 19). The Christian church "sees the Jews as a disease creeping through Europe the way two hundred and fifty years earlier Jews had been blamed for the Black Plague" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 26-27). Thus, they easily become scapegoated, persecuted, and killed by the people and the state with impunity. In a time of great political and social unrest that very much evokes the Jewish Holocaust of the 20th century, "the Jews are expendable […] As a visible separate people, they are always in danger" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 26). Witnessing his people's suffering and determined to do whatever is necessary to defend them, Maharal Judah Loew, a kabbalist who is not only steeped in ancient tradition but also open to the scientific speculation of his time, hears a voice in his sleep that instructs him to "make a golem of clay to rise and walk the ghetto and save your [his] people" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 28). Like many other Jews in his tradition who hear voices instructing them to perform a duty, the Maharal considers it the higher truth and obeys; thus, he decides to join science with religious magic in order to create life (Piercy, *He, She and It* 28).

As if he came out of one of the stories of Kafka that Malkah carried around with her everywhere in her youth, the golem arises from a strictly ordained religious ritual in which the Maharal and his two disciples recite thousands of Hebrew alphabetic arrangements in order to protect and defend the Jews of Prague; as William A. Covino notes, "the letters themselves embody the spiritual and physical energy that constructs life" (Covino 356). The cyborg is also the materialization of "text, formulae, algorithms" consisting of "spoken words and recorded images" inscribed on silicon chips and implanted in the circuitry and hardware of functional form (Piercy, *He, She and It* 426). The affinities between the cyborg and the golem, however, do not stop here; as Covino notes, with the story of Joseph, Piercy renders the cyborg "a latter-day golem" creating an analogy between the cyborg and the golem that "has been used by scholars of both Judaism and technology" (Covino 356). Much like the cyborg and contrary to traditional golems created through mystical rites, Joseph needed to be formed secretly, bestowed with intelligence and the power of speech and able, when necessary, "to fight, to police, to save" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 28). In effect, both Yod and Joseph are described as "a one-man army" and a weapon with consciousness programmed to find pleasure in violence (Piercy, *He, She and It* 28 & 30; 345 & 366). The latter is created to protect the Jewish community of 17th-century Prague from external and

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hostile forces, while the former is intended to repel cyber-attacks against the modern Jewish community of Tikva. Even the name of Avram's cyborg recalls the name of the Maharal's golem, since Yod is not only the name of the tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet given to the cyborg because he is tenth in a series, but it is also the first letter of Yosef, Joseph in Hebrew. As Elissa Gurman maintains, although Joseph's story is a tale from long ago whereas Yod's takes place in the future, Piercy clearly establishes Joseph as Yod's "predecessor", and "thus places the cyborg metaphor and story within the golem tradition of Jewish legend" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 18 & 312; Gurman 470). For as long as there are Jews in need and political leaders do nothing to help them but "temporize", "mitigate" and "stand aside" there will always be a need for the erection of a monster or a cyborg; "So it was the century before. So it will be a century later" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 313).

Aside from drawing inspiration from Jewish folklore, Piercy's story of the creation of the figure of the cyborg/golem within a posthumanist discourse is highly evocative of two other, implicitly related, sources: Mary Shelley's quintessential Gothic science fiction novel *Frankenstein* and the Judeo-Christian *Genesis* creation narrative that has defined Western thought. Piercy's intertextual tribute to Shelley's 1818 iconic novel is understandable since it is the first literary example of the intersection between the Gothic and the critically dystopian, producing the first text of the posthuman. Using the book of *Genesis* to address questions about humanity in a posthuman era, however, might appear counterintuitive at first. Yet, as Haraway shows, such an approach is in fact quite necessary since creation narratives reveal the fundamental modes of understanding of what it means to be human within Western society. As she asserts, the tools to mark the world that marks you as other "are often stories, retold stories, versions that reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities" (Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 175). As Barbara C. Sproul maintains, "the most profound human questions are the ones that give rise to creation myths: Who are we? Why are we here? What is the purpose of our lives and our deaths? How should we understand our place in the world, in time and space?" (Sproul 1). Even more significantly for the purposes of this study, however, Sproul notes that specific origin myths both shape and are shaped by the ways in which human culture views its place in the world. For example, "Westerners, whether or not they are practicing Jews or Christians, still show themselves to be the heirs of this tradition by holding to the view that people are sacred, the creatures of God" (Sproul 1). Even nonbelievers, she goes on to add, "cherish the consequence of the myth's claim and affirm that people have inalienable rights (as if they were created by God)" (Sproul 1). Even those who "do not believe", therefore, are likely to consider themselves "superior to all other creatures […] properly set above the rest of the

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physical world by intelligence and spirit with the obligation to govern it" (Sproul 1). As Haraway maintains, "in retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture" (Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 175). These myths, "current and very powerful" even to this day, are reflected and produced in the first chapter of the *Genesis* as transcriptions of the word of God.

In Piercy's narrative, the *Genesis*' creation story is interlinked with the tale of the golem and the story of Frankenstein's monster within the posthuman world of cyborgs not only to present instances of excessive patriarchal licence but also to illustrate the disintegration of that power in the figure of the posthuman. While the creation/construction of the golem and the monster is evocative of their makers' patriarchal authority over them and the latter's "right" to exercise that power however they choose, Piercy's posthumanist critical dystopia has the cyborg defy his maker and become a modern Prometheus who both transgresses patriarchal law and tragically, yet heroically, sacrifices himself for the good of humanity. Yod might not have tried to destroy his father/maker like Frankenstein's monster but, at the end, he does what Joseph could not have done in the original golem narrative: destroy any power or authority that the father assumes to have over him and seize one of the attributes that traditionally represents the essence of humanity, free will.

But let us here return to an examination of the concrete parallels between the narrative of the Genesis, *Frankenstein*, and Piercy's posthuman critical dystopia. To begin with, even though Avram is a pious Jew, he knows that what he is doing could be considered sacrilegious since he is taking it upon himself to impart life in an "unnatural way"; he allows his creation to become an Adam, the first of his kind instead of merely a machine. Similarly, having taken it upon himself to create a "human being" "of a gigantic structure", Victor Frankenstein, like the biblical God, combines human and animal parts with scientific research in order to infuse the "spark of existance" into the lifeless inanimate body (Shelley & Munteanu 133). Interestingly, one of Shelley's primary inspirations for her own novel was the 16th-century legend of the Maharal who takes it upon himself to act as God (or something very close to that) and breathe life into a shell of a body made of mud, creating a conscious being. Contrary to the Maharal or Avram, however, who created their sentient beings in order to use them for the defence of their respective cities and their people, Frankenstein's sole reason for creating his monster is his thirst for "forbidden knowledge" and the appropriation of God's legitimate role as creator and master of the universe. In fact, Frankenstein's vanity and arrogance lead him to believe that his achievement will be a noble and superior one and that his creation will revere and respect him like a most deserving father.

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As soon as he sees the monster's "dull yellow eye" and the convulsive motion of its agitated limbs, however, Frankenstein is horrified and appalled; the body parts and research he has been accumulating for nearly two years in order to create the perfect body result in a monstrous creation that from its first breath destroys Frankenstein's hope for the creation of a beautiful "human" being out of degenerating body parts. As Anca Munteanu maintains, when he sees his creature, "Victor perceives himself as a diabolical creator, whose demonic desires and actions resulted in disastrous consequences"; he likens himself to Faust or Satan for aspiring to absolute knowledge (Shelley & Munteanu 81). In fact, Frankenstein's rejection of his creation is so extreme that he refuses to even give it a name; this refusal has significant implications for the evolution of the story since, in essence, the creature is denied an identity by its own maker.

The symbolic and ceremonial dimensions of the act of naming, which are originally met in *Genesis*, reveal a significant diversion of Piercy's narrative from Shelley's story. Frankenstein is so appalled with the monster that he refuses to name it and abandons it to its own fate, praying for its swift demise. By relinquishing his nominalizing authority over it, however, Frankenstein inadvertently refuses to take any responsibility for its actions despite his feelings of remorse. It is no wonder, therefore, that Frankenstein dismisses his creation, hoping for its swift annihilation in order to redeem himself from the curse he brought to this world. By naming their creatures, on the other hand, the Maharal and Avram underscore their authority over them from the moment Joseph and Yod draw their first breaths. Contrary to Frankenstein's reaction of loathing and disgust over his creation, Avram and the Maharal endeavour to create life primarily because both intend to use their creatures to ensure the success of their respective causes; upon completion of their tasks, Joseph and Yod's makers intend to destroy them, preserving small pieces of them (physical in the case of Joseph and software in the case of Yod) in order to replace them if the need arises again. In Yod's creation story, therefore, even though Yod is described as an Adam, as the first of his kind, he is expected to follow orders like the beasts in the field. As Kerr notes, "while the humanist world expressed though *Genesis* gives humans the ideal of individual rights", Yod's posthumanist yet still patriarchal world originally does not afford him, a cyborg, the same rights (Kerr 113). Acting like a posthumanist God, Avram (like the Maharal before him) feels that his creation owes his existence entirely to his creator and advocates the use of cyborgs as mere instruments, to be used whenever the need arises. When both creatures are about to be destroyed by their creators, Avram and the Maharal use the same words: "I made him. I must unmake him", evoking Victor Frankenstein's similar vows to destroy his monster (Piercy, *He, She and It* 398 & 408). In Shelley's 19th-century narrative the issue takes on a

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very interesting form since what is at stake is not as much the inclusion of the monster within humanity as the acceptance of difference within human society. As an "artificial creature, rational yet inhuman, that is composed of both animal and human parts", monstrosity is precisely predicated upon the monster's being (as Kafka's Red Peter or Carter's Beast and Wolf arguably are) within this boundary zone between the human and the nonhuman. As Lykke maintains, the creature "became a human yet non-human creature whose borderline existence made him/it appear terrifying" (Lykke 16).

The narrative, however, presents a far more affirmative possibility than that of abject monstrosity; it enables the creature to embody not only his creator's fears and warnings but also the hopes for a different and more hospitable future. Such glimpses of possibility are importantly already present (if also thwarted) in Shelley's own text: while in exile, Frankenstein's monster feels the need to communicate with other people and form bonds with other human beings; this leads him to assiduously study language and acquire the ability to speak and write. Soon enough he learns about complex philosophical and social concepts, gender difference, motherhood, family relations, and death; he reflects on his own identity, status, and condition, and eventually longs for inclusion within a community and membership within a family unit. As Munteanu notes, "the Monster's intuition that the acquisition of language could give him access to the community of men and help him establish a position and an identity proved, after all, correct" (Shelley & Munteanu 145). Nevertheless, the monster never dares to consider himself human, since he quickly becomes aware that he is "similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike to the beings" he observes and reads about. This further escalates into his feelings of isolation and estrangement, as well as his desire for a female companion. The latter, he believes, should be "as deformed and horrible" as he is, "of the same species" and with "the same defects" – a creature with whom to share his solitary, marginalised existence (Shelley & Munteanu 138). Therefore, with his newly found articulateness and powers of reason and negotiation, the monster asks his maker for clemency over his murderous acts of "hellish rage" and vengeance and begs him for a mate, a female who will accompany him in exile; only then can he truly be happy:

> All men hate the wretched; how, then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us […] Remember, that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was

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> benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous. (Shelley & Munteanu 96 & 97)

While he essentially refuses the monster's requests, calling the creature an "abhorred monster", a "fiend" for whom "the tortures of hell are too mild a vengeance", Frankenstein inadvertently admires his astute, lucid and eloquent arguments, his capability to address and navigate his creator's vacillations, and his ability for self-restraint and calm (which Frankenstein himself is clearly unable to attain); as Munteanu highlights, "clearly, such an individual could have functioned well in the society of man" if only it could be an accepting, inclusive one (Shelley & Munteanu 145). Unfortunately, in the novel's world, "where the 'different' is always regarded as dangerous" and, therefore, "instinctively rejected", the monster's deformity is inadmissible, and its destruction is the price for restoring the social order (Shelley & Munteanu 145). Yet Frankenstein's monster is never *really* destroyed; this is not merely because it is entirely uncertain that he can actually die but also because he becomes figuratively immortal as well. Shelley's monster is indeed "an early harbinger of the cyborg world of the late 20th century", presenting an instance of a rebellious transgression of a "natural" boundary that has long denigrated both women and nonhumans as "lesser" than man.

Following the tradition built upon the rise and fall of figures such as Frankenstein's monster, Piercy's cyborg becomes a modern Prometheus performing a heroic and tragic transgression of law and revealing the evolution/revolution of Gothic forms in the posthuman era. Prometheus is a figure from Greek mythology credited with the creation of humanity from clay. He is a hero of *culture,* who defies the law of the Gods and steals fire to give it to humanity, to abet its own progress and civilization. Though he was celebrated as the champion of mankind, Prometheus was punished for his theft by Zeus and sentenced to eternal torment: bound to a rock, an eagle, emblem of Zeus, would come to feed on his liver which, in turn, would grow back to be eaten the next day. Prometheus' story embodies all the ambiguities associated with heroic transgression of law and the tragic fate that it necessarily carries in both Shelly's and Piercy's narratives.

The subtitle of Shelley's novel is indicative of the importance the myth of Prometheus has for the story and its interpretations; in Shelley's humanist narrative, the model of modern Prometheus is undeniably Victor Frankenstein, the lone genius whose efforts to improve humanity transgress the natural law and result in tragedy. In Piercy's posthuman dystopia, however, it is the figure of the cyborg that embodies the ambiguities generated by the breaking of boundaries and the transgression of patriarchal law. After the construction of their "sons", both Avram and the Maharal become in a way superfluous, as

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they have already given their creatures everything (life, a functioning body and mind); Yod becomes an all-powerful, one-of-a-kind hybrid of machine and biological organism and Joseph is an extremely strong sentient being made of clay. Even though the fathers still have the power to destroy their sons, both creatures aspire to be – and eventually become – more than they were originally intended to be. Haraway notes that even though the creation of the cyborg is a necessity at certain times, cyborgs are "the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention socialism" and as such they tend to be unfaithful to their origins since, their "fathers" eventually become superfluous (Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 151). In effect, Haraway suggests, cyborgs long to be considered human instead of being merely instruments or weapons. Tellingly, both Yod and Joseph want to participate in a minyan[12] and both fall in love with the women who educate and help them, Shira and Chava respectively. As Gurman notes, both Yod and Joseph "measure their humanity in their free participation in their community – primarily through their involvement in religion – and their ability to fall in love and form a family" (Gurman 461).

Piercy's golems and cyborgs, therefore, surpass the restrictions and prescriptions meant to guard the category of "humanity" and render the Cartesian legacy immaterial and obsolete. Their obvious social and emotional agency, their unquestionable spirituality, and their indisputable ability to speak, learn, and think independently place the category of the human into question, challenging the idea that one *is* rather than *becomes* human. In two of the most moving instances of the narrative, both Joseph and Yod declare their humanity with their dying breaths (Piercy, *He, She and It* 371). According to Malkah's story, when Joseph has fulfilled his function and the Maharal announces that he must now be turned back to mud and starts chanting, Joseph cries out in pleading despair: "No! I want to live. I want to be a man! [...] Don't let him do this to me! I deserve to live! [...] I fought for you! I saved you! I am a man too, I have my life as you have yours, My life is sweet to me!" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 400) Avram and Malkah share with the Maharal "the glory and the guilt of having raised a Golem to walk on the earth with men and women, to resemble, but never to be, human" (Piercy, *He, She and It* 402). Much like Joseph, Yod professes his humanity, his Jewishness, and his love for Shira to both the council and his "father", who forces him to go on a final suicide mission for the cause. In the ultimate moment of rebellion, Yod goes as far as to kill his own creator in order to stop him from creating and using others like him; in a posthumous video Yod sends to Shira he maintains:

[12] The group of ten Jews over 13 years old necessary for traditional Jewish public worship.

