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**PERFORMING THE LETTER OF THE LAW: THE ROLE OF
ORIENTALIST RACE THEORY IN KAFKA'S WRITINGS**

A Dissertation in German

by

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to understand how and why selected literary works of Franz Kafka come into dialogue with and even seem to rebuke theories about “Oriental” races, particularly the Chinese and Jews, from the eighteenth and more predominantly from the nineteenth century. My dissertation brings together the subfield of philosophy called “race theory” with literary representations of racial others discussed in these theories, with a particular emphasis on the Chinese and Jews. For the purposes of this dissertation, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Lectures on the Philosophy of History) will serve as a representative of ideas discursively circulating between philosophical, historical, philological, and biological/ physiological traditions. Hegel maintains that the Chinese and Jews lack the freedom of thought necessary to make decisions on their own and defer to figures of authority, the Emperor for the Chinese and God for the Jews. I argue that Kafka’s literary works have the versatility to expose the construction of race as a concept within race theory and by extension undermine Euro-centric assumptions made about non-European others. I defer to performance theory, in particular Brecht’s notion of *Verfremdungseffekt* (Alienation Effect), which he formed after watching Mei Lanfang’s performance of a Beijing Opera in Moscow, mediated through Walter Benjamin’s redemptive reading of Kafka, and through the lenses of Judith Butler’s notion of gender-performance and Tina Chen’s application of Butler and Brecht in readings of Asian-American representations in literature. In the first two chapters of this dissertation I will look at Hegel’s thoughts on the Chinese and Jews alongside Kafka’s literary works “Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer” (“The Great Wall of China”), “Ein altes Blatt” (“An Old Manuscript”), “Die Abweisung” (“The Refusal”), “Das Stadtwappen” (“The City Coat of

Arms”), “Abraham,” and “Das Paradies” (“Paradise”). In the third chapter I will consider the role animals in Kafka’s “Schakale und Araber,” (“Jackals and Arabs”), and “Ein altes Blatt,” and “Die Verwandlung” (“The Metamorphosis”) play as both analogs to racial others and to other larger political entities. In my last chapter, I consider the role of violence and sexuality alongside the racial coding of skin color in Kafka’s “Beschreibung eines Kampfes” (“Description of a Struggle”) and “In der Strafkolonie” (“In the Penal Colony”).

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Kafka's Mei Lanfangs: Introduction

This dissertation seeks to understand how and why selected literary works of Franz Kafka come into dialogue with and even seem to rebuke theories about “Oriental” races, particularly the Chinese and Jews, from the eighteenth and more predominantly from the nineteenth century. My dissertation brings together the subfield of philosophy called “race theory” with literary representations of racial others discussed in these theories, with a particular emphasis on the Chinese and Jews. For the purposes of this dissertation, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (*Lectures on the Philosophy of History*) will serve as a representative of ideas about race discursively circulating between philosophical, historical, philological, and biological/ physiological traditions. Hegel maintains that the Chinese and Jews lack the freedom of thought necessary to make decisions on their own and hence defer to figures of authority, the Emperor for the Chinese and God for the Jews. I argue that Kafka’s literary works have the versatility to expose the construction of race as a concept within race theory and by extension to undermine Euro-centric assumptions made about non-European others. I defer to performance theory, in particular Brecht’s notion of *Verfremdungseffekt* (Alienation Effect), which he formed after watching Mei Lanfang’s performance of a Beijing Opera in Moscow, mediated through Walter Benjamin’s redemptive reading of Kafka, the lenses of Judith Butler’s notion of gender-performance and of Tina Chen’s application of Butler and Brecht in readings of Asian-American representations in literature. In the first two chapters of this dissertation I will look at Hegel’s thoughts on the Chinese and Jews alongside Kafka’s literary works “Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer” (“The Great Wall of China”), “Ein altes Blatt” (“An Old Manuscript”), “Die Abweisung” (“The Refusal”), “Das Stadtwappen” (“The City Coat of Arms”), “Abraham,” and “Das Paradies” (“Paradise”). In the third chapter I will

consider the role animals in Kafka's "Schakale und Araber," ("Jackals and Arabs"), and "Ein altes Blatt," and "Die Verwandlung" ("The Metamorphosis") play as both analogs to racial others and to other, larger political entities. In my last chapter, I consider the role of violence and sexuality alongside the racial coding of skin color in Kafka's "Beschreibung eines Kampfes" ("Description of a Struggle") and "In der Strafkolonie" ("In the Penal Colony"). A reading of Kafka alongside Hegel will give us insight into how literature can undermine the limited understanding of race promoted by race theory.

I chose to compare Kafka with Hegel because Hegel specifically claims that the Chinese and Jews are unable to think for themselves and are therefore confined to a letter of the law handed down from an Emperor/God, a claim on the one hand rather unique to Hegel, but one that falls in line with ranking the Chinese and Jews as somehow inferior to Europeans. This diagnosis of racial inferiority is one that underlies Kafka's characters, irrespective of their origins or even species. For all its intellectual nuance, Hegel's lectures rely on a hierarchical model of "superior" and "inferior" cultures, who, according to his sources and interpretation, have not achieved "freedom of thought." A defining feature of Hegel's thought is "the negation of the negation," wherein the antithesis is the negation of the thesis, then the last move that leads to the synthesis is "the negation of the negation" or in other words "the antithesis of the antithesis." This double negation moves past simple polarities such as East-West, racist and non-racist, and this restless tendency to negate everything makes Hegel a sophisticated modern thinker; however, for all the negations of negations one can find in Hegel's lectures, no amount of thought undoes the material damage done by the effects of Sinophobia and Anti-Semitism that Hegel's lectures reinforce, especially when he implies that the Chinese and Jews are guilty of suffering Sinophobia and Anti-Semitism because they "have not reached freedom of thought".

Kafka portrays his characters, both Oriental and otherwise, similarly, but frequently situates them in contexts where freedom of thought and agency are necessary to overcome a given conflict, rendering these characters unable to overcome obstacles and solve said conflicts. These features are endemic to all of Kafka's characters, including his European ones. However, these characteristics resonate with the Chinese and Jews in the context of race theory, and not with Europeans, which makes these traits interesting to consider. What could be gained from depicting characters as such? To answer this question, I maintain that looking at Kafka's "Oriental" characters alongside Hegel will reveal the answer. Kafka's characters, both "Oriental" and otherwise, seem to mimic those described within nineteenth century race theory, and it is through a characteristic use of *Verfremdungseffekt* and *Gestus* (concepts on which I shall elaborate later in this introduction) that the reader's attention is brought to the constructedness generated and circulated by those race theories. We must not ignore the impact that circulating categorically false information about the character of non-European others had on the Jews in Europe or those others in colonies/ trade relations, etc. around the world. Therefore, this project elucidates how Kafka's oeuvre comes close to, but actually takes the opposite position from, Hegel's representations of race in his lectures. For, Hegel's lectures and Kafka's literary works tread in the problematically political terrain of race that was always already there. Moreover, once somebody has read Kafka's "Orientalist" texts alongside Hegel and then read the rest of Kafka's oeuvre, in particular his representations of Europeans, we can infer that Kafka's works consider the Europeans with the same regard that nineteenth century theorists had for the Chinese or Jews. When readers of Kafka holding the knowledge of the Chinese and Jews circulating in nineteenth century race theory are confronted with individuals behaving as they are

said to in nineteenth century race theory, they face the awkwardness of that behavior and realize how it is inorganic and possibly inaccurate.

Before delving further into this project, there are some terms and questions that warrant further explanation. Racism, in this dissertation, is the systematic oppression of peoples based on differences of skin color, geographical origin, or language. Racism manifests itself not only in derogatory language and violent acts, but also in everyday practices and discourse that insist racial others should be perceived and treated as such. Providing misleading or ideologically charged information about people who do not belong to a dominant culture contributes to a discourse of racism. On a local level, one could take the falsely provided information and use it to justify any number of institutionally oppressive or violent act against somebody who does not belong to the dominant culture. Hegel's ideas are racist because they contributed to a larger discourse of race that was used to justify colonialism, imperialism, Anti-Semitism and a belief that people outside of Europe somehow simply do not and cannot belong on the European continent, which persists among Europeans today. Race theory contributes to this discourse through its scholarly reflection of biological, linguistic, social and other forms of difference between groups of people that exists, on the one hand, as abstract understandings of race, but on the other hand also a coherent body of scholarship produced in theological, philological, philosophical, and scientific disciplines. Race theory is the attempt by philosophers and scientists to answer "[t]he question of how the races related to humanity,"¹ as humanity was largely defined in their respective eras, whether in the Middle Ages, Enlightenment, later nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. To frame this project's definition of racism in the context of the