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> I have died and taken with me Avram, my creator, and his lab, all the records of his experiment, I want there to be no weapons like me. A weapon should not be conscious. A weapon should not have the capacity to suffer for what it does, to regret, to feel guilt. A weapon should not form strong attachments. I die knowing I destroy the capacity to replicate me. (Piercy, *He, She and It* 415)

With the destruction of the male scientist and his records, Ruth Bienstock Anolik asserts, "the biological, natural, female centred form of creating life prevails in Piercy's utopia" (Anolik 44). Despite his eventual demise, therefore, Yod embodies an ambiguity that was already there in Shelley's and the Maharal's creatures; in effect, he becomes an ironic, blasphemous, and transgressive sign of both monstrosity and potentiality[13], a warning of the inevitable and the promise of a malleable future.

Like Piercy, Atwood also uses an amalgamation of the Judeo-Christian myth of creation and Shelley's iconic novel in order to question the ways Western culture thinks of humanity and rethink how we view ourselves with the advent of technology. In other words, given the fact that Atwood wishes to explore "what we consider human today, and reconsider what we will consider human tomorrow", she finds herself compelled to confront the creation myths that so deeply underscore our views of what it means to be human in a posthuman era (Kerr 104). On one level, the *MaddAddam* trilogy explores the mutual complication of posthumanism and protohumanism. Whereas posthumanism refers to the world after biotechnology has changed and reshaped the way we understand ourselves as humans, protohumanism refers to the ways in which origin myths and especially the *Genesis* creation story dictate the ways we view our humanity. As Kerr maintains, "creation or origin myths underpin how a culture views itself, and thus protohumanism is of utmost importance to questions of human identity" (Kerr 101). Hence, Atwood uses the "stark reality of posthumanism" to complicate the Judeo-Christian narratives of protohumanism, and vice versa (Kerr 101). If our understanding of the creation narrative that has shaped Western thought fails to anticipate the potentialities of posthumanism, then it must be revised to accommodate itself to what the latter has made imaginable; this is what Atwood's narrative wishes to undertake as a task. On another level, Atwood is equally interested in revising the

[13] The word "monster" derives from the word *monstrum* which Saint Augustine argued is synonymous with *prodigum*; thus, as Rosi Braidotti maintains, "the monster de-monstrates God's will, which may or may not be a positive thing". *Monstrum* can also by associated with *moneo*, which means to warn, creating what in antiquity were called "signs of wonder" that could not be ignored (Braidotti, "Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt" 136).

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literary foundations of the story of posthuman existence in a fashion that will question humanist assumptions about male hegemony, power, and authority in her own era. In essence, Atwood employs these two diverse creation stories – of Adam and of the monster – to highlight the link between dystopia and masculine authority and call for the reconfiguration of gender dynamics in conformity to the demands of utopian possibility.

It becomes evident early on that Atwood's narrative is full of strong biblical allusions, especially ones that refer to the book of *Genesis* and to Adam's naming of the animals. Firstly, "*Glenn-alias-Crake* or *Crake/Glenn*, or *Glenn, later Crake*" is said to have given himself his nickname from a simulation game called Extinctathon, "an interactive biofreak masterlore game […] *Monitored by MaddAddam*" as an homage to the rare Australian bird, the red-necked Crake (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 92). On the first page of the website we read: "*Adam named the living animals, MaddAddam names the dead ones*"*;* and on a later page: "*Adam named the animals. MaddAddam customizes them*" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 92 & 253). Created as part of the "Paradice Project", the Crakers receive their names directly from their creator, Crake who, acting both like God and Adam, names them "after eminent historical figures" such as Abraham Lincoln, Empress Josephine, Madame Curie or Sojourner Truth (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 116*).* The parallel between the Crakers, created "*sui generis*" and running around the "Paradice Dome" naked, and Adam and Eve, the original inhabitants of Paradise, walking around unaware of their nudity, is clear; as Kerr asserts, "the biblical language and imagery put the reader in a mindset of *Genesis* (either epic or genetic) and establishes that creation will play a large role in the narrative" (Kerr 105).

Unquestionably, the design of the Crakers clearly alludes to a prelapsarian innocence that has disappeared from humanity. Their lack of language, history, or Western culture – their own embodiment of the utopian launching pad of the *tabula rasa* – places them in a unique position to rebuild and repopulate the world unadulterated by humanist assumptions and formulations, old and new. Even in their state of innocence, however, the Crakers appeared to have existential anxieties and needed to know the origins of their species. As a result, contrary to Crake's wishes, their guardian Jimmy, a.k.a. Snowman, has become the reluctant "prophet" of Oryx and Crake, responsible for providing the Crakers with a simple narrative about the creation of the world, their presumed deities – Crake and Oryx – and, most importantly, themselves. As a result, Snowman has to invent and develop an entirely new theology that the Crakers could follow, one that is entirely different from but based on similar premises to the Judeo-Christian creation narrative. In fact, Snowman tells them that

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> *Crake made the bones of the Children of Crake out of the coral on the beach, and then he made their flesh out of a mango. But the Children of Oryx hatched out of an egg, a giant egg laid by Oryx herself. Actually she laid two eggs: one full of animals and birds and fish, and the other one full of words. But the egg full of words hatched first, and the Children of Crake had already been created by then, and they'd eaten up all the words because they were hungry, and so there were no words left over when the second egg hatched out. And that is why the animals can't talk.* (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 110)

As Snowman cannot escape his Western values and humanist upbringing, his theology already creates a division between the Crakers and the other animals, with the latter seen as lacking in what distinguishes the Crakers as unique. The ability to use words and language to communicate, linked with the ability to think, is exactly the Cartesian foundation that shaped Western thought rendering the human hierarchically superior to the rest of creation. At the same time, Snowman also creates another type of hierarchy: the one between the two deities, Oryx and Crake. Since Crake creates the beings thought as superior, he must also be the more superior entity, while the female Oryx and her creations are weaker and in need of protection. Indeed, Snowman is completely unaware of the implications of the theology he is creating and evidently, he doesn't really care of the consequences for the Craker community, since he will soon be dead as well. Every time he is asked a question by the Crakers and pretends to be communicating with Crake – and not Oryx – who unsurprisingly "lives in the sky" – without Oryx – through a broken wristwatch, Snowman lays the foundation for the creation and development of a prototheology with a clear hierarchical system concerning gender, species, and genetic superiority. This prototheology is upheld even after the Crakers mingle with the human survivors and solidify their knowledge of reading and writing. In essence, by exposing the effortlessness with which theologies, and therefore ideologies, insinuate themselves within the very early stages of cultural development, Atwood hints at the persistence of a dystopian threat if the very modes of production and definition of humanity remain unchanged.

While Atwood appears to be critical of biblical tales of creation, however, she pays homage to a literary one that demonstrates all the ambiguities of the critical dystopia and the posthuman Gothic years before some of these terms were even formulated – Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The debt to Shelley's novel runs deep: Crake is a post-modern Victor Frankenstein manufacturing an entirely different species of creature, the Crakers, using an ambiguous method consisting of chemistry, biology, engineering and, in a way, alchemy. But ambiguity is not restricted to scientific method; there are good reasons why, even

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nowadays, Frankenstein tends to be mistaken for his monster: by the end of Shelley's narrative the scientist is so consumed with irrational rage and the desire for revenge that he has become a monster himself, indistinguishable from his creature. As Anne Mellor asserts, "Victor has become his creature, his creature has become his maker; they are each other's double. Hence naming the creature 'Frankenstein' – as popular folklore would have it – uncovers a profound truth within the novel's narrative" (Mellor 23). Similarly to Frankenstein, Crake is presented as a radical extremist who almost wipes out humanity. As Chung-Hao Ku notes, however, Atwood's trilogy, "while no doubt inheriting, modifying and critiquing the 'mad scientist' stereotype of Frankenstein" introduces an important difference from Shelley's prototypical text: whereas Frankenstein is appalled by his creation, violently scorns it, and is later killed by it, Crake takes great pride in his work and even kills himself to let his creatures prosper (Ku 109). One of Atwood's most significant diversions from Shelley's tale, therefore, is the notion that while Frankenstein's creature is, or at one point becomes, a monster mirroring its maker, Crake's creatures are viewed by their maker as means to humanity's salvation. As Ku maintains, Atwood's trilogy does not only negotiate the physical and/or ethical boundary between the human and the monster but also "makes a far bolder leap" by maintaining the importance of the Crakers as ushers to the posthuman era (Ku 109). In essence, while Romantic and Victorian monsters are eventually controlled and "held in check", the Crakers, as bioengineered creatures that fit into any environment effortlessly, adapt to any living condition, and cohabitate with other living beings in harmony, seem to flourish.

One could argue, in fact, that the monster that Crake as a modern-day Victor Frankenstein creates is not the Crakers but Snowman himself. Forced by circumstances (and Crake), to be the Crakers' guide and keeper since he originally seems to be the only human left alive, Snowman becomes a mere shadow of his former self. He lives alone in a tree, further away from the Crakers' encampment, wraps himself in an old sheet, excludes himself from their festivities, and scavenges supplies from the remnants of human civilization. Ku asserts that, even though he is morphologically the same, genetically he is much more primitive than the Crakers, "thus making of him a sort of monstrous outcast or freak" (Ku 116). Reeking "like a walrus – oily, salty, fishy", Snowman mourns for the dissolution of the only thing that still connects him to humanity, language: "Language itself had lost its solidity; it had become thin, contingent, slippery, a viscid film on which he was sliding around like an eyeball on a plate" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 7 & 305). Obviously, with his mental, psychological, and physical condition deteriorating to such an extent that he constantly has hallucinations and a high fever, Snowman, Ku asserts, likens himself to "an

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intruder, a pervert, a leper, a spectre, an animal, and even a monster in contrast to the Crakers" (Ku 115). According to Ku, Atwood fully subverts the (human) self/other (nonhuman) binary: the "superhuman Crakers now take priority as the favoured human subjects on this side of the grand 'self'" and "the non-bioengineered Snowman, even if more human in the traditional (organic) sense, now becomes the 'other'" (Ku 112). Tellingly, Snowman starts viewing himself as a Frankenstein's monster of sorts: "Why am I on this earth? How come I'm alone? Where's my Bride of Frankenstein?" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 199). Internalizing the image of monstrosity, he holds a whistle "like a leper's bell" to inform others of his arrival; "all those bothered by cripples can get out of his way" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 181). Initially, he adopted the name "Abominable Snowman", a hybrid creature that lies on the border, "existing and not existing, flickering at the edges of blizzards, apelike man or manlike ape, stealthy, elusive, known only through rumours and through its backward-pointing footprints" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 8). Eventually, Snowman ends up seeing himself as a phantom, a ghost, slipping in and out of existence: "*I'm your past, he might intone. I'm your ancestor, come from the land of the dead. Now I'm lost, I can't get back, I'm stranded here, I'm all alone. Let me in!*" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 123) His eventual death only solidifies the view that in this post-apocalyptic world, the future belongs to the superhuman clan of the Crakers and, as Melissa Roddis asserts, that "there is no room in this posthuman, postnatural utopia for the human" (Roddis 30).

Nevertheless, Atwood's critical dystopia, unlike Crake himself, does not propose the effacement and replacement of humanity with another species; it rather advocates the mutation, evolution, or even the enhancement of humanity through the nonhuman. As time progresses, the Crakers cohabitate with the few human survivors in a shared environment forming an alternative community of Crakers, humans, and their hybrid offspring. Contrary to a number of "deep ecology" dystopias and utopias that have been criticized as reactionary for their effectively misanthropic vision expressed here by Crake, Atwood's posthumanist agenda does not revolve around the complete eradication of human culture, tradition, language, or religion but rather, as Cary Wolfe originally put it, it concerns an expansion and revision of the term "human". According to Neil Badmington, "From a perspective informed by their thought, the 'post-' of posthumanism does not (and, moreover, cannot) mark or make an absolute break from the legacy of humanism. 'Post-'s speak (to) ghosts, and cultural criticism must not forget that it cannot simply forget the past" (Badmington 21-22). As he adds, "The writing of the posthumanist condition should not seek to fashion 'scriptural tombs' for humanism, but must, rather, take the form of a critical practice that occurs inside humanism, consisting not of the wake but the working-through of humanist

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discourse" (Badmington 22). For Crake, the Crakers are the answer to an anti-humanist agenda; to Atwood they are the harbingers of a posthumanist one. In fact, through the insertion of the Crakers into what is left of humanity, Atwood presents another possibility of an alternative, more inclusive perception of human nature, another possibility beyond the limits of humanity.

Violence and Sexuality: Failed Masculinities and Empowered Feminist Communities

Given that, for both Piercy and Atwood, traditional masculinities prove inadequate within a posthumanist context and lead to a dystopian world of violence and exclusion, the third and final section of this chapter focuses on the two authors' vision of a more accepting utopian future of inclusion and diversity. The only way to achieve this is through the creation and nurture of an empowered female coalition that would synergistically merge with the posthuman and thus save life on the world. In Piercy, this is accomplished through a revision of the golem folk tale within the context of posthuman concerns. Piercy essentially reworks the story, "appropriating and rewriting", as Anolik maintains, "the traditional tale to include the possibilities of female empowerment suppressed in the original" (Anolik 43). Tradition is thus both preserved and negated in its retelling; as Anolik highlights, "the traditional role of the woman, developed in the Jewish culture of Eastern Europe, a culture with continuing power and influence upon a people committed to its past, is marked by constraints and limitations" (Anolik 39). Within Jewish tradition, women, much like the golem/cyborg, are not allowed to participate in a minyan nor lead public prayer; they are prohibited from bearing testimony in religious court or for a religious event like a wedding; they are forbidden from fully participating in various rituals; and they are also denied access to the highest levels of scholarship.[14] What becomes one of the most important elements of this traditional paradigm for the Jewish female writer, furthermore, is that, essentially, women's access to language is limited: in Europe, only Yiddish, the vernacular, or the secular languages of the locals were spoken by women; Hebrew, "the holy tongue", was only spoken by male scholars (Anolik 40). As Anolik asserts, "contemporary Jewish women writing within their own tradition must continue to grapple with the traditional powerlessness of women within Jewish culture, the curtailing of their authority and of their voice" (Anolik

[14] It was not until the 1970s, and only in the most liberal wings of Judaism, that the concept of a female rabbi was even regarded a possibility. As Anolik notes, "within the traditional paradigm exists a system of laws and customs, buttressed by the ritually impure state of the menstruating woman and the primacy of women's responsibilities to husband and children, that denies women access to the highest levels of Jewish observance available to men" (Anolik 39).

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40). Thus, Piercy creates her own version of the golem of Prague, allowing it to become a predecessor for a figure that would challenge every boundary known to "man", the cyborg.

In the traditional tale of the golem originating in rabbinic literature, the being created by the Rabbi Jehuda Loew ben Bezalel came to life by a combination of magic and the word of God. As Gershom Scholem writes,

> Rabbi Loew's robot […] could work and do the bidding of his master and perform all kinds of chores for him, helping him and the Jews of Prague in many ways. But the poor creature could not speak. He could respond to orders and he could sort them out, but no more than that. (Scholem, "The Golem of Prague and the Golem of Rehovoth" 63)

The Maharal, it is related, put a piece of paper in the golem's mouth with the "mystic an ineffable Name of God inscribed on it; So long as this seal remained in his mouth, the Golem was alive – if you can call such a state alive" (Scholem, "The Golem of Prague and the Golem of Rehovoth" 63). The golem, then, can be understood – and my argument is that Piercy consciously understands it thus – as a "veiled code for the woman in Jewish culture": not only does it remain eternally silent, blindly and violently following its master's orders, but it is forbidden from fully participating in religious life and is responsible for performing other homely household chores (Anolik 42). With biological reproduction traditionally reserved for women, the golem, on the other hand, bears testimony to man's power to create life via the use of language and the power of the word; according to Anolik, "the folk tale further works to limit the threat of female power by appropriating to the male rabbi the most powerful available act to women in traditional culture, the ability, based on biology and sexuality, to create life" (Anolik 42). Basing her narrative on this original story of transgression of boundaries and containment, Piercy's reworking of the traditional golem legend does not repress the power of female sexuality or deny the power of female creation but valorises these female possibilities. In appropriating and rewriting traditional narratives, Jewish women writers, including Piercy, lay the foundation for the opening up of a narrative space to be inhabited by the figure of the vocal, creative, and empowered woman; "in revising and feminizing these narratives, Jewish women write themselves back into their tradition, appropriating the tradition and making it truly their own" (Anolik 40).