¹ Bernasconi, Robert and Tommy L. Lott. "Introduction." *The Idea of Race*. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott, Ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000, viii.

most familiar event of the Holocaust, racism is not merely just depicting Jews as rats to elicit Anti-Semitic sentiment from the gentiles of the German-speaking world, but also the systematic mass-murder of six million Jews in labor and death camps. My dissertation, however, makes no such grand claims about Kafka, Hegel and racism; rather, it considers Kafka's works in the contexts of Hegel's claims about the Chinese and Jews in his lectures and determines the degree to which Kafka's representations of racial others line up with or contradict Hegel's understanding of these peoples.

The first chapter of *Performing the Letter of the Law* compares Hegel's representations of the Chinese Emperor and his imperial subjects with Kafka's 'Chinese Emperor' and 'Chinese' people in his short works "The Great Wall of China" and in "An Old Manuscript" to show the ways Kafka's literary representations of the Chinese reproach an understanding of the Chinese fostered by Hegel's lectures. Hegel contends that the Chinese have an exclusively external sense of judgment, deferring always to the letter of the law as laid down by the Emperor, because the Emperor maintains a kind of omnipotence and the Chinese fear and revere the Emperor. This chapter demonstrates how these works employ irony, narrative digression, and literary tropes in a way that is similar, but not quite the same as Hegel's representations of the Chinese; the dissertation also shows how the wall stands in for the very constructedness of race within nineteenth-century race theory.

Following a number of philosophical and theological predecessors whom I will cover later in this introduction, lumps the Jews with other Middle Easterners in a subsection of the Orient designated as "Persia" in his lectures and asserts that the Jews are only different from the Chinese in their deference to the Judeo-Christian god instead of an emperor. In chapter two, I contend that Kafka's own reinterpretations of the Old Testament, namely in "The City Coat of

Arms”, a posthumously published story, “Abraham,” and a letter he wrote to friend Robert Klopstock and “Paradise”, mirrors Hegel’s understanding of the Jews with some difference. The tropes of the wall and childish credulity return in their same capacity within the China stories, though the wall is replaced by the Tower of Babel, which serves within Kafka’s literary universe as the other side to a coin that features The Great Wall of China. By way of conclusion, I also show how Kafka’s “Paradise” resembles fantastical representations of the Orient (particularly China and Persia), which is fostered by nineteenth century race theory.

Keeping to some extent within Hegel’s reading of ancient Egypt, chapter three explores Kafka’s representations of animals, particularly in “Jackals and Arabs”, “An Old Manuscript”, and “The Metamorphosis”. This chapter looks at the ways in which Kafka’s animal beings have been read in some cases as analogues for nation and empire in the simultaneous collapse of the Habsburg Empire and Imperial China, as well as the formation of a Jewish state in the Middle East, and argues how these readings are themselves only possible by looking at how literary animals are charged with characteristics attributed to racial others by nineteenth century race theory.

My fourth chapter examines the relationship between homoeroticism and violence in Kafka’s two more implicitly Orientalist works, “Description of a Struggle” and “In the Penal Colony”. Kafka’s “Description of a Struggle,” I argue, serves as an important point in considering how to represent racial others through the use of coding his characters with yellow skin; his experimental piece employs male-male queer relationships and extreme physical force to disrupt the fantastical colonial fantasies fostered by nineteenth century race theory. We see these motifs resurface, “In the Penal Colony,” which is set in a European-held, tropical colony, when Kafka was concurrently working on “The Great Wall of China,” “An Old Manuscript,” and

“Jackals and Arabs,” suggesting that Kafka works not only engage with Hegelian race theory, but larger questions of “Oriental” race in general; this chapter explores the degree and extent of that engagement.