In his dedication to the new computer invented by the Weizmann Institute at Rehovoth in Israel in 1965, Scholem maintains that what differentiates the traditional golem from Adam is the "spark of His divine life force and intelligence (this, in the last analysis, is the 'divine image' in which Man was created)"; this is essentially what renders the golem merely a replica of Adam, without the "intelligence and spontaneous creativity of the human

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mind" (Scholem, "The Golem of Prague and the Golem of Rehovoth" 63). In her own act of textual appropriation within the main narrative, Malka's revision and retelling of the golem legend introduces a major female figure that is absent in the traditional story of the golem. Malka invents the figure of Chava, a curious, pious, well-educated woman, the granddaughter of the rabbi and a long-time widow responsible for teaching Joseph how to speak, read and write; according to Anolik, Chava is "a prototype of the female scientist, possessing knowledge that is unavailable to men" and willingly imparting it onto the golem (Anolik 44). At the same time, Chava involuntarily awakens and trains not only Joseph's mind but his heart as well; in other words, even though she continuously professes that she doesn't want to marry or love any man, Chava inadvertently teaches Joseph how to love and hope for a future within a heterosexual relationship, a monstrous possibility that was already anticipated by Scholem half a century ago[15]. Even though this possibility is never realized even in Malka's version of the golem story, Chava, whose name in Hebrew means Eve, admires and cares for Joseph and, in a way, becomes the only one who humanizes him. Incidentally, aside from being Joseph's teacher and love-interest, Chava is also a midwife, a woman who helps women give birth. Hence, contrary to the myth of Genesis, that depicts Eve not only as inferior to man (according to the second creation narrative) but also as the gullible and weaker part of the originary couple, Malka's narrative "evokes the female source of all human life and recalls that transgressive hunger for knowledge has been long associated with the dangers of the female" (Anolik 44). Malka's creation of Chava, a powerful, independent and learned woman beyond anything her female peers could even dream of, valorises the female power to create life and subverts the exclusively male-centred traditional tales of golem formation, producing viable archetypes upon which the empowered female teacher/lover/mentor and the cyborg are to find their historical (and mythical) antecedents.

Joseph's modern-day descendant, Yod, might have been created by a male scientist, but he is programmed by a female scientist, Malka, and then acculturated by a woman, Shira. In Piercy's damaged and patriarchal society, where the population is infertile with the sole exception of the inhabitants of free towns such as Tikva who are able to bear and produce children naturally, Shira's ability to conceive and give birth to her son Ari without technological intervention inside her multi is extraordinary. Ari, the result of Shira's sexual

[15] In contemplating the future of the figure of the Golem, Scholem asserts that we are still a long way from a Golem that will not merely follow orders but will possess the free will to transgress the will of his maker, fall in love, and even willingly sacrifice themselves for others; however, he considers the potential for the existence of a "Utopian figure of a Golem" standing before the two male scientists who, "in great embarrassment", look at the tape coming out of it that reads: *Cogito ergo sum* (English: "I think, therefore I am)" (Scholem 65).

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and biological prowess, becomes a symbol of the female authority to create and possess children in the middle of almost complete bareness. By having Shira initiate Yod into the fundamentals of human interaction and culture, Piercy not only insists on the female principle of creation but expands its possibilities beyond the biological, toward the scientific and intellectual. Whereas his former nine precursors created by the male scientist alone were too aggressive, unreasoned, and threatening and had to be "put down" like the golems of legend, Yod is gentler, more civilised and more *human* "because he is invested with the female principle" (Anolik 43). Countering "the rabbinic fear of the unleashed woman", Piercy's Yod is a creature who successfully synthesizes and embodies opposites: human/machine, biology/technology, male/female. Even though he is physically male and forms a sexual relationship with Shira, Yod exhibits the emotional sensibilities and agency that Piercy attributes to women; in the figure of Yod then, "Piercy constructs a being who resists the polarizing categorization that rabbinic culture constructs to diminish women: her androgynous golem, may, in fact, participate in a minyan (as may Shira in the utopian, egalitarian Tikva)" (Anolik 43).

Interestingly, even the women in Piercy's narrative are cyborg entities in various stages of enhancement, epitomising Haraway's elevation of the cyborg figure as a feminist trope for women empowered by technology. For instance, Malkah and Shira have plugs inserted into their skulls to "interface with a computer"; Riva, Shira's mother, is a warrior woman whose body is both "flesh" and "protective gear", to shield her from the rigours of combat; and Nili, Riva's lover and fellow assassin, has undergone major alterations in order to survive in hostile environments and defend herself against entire armies (Piercy, *He, She and It* 193). The latter is a survivor of the "Two Week War", initiated by "a zealot with a nuclear device" destroying Jerusalem and creating "the interdicted zone of the Middle East", an uninhabited nuclear wasteland (Piercy, *He, She and It* 198). As a result, many Israeli and Palestinian women have to learn to put aside their ethnic differences and become cyborgs themselves; as Nili explains,

> I can walk in the raw without protection. I can tolerate levels of bombardment that would kill you. We live in the hills – inside them, that is. We are a joint community of the descendants of Israeli and Palestinian women who survived. We each keep our religion, observe each other's holidays and fast days. We have no men. We clone and engineer genes. After birth we undergo additional alteration. We have created ourselves to endure, to survive, to hold our land. Soon we will begin rebuilding Yerushalaim. (Piercy, *He, She and It* 198)

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Technology is employed to connect women of different, conflicting backgrounds and enable them to endure and survive together without the help or need of men. Haraway maintains that

> Perhaps, ironically, we can learn from our fusions with animals and machines how not to be Man, the embodiment of Western logos. From the point of view of pleasure in these potent and taboo fusions, made inevitable by the social relations of science and technology, there might be a feminist science. (Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 173)

In line with Haraway, therefore, Piercy's narrative seems to suggest that women in control of technology (Malkah the teacher and storyteller, Shira the lover, Riva and Nili the warriors) have the potential to create a feminist science that is structurally egalitarian, challenging the patriarchal assumptions that excuse and perpetuate oppressive dominating practices. In Piercy, therefore, utopian hope becomes fundamentally premised on female empowerment, at once reverting and progressing towards a matriarchal state of enlightenment and highlighting the potentiality inherent in such a state.

The same potentiality exists in Atwood's narrative, wherein the deteriorating and monstrous masculinity represented originally by Snowman and later by the Painballers is replaced by an array or female characters who face great adversity, question authority, and fight for the prosperity of the new hybrid community. The first such female character, Oryx, represents the complex and multifaceted femininities that need to be embraced. Interestingly, Oryx gets little mention in the scholarship surrounding Atwood's trilogy, even though she is a named character in the first novel. Her intimate connection to the sex industry and her racial otherness have rendered Oryx one of Atwood's most ambiguous characters to date, since she embodies the multiplicity of female responses to significant issues concerning female sexuality. As Fiona Tolan writes, "the figure of Oryx articulates significant tensions surrounding the notions of sexual liberation, free will, exploitation, commercialism, race, exoticism and ethnicity that congregate around the theme of pornography" (Tolan, 286). In fact, years before she served as the original female educator of the Crakers in the "Paradice Dome" and as their deity in Snowman's narratives associated with nature and the environment, Oryx was "another little girl on a porno site" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 103). She is described as a "small-boned and exquisite" girl of Asian descent of about eight years old who performs lewd sexual acts with other little girls positioned "in front of the standard gargantuan Gulliver-in-Lilliput male torso" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 103). Jimmy's fascination with Oryx grows out of the pornographic videos he used to watch of her and is bound up with her exotic appeal; as Edward Said asserts, European attraction to "the

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spectacle of the orient" and exotic strangeness has been expressed in images of grotesque and sexual license. As the philosopher maintains, "The Orient is *watched*, since its almost (but never quite) offensive behavior issues out of a reservoir of infinite peculiarity; the European, whose sensibility tours the Orient, is a watcher, never involved, always detached, always ready for new examples" crafted for European consumption (Said 103). Entrenched in this context by the use of technology that gives him unlimited access to this exotic spectacle, Jimmy becomes a detached Western voyeur consuming the spectacle.[16]

Yet for all her investment by Jimmy's voyeuristic desire, readers never get a clear image of the figure of Oryx, only scraps of information forming an incomplete picture; even Jimmy reflects that "Sometimes he suspected her of improvising, just to humour him; sometimes he felt that her entire past – everything she'd told him – was his own invention" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 371). In an attempt to confirm her identity as the Asian child he watched on the kiddie porno sites of his youth, Jimmy downloads a photo of her and shows it to Oryx, pointing to her striking gaze as confirmation of her identity; Oryx replies by saying "a lot of girls have eyes […] A lot of girls did these things" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 105). Oryx's refusal to acknowledge or take possession of the image leaves her history open to interpretation, not only "merging it with that of countless other young girls trapped by poverty and abuse" but allowing it to incessantly change and evolve as the narrative progresses (Tolan 287). Embodying different narratives as if she were wearing different masks, Oryx has the potential of perpetual self-invention; at one time readers get a description of an arrangement whereby she had to exchange sex for English Language lessons, then, of an employment under Crake where she had to serve as a Student Services prostitute, and finally of a consensual sexual relationship with first Crake and then Jimmy. As Tolan adds, "In her pliancy and sexual availability, the line between free will and necessary compliance becomes blurred", making it impossible to distinguish which mask is indeed true (Tolan, 290). As Atwood's narrator asserts,

> *Enter Oryx as a young girl on a kiddie porn site, flowers in her hair, whipped cream on her chin; or, Enter Oryx as a teenage news item, sprung from a pervert's garage; or, Enter Oryx, stark naked and pedagogical in the Crakers' inner sanctum; or, Enter Oryx, towel around her hair, emerging from the shower; or, Enter Oryx, in a pewter-grey silk pantsuit and demure*

[16] However, Tolan argues, Atwood's narrative contains some serious pitfalls since "in the pornographic experiences of Oryx, described in relatively explicit detail" and her faded recollections of the "distant, foreign place" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 133) she came from, "eastern Oryx's narrative perpetually threatens to also turn Atwood's typically affluent Western reader into a voyeur, making him or her complicit in Jimmy's morbid fascinations" (Tolan 288).

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> *half-high heels, carrying a briefcase, the image of a professional Compound globewise saleswoman?* [...] Was there only one Oryx, or was she legion? (Atwood, Oryx and Crake 361-362)

Much like in Carter's stories from the previous chapter, Atwood's narrative seems to assert that the myriad masks that Oryx wears point to a "postfeminist agency: a postmodernist feminist rejection of authenticity and stable categories" (Tolan 290). By the end of the first novel, of course, Atwood takes a decisive step further by reinventing Oryx, this time as a female goddess to be adored and worshipped by Crake's posthuman creations. This reincarnation, composed by Jimmy, evokes a long tradition that envisions women as embodiments of nature and the natural world, as if "the rape of the goddess was directly equated with the dying of nature" (Adorno & Horkheimer 20). Oryx becomes the goddess of nature and of all animals[17] and provides the Crakers with an origin story, enabling them to tap into a positive understanding of their relation to nature and their surroundings and providing the grounds for a feminist utopian, posthumanist vision. Even though Oryx is silent in the remaining two books of the trilogy, the figure of the female prostitute-turned-goddess shapes the entire narrative and allows for the potential of an alternative kind of history in the posthumanist era – one based on female empowerment and self-invention.

Of course, in the last two books of the trilogy, Atwood's critically dystopian, feminist, and posthumanist agenda is further reinforced by the presentation of two possible versions of the future after the introduction of a few human survivors within the narrative. In other words, the introduction of survivors who represent both the best and the worst of humanity questions the likelihood of a utopian future without humanity and re-introduces the possibility of a dystopian future. The oscillation between the possibility of a dystopian nightmare and the hope of a utopian community and the ease with which one can turn into the other are primarily manifest in the two versions of the future the author presents in the last two books of the trilogy. On the one hand, among the survivors of the pandemic are a group of violent criminals, emotionally hardened by a lethal version of paintball (ironically called Painball) that has turned them into modern-day gladiators, killing each other for public entertainment. Representing the worst of humanity, these criminals indulge in acts of extreme violence and cruelty, such as torture, murder, rape, and even cannibalism; as Atwood writes, "Anyone who'd survived Painball more than once had been reduced to the reptilian brain. Sex until you were worn to a fingernail was their mode; after that you were

[17] Indeed, the figure of the goddess has been a prominent image in second-wave feminism in order to counter the "masculine rationalist gods" such as the God/Father/Creator Crake and provides feminists with a better alternative.

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dinner. They liked the kidneys" (Atwood, *MaddAddam* 9). Readers have several examples of just how (abjectly) human the Painballers truly are when they ruthlessly hunt down, kill and mutilate a young boy named Oates and capture, sexually torture and gang rape two women, Amanda and Ren.[18] One can only assume that the Painballers would take one look at the Crakers' green skin and yellow eyes and one whiff of their citrus smell and label them as monstrous, bestial, barbaric creatures; once they would be rendered as outsiders, as abnormal creatures, their eradication would be necessary for the restoration or maintenance of the status quo. Indeed, there are many instances where Snowman expresses his concern over the fate of the Crakers if they come to contact with others with "extra skins" (clothing) holding "noisy sticks" (guns). The possibility of an imminent threat towards the Crakers becomes evident with Snowman's realization that he isn't the only human survivor of the pandemic, contrary to Crake's aspirations:

> On the other hand, these new arrivals could easily see the Children of Crake as freakish, or savage, or non-human and a threat. Images from old history flip through his head, sidebars from Blood and Roses: Ghenghis Khan's skull pile, the heaps of shoes and eyeglasses from Dachau, the burning corpse-filled churches in Rwanda, the sack of Jerusalem by the Crusaders. The Arawak Indians, welcoming Christopher Colombus with garlands and gifts of fruit, smiling with delight, soon to be massacred, or tied up beneath the beds upon which their women were being raped. (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 425)

Fortunately, this strictly dystopian nightmare is never realised due to a group of women who create a coalition to not only save and protect themselves but the Crakers as well; in essence, through their conscious resistance, these women enable another possible version of the future; safer, happier, more peaceful and, most likely, utopian. Two of the most significant members of this feminist community of Crakers and humans are Toby and Ren, two drastically different women who come together to save what is left of the world. Toby, a former member of a religious sect that combined Biblical traditions, practices, and beliefs with radical environmental activism, veganism and farming, goes into hiding in order to escape a dangerous stalker and works in a high-end spa. Quick-witted and practical, Toby is described as having little concern for her appearance, no maternal instinct, very limited sexuality or interest in romance. In fact, often described as "hard", "tough", and "dry" while

[18] In "What is a Posthumanist Reading?" Herbrechter and Callus suggest that "what makes 'us' human is the capacity for murder" (Herbrechter & Callus 103). Murder, however, is more than a crime, a sacrilege for humanity, one that the philosophers assert is "necessary", since, as they assert, a person "is most (abjectly) human in the moment of annihilating another human" (Herbrechter & Callus 103).

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other women are "soft" or "squashy", or at worst, "wet", Toby is at times referred to as the "dry witch", a clear allusion to her lack of emotional vulnerability, sexual drive, or the ability to conceive children. Aside from her masculine name, Toby is described as being "kind of scrawny" and "flat as a board, back and front" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* 152*).* Once out in the street, Toby shuns away those elements that suggest femininity. She is characterized by a "smiling, bossy sanctimoniousness" that is, according to Toby, "a little too pervasive" in Edencliff, "especially among the female members of the sect" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* 60*).* In effect, through her inability to embody the elements of traditional femininity, Toby becomes the quintessential "mother", a Demetrian leader of women, men and others. Hence, contrary to Snowman's distance from the Crakers, Toby's compassionate and sympathetic stance, caring for the them and teaching them how to read and write, prepares her adequately for her role as their "guardian" and the "leader" of their newly-created community.

Whereas Toby seems to belong to the elevated matriarchal age of female excellence and high virtue and to lead a stable and well-ordered existence, she is not the only female heroine who can rightly claim credit for the formation of this community. Ren is clearly a figure who originally seems to embody all the negative attributes traditionally ascribed to base femininity: promiscuity, cunning, and weakness. Both a prostitute and a trapeze artist who works at the Scales and Tails brother, she survives Crake's apocalypse by hiding in the club's biohazard containment chamber. Even though she is sexually experienced and has the same age as Toby, it is very easy to perceive her as a child, since she appears to be in constant need of rescue from the violence of the streets, from her life in the brothel, from her mother, from the Gardeners and later from the Painballers and the pandemic. Adoring her pimp, Mordis, and her rescuer Amanda, Ren is romantic, faithful and devoted to her friends throughout the story. Having defined herself as "Chickin' lickin' good", Ren is in touch with her sexuality and feels content with her employment at Scales (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* 72). Even though she presents a very different model of femininity and female empowerment from Toby, Ren becomes an equally strong leading figure and the literal matriarch of the newly formed hybrid community since she gets pregnant and gives birth to a new generation of Craker/human babies.

Evidently, the birth of these babies, namely, the new green-eyed Craker hybrids, Jimadam, Pilaren, Medulla and Oblongata, is the realization of the utopian possibility that the Crakers embody; what this second version of a future highlights, therefore, is a world beyond patriarchal masculinist violence represented by the Painballers – one held together by the coalition of strong, independent women who take up the functions of both education

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and defence. In effect, by having the coalition of women and Crakers kill the Painballers and freeing the sexually violated and tortured Amanda, Atwood's narrative emphasizes the importance of the collapse and disappearance of traditional masculine performances and the empowerment and reconfiguration of femininity that turns the dystopian nightmare into a utopian reality.

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The futuristic dystopian futures that Atwood and Piercy describe in their science fiction narratives, therefore, are never entirely hopeless; in effect, in both Atwood and Piercy's works exists, as Baccolini observes, an "oppositional and resisting form of writing, one that maintains a utopian horizon in the pages of dystopian science fiction and in these antiutopian times" (Baccolini 518). In a statement that is striking for its lucidity and simplicity Piercy writes:

> When I was a child, I first noticed that neither history as I was taught it nor the stories I was told seemed to lead to me. I began to fix them. I have been at it ever since. To me it is an important task to situate ourselves in the time line so that we may be active in history. We require a past that leads to us. After any revolution, his story is rewritten, not just out of partisan zeal, but because the past has changed. Similarly, what we imagine we are working toward does a lot to define what we will consider doable action aimed at producing the future we want and preventing the future we fear. (Piercy, "Telling Stories About Stories" 1-2)

In essence, by not accepting the world as it is, Piercy and Atwood's text envision the world as it might become; whether that is a creaturely and dystopian nightmare, or a utopian egalitarian community of acceptance and inclusion depends entirely on each of us as members of the same species. In an interview with Constance Grady in June 2017, Atwood was asked whether she was optimistic about the future since at the heart of all her dystopias lie very real utopian possibilities; the author replied:

> There is no 'the future.' There is an infinite number of possible futures. Which one will actually become the future? It's going to depend on how we behave now. So it's not actually going to be up to me, what sort of future we are going to have. It's going to be much more up to you. You're going to be around for it, whereas I'm actually not. (Atwood and Grady)

By opening up a space for the possibility of a utopian future in the midst of a radically dystopian present, Atwood and Piercy rekindle utopian hopes and desires even as they issue a grim warning that if humanity continues along the same path of destruction and

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exploitation, its very survival may well be at risk. In effect, by interweaving dystopian/gothic fears and terrors of the inevitable destruction of humanity with utopian possibilities and hopes of a (r)evolutionary futurity, Atwood and Piercy compel readers to think critically about their own responsibility and accountability for the state of the world and its future(s).

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Part III: Animality and Postcolonial Narratives

Chapter 5

The Postcolonial Animal in J. M. Coetzee and Bernard Malamud

The Jewish writers discussed in Part I of this dissertation explore the catastrophic relationship between humanity and animality and expose the deadly consequences of the reduction of a group of people into beetles, rodents, and other creatures, into bare lives and *homines sacri* that were later killed by the millions with relative impunity. The feminist authors analysed in Part II study and reconfigure the demeaning and debilitating capacity of the link between femininity and animality within the genre of the fairy tale and the utopian/dystopian potential of posthuman figures that threaten the rigidity of any categorizations regarding the human and the inhuman. The third and final part attempts to consider the intricate relationship between race and animality and the marginalization and oppression of specific groups of people based on their racial descent – especially black South Africans and African Americans. In essence, the authors discussed in this part not only explore the philosophical discourses that rendered black bodies inferior, primitive, bestial, and savage and thus, their systematic oppression justified and even necessary for the preservation of the wellbeing of society, but also take an ethical stance against authoritarian regimes based on racial segregation and sanctioned violence.

In a sense, the origins of racism and of the creed of racial superiority date all the way back to 5th century BC Athens and to Aristotle who emerges, according to Charles W. Mills, "as the trailblazing racist thinker of the Western world" (Mills 20). Even though he never explicitly used the term race or evoked racial difference, in his *Politics*, Aristotle differentiates between Hellenes and barbarians and maintains that barbarians "are by nature slaves" because they are "more servile in character than Hellenes" (Aristotle 73). The use made of both slaves and animals is quite similar since they both minister to the needs of life with their bodies; thus, nature involves a crucial distinction between the bodies of freemen and slaves, "making the one strong for servile labour, the other upright, and although useless for such services, useful for political life in the arts both of war and peace" (Aristotle 9). It becomes clear then that, for Aristotle, some men are by nature free and others, slaves, "and that for this latter slavery is both expedient and right" (Aristotle 9). Of course, many other ancient Greek thinkers made similar assertions. Euripides wrote, in his *Iphigenia at Aulis,* that "It's proper for Greeks to rule barbarians […] not barbarians Greeks, because they are slaves, but Greeks are free!" (Euripides 381). The philosopher Thales also equates the

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"inferior" categories of barbarian, woman, and animal by reportedly giving thanks to fortune for three things: "first, that I was born a human and not a beast, next that I was born a man and not a woman, third that I was born a Greek and not a barbarian" (Thales qtd in Blondell 23). In general, even though the ancient Greeks were often fascinated by barbarian and "alien peoples", as Ruby Blondell maintains, "they shared with most human cultures a tendency to despise those who were different from themselves, and to conceptualize those Others in ways that supported their own process of self-definition and self-glorification" (Blondell 22). The term *barbarous,* which took on pejorative connotations even in antiquity, later evolved into the word "barbarian" as it is used today to refer to an uncivilised, savage, primitive, and brutish member of a non-white racial background.

Today, of course, the notion of race as a meaningful criterion within the biological sciences has long been recognised to be a fiction. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. asserts, "when we speak of 'the white race' or 'the black race,' 'the Jewish race' or 'the Aryan race,' we speak in biological misnomers and, more generally, in metaphors" (Gates 4). Nonetheless, daily conversations are overrun with uses of "race" which have their dubious origins in the pseudoscientific evolutionary theories of the 18th and 19th centuries, which were used to justify and legitimize imperialism. As Patrick Bratlinger maintains, "the theory that man evolved through distinct social stages – from savagery to barbarism to civilization – led to self-congratulatory anthropology that actively promoted belief in the inferiority – indeed, the bestiality – of the African" (Bratlinger 203). For example, Benjamin Rush (1745-1813), a Founding Father of the American Republic and a physician, wrote an article in 1799 arguing that black people were really white underneath, but they were infected with a hereditary, non-contagious skin disease called "negroidism". Some side-effects of what Rush viewed as a form of leprosy were darker skin, an increased sexual appetite and virility, big lips, and woolly heads. The disease, he suggested, could be cured by "depletion, whether by bleeding, purging, or abstinence", which "has been often observed to lessen the black colour in negroes" (Rush 296). Rush did not believe that whites' superiority gave them an excuse to terrorize the infected but argued that they should under no circumstances procreate with them, as measures were needed to prevent the contagion of "negroidism" in posterity. Another example is Petrus Camper (1722–89), a Dutch scholar who used craniometry to "scientifically" explore and justify white superiority and black inferiority. As Miriam Claude Meijer notes,

> the results of Camper's measurements were illustrated by a series of profiled heads manifesting a progressive lowering of the facial angle. From the idealized Greek statue profile (100 degrees), the angle descended through the

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> European (80 degrees), Asian and African (both 70 degrees), to the orangutan (58 degrees) and tailed monkey (42 degrees). (Meijer 3)

Seemingly proving racial difference and hierarchy, Camper, along with other pseudoscientists, including the naturalist Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1772–1844), the American physical anthropologist Samuel George Morton (1799–1851), and the anthropologist Paul Broca (1824–80) popularized craniometry in the context of providing "objective" legitimation for white supremacy and black bestiality.

By the latter end of the 19th century and in the period of the rise of modern imperialism, eugenicists and social Darwinists began taking things a step further. In *The Origin of Civilization* (1870), John Lubbock asserted that "the lower races of man in various parts of the world present us with illustrations of a social condition ruder, and more archaic, than any which history records as having ever existed among the more advanced races" (Lubbock 1-2). The implications of this inveterate inferiority became more and more explicitly genocidal: in the *Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin himself asserted that there were superior and inferior races and that "[a]t some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races" (Darwin 201). According to Darwin, the savages, whom he likens to apes or gorillas in size, strength, or ferocity, would inevitably vanish as the "fitter" advanced much like the Native Americans, Tasmanians, the Maoris, and the Aboriginals in Australia were decimated by more civilised and progressive races. A further example can be found in George Romanes' *Mental Evolution in Man* (1889), which argues that modern savages are closer to gorillas than to modern gentlemen and they might present a way for "scientists" to bridge "the psychological distance which separate the gorilla from the gentleman" (Romanes 439).

A few years later, Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution* (1894) asserts that "weaker races" would inevitably be destroyed by the stronger ones, much like "the Anglo-Saxon has exterminated the less developed peoples with which he has come into competition not necessarily indeed by fierce and cruel wars of extermination, but through the operation of laws not less deadly and even more certain in their result" (Kidd 46). Finally, in *National Life from the Standpoint of Science* (1901), Karl Pearson proposed that "no strong and permanent civilization can be built upon slave labour, [and] an inferior race doing menial labour for a superior race can give no stable community" (Pearson 47). Thus, in order to have "a healthy social state in South Africa", Pearson proposed that white men replace "the dark" in all manual labour positions so as to eradicate them completely or at least push them back towards the equator; "the nation organised for the struggle [of existence] must be a

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homogeneous whole, not a mixture of superior and inferior races" (Pearson 47-48). Overall, during the 18th and 19th centuries, anthropology, evolutionary theory, and social science had become tools for the study of racial difference and forms of scientific rationalization for empire since they supposedly proved, as Bratlinger asserts, "that Africans, if not nonhuman or a different species, were such an inferior 'breed' that they might be impervious to 'higher influences'" (Bratlinger 201). Hence, they should either be placed under "imperial guardianship" and treated as "nothing more than potential labour" or exterminated, like so many other inferior and savage peoples before them (Bratlinger 203).

The impact of the European and North American idea that there existed irresistible and unsurpassable differences between races, which constituted a species barrier dividing (white) humanity from its bestialized counterparts is also evidenced by a plethora of literary texts produced in the era of high imperialism, including Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Rudyard Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King* (1901), H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1889) and many others. For these writers, as Gates maintains, race had become "a trope of ultimate, irreducible difference" (Gates 5). At the same time, however, it was already apparent that there were no objective bases upon which to determine racial character; its definition depended entirely on the conjunctural interests of the imperialist oppressors. As a result, the literature of empire employs images of radical racial difference in order to produce the *raison d'être* of what it otherwise pretends to merely describe, namely, imperial conquest. In effect, the natives' "curious" beliefs, "strange" customs, "indecent" physical appearance, and most importantly their supposed lack of rational thought and comprehensible language, are made to appear as the natural, fixed, and essential characteristics that render them not merely racially different but also perennially inferior to white civilised colonisers. The latter could consequently take it upon themselves to enlighten, govern, lead, teach, convert, and punish the savages.

But "races", as Gates would assert, are imaginary, metaphorical, and very dangerous categories used to divide and oppress; countless people have been persecuted, tortured, and/or killed throughout the years in the name of differences ascribed solely to race. To the extent that such violence depends on a gesture of deprecation and bestialization of the other, it has occasioned, on the part of those speaking on behalf of its victims, a critical interrogation that aims to uncover the concealed relations of knowledge and power inherent in popular and academic deployments of racial difference as a form of species difference. In this chapter I analyse the ways in which, through their works, both Bernard Malamud and J. M. Coetzee explore the suggestive link between humanity and animality in order to expose

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the fictitious aspect of racial Manicheanism and to challenge its oppressive and discriminatory nature within a posthuman, postcolonial context.

Last Man Standing: Posthuman Colonialism and the Simianization of the Black Body

The first work that is discussed in this chapter is Bernard Malamud's 1982 novel *God's Grace*. Resonating with the apocalyptic, science fiction and utopian/dystopian elements in Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, Malamud's last work narrates the journey of Calvin Cohn, the sole human survivor of a thermonuclear war and God's second Flood, who attempts to create a civilized, moral, educated utopian enclave with the few primates who also endured. In this post-apocalyptic world, a wrathful and explicitly non-anthropomorphic God has punished humanity with a great Flood, after humans burn the world down with the last of their great wars. A palaeontologist who survives only by a small oversight, a "miniscule error" on the part of God, Cohn originally befriends a young chimpanzee, Buz, who used to be the subject of scientific experiments that have given him the ability to speak (Malamud 3). Together, they move to a tropical island which subsequently proves to be inhabited with other primate survivors of the Fire and the Flood, and they attempt to rebuild civilization and create a community based on mutual understanding, compassion, and cooperation under the tutelage of Cohn himself. Originally, these apes appear to be primitive and savage animals, in many ways inferior to both the human Cohn and the genetically enhanced Buz. As a result, Cohn feels it is his obligation as the last of the superior beings to teach and train the apes in order for them to acquire human-like behavioural and mental attributes. In other words, since for Cohn his humanity immediately confers on him the innate capacity for rational thought, language, creative invention, and moral understanding, he uses any means necessary – including violence – to elevate the apes to something resembling humanity. The link between perceptions of human superiority over the other races of animals (especially the apes, who are traditionally considered humanity's closest relatives) and the white man's drive to educate and civilize them under the precept of a God-send mandate, offers a first point of access into a postcolonial reading of Malamud's narrative.

To begin with, it is important to note that unlike most post-apocalyptic dystopian narratives that explore the intersections of technological advances and the creation of new species of creatures to inherit the world, Malamud's novel negotiates the juncture between Judeo-Christian religion and the reversion to a more primitive natural world. In the words with which God informs Cohn of what had occurred while he was conducting an underwater experiment in his oceanographic vessel:

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> The present Devastation, ending in smoke and dust, comes as a consequence of man's self-betrayal. From the beginning, when I gave them the gift of life, they were perversely greedy for death. At last, I thought, I will give them death because they engrossed in evil. They have destroyed my handiwork, the conditions of their survival […] They tore apart my ozone, carbonized my oxygen, acidified my refreshing rain […] I made man to be free, but his freedom, badly used, destroyed him. In sum, the evil overwhelmed the good. The Second Flood, this that now subsides on the broken earth, they brought on themselves. They had not lived according to the Covenant. (Malamud 5)

Malamud's God, another incarnation of the wrathful God of the Old Testament, has made it perfectly clear that his anger is directed towards humanity and not the rest of creation; therefore, contrary to Cohn's assumptions, the survival of Buz and the other simians is not really an oversight but rather an intentional act of divine intervention. In other words, Malamud's God clearly states his loathing towards what humanity has become while implying his intent to protect the rest of Creation. This double gesture marks and validates the distance between humanity and the simians and the link between the latter and the natural world; the animals are intended to survive, though there is "no Noah this time, no exceptions, righteous or otherwise" (Malamud 6). As a result, Cohn's existence also has an expiration date; he must be slain, "it is just" (Malamud 6). Yet, he will be allowed a short time to compose himself and to make his peace with God and His decision.