Of the Chinese and Persian Jews or the Foreign and Domestic Orientals

There are two broader conversations to which *Performing the Letter of the Law* contributes: 1. Kafka’s writing on the “Orient” (read: Middle East and East Asia) and 2. The history of race theory. The German-speaking world, in other words, did its fair share of studying the Orient, but staked few colonial or imperial claims in the Middle East or East Asia. Edward Said asserts:

There was nothing in Germany to correspond to the Anglo-French presence in India, the Levant, North Africa. Moreover, the German Orient was almost exclusively a scholarly, or at least a classical, Orient: it was made the subject of lyrics, fantasies, and even novels, but it was never actual, the way Egypt and Syria were actual for Chateaubriand, Lane, Lamartine, Burton, Disraeli, or Nerval... What German Oriental scholarship did was to refine and elaborate techniques whose application was to texts, myths, ideas, and languages almost literally gathered from the Orient by imperial Britain and France².

Suzanne Zantop, responding to Said, points out, “In contrast to [Edward] Said, who has argued that the lack of colonies made German colonists discourse more abstract, scholarly, and by implication, less powerful...it was precisely the lack of actual colonialism that created a pervasive desire for colonial possessions and a sense of entitlement to such possessions in the

² Said, Edward. *Orientalisms*. New York: Vintage, 1979, 19.

minds of many Germans”³. In her Freudian reading of the German-speaking world’s fantasizing about colonialization of the Americas, Zantop highlights the importance of considering the discursive power of literary and creative Orientalisms and not deferring exclusively to academic assessments of the East for understanding how the German-speaking world conceived of the Orient. Indeed, Zantop further claims:

German colonial fantasies were different even when they imitated or rewrote those of other European nations. By virtue of existing in the ‘pure’ realm of the imagination, ‘untainted’ by praxis, German fantasies were not only differently motivated, but had a different function: to serve not so much as an ideological smokescreen or cover-up for colonial atrocities or transgressive desires, but as *Handlungersatz*, as substitute for the real thing, as imaginary testing ground for colonial action.⁴

Zantop is of course talking specifically about representations of the Americas in German literature and culture from 1770 to 1870, just before the newly formed German Empire would join other European powers in taking slices out of Africa, colonizing the continent⁵. Franz Kafka, I argue throughout this dissertation, urges the reader to see these fantasies as such, exposing racial otherness as a construct developed by nineteenth century race theorists.

A few scholars have already noted the ways in which Kafka’s works subverts Orientalist tropes at large in his works. Rolf Goebel points out that “whether he playfully exploits turn-of-the-century exoticism, or interprets Chinese poetry from a radically subjective point of view, or parodically appropriates classical views about China’s stagnant history and autocratic emperor,

³ Zantop, Susanne. *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997, 7.

⁴ Zantop, 6.

⁵ Historians have also noted that German colonies in Africa were the testing grounds for several practices enacted in the Holocaust. See Bergen, Doris L. *War & Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*. 2nd Edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009, 17.

Kafka always keeps an ironic distance from an Orient whose geopolitical reality and spiritual traditions are not immediately accessible to his own cultural horizon”⁶; Robert Lemon’s recent work shows how “Kafka subverts the contemporary ethnonationalist discourse in the very act of its articulation”⁷. For Lemon, this means that Kafka undermines the logic of scholars contemporary to Kafka, who would have synthesized much of the nineteenth century’s theorization on race and contributed to slanting those theories ever in favor of the European as the pinnacle culture of humanity. In one of the most recent interventions contributing to this threat of scholarship, Mark Christian Thompson points out, “Kafka did not fancy himself a writer and critic of scientific racism, psychoanalysis, cultural materialism, historicism, and so forth. He was a bricoleur. His borrowings from science, theology, and other domains do not amount to expertise or even detailed engagement (reflections on the law excepted). He is attracted to a general idea that he then uses to spectacular effect to create works that function in a truly singular way”⁸. These scholars have laid the very crucial and critical foundation on which this project is built, for while these three have acknowledged Kafka’s dissident ways undermining colonial/ imperial/ ethnological/ racist discourse, none has looked closely at Kafka’s writings in combination with nineteenth century race theory. Looking at Kafka’s works alongside race theory illuminates the flexibility of Kafka’s writing to speak to broader ideas with which Kafka himself may or may not have worked with.