One of the most significant aspects of Malamud's critique of scientific arrogance is that contrary to other post-apocalyptic science fiction narratives such as Atwood's or Piercy's that employ supernatural bioengineered, alien, or machinic others as means to interrogate the path down which humanity is heading, Malamud's postcolonial narrative deploys the residually non-human rather than the properly postmodern posthuman as figure of the post-apocalyptic future. The fact that Malamud employs the figures of apes, chimpanzees, gorillas, and baboons – primates traditionally thought as humans' evolutionary ancestors – is, as I suggested above, particularly revealing within a postcolonial context. On the one hand, apes, monkeys, and other primates have by themselves a privileged relation to both nature and culture in Western thought; as Haraway maintains in *Primate Visions*, "simians occupy the border zones between those potent mythic poles" (Haraway, *Primate Visions* 1). Even before Darwin's theory of evolution and its misreading as a theory that suggested modern man was the descendant of apes as the fittest in the evolutionary chain, humans have always been aware of a physiological and biological kinship between themselves and other primates. The latter have held a privileged position in research within

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different life and human sciences such as anthropology, biology, medicine, palaeontology, linguistics, and others, and have encompassed an immense array of human dreams, hopes and aporias. In fact, they emerge alongside human beings in primatology inside intricate narratives about "origins, natures, and possibilities" and they become intermediaries between the superior world of humans and the lower world of other animals for Western thought (Haraway, *Primate Visions* 5). Consequently, as Haraway adds, "in European, American, and Japanese societies, monkeys and apes have been subjected to sustained, culturally specific interrogations of what it means to be 'almost human'" (Haraway, *Primate Visions* 2). In essence, since they exist at the boundaries between the human being and the non-human animal, they become ideal means with whom to investigate "the permeability of walls, the reconstitution of boundaries, the distaste for endless socially enforced dualisms" (Haraway, *Primate Visions* 3).

On the other hand, the fact that they are not quite human renders these simians ideal metaphors utilized by derogatory propaganda in support of racial segregation. In effect, even though the connection between racial difference and animality stretches back to antiquity, simianization is a relatively contemporary discourse that operates as a vehicle of defamation until today. As Wulf D. Hund, Charles W. Mills and Silvia Sebastiani maintain in their editorial introduction to *Simianization: Apes, Gender, Class, and Race Overall,* "the ape stereotype represents elements of a canon of dehumanization which are part of larger verbal and visual metaphoric systems linking the Other with objects or animals, dirt or germs, things that require managing, cleansing, or elimination" (Hund, Mills and Sebastiani 15). Although employed in several contexts – with the Irish, the Jews, the Japanese and even the Germans having served as the targets of simianization discourses – in modernity "the ape stereotype has taken particularly malicious forms with regard to Africa and people of African descent" (Hund, Mills and Sebastiani 15). In essence, through a flood of ascriptions and assumptions encompassing the "construction and imputation of sexual violence and racial contamination", the ape stereotype has evolved into one of the most tenacious markers of black otherness (Hund, Mills and Sebastiani 15).

The simianization of people of African descend and the hateful association between blacks and apes or monkeys became particularly popular in the West during the 18th and 19th centuries, largely due to the constant efforts of the antebellum South to justify slavery. Blacks were perceived as more simian than human and were thus considered to be devoid of rational thought, critical thinking, literary capacity, or freedom. On the contrary, they were presented as violent and brutal, driven by unhindered sexuality and predatory primal instincts. Even after the Civil War, the abolition of slavery, and the introduction of the 13th,

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14th, and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution, white supremacists would still employ the link to account for the need for Jim Crow laws and racist vigilante groups as means of maintaining the status quo. From the mandated segregation of public schools, transportation and other places such as restrooms, restaurants, and drinking fountains for whites and blacks to lynching, hangings, castrations with razor blades, bombings, shootings, stabbings, and rapes, the effects of the simianization discourse on African-Americans culminated during the 1920s, when white racist organisations such as the Ku Klux Klan reached over 4 million members including members of Congress, the armed forces, and the business elite. James Q. Whitman even maintains that two radically discriminatory pieces of legislation that Nazi Germany passed in 1935 known as the Nuremberg Laws, which laid the legal foundation for the persecution of the Jews during WWII, were in fact inspired by the Jim Crow laws and the denigration and oppression of the African-Americans.[19] In effect, the USA, "with its deeply rooted white supremacy and its vibrant and innovative legal culture", provided a model of legal disenfranchisement and discrimination that was entirely based on the simianization of African-Americans (Whitman 138).

Evidently, modernity has elevated the figure of the ape into a fundamental signifier of the African-American's bestial inferiority; as Mills notes, "Africans were, after all, native to the very continent where apes were most prevalent" (Mills 30). The substitution of one for the other, the simianization of black bodies, is enabled by the fact that from a racist perspective, the ape "spans the figurative and the literal in a way no other animal can" (Mills 30). As a matter of fact, even the most uncompromising anti-Semitists could not really think that Jews were literally rats or vermin, despite their best effort to turn them into such; pushed to their limits as much as possible and despite their murderous consequences, these devastating connections could only remain metaphorical. As Mills explains, however, "the ape-man seemed like a real possibility even before Darwin's work revealed the family connection", rendering literal bestialization a reality even within a secular framework (Mills 30). What is more, even when the literal identity of Africans and apes is denied, it generates a semiotic aura that overdetermines any comparison regardless of how innocent or satirical

[19] At the annual rally of the Nazi party held in Nuremberg in 1935, the Nazis announced the introduction of three new pieces of legislation that would institutionalize many of the racial theories prevalent in Nazi ideology. The first was the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German honour, which forbade interracial and extramarital intercourse between Jews and Germans and the employment of German females under the age of 45 in Jewish households. The second was the Reich Citizenship Law, which declared that only those of German or related blood were deemed as state subjects; the rest were considered state subjects without citizenship rights. Of course, as Whitman maintains, there was another law preceding the two, the Flag Law for the Reich, provoked by an incident in New York whereby a group of opponents of Hitler stormed the *SS Bremen*, ripped the swastika down and tossed it into the Hudson River (Whitman 19-20).

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it might appear: “though it is natural biological causality that will primarily be invoked, the earlier black magic has not fully been exorcised, especially when the Africans are involved, and the funny monkey turns into the insurgent killer ape” (Mills 30). The character of King Kong (originally appearing in 1933), for example, is both an evolutionary anomaly, an outgrowth gone off track and a gigantic black deity of the black jungle savages who revere him and sacrifice to him; he becomes, as Mills notes, “the demonic ape who brings together in one terrifying entity pre-modern diabolization and modern bestialization” (Mills 31).

It is no surprise, therefore, that during the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries the simianization of blacks also found an expression in US mainstream popular culture: African-Americans were depicted with exaggerated simian features such as great height, particularly elongated arms, prominently thick lips, and wide flat noses. These ironic “coon caricatures”, often found in newspapers or on postcards along with their antebellum precursor, blackface minstrelsy, were meant to cater to the White supremacist idea that blacks were too stupid to realise their natural, inherited, and inherent inferiority. Until today, several black celebrities such as athletes, actors, singers, and politicians have been depicted as apes or as ape-like both inside and outside mainstream pop culture: witness the cartoon of basketball player Michael Jordan portrayed as a massive ape or the multiple images, memes, and gifs of Barack and Michelle Obama as monkeys and apes that circulated in 2008 and 2009. Even though many white Americans claim to be unaware of the devastating history of the association between blacks and apes, the multiple occurrences of the link throughout the advertising industry implies at least a subconscious engagement with it. For example, a black “Cuddle With Me" doll released in 2009 was packaged wearing a hat that read “Lil Monkey” and holding a monkey stuffed toy, while a 2017 advert for *H&M* featured a young black boy wearing a hoodie with the inscription “Coolest Monkey in the Jungle”. Therefore, when an American author like Malamud decides to populate his post-apocalyptic world with a group of simians and a white Western scientist who decides that they must be acculturated and educated in order to build an ideal society, one needs to consider the possibility that within his narrative we are working within a historically annihilating association that must be critiqued and deconstructed.

Malamud’s main simian protagonist is Buz (originally named Gottlob), a chimpanzee who is Cohn’s companion and adopted son. Cohn finds him stowed away on the vessel shortly after the deluge, and the two form a bond out of necessity. For a very long time the two are thought to be the only survivors of the Flood and they rely heavily on each other for their survival. Much to Cohn’s surprise, Buz appears to have gained the ability to speak due to a mechanical apparatus surgically embedded in his throat, put there by the ape's previous

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"owner", Dr. Bünder. Among the first things that Buz tells the astonished Cohn is that animals can talk, and that they do talk amongst themselves; if you can communicate with one living animal you can communicate with all his relations. This inspires Cohn to use Buz and his outstanding ability to speak in order to conduct a study regarding the nature of communication and speech in man. At first, Cohn helps Buz enunciate consonants and most vowels in a U.S. accent. Then, Buz begins his language studies by reading selected pages from the dictionary to extend his vocabulary, though he tries to speed up the process by eating a few pages every now and then. Soon enough, Buz becomes capable of complex thinking, including the comprehension of the meaning of pauses and silences, metaphors, similes and symbols; but most importantly, he reflects on the nature of the spoken word. The last question helps launch a rather interesting dialogue between the Western Jewish scientist and the naïve chimp, with the former reiterating every assumption made by Western philosophy about the link between human superiority, reason, and *logos* and the latter innocently (or not) poking holes into the argument. Language, Cohn asserts, renders humans superior to all other creatures: "it's through language that a man becomes more finely and subtly man – a sensitive, principled, civilized human being – as he opens himself to other men – by comprehending, describing, and communicating his experience, aspirations, and nature – such as it is. Or was" (Malamud 69). Buz consequently wonders whether the acquisition of language transforms even a chimp into a human being and Cohn's answer is particularly revealing; in effect, Cohn responds that since humans and simians share common ancestry over eons of evolution it would not be unlikely for an improved version of homo sapiens to arise in a few millennia. To be human, according to Cohn, "was to be responsible to and protective of life and civilization" but given the fact that in every post-apocalyptic narrative humans are responsible for the destruction of the natural world, Buz corrosively asserts that he would rather be a chimp (Malamud 70).

A few weeks later, Cohn and Buz discover many other simians that have also survived the Flood, forming primary and secondary clusters around the community that Cohn and Buz have created. Embracing his self-anointed "new Adam" persona, Cohn wastes no time in naming them after prominent figures from the Old Testament and, with Buz's help, after some figures from the New Testament as well. The first of the primary group of simians is Esau, a conceited and confrontational "alpha ape" who is constantly in conflict with Buz, Cohn, or both, because he wants to assert his authority over the rest. The second is Melchior, a highly respectable elderly ape who assumes leadership when Esau fails, and Luke and Saul of Tarsus, a pair of juvenile, mischievous twin apes who are slow of speech and easily influenced by Esau. The final member of this primary group of simians is Mary

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Madelyn, a reserved, intelligent, young ape who is the target of a number of sexual advances because she is the only female ape on the island. There are, of course, secondary clusters forming outside the main community such as a group of eight baboons that appear inexplicably on the island or George, a gorilla – the only on the island – whose stature, silence, and genetic differences render him a pariah despite Cohn's attempts at diplomatic resolution. Even though it is not clearly stated, it is implied that all these simians have survived the Second Flood because of divine Providence, probably in order to repopulate the Earth after humanity has become extinct.

Disregarding God's intentions, or better yet not fully understanding His plan, Cohn wishes to perform another secular miracle, similar to the one he achieved with Buz: he plans to educate and acculturate the other simians, setting the foundation for the creation of a new "humanity" on the planet. But Cohn's original intention to set up a school in order to give the apes language lessons becomes irrelevant when Buz casually announces that he has already taught the others how to speak the English language. Even though the scientist cannot comprehend how the simians had learnt to speak English, he is elated, since this implies that his vision of the repopulation of the planet with a new species of homo sapiens is a possibility; as Cohn asserts, "after a frightening period of incoherence, there was now a breath of settled purpose in the universe" (Malamud 107). The chimps, in turn, quickly incorporate complex words into their vocabularies, grasping abstract notions such as justice, ontology, or ethics, while embracing the established etiquettes of Western civility and propriety. In essence, their ability to speak enables the creation of "a sensible arrangement of the lives of apes on the island into a functioning social community, interacting lives; and with Cohn as advisor and protector to help them understand themselves and the social contract" (Malamud 127). Language, Cohn maintains, can transform the uncivilized brutes into an evolved species; they are no longer the chimps their fathers were because they can talk. Hence, they have "an obligation to communicate, speak as equals, work and together build, evolved into concerned, altruistic living beings" much like humans (Malamud 127). In fact, Cohn stops viewing them as non-human to such an extent that he ignores all Western taboos surrounding bestiality and copulates with the only female on the island, the "more human" ape Mary Madelyn, and has a hybrid child with her, Rebekah Islanda. The female, hybrid child encloses all of Cohn's hopes and aspirations for the creation of a better future and the establishment of a Utopian community on the island and transforms the Jewish scientist into what he intended to be from the beginning of the story: a new Adam.

But this utopian prospect remains problematic to the precise extent that, far from being futural, it recycles the fundamental "humanist" (and often inhuman) ideas of the past:

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Cohn's mindset reiterates the primacy of *logos* as a foundation of the hierarchical designation of some people as superior and others as inferior. Indeed, the ability to think and express those thoughts verbally has always been a sign of racial and specieal superiority. The correlation of "black" and "stupid" is often posited by colonial writers as if it were self-evident, since black people, along with Jews, women, slaves, natives, machines, and animals are members of a group traditionally deemed to be lacking in reason and thus felt to be in many ways closer to nature than culture and hence inferior to white males and their Western patriarchal societies. From Aristotle to Spivak and Derrida, many thinkers have both supported and criticized the use of language and thought as a means of rendering specific groups of people less than human in order to then justify their oppression, exploitation, enslavement, or even extermination. As a result, in order to fully understand the importance of the simians' acquisition of language for Malamud's postcolonial narrative and his critique of racial segregation and discrimination, we need to turn to the history of the discussion around speech and *logos* in Western thought, as well as to its import within the postcolonial literary context.

Speaking of the (Un)Spoken: The Absence of Logos and the Question of the (Sub)human

Undeniably, the primacy of speech for Western thought is not a novel invention but has been at the epicentre of philosophic considerations since the ancient Greeks and especially Aristotle. In his *Politics*, Aristotle makes a crucial differentiation between *logos* and *phone*, that is, speech and mere "voice". The "political animal" that is man, Aristotle contends, possesses both voice and speech whereas other animals possess only voice:

> Now, that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals [...], the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. (Aristotle 5)

The distinction between speech and voice is fundamental for Aristotle since it is the basis upon which he differentiates between man as a political animal and other animals, between the "expedient" and "inexpedient", slavery and freedom, and finally, between what is just and unjust. From an Aristotelian perspective, the simians' inability to speak is what has

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traditionally rendered them inferior to man; this is the reason why Cohn is convinced that his "functional social unit" would never be realised if the apes remained unable to verbally communicate with each other. For him, then, the simians had to develop the ability to speak in order to elevate themselves to the status of "political animals" and be able to make ethical judgements using their freedom of will.

Cohn's utopian dream, however, quickly turns into a dystopian nightmare: along with the ability to speak, the simians gain a variety of human follies such as covetousness, cruelty, vindictiveness, and a penchant for violence; in a sense, the more human they become the more brutally they treat those around them. Ironically, the group of male talking apes comprising of Esau, Luke, Saul of Tarsus, Esterhazy, Bromberg, and, on occasion, Buz, begin marginalizing and terrorizing the simians that were unable to speak. They call George the gorilla a stinking "fat, stupid pig" even if they are not able to inflict any physical harm to him. As for the group of baboons who live near the ape's encampment, they do not escape this fate and are subjected to the most extreme physical violence as well as psychological torment; Esau asserts that "baboons don't belong here because they are strangers […] they look like monkeys with dog-heads" (Malamud 186). The group's hatred towards the baboons, who are considered inferior animalistic creatures manifests itself when they track down a young female baboon named Sara and proceeded to separating her from her family, hunting her down, killing her, dismembering her, and then consuming her parts down to the marrow of her bones. The cannibalistic behaviour, which was in no way part of their animal instincts (since before the Flood the apes were strictly herbivorous), shocks, horrifies, embitters, and appals Cohn, who calls them "depraved killers" (Malamud 190). When Cohn confronts them, their justification sounds a lot like the racist and fascist propaganda that dominated 20th century political discourses surrounding anti-Semitism and imperial colonialism: "the baboons are dirty, stinking, thieving monkeys, interfering into everybody's business. They breed like rats and foul up all over the clean bush. If we don't control their population, they will squat all over this island and we will have to get off" (Malamud 194). The following day, the apes, led by Esau again, track, hunt, kill, and ferociously cannibalise another baboon child, becoming in Cohn's eyes serial offenders.

It is crucial that the simians' destructive behaviour so directly evokes for its justification a discourse reminiscent of racist propaganda. In the postbellum period, several white US writers would refer to black people – and especially black men – as "fiends"; they characterized the black man as the most terrible and terrifying creature on Earth, the most ruthless and cruel, the most lustfully crazed and beastly. Others described them as rapacious apes wanting to ravage white maidens; what is more, "black men, it was supposed,

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obsessively craved sex with white women, whom they savagely raped at every opportunity" (Smith and Panaitiu 99). Thomas Dixon's novel *The Clansman*, which was part of a Ku Klux Klan trilogy and the foundation of the notorious film *The Birth of a Nation* portrays black slaves reverting to their especially savage bestial nature once freed. In the novel, Gus, a freed slave with "gleaming apelike" eyes, "thin spindleshanks" supporting "an oblong, protruding stomach, resembling an elderly monkey's" and uncontrollable animal desires, rapes a white girl. He approaches the girl and with a "single fierce leap […] the black claws clutched the air slowly as if sinking into the soft white throat" (Dixon 234). The language of Dixon's novel echoed the language of everyday life in the American south at the time; as Smith and Panaitiu note, "it was the language of mobs bent on wreaking vengeance on their former slaves" (Smith and Panaitiu 100). The idea that black men were murderous, sexually deprived, rampant apes "both motivated and justified the epidemic of lynching" black men, who were savagely beaten, hanged and burnt, their sexual organs mutilated by bloodthirsty white mobs. Such violence legitimated itself in terms of defensive retaliation: in many cases, "eyewitnesses" maintained that brutes with "gorilla ferocity" had attacked white girls, tearing them asunder in "mad wantonness". These alleged assaults were depicted as "indescribably beastly and loathsome" marked "by a diabolical persistence and a malignant atrocity of detail that have no reflection in the whole extent of the natural history of the most bestial and ferocious animals" (Smith and Panaitiu 99).

What kind of simians did such writers and commentators in the post-Reconstruction South have in mind? Many anthropologists and primatologists such as Barbara Smuts would agree that apes, gorillas, or baboons live peacefully in family-oriented groups, eating leaves or fruit and hanging from trees. Unprovoked, they are not only harmless to humans, but they can even form lasting meaningful friendships with the scientists living among them regardless of gender. Malamud's simians are originally described as such: peaceful, simpleminded creatures, eating fruit and hanging from trees. It is only after they acquire speech, culture, and the best of humanity's accomplishments according to Western standards that they also acquire the imperial West's sense of superiority, pride, territoriality, and dominance over all other life forms. Since they couldn't speak, the baboons would inevitably be used as livestock for the ape community to be worked, bred, and consumed upon demand.

Ironically, the transformation of simians into the worst aspects of the human renders Cohn redundant in a way he has not foreseen. Even though he cursed at the apes, admonished them for their actions, and even tried to reason with them, he is no longer considered the leader/teacher/father of the group; he, the one human character of the novel, begins to feel himself a failure: "How can they survive if they do to fellow survivors what men did to each

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other before the Second Flood?" (Malamud 203). The male apes' brutality escalates when they invade Cohn's cave and kill Rebekah Islanda by tossing her like a ball amongst themselves for sport. The enraged and grief-stricken Cohn tries to take back the language and humanity that he had given the apes and hence their murderous brutality but all he manages to do is to overpower Buz and to snap the wires of his artificial voice box, depriving him of speech. Infuriated, Gottlob (formerly known as Buz) savagely rapes Mary Madelyn and by doing so he becomes the "Alpha Ape" since he shames Esau with his sexual prowess (Malamud 216). With his family torn to pieces, Cohn's suffering soon comes to an end since Gottlob ties him up and offers him as sacrifice to God. In a scrambled version of the Abrahamic sacrifice, Buz/Gottlob slits his "father's" (Cohn's) throat without any animal substitute miraculously appearing to offer itself up for the slaughter. He thus fulfils God's dictate, at the beginning of the story: to end humanity's reign on the world. The future of the world after humanity's extinction remains unknown within the narrative and there are no hints as to whether the simians will revert back to their primitive animalistic natures or, more likely, whether they will evolve into a new kind of homo sapiens that would occupy, dominate, and exploit the rest of creation.

In Malamud's novel, then, the asymmetrical distinction between speech and voice not only strengthens the link between sub-humanity and animality but also works as the foundation of a critique against racial discrimination that takes the specific form of the simianization of black bodies. The asymmetry in the distinction between speech and voice, however, can be destabilized further, since within speech there is a second distinction between silence and muteness as opposites of *logos*. In *Silence: The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance*, Bernard Dauenhauer differentiates silence as active performance from muteness. He notes:

> The difference between muteness and silence is comparable to the difference between being without sight and having one's eyes closed. Muteness is simply the inarticulateness of that which is incapable of any sort of signifying performances. A man cannot be absolutely and permanently unconscious. Unlike muteness, silence necessarily involves conscious activity (Dauenhauer 4).

While Dauenhauer views silence as intentional and active, on the other hand, Michel Foucault regards silence as a correlate of power. In a well-known passage from *History of Sexuality*, Foucault claims:

> Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like

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> manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance. (Foucault 101)

In effect, intentional and indeterminate silences can be produced in a given discursive regime; the determination of language by power can be contested by silence, both intentionally and unintentionally. In *HumAnimal*, Kalpana Rahita Seshadri asserts:

> The place of silence, then, is both within and without language – a site of the inhuman, it is also the site where the traditional dichotomies (human/animal, sovereign/outlaw) and the traditional pairs (law/language, belonging/name, mind/body) find their mediation through the inoperativity of an active stillness (Seshadri 40).

If one accepts, therefore, that silence is not opposed to speech, that it has multiple operations, and that it can be a conscious attempt towards a preordained goal, then one realizes that silence presents a particular type of limit and/or threshold. When Derrida explores the abyss that separates human and animal he claims that

> The discussion becomes interesting once, instead of asking whether or not there is a limit that produces discontinuity, one attempts to think what a limit becomes once it is abyssal. Once the frontier no longer forms a single indivisible line but more than one internally divided line; once as a result, it can no longer be traced, objectified, or counted as single and indivisible. What are the edges of a limit that grows and multiplies by feeding on an abyss? (Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am* 30-31)

In order to answer such questions about boundaries of silences that feed upon the abyss, I would like now to turn to another postcolonially inflected text, J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*, which engages with the thematization of silence and muteness at a variety of different levels.

Foe is a recasting of Daniel Defoe's 1719 novel *Robinson Crusoe*, one of the most widely published books in history, and one associated with the rise of the novel form in English and with realist fiction as a literary genre. Defoe's *Crusoe* credits the book's fictional protagonist Robinson Crusoe – a man shipwrecked on a seemingly deserted island, trying to survive with what he can salvage from the ship – as the author. Combining what he salvages with his own skills and devices, he slowly builds his own private plantation/colony/kingdom. After rescuing a black captive, whom he comes to call Friday, from being eaten by cannibals, Crusoe teaches him English, converts him to Christianity and employs him at his plantation. Apart from the overtly religious and didactic elements of Defoe's novel, what is significant for our purposes are the explicitly colonial implications that arise from Crusoe's relationship

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to Friday. The idealization of the master/servant relationship that Defoe presents can only be seen in terms of cultural imperialism, with Crusoe as the Enlightened and superior European who takes it upon himself to "save" the barbarous savage through religious conversion and cultural assimilation, thus creating an ideal community. In his own words,

> My island was now peopled, and I thought myself very rich in subjects; and it was a merry reflection which I frequently made, how like a king I looked. First of all, the whole country was my own meer property; so that I had undoubted right of dominion, 2ndly, my people were perfectly subjected; I was absolute lord and lawgiver; they all owed their lives to me, and were ready to lay down their lives, if there had been occasion of it, for me. (Defoe 203)

Written in 1986, at a time when South Africa was plagued by the Apartheid policy, Coetzee's *Foe* renegotiates issues such as slavery and the position of silence within an oppressive regime by returning to this foundational moment in both the history of the Anglophone novel and that of colonial fiction. Coetzee's narrator is not Cruso but Susan Barton: a castaway on the island ruled by Cruso and his servant Friday whose tongue has been allegedly severed by slave traders. When Cruso dies, Susan decides to return to England with Friday seeking out Daniel Foe, the famous author (who is however, like the original Daniel Defoe, on the run from his creditors) in order to help her write the novel about her adventures on Cruso's island.

The mystery of Friday's silence is one that troubles Susan from the beginning of the story; early on she asks whether Friday was an "imbecile incapable of speech" (Coetzee, *Foe* 22). According to Cruso, Friday has no tongue; his tongue was severed by slavers who perhaps "grew weary of listening to Friday's wails of grief" or perhaps "they wanted to prevent him from telling his story", or perhaps it was punishment for being a cannibal. Outraged by Cruso's indifference to Friday's story, Susan protests: "First a slave and now a castaway too. Robbed of his childhood and consigned to a life of silence. Was providence sleeping?" (Coetzee, *Foe* 23). It is at this point that Cruso delivers one of the most interesting opinions in the text:

> 'If Providence were to watch over all of us,' said Cruso, 'who would be left to pick the cotton and cut the sugar-cane? For the business of the world to prosper, Providence must sometimes wake and sometimes sleep, as lower creatures do [...] You think I mock Providence. But perhaps it is the doing of Providence that Friday finds himself on an island under a lenient master, rather than in Brazil, under the planter's lash, or in Africa, where the forests teem with cannibals. Perhaps it is for the best, though we do not say so, that

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> he should be here, and that I should be here, and now that you should be here'. (Coetzee, *Foe* 23-24)

Cruso's argument is one that resonates closely with Defoe's Crusoe as well: Providence made it so that there are slaves to work for the masters' fields and plantations; Providence made sure that there are lower creatures in order to serve, and masters, like Cruso himself, who are lenient with their subjects. It is a colonialist viewpoint that renders Friday less than human, but it is also very much a part of a long Western tradition that busies itself with regulating the boundary between masters and slaves as much as that between humans and animals. This tradition begins at least as early as Aristotle, who also raises the question of whether slavery is natural or conventional and he comes to the conclusion that the first is more realistic since some are *naturally* slaves and others *naturally* masters. He argues:

> For that which can foresee by the exercise of mind is by nature intended to be lord and master, and that which can with his body give effect to such foresight is a subject, and by nature a slave [...] There is no difficulty in answering this question, on grounds both of reason and of fact. For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule. (Aristotle 4 & 8)

Providence, or, according to Aristotle, *Nature* marks some as slaves and others as masters based on their capacity (or incapacity) to reason, which in turn is deduced from his original differentiation of reasonable *logos* from merely passionate or sensuous *phone*.

Friday's silence thus only cements his position as an animalized figure, a creature that lacks not only language but also the mental capacity to grasp fundamental aspects of human existence. Interestingly enough, Cruso's account of Friday's situation convinces Susan to shape the way she views Friday. Whereas before she viewed him like "any house-slave in Brazil" now she begins to look at him "with the horror we reserve for the mutilated" (Coetzee, *Foe* 24). In Susan's eyes, Friday is less than a man; he is a languageless barbarian, an animalized figure who expresses himself in strange dances when in trance and who can never know fundamental human properties such as "freedom, honor, bliss" (Coetzee, *Foe* 149). At the same time, however, this identification with the *alogos* (reasonless) world of animals remains precarious: apart from Cruso's questionable testimony and Friday's seeming inability to utter words, there is no evidence to support Cruso's account of Friday's silence. When Cruso opens Friday's mouth to show Susan his severed tongue, she sees nothing because it is too dark. Furthermore, the story of Friday's severed tongue is relayed by Cruso, whom Susan herself views as an unreliable narrator. Of course, since Susan doesn't attempt

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to verify the story herself, by the time she meets Foe and discusses the issue with him, the idea that "the slavers served Friday when they robbed him of his tongue" becomes for her an unquestionable truth (*Coetzee, Foe 150*). Besides, Friday never offers some alternative account of the truth (nor does he verify the existing one for that matter). But questions remain: If Friday had been truly mutilated by slave-traders and was unable to utter words as a result, couldn't he have used body language or some sort of primitive form of sign language in order to convey meaning to both Cruso and later Susan, if he truly wished to tell his story? Couldn't we therefore more properly speak of a *refusal* to do so, a conscious attempt, as Dauenhauer might describe it, to resist any form of identification, that is, to refuse to become a voice in the narrative?

In contrast to Susan, who is seen as a failed narrator, Friday narrates nothing in the novel; he is, according to Lewis MacLeod, a "nonnarrator" (MacLeod 6). Unlike Susan, he refuses to put his life's story into anyone else's hands and as a result, "he seems to avoid the kind of conscription that troubles his more ambitious caretaker" (MacLeod 6). Many critics have been right to assume that his silence prevents him from becoming "the raw materials of somebody else's narrative" (MacLeod 6). Even after Foe takes over Susan's story and overwhelms her with an abundance of requests, Friday's silence remains impenetrable. In the end nobody has "spoken the unspoken" for the very reason that nobody is able to locate Friday or his story accurately enough to manipulate them. Susan asserts that "The story of Friday's tongue is a story unable to be told, or unable be told by me [her]. That is to say, many stories can be told of Friday's tongue, but the true story is buried within Friday, who is mute" (Coetzee, *Foe* 118). Through his silence, therefore, Friday "retains a measure of elusive dignity", as Macleod argues (MacLeod 7). To this extent, his speechlessness is meant to be viewed as a means of refusing to "plant the seed, the story, that will finally have him sitting at the feet of his 'superiors'" (MacLeod 7). Whereas, then, earlier criticism on *Foe* seems to interpret Friday's silence as "the sign of his oppression" (Attridge 183) or to regard "Friday's loss" as a way to distinguish between different understandings of marginality (Spivak 170), one could argue that his silence can be seen as a sign of resistance to the oppressive power that tries to define him, incorporating him within another "grand narrative" [20]. If we accept, even provisionally, that Friday does have a tongue and chooses to remain

[20] In his classic 1979 work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* Jean-François Lyotard introduces the terms grand narrative, "master narrative", or "metanarrative" to define a narrative about narratives of historical meaning, knowledge, or experience. This grand narrative offers a society legitimation through the expected completion of a (as yet unrealized) master idea; a grand narrative, as he claims, is an "apparatus for legitimation" (Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* xxiv). "Simplifying to the extreme," the philosopher defines the postmodern condition as "incredulity towards metanarratives" and views this mistrust

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silent, then his silence is not like Susan considers, "a helpless silence", but "an epic gesture of defiance", as "a heroic restraint, a triumph of individual agency against insistent demands that he participate in some kind of master narrative and the discourse it posits" (Coetzee, *Foe* 122; MacLeod 11-12).