⁶ Goebel, Rolf. *Constructing China: Kafka’s Orientalist Discourse*. Columbia: Camden House, 1997. P. 7. Referred to from here on out as “*Constructing China*”.

⁷ Lemon, Robert. *Imperial Messages: Orientalism as Self-Critique in the Habsburg Fin de Siècle*. Rochester: Camden House, 2011. 129.

⁸ Thompson, Mark Christian. *Kafka’s Blues: Figurations of Racial Blackness in the Construction of an Aesthetic*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2016. 12.

Performing the Letter of the Law: The Role of Orientalist Race Theory in Kafka's

Writings picks up and digs deeper into the depiction of race within Kafka's oeuvre. I argue that Kafka's fictional characters (both "Oriental" and otherwise) operate in worlds where they are denied freedom to rationalize and think on their own, taking on a smaller, more localized scale, the characterizations of non-European others (as defined by nineteenth century race theorists), in particular East Asians (notably the Chinese) and "Persians" (people attributed to the Middle East, in particular the Jews), prompting readers to see the constructedness of race taken on in those race theories. Kafka characters, both "Oriental" and otherwise, do not have the power to make decisions on their own and are enslaved by the letter of the law enscribed by an absent figurehead. The impersonality of the law in, and how it attracts but needs no further outreach to subjects of the law, is a larger theme spanning Kafka's literary career. This is the main argument of 'Before the Law' in *Der Prozess (The Trial)*. Kafka labored over the issue of how we know and what we know. However, I find it necessary, with so much already said about China in German philosophy and literature, to eliminate the possibility that Kafka makes a firm statement against law in China, before we can say he makes a more damning statement about the law in the Austro-Hungarian Empire or Europe at large. Goebel asserts "nineteenth century authors – Ludwig Börne, Heinrich Heine, Franz Grillparzer, and others—read China in analogy to the equally anachronistic, despotic, and corrupt Prussian and Austro-Hungarian monarchies⁹. The impending collapse of German-speaking Empires were mapped onto the fall of Imperial China in an effort to critique these empires, and Kafka is no exception within his works on China. Many of his 'China works' were written between 1917 and 1920, just as the German Empire

⁹ In Germany, progressive intellectuals referred to the fall of the Manchu dynasty in speculating about the end of their own Wilhelminian empire" and that there were "parallels between the reactionary, corrupt, and decadent Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the Ch'ing dynasty." See *Constructing China*, 75 and 92.

transitioned into the Weimar Republic and the Habsburg Empire broke apart into individual nations. However, Kafka's work also demonstrates the racist logic of equating the Wilhelminian or Habsburg Empires to Imperial China by using terms applicable to either empire or emperor. Kafka's rationale for breaking away from this logic, as Lemon demonstrates, is due to the fact that "At the turn of the century many Viennese German-speakers held that the Orient began not at the border with the Ottoman-speakers, but rather at the doors of their Slavic, Jewish, and (following the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908) Muslim compatriots"¹⁰. Notions of ethnicity within the Habsburg Empire were, on the one hand determined by the categories specified by nineteenth century race theory, but on the other hand determined more simply by linguistic difference¹¹. Linguistic difference figures greatly in Kafka's oeuvre and will emerge periodically throughout this project, particularly when I look at an excerpt from "An Old Manuscript," an excerpt from *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, "The City Coat of Arms," "The Metamorphosis," and "In the Penal Colony," since, in all of these texts, characters reach points where they are unable to communicate effectively with one another. After all, the Habsburg Empire was still an empire that had to constantly confront the issue of linguistic difference among its subjects, both those who spoke the language of the Habsburg Family (German) and those who did not. Moreover, as Said notes, "The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future—these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative...., nations themselves are narrations. The power to narrate, or to block other

¹⁰ Lemon, 2.

¹¹ The Habsburg Empire of Kafka's time was one with several languages spoken in various regions, such as but not limited to Czech, Hungarian, Croatian, Slovak, Slovene, Polish, Italian, Romanian, Serbian, French, Ruthenian, Dutch, Hebrew, and Yiddish. In 1784 Emperor Joseph II changed the legal/official language of the empire from Latin to German.

narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism”¹². By echoing the race theorists before and concurrently with him, Hegel definitely puts forward a narrative that justifies European, imperial intervention in other parts of the world, where according to Hegel, Absolute or Objective Geist have not occurred. Kafka’s literary works are by no means a directed response and are also nowhere on the same scale as Hegel’s lectures, but are small and poignant, and went barely noticed in his own life time. However, when these empires crumbled under their own weight, Kafka’s works emerged as an alternative narrative, one with the flexibility to have a possible critique of these empires embedded within.

In another response to Said, Suzanne Marchand claims “It is far too simplistic to say that nineteenth-century Europeans always thought of themselves as a united group, over and against ‘the oriental other’”¹³ and insists on “a synthetic and critical history, one that assesses oriental scholarship’s contribution to imperialism, racism, and modern anti-Semitism, but one that also shows how modern orientalism has furnished at least some of the tools necessary for constructing the post-imperialist worldviews we cultivated today”¹⁴. Following Marchand, my dissertation focuses on race theory and its consequences for non-European peoples both within and outside of Europe. Hegel, according to Robert Bernasconi, “was driven only by his desire to make his picture of China conform with the larger philosophical aims of his philosophy of history, even if those larger aims had a Eurocentric and even Germanocentric component”¹⁵;

¹² Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage, 1994. Xii-xiii.

¹³ Marchand, Suzanne L. *German Orientalisms in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, xxii.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* xx.

¹⁵ Bernasconi, Robert. “China on Parade: Hegel’s Manipulation of His Sources and His Change of Mind.” Bettina Brandt and Daniel L. Purdy, eds. *China in the German Enlightenment*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016, 166.

since his predecessors and contemporaries argued that the Chinese (and the Jews as I will demonstrate shortly) lacked freedom of thought to achieve “Geist,” there was no reason to depict them otherwise. Hegel presented an argument in support of racial distinction because much of the scholarship up through that time placed emphatic difference on how European civilization developed in contrast to non-European civilization. Hegel deferred to other sources about China and his knowledge of biblical history in the Middle East to make his claims.

From Marchand we learn that the German-speaking world’s view of China was largely established through the lenses of travelogues from other European travelers. Accounts of French and Portuguese Jesuits written in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, such as those of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) were important in this respect. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (1646-1716) and Christian Wolff (1679-1754) had earlier taken a positive approach to China. As Peter Park observes, “Leibniz celebrates the opening of China to intellectual exchange with Europe and enthusiastically greets the prospect of the advancement of knowledge, both theoretical and practical, through this exchange”¹⁶ and “[Wolff] argued that the Chinese system of government was inspired by principles very similar to those enunciated in Plato’s *Republic*. He believed that he had found in ancient China the ideal state *in fact* and that its rulers understood the usefulness of philosophy and philosophers”¹⁷. Leibniz saw a number of similarities between his own philosophy and Chinese philosophy, as demonstrated by the *Confucius Sincicus Philosophus*. Park also observes that “Initially, Leibniz focused on Chinese as the model for a universal language”¹⁸

¹⁶ Park, Peter K. J. “Leibniz and Wolff on China.” Joanne Miyang Cho and David M. Crowe, Ed. *Germany and China: Transnational Encounters since the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 24.

¹⁷ Ibid. P. 30. Italic emphasis in the original.

¹⁸ Ibid. P. 23.

and this will prove important for understanding subsequent thought on the Chinese in Hegel and Kafka, as Hegel and others will subsequently claim that the Chinese language is anything but accessible and therefore not universal. Wolff claimed that China was in many ways a vastly superior culture for its long-standing written history and because of the intellectual emperor, whom Wolff also asserted was the embodiment of Plato's philosopher king. These philosophers were among the most well known in a wave of sinophiles from the sixteenth century.