Susan, however, identifies another avenue that could possibly enable the story of Friday to be told; as Susan states, "The true story will not be heard till *by art* we have found a means of giving voice to Friday" (Coetzee, *Foe* 118; emphasis added). In this context, it is particularly significant to analyze the term "art", since it implies both the artifice of such endeavor as well as the application of creative skill and imagination for artistic production: the artifice of the literary imagination becomes the artistic avenue through which Coetzee reinvents Defoe's narrative in order to attempt to give a voice to Friday or better yet to make his silence speak. It is telling in this respect that in her effort to convey everything that took place on Cruso's island and her later exile in England, Susan soon starts to realize the "possible impossibility of literature" (Seshadri 54). On several occasions in her own narrative, Susan observes the existence of an unspeakable and unruly alterity that haunts and at the same time structures every act of narrating. At one point, Susan looks at Foe's work and realizes that he has been writing the same story over and over, in version after version, stillborn every time: the story of the island, as lifeless from his hand as from mine [hers]" (Coetzee, *Foe* 151). In essence, something prevents both their stories from becoming fertile, from bearing fruit. This inassimilable alterity could be viewed as a figurative *foe* that displaces both the canonical author Foe (Defoe) and Susan herself as the narrator of the novel that bears *Foe* as its title, marking a textual terrain beyond the control of the Foe "who is both the would-be author and the real has-been author of a certain inaugural novel of a literary tradition called *Robinson Crusoe*" (Seshadri 54).

Seshadri's observation might become clearer if we consider the scene when Susan begins to realize this possible impossibility of literature:

> 'Mr Foe' I said. 'I have come to a resolution.' But the man seated at the table was not Foe. It was Friday, with Foe's robes on his back and Foe's wig, filthy as a bird's nest, on his head. In his hand, poised over Foe's papers, he held a quill with a drop of blank ink glistening at its tip. I gave a cry and sprang forward to snatch it away. But at that moment Foe spoke from the bed where he lay. 'Let him be, Susan,' he said in a tired voice: 'he is accustoming himself

of transcendental and universal truth as a positive development for a number of reasons (Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* xxiv).

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> to his tools, it is a part of learning to write.' 'He will foul your papers,' I cried. 'My papers are foul enough, he can make them no worse,' he replied (Coetzee, *Foe* 151).

This powerful image of the languageless Friday sitting at the desk of England's first novelist with a pen in his hand ready to "write" comes as "the antithesis of the original logocentric author marked by his privileged access to the signified, to meaning, and to closure. What we have instead is the signifier, non-meaning, and repetition as beginning" (Seshadri 55). And then,

> I turned back to Friday, still busy at his writing. The paper before him was heavily smudged, as by a child unused to the pen, but there was writing of a kind, rows and rows of the letter o tightly packed together. A second page lay at his elbow, fully written over, and it was the same. "Is Friday learning to write?" asked Foe. "He is writing, after a fashion," I said. "He is writing the letter o." "It is a beginning," said Foe. "Tomorrow you must teach him a." (Coetzee, *Foe* 152)

Arguably, Friday's "writing" cannot possibly start from the beginning and thus mark an origin; the beginning has already been written by the philosophy and the literature that preceded him, by the primarily white, male authors that have already placed him within the category of the savage barbarian. When Friday writes the *o*, he engages himself in inscribing not only the middle letter of the alphabet but also the middle letter of the name of the human author, Foe. It is a middle that comes before the beginning (the letter *a*), perhaps signifying an alternative way of beginning and questioning the linearity that has always characterized learning in the West; it might not be the beginning that Foe or Susan might be expecting, but it is a beginning nonetheless. But the letter Friday repeatedly inscribes is also a shape, that of an open mouth, a hole from which voice, but not necessarily meaning, emanates. One could argue that through his act of transcription, Friday claims a new form of writing, a writing still in infancy.

In the final image of the novel, Friday opens his mouth in order to speak but nothing comes out; he only forms an *o*, reminiscent of the *o* he was scribbling on Foe's papers instead of writing. Through this *o*, one can hear the sounds of Cruso's island, "the cliffs and the shores", running "northward and southward to the ends of the earth" (Coetzee, *Foe* 157). It is the "soft and cold, dark and unending", sound of a logos that remains precisely to-come, and in this sense, is non-identical to Aristotelian phone or logos (Coetzee, *Foe* 157). In this light, the *o* that Friday keeps repeating, both in writing as well as in speech, might not point to a process of language learning but to a hole, an opening or an undoing of closure, an

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awaiting for something that breaks through the dead-ends of history. By intentionally not giving a voice to Friday, Coetzee registers the emptiness this position designates, in order to render it an act of conscious resistance. Therefore, Coetzee's refusal to interpret Friday's silence does not incapacitate the narrative, but quite the contrary: it is only through Susan's (and Coetzee's) productive failure to determine, to identify and to define the figure of Friday that Coetzee is able to restore agency and meaningfulness to Friday's silence, opening up its void to the possibility of a justice to-come.

Going to the Dogs: Guilt, Shame, and Redemption

Such justice would also involve restitution. For Friday's silence testifies in a determinate historical manner to a determinate social circumstance of injustice; Coetzee's novel was written at a time when the South African Apartheid policy curtailed the rights, movements and associations of indigenous blacks, the figure of Friday and his silence become exceptionally revealing. Colonialism, and, more specifically, the South African Apartheid policy, are marked by silence, by things remaining untold. In 1986, when *Foe* was first published, the whole story had yet to be heard perhaps because, just like Susan, Coetzee could be the one to tell it; it was not his place to do so as a white male South African writer. Therefore, he does not attempt to recover the voice of the colonized others or speak for them. He does, however, attempt to remember and register the silencing of this other, pointing, perhaps, towards an ethical responsibility for a restitution to come, a hope for a justice that remains in abeyance. In "Racism's Last Word", Derrida revisits his formulation of a "justice to-come" from *Specters of Marx* to highlight the need for a future restitution for the atrocities of the South African Apartheid; the silence, the philosopher asserts, "calls out unconditionally; it keeps watch on that which is not, on that which is not yet, and on the chance of still remembering some faithful day" (Derrida, "Racism's Last Word" 338). Even though justice and restitution always move towards what remains to come, there is, according to Derrida, a "pledge [gage] (promise, engagement, injunction, and response to the injunction, and so forth) […] given here and now, even before, perhaps, a decision confirms it" responding without delay to the "impatient, uncompromising, and unconditional" demand of justice (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 37). In order to further explore the ways in which Coetzee employs the notion of animality to engage in a conversation surrounding guilt, shame, and the consequent possibility of restitution and redemption in the aftermath of the Apartheid it is vital to turn to turn to his 1999 novel *Disgrace.*

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In *Disgrace,* Coetzee narrates the story of David Lurie, an English professor in post-Apartheid South Africa, who loses his job and his reputation when he is revealed to have sexually seduced one of his female students, Melanie. Ashamed and disgraced, Lurie flees to the Eastern Cape on his daughter's farm, where he overstays his welcome. After his daughter is gang-raped by a group of black men including Petrus, the man who takes care of the farm's dogs, Lurie finds himself completely demoralised and broken, but finds his way towards redemption through his work at an animal clinic, putting unwanted animals to sleep. In the final part of this chapter, I wish to engage with the ways in which Coetzee's novel employs the thematic of animality in its representation of racial conflict and species difference in an attempt to undo the silencing of the Other particular to different colonialist discourses where women, the colonized, and animals have consistently been excluded from modes and means of expression. In so doing, I demonstrate how the novel highlights the crisis of Eurocentric modernity and questions its privileged models of subjectivity by introducing different kinds of shame as well as a path to redemption in the postcolonial context and in the context of South Africa specifically.

At the heart of Coetzee's narrative there lies David Lurie's multi-layered and ambiguous fall from grace which, as Nyman argues, "problematizes his position as the subject of Reason, as it interrogates and gradually erases his masculine/colonialist mastery over his family, his students, and all racial, classed and natural Others" (Nyman 138). Lurie's investment in the pleasures of racial subjugation is painfully and repeatedly evident in the early sections of the novel: During his seduction of his student Melanie, he describes her as "Meláni: the dark one"; her darkness along with her Jewish-sounding surname, Isaacs, allude to her racial othering (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 18). His taste for "exotic" women, evident from the black prostitute he regularly visits, racialize Lurie's desire, presenting him as "a colonizer who seeks the fulfilment of his erotic and sexual desires in Other women" (Nyman 139). This position also infuses Lurie with immense power over these women; for once, his position as a paying customer allows him to satisfy his every wish with Soraya: "The first time Soraya received him she wore vermillion lipstick and heavy eyeshadow. Not liking the stickiness of the makeup, he asked her to wipe it off. She obeyed and has never worn it since. A ready learner, compliant, pliant" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 5). Similarly, once he sets his eyes on Melanie, Lurie exercises his power to the utmost in order to possess her just like Soraya; he seeks contact with a student, abuses his position, misuses her student records, takes her out to meals and behaves "in the manner of a man of the world" (Nyman 138). Lurie even "conquers" this female Other by having sex with (in fact, ultimately raping) Melanie: "She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 25).

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Aside from the discourse on the relation between race and power, however, the passage is extremely important in that it connects Melanie with the animal: "she lets him lay her out on the bed and undress her: she even helps him, raising her arms and then her lips. Little shivers of cold run through her; as soon as she is bare, she slips under the quilted counterpane like a mole burrowing, and turns her back on him" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 25). In the following paragraph, Melanie appears to "go slack, die within her for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck. So that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 25). On a later instance, his proposed address to Melanie would begin with "*My little dove*"; she is further described as having a "cunning little weasel body" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 34 & 189). A closer look at the novel reveals that the narrative is pervaded by animal metaphors, similes and images whose occurrence is conspicuous: Petrus, Lucy's primary rapist and former employee, is described as a "dog-man"; Pollux, the youngest of the rapists, is called a "jackal boy", and all three rapists are said to move "like dogs in a pack" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 64, 202 & 59). A similar animal metaphor is employed in the way Lurie imagines the three rapists leaving the farm after the assault: "He thinks of the three visitors driving away in the not-too-old Toyota, the black seat piled with household goods, their penises, their weapons, tucked warm and satisfied between their legs – *purring* is the word that comes to him" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 140). In addition, Lurie views himself as a "moral dinosaur" and Lucy describes her father as "one of the three chimpanzees, the one with paws over her eyes" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 89 & 161).

By using language that blurs the boundary between the human and the inhuman, "the novel appears to attempt to work through the central tenets of anthropo- and Euro-centricity that have been central in the making of the Western subject equipped with full mastery over its Others" (Nyman 140). This becomes especially obvious in Lurie's nightmare after the rape of his own daughter, wherein the black African man and the animal are amalgamated into a singular menacing unit threatening the preservation of his "naturalized sense of self": "he has a nightmare of his own in which he wallows in a bed of blood, or, panting, shouting soundlessly, runs from the man with the face like a hawk, like a Benin mask, like Thoth" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 140). The reference to Thoth, a deity of the Egyptian pantheon, is not coincidental; the God was depicted as a man with the head of an ibis or a baboon, while simultaneously being (in a way highly reminiscent of Kafka's own imagery) associated with the law: exacting arbitrations on godly disputes and passing judgments on the dead. Linking, hence, the posthuman and animalistic figure of Thoth to a Benin mask, a miniature sculptural portrait in ivory resembling an African mask of the powerful Queen Mother Idia, the narrative suggests an even further link between species and racial difference. In the face of

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the African man, Lurie sees the racial Other as both a bestial and subhuman figure and as an awesome deity passing ethical judgements and/or exacting revenge (lest the irony of his daughter's rape passes unnoticed, Lurie has himself effectively raped a young girl).

The turning point in Lurie's journey from fall from grace to redemption comes when three black men claiming to be from a nearby village enter Lucy's house, beat up, incapacitate, and scar Lurie, rape Lucy, shoot the dogs she is fostering, and finally drive away with all the valuables they could find in the house. As a co-owner of a small property, Lucy embodies, according to Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, "Western idealist and romantic visions of organic community and rural simplicity filtered through various, but invariably European, literary/artistic fantasies" that have fed urban imaginations for decades and the persistence, in this manner, of white settler power from the perspective of the newly liberated South-Africans (Huggan and Tiffin 108). Petrus, on the other hand, Lucy's black co-proprietor, who eventually takes over the title deeds to the property, is "self-consciously forward-looking in his calculated approach to both the future acquisition and the provisional management of what eventually will become his farm" (Huggan and Tiffin 108). He represents a new, "blacker" South Africa based on gendered and colonial violence and the formation of black identities liberated into their own small capitalist ownership. In this spatially and politically transformed South African countryside, traditional white settlers such as Lucy must disappear: "Petrus has a vision of the future in which people like Lucy have no place" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 118). In other words, Petrus' ambition to own land – the land that he views has been deprived of his ancestors by white settlers – provokes his hatred towards Lucy and her humanized, romantic, and friendly settler status. His act of raping her becomes a way of inflicting shame on her and is viewed by Lucy as a price that must be paid, a historically specific form of "debt collection" for the long history of exploitative attitudes towards the land and the people. In this context, where violent rapists are viewed as "debt collectors, tax collectors" who wield sexual violence as a means to subject and subjugate, even Lucy is able to see that in this new South African context there is a need for different kinds of solutions (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 158). In fact, when at the end of the novel Lucy discovers that she is pregnant with a child of rape she comes up with her own formula of reconciliation:

> 'Go back to Petrus', she says. 'Propose the following. Say I accept his protection. Say he can put out whatever story he likes about our relationship and I won't contradict him. If he wants me to be known as his third wife, so be it. As his concubine, ditto. But then the child becomes his too. The child becomes part of his family. As for the land, say I will sign the land to him as

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> long as the house remains mine. I will become a tenant on the land.' (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 204)

As a result of this settlement, Lucy will enter what Nyman calls "a terrain of hybridity", a space that is incredibly volatile but that will nevertheless allow her child to grow up safely as part of Petrus' extended family (Nyman 145). The compromise might be, as Lucy admits, "humiliating" but it is one that will allow her to start over again: "Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 205).

In the duration of this ordeal, Lurie becomes intensely aware not only of his personal offences towards Melanie but of the collective guilt of white South Africans during the Apartheid and post-Apartheid eras. In a different work, Coetzee's protagonist deals with a similar collective guilt, that of the Germans during the Holocaust; specifically, in *The Lives of Animals,* Elizabeth Costello suggests that Germans of a certain generation are still "regarded as standing a little outside humanity, as having to do or be something special before they can be readmitted to the human fold" (Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* 20). Indeed, she argues, they are still looked at as if they are polluted: "in the very sins of their *normality* […] we see proof of how deeply seated *pollution* is in them" (Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* 21). In fact, in all their efforts to cleanse humanity from the pollution that the link between Judaism and animalization presented in their eyes, Germans during that period became themselves exposed to dehumanization; in their pursuit of normality and purity, they ironically became more bestial, polluted and abnormal themselves. The shame over the atrocities of the Third Reich, which is directly linked with the violence against something perceived as subhuman and animal-like, resonate deeply with the shame of Apartheid history, the shame of being white in post-Apartheid South Africa (as both Coetzee's protagonist and Coetzee himself are), but also the multivalent shame involved in the event of the rape of Lurie's daughter: the shame he feels for his daughter's rape, the shame over his own, less than consensual, sexual liaisons with young girls, the shame his daughter feels toward her father and toward herself, given the fact that she is openly a lesbian, the act of rape as an act intended to inflict shame, the intention of inflicting shame as postcolonial "revenge" (against white property holders), the shame of the recycling of racial violence (Apartheid) as sexual violence (rape), the shame inherent in white liberal guilt. The only option left to one thus disgraced, Lurie feels, is to live "like a dog" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 205). The phrase both evokes and subtly revises the ending of Kafka's *The Trial*, where K. who was eventually killed "Like a dog! outlived only by shame". In Coetzee's narrative, it is not shame that outlives one, but life itself that may sustain itself through a confrontation with shame; the animal, on the other hand, is not the emblem of that shame, but the sign of hope in a redemption to-come.

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Therefore, Lurie is not to die in shame but, rather, to attempt to exorcize his shame through a different kind of living than the one he had before. In fact, the only way Lurie finds to deal with all the compounded and multiple narratives of shame that surround his life as an educated white South African is in the company of stray and abandoned dogs, who must die. In an attempt to find something to do, Lurie volunteers for work at a local veterinary clinic run by one of Lucy's friends, Bev Shaw, and is primarily tasked to transport dead dogs to the crematorium at the local hospital:

> The dogs are brought to the clinic because they are unwanted: *because we are to menny*. This is where he enters their lives. He may not be their own saviour, the one for whom they are not too many, but he is prepared to take care of them once they are unable, utterly unable, to take care of themselves, once even Bev Shaw has washed her hands of them… Well, now he has become a dog-man: a dog undertaker; a dog psychopomp; a *harijan* (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 146)

Even though Lurie begins his volunteer work well before the assault, Lucy's rape has a decisive impact on his life; his only occupation other than caring for her becomes caring for the dogs; as Alice Brittan maintains, when Lurie holds the dogs as they are being euthanised trembling and weeping from terror, when he takes their corpses to the hospital incinerator, "bodies that are of no interest even to the poor and vagrant who comb the hospital dump", when he relieves the hospital incinerator workers of their duties in order to place the corpses within the furnace waiting until they have been fully cremated, "Lurie is accompanying death as a witness whose presence confirms that there is something that can and must be seen" (Brittan 489). Even though the animals' bodies have become ash and there is no visible remainder of their existence, David's actions assert that at he can at least acknowledge that they existed and, in this sense, give their existence a voice. Perhaps, as Brittan asserts, in addition to the physical practicalities – the bagging, transporting, and cremating of bodies – this is what it means to act as a psychopomp, a spirit guide: "to continue to think of the dead after others have stopped, not to mourn them, but to enfold them in the imaginative grace that might allow the dead to recognize and understand their new and unfamiliar state, and the living to enlarge the precincts of what we can know" (Brittan 489). In essence, Lurie attempts to ease the "disgrace of dying" by bearing witness to the death of the animals "not to alter the fact of death but to pay attention, because to think of the dead is to hold them a little longer within the reaches of what can be thought, and thus to prolong grace" (Brittan 498).

Thus, a privileged white man who casually asserted his dominance over women learns the sense of abjection caused by sexual violence and rape through his abuse and

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becomes aware of a collective guilt that stems from racial othering and the bestialization of this Other. Most importantly, the animal, and more specifically the dog, becomes not only the vessel of absolute shame but, as Agamben had intimated in *The Open*, the vehicle of redemption. In fact, by caring and/or mercy killing a bunch of sick or surplus animals, Lurie finds redemption not only for himself but "for his idea of the world, a world in which men do not use shovels to beat corpses into a more convenient shape for processing" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 146). Once again, (as in Kafka, Benjamin, Levi, Agamben, or Spiegelman), redemption comes in the dismissal of a logic that insists on the primacy of the white male European subject of pure reason. The rejection of such reason takes the form of empathetic affiliation with the abject vulnerability of the animal creature[21]. In this time of "unhappiness" and "imaginative collapse that Coetzee calls disgrace" the possibility for the rediscovery of grace lies with Lucy's astonishing choice to give birth, raise and love the child of her rapist, who has now become her neighbour and landlord of sorts; and Lurie's heart-breaking decision to give up even his favourite dog for euthanasia and not allow himself to single out any special dog by affording it an extra week of delay (Brittan 500). Whereas the first path to grace points to the formation of a new post-Apartheid South Africa, the second might point, as Rita Barnard suggests, to the rather helpless, perhaps resolute, admission that life must be lived not only in empathy but also in awareness that there is "an infinite number of other creatures with whom he [Lurie/Western Man] has no special connection – who are neither his 'own kind' nor his historical victims" (Barnard 222). As in Kafka, Spiegelman, Carter, Atwood, and Malamud, in Coetzee the question of animality acquires, at once, powerfully utopian and dystopian valences, given both its inextricable link to dominant forms of oppression like racism, sexism, and colonialism and its function as a fundamental means of challenging the very modes of "reason" that subtend such forms.

[21] This is reminiscent of Derrida's adoption of Jeremy Bentham's "Can they suffer?" It is a question that is difficult to answer, not because everyone doesn't already know the answer – "because, yes, we know this and no one would dare to doubt it" (Derrida and Roudinesco 70) – but rather because as soon as they accept and admit it, they become conscious co-conspirators in this crime against nature, against life, against their half-brothers, their others. The answer, Derrida notes, is quite simple: "Animals suffer; they manifest their suffering. We cannot imagine that an animal doesn't suffer when it is subjected to laboratory experimentation or to circus training. When one sees an incalculable number of calves, raised on hormones and stuffed into a truck, on their way from the stable straight to the slaughterhouse, how can we not imagine that they suffer?" (Derrida and Roudinesco 70) These images evoke sympathy, compassion and pity. This pity and compassion can be interpreted in terms of the sharing of the suffering among the living: "We know what animal suffering is, we feel it ourselves" (Derrida and Roudinesco 70).

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Conclusion

Undeniably, no society can withstand the passing of time unaltered, but in some periods, change is so rapid that it resists definition; this is the case with the 20th century. Calling it an "age of extremes," British historian Eric Hobsbawm asserts that "nobody can write the history of the 20th century like that of any other era" because it is a time of immense contradictions (Hobsbawm ix). Indeed, the 20th century was a time of staggering change: unprecedented and unimaginable advancements in the sciences, medicine, and technology placed humanity at the apex of its glory, proving the primacy of reason, scientific curiosity, and innovative thinking for human hegemony over the planet. Yet, along with the best, the 20th century also brought out the darkest side of humanity; in fact, two World Wars, Stalin's terror and the Soviet Gulag system, Hitler's extermination of the Jews and the Nazi concentration camps, the KKK's assaults and murders of the African-Americans and the Jim Crow racial segregation legislation and the Apartheid's sanctioned racial segregation and political and economic discrimination against black South Africans have rendered this century the bloodiest and most violent era in human history.

While each regime's all-too-real motivations included greed for supreme power or tribal, religious, or cultural hatreds, they dressed their objectives in honourable terms such as freedom, democracy, liberty, justice, or "the greater good" in order to justify their actions. Indeed, at the core of all the discourses that enabled the rise and maintenance of the divisive and authoritarian regimes lay mankind's effort to combat and eventually discard the abject animality and inferiority that resides within humanity itself. This dissertation has highlighted three specific instances where literature has engaged with the ways in which fascist, sexist and racist authoritative regimes have attempted to employ the link between humanity and animality in order to marginalize, oppress, and even murder other humans: Jews were likened to rats and as such had to be exterminated for the preservation of the purity and supremacy of the Aryan race; women were linked to animality in manners that highlighted their inferiority and sanctioned their oppression and domination; and blacks were equated to simians in order to justify their enslavement and oppression in the context of both the U.S and South Africa. In effect, with each one of these instances dominant culture sought to cast out what it thought as weak, inferior, abnormal, abject, bestial, polluted or simply different by marginalizing, subjugating, or even annihilating those which it deemed encompassed any of these characteristics.

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Unfortunately, the dawn of the 21st century sees history and these kinds of discourses repeat themselves. We are experiencing years of great socio-political unrest, especially due to the fact that the world is experiencing the biggest war-related refugee crisis since World War II. Undeniably, this is the first time in history that Europe has faced such a mass influx of refugees from outside its domain: record numbers of displaced people fleeing economic deprivation and/or armed conflict move by any means necessary and always at great personal risk toward Europe's aquatic or terrestrial borders in search of a better life. Secretary-General to the UN António Guterres spoke of a "world in pieces" only to be made worse by the rising insecurity, growing inequality, spreading conflict, social fragmentation, and polarizing political discourses within Western societies.

Arguably, Europe found itself completely unprepared and, more dangerously, at a loss about how to handle the most recent – and vastly exacerbated – refugee crisis. Once again, references to "pollution" and "impurity" have infested dominant discourses, with nationalist, fascist and right-wing propaganda referring to foreigners, immigrants, and refugees as the "enemy" who threatens the family unit, the customs of the community, the national and international security and the moral fibre of Western society. Speculations about links between the influx of refugees and an attendant rise in corruption, violence, and even unemployment in certain areas have involved the portrayal of non-Westerners as depraved barbarians who act with premeditation in order to destroy civil society or as blood-sucking parasites who feed off their hosts' labour, buying their time until they are well enough to strike and biting the hand that has been feeding them. Indeed, unsolved crimes are often attributed by locals to the "bestial" foreigners, whose lack of "reason" and "civility" have undeniably rendered them inferior and dangerous to civil society. Linked to several parliamentary parties, the media also appear to be in the midst of a large-scale endeavour to brand immigrants, refugees, and foreigners as the bestial, anti-social villains.

In his book *Of Hospitality*, Derrida focuses on the figure of *l' étranger* who, like the Greek *xenos*, designates both the "stranger" and the "foreigner" (Derrida, *Of Hospitality* 41). However, the philosopher asks, "what does 'foreigner' mean? Who is foreign? Who is the foreign man, who is the foreign woman? What is meant by 'going abroad,' 'coming from abroad'?" (Derrida, *Of Hospitality* 43). The foreigner or the stranger is the one who exists outside "the *family*, *bourgeois* or *civil society*, and the *State* (or the nation-state)" and who is welcomed either "as guest or as enemy" (Derrida, *Of Hospitality* 45). This inability to clearly identify whether the foreigner is a guest or an enemy to the family, to society, or to the country means that the foreigner is a subject of perennial anxiety. Our notion of hospitality, on the other hand, presupposes that one is always already the "master" of the house, the

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country, or the nation and, hence, has the right to full jurisdiction on anyone entering that domain. As Derrida maintains, "I want to be master at home (*ipse*, *potis*, *potens*, head of house, we have seen all that), to be able to receive whomever I like there" (Derrida, *Of Hospitality* 54). Hence the host is someone who has control over individuals gaining entrance and those being excluded, over the opening and closing of boundaries. In Derrida's words: "Anyone who encroaches on my 'at home,' on my ipseity, on my power of hospitality, on my sovereignty as host, I start to regard as an undesirable foreigner, and virtually as an enemy" (Derrida, *Of Hospitality* 54-55). A guest who threatens the status quo by needing more than he can give becomes for Derrida "a parasite, a guest who is wrong, illegitimate, clandestine, liable to expulsion or arrest" (Derrida, *Of Hospitality* 61). This is precisely what renders "the other" always a foreigner, a stranger exposed to the exercise of violence, if necessary.

As this dissertation has already established through various historical references, in the very attempt to "safeguard" the domain of humanity from unwanted intruders, mankind becomes ever more exposed to dehumanization. In other words, the more the effort to oppress, control, and even eradicate the pollution of what is imagined, constructed or simply perceived as less-than-human, as bestial, or as abnormal, the more cruel and inhumane mankind becomes. The pursuit of "humanity" becomes a source for its opposite, since the more it feels compelled to reject nature and the natural world the more prone it becomes to tolerance toward the most heinous acts of cruelty and violence. The advancements of technology and the popularity of social media have rendered such actions more visible today than they were during the last century; whereas it is possible for people to deny that the Holocaust even happened[22], the dystopian images of families being pushed and beaten back by armed soldiers at the Hungarian-Serbian border or of children piled up at detention centres in different countries have an immediacy that is harder to obfuscate or evade. Whereas there were countless photos and videos that went viral depicting different instances of the reduction of the refugees to sub- or non-humanity, two instances would fully represent the pollution that resides within Western humanity's effort to keep itself clean and safe: the first is the haunting image of the three-year-old Alan Kurdi, whose lifeless body washed up face down at the beach after his family unsuccessfully attempted to reach the Greek island of Kos with

[22] Holocaust denial is the act of denying the Jewish genocide by the Nazis during WWII. In fact, people who support such outrageous opinions claim that Nazi Germany only wanted to deport the Jews from the Reich and had never used gas chambers, concentration camps, or any other method of torture and murder. It is a common facet of fascist and racist propaganda and a significant societal problem to such extent that it has become illegal in some countries of Europe, as well as in Israel.

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a small inflatable boat to escape the civil war in Syria and the second is the disturbing video of the five-year-old Omran Daqneesh sitting in an ambulance covered in dust and blood staring blankly at those around him, having just survived a bombing in Aleppo. Of course, images remain manipulable by state or para-state ideological interests, and those deriving from the Syrian crisis are certainly no exceptions, but, nevertheless, public outrage and media-fed reactions often prove to have only a short and superficial attention span. In fact, the concerned voices expressing their thoughts and prayers from behind their keyboards soon died down and Europenan leaders' obstinate unwillingness to address their own complicity in the refugee crisis continued to prove that, occasional and often propagandistically motivated "humanitarianism" aside, some human lives continue to be disposable.

It is also true, however, that whilst most refugees remain invisible or at the mercy of hegemonic discourses in the mass media if they wish to have their stories heard, there are some who are able to find the strength to express themselves through artistic production. In the Netherlands, for example, a group of "undeportable" migrants, whose home countries have experienced such extreme levels of devastation that there is nothing to go back to, have attempted, through different artistic projects, to establish their presence and make their situation known to the rest of the world. The "We Are Here" refugees are largely unwelcome to the government of the Netherlands, and they cannot seek asylum in any other country because their home countries do not exist anymore. In actuality, they inhabit a state of invisibility without rights – without, in fact, the right to have rights – while attempting to become visible through their art by producing different pieces in the streets of Amsterdam, in abandoned warehouses, and most recently in established museums. Supported by a network of activists, researchers, artists, academics, and ordinary people these undesirables have used their art to create their own ever-expanding active community of equals and to fight for their position within society bringing their struggle into the public realm.

Evidently, the only way to cope with – and perhaps even overcome – the dystopian present is through collective action and the creation of a community dedicated to socio-political activism. As Neferti X. M. Tadiar maintains, the persistence of the disposability of non-Western lives, their very condition as destined waste, still continues as

> [N]eocolonial wars have resurfaced with a vengeance, in the name of the civilizing influence of a globalizing neoliberal democracy, and humanism has returned as the ethicopolitical arbiter of rights and responsibilities, privileges and burdens, value and nonvalue, in a world of unfathomable wealth and unmitigated violence and deprivation. (Tadiar 2)

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In this context, Tadiar defines the current political moment in terms of a "complex, potentially antagonistic relation between a war to be human and becoming human in a time of war" (Tadiar 2). While the former refers to the violence of a new Western "imperial project" aiming "to secure and further aggrandize the privileges and powers enjoyed as well as bequeathed by the already human within a capitalist order", the latter concerns a systematic, collective, and effective opposition to this project (Tadiar 2). I would like to think that this dissertation contributes to some extent towards the goal Tadiar sets as much as it shares its critical suspicion of the dehumanizing implications of Western humanism: by creating an alternative literary history based on the affiliative relationships between authors, writers, and artists who have dealt with the inextricability of marginality, inferiority, and the non-human, I have exposed the influence and persistence of anthropocentric thinking for the creation of oppressive regimes throughout history and especially the 20th century. The writers negotiated in this dissertation employed the most powerful tools in their arsenals, that is, literature and artistic production, in order to demonstrate how easily the normative and restrictive construction of "humanity" and its attendant consequences in the bestialization of those taken to fail to fulfil the norm becomes a weapon of mass destruction and genocidal violence.

But by the same token, this dissertation retains a utopian element that stems directly from a connection between the human and the non-human that is not mutually degrading: Kafka's vast array of animals, hybrids, and other non-human beings are the only avenues to redemption in his dystopian nightmares; Levi's *homines sacri* testify to the strength and perseverance of the less-than-human during the Holocaust; Carter's female protagonists find empowerment and sexual freedom through the acceptance of their own bestiality in traditionally patriarchal universes; Atwood's hybrids and Piercy's cyborgs explore new possibilities for feminist subjectivity and agency within the imaginary worlds of the posthuman gothic; and Coetzee's injured and discarded dogs bring about a flicker of hope for the overcoming of multiple layers of paralyzing shame in post-Apartheid South Africa. In effect, the different incarnations of the non-human in all these texts become calls out of complacency with the "all too human" and towards reflexiveness, responsibility, resistance and opposition. In the hopelessness and despair that has so far marked the 21st century, hope, perhaps, lies with the people who work from a marginal, "monstrous", and abject position toward building cross-cultural, cross-faith, cross-gender, and cross-racial communities of equals; affiliative groups that thrive on active remembrance, resistance, and opposition.

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