According to Marchand, in "1770, the 'China Fad,' especially in the Protestant Germanies, died a sudden death and China's associations with Rococo, the French, and the Jesuits made it anathema for early romantic writers"¹⁹. Rather, studying China remained dormant, cropping up only in series of lectures and philosophical treatises that evaluated cultures and histories, such as those of Hegel. In order to fully appreciate the tractability with which Kafka's works engage in the question of "Oriental races," and in particular the Chinese, we need to understand how the German speaking world before Kafka perceived the Chinese. As George Frederickson accounts in his history of racism, "For idealist philosophers and writers like Fichte, Schlegel, and their successors, Germany stood for the life of the spirit against the arid rationalism of the French Revolution. It also stood for Christian belief against the infidelity of the Philosophes."²⁰ Sadly, the fading of sinophilia occurred concurrently with the development within Europe of race theories, from which the Chinese were not excluded. Among the first and most prominent of these race theorists in Europe was Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788). At the onset, "Die Variationen des Menschengeschlechts führte Buffon nämlich primär auf das Klima zurück, das sich am auffälligsten auf die Hautfarbe, darüber hinaus aber

¹⁹ Marchand, 22.

²⁰ Frederickson, George. *Racism: A Short History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, 71.

auch auf Gestalt und Größe sowie das Naturell der verschiedenen Völker ausgewirkt habe”²¹/
“Buffon traced the variations of human races back to climate, which, in his understanding, would have had its most obvious impact on skin color, but also on form and size as well as on the temperament of the different peoples”²². Writing from the development of studies on nature in the sciences, scholars such as Buffon developed theories on the variations within humanity based on comparative studies of flora and fauna in his 49-year project, *Histoire Naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du Cabinet du Roi*. Buffon was among the first to impress the notion that variations in skin color were the consequence of the topographical conditions of where one lived. Demel further explains:

Implizit ging Buffon also davon aus, daß sich die Hautfarbe der Menschen klima-, aber auch kultur- bzw. zivilisationsbedingt in den Abstufungen weiß – gelb – braun und schwarz bewegte. Dabei erscheinen ‘farbige’ Hauttönungen generell als ein Ausdruck einer biologischen Entartung, die mit einer kulturellen Rückständigkeit gemeinhin Hand in Hand geht. Auch (freiwillige oder unfreiwillige) Wanderungsbewegungen von Völkerschaften ändern an diesem Zustand zunächst nicht viel, den Buffon vermutete, daß sich die Hautfarbe nur langsam der neuen klimatischen Umgebung anpasse.²³

Implicitly Buffon presumed that skin colour, along with climate, as well as culture and civilization, was organized according to a hierarchy – white, yellow, brown, and black. In the process, ‘coloured’ skin shades were generally an expression of biological degeneration, which went hand in hand with cultural backwardness. Migrations, whether voluntary or forced, also initially did little to alter these circumstances, for Buffon suspected, that that skin colour adapted to its climatic environment only very slowly.²⁴

²¹ Demel, Walter. “Wie die Chinesen gelb wurden: Ein Beitrag zur Frühgeschichte der Rassentheorien.” *Historische Zeitschrift*, Bd. 255, H.3 (Dec. 1992). P. 645-6. Referred to from here on out as “Demel.”

²² Demel, Walter. “How the Chinese Became Yellow: A Contribution to the Early History of Race Theories.” Bettina Brandt and Daniel Purdy, trans. Bettina Brandt and Daniel Leonhard Purdy, eds. *China in the German Enlightenment*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016. P. 29. Referred to from here on out as “Brandt and Purdy.”

²³ Demel, 647.

²⁴ Brandt and Purdy, 30.

There are two key points of interest here: first that there is a hierarchy that Buffon attributes to the different races on the basis of their skin, biologically rationalizing a hierarchy of inferior and superior races. Somewhere between the Europeans (white) and the Africans (brown, black) are the “Orientals” (yellow). This position matters within Hegel’s appropriation of race theory, though he does not use skin color, as Buffon does, to organize/ justify this hierarchy. Hegel adopts a similar hierarchy, but relies on his philosophical theory of “Geist” instead of biological or anthropological terms. On the one hand, one should note that Hegel follows the much older assumption that civilization originates in the Orient, and that the Chinese are still stuck in an earlier stage of development, on the other hand, he still includes Africans (together with Native Americans) as even less developed than those people he represents as Orientals; such an assumption lines up well with Kafka’s fascination with ancient cultures when he writes them from a modernist perspective, giving Hegel and Kafka some common ground for involving similar ideas. Bernasconi points out that Hegel “found them to be barbaric, cannibalistic, preoccupied with fetishes, without history, and without any consciousness of freedom”²⁵. Additionally, migration cannot rid non-Europeans of the so-called inferiority attributed by the Europeans to the non-Europeans. Although Hegel does not approach race through biology, his arguments regarding Oriental races will have a foundation in this thought, particularly since, as I will demonstrate throughout this work, Hegel’s lectures are themselves geo-historically determined.

²⁵ Bernasconi, Robert. “Hegel on the Court of Ashanti.” Stuart Barnett, ed. *Hegel After Derrida*. New York: Routledge, 1998, 41.

Buffon's assessment of races was received both positively and negatively by German scholars, notably Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Christoph Meiners (1747-1810). Kant weighed in on the race theorization in his essay, *On the Different Races of Man (Über die verschiedenen Rassen der Menschen)*, which predates many of his more major philosophical treatises. Demel observes, "Unter den erblichen Variationen zum selben Stamm gehöriger Lebenswesen bezeichnete [Kant] diejenigen als 'Rassen,' welche sich sowohl bei Versetzung in fremde Weltgegenden über Generationen hinweg constant erhielten als auch bei der Vermischung mit anderen Variationen desselben Stammes jederzeit echte Mischlinge zeugten."²⁶ "[Kant] considered those to be a race that remained constant over generations, even after being dislocated into a foreign part of the world, and that produced real hybrids when mixed with other variations of the same species"²⁷. Kant adopted Buffon's presumption that races have some inherent attribute that transcends spatial movement and therefore cannot be undone by adaptation to new surroundings. I should observe here that this will be a key difference between Hegel and Darwin, whose theory of evolution and subsequent adoption into nineteenth century race theory's notion of "Social Darwinism." Hegel uses history to suggest a kind of linear, seemingly evolutionary development of races around the world, wherein African and Native American races are stuck in a pre-civilization stage, "Oriental" cultures are in a child-like stage of development and Europeans are considered the most advanced culturally. However, Hegel's developmental model does not accommodate notions of adaptation to new environments, which is key to Darwin's understanding of evolution. Buffon and Kant's common thoughts would later synthesize into the race theories of Hegel's contemporary race theorist, Johann

²⁶ Demel. 648.

²⁷ Brandt and Purdy, 31.

Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840): “Hatte z. B. Buffon den Einfluß des Klimas, Kant die Beschaffenheit des Blutes, wieder andere die Wirkung der Organe, speziell der Leber, betont, so kombinierte Blumenbach nun diese Faktoren, in dem er Z. B. konstatierte, Leberkrankheiten seien in den Tropen sehr häufig”²⁸/ “if Buffon, for example, had stressed the influence of climate; Kant, qualities of blood; and others still, the effects of the organs, especially the liver, then Blumenbach had combined them, to the extent that he asserted that liver diseases were much more common in the tropics”²⁹. Keeping with Kant and Buffon, Hegel used geography to attribute inferior/superior traits to different races, ignoring, rather than formally rebuking, any possibly changes in a race’s condition through migration. Bernasconi rightly affirms that “for Hegel, the differences between races was a natural difference based on geography”³⁰. Kafka, in turn, distorted space itself, rendering geographical determination for race problematic.

However, Hegel also, provocatively enough, maintains a distance from French race theory, which can be attributed to the influence of Meiners. As Suzanne Zantop observes, “Christoph Meiners’ insistence in the 1790s on the natural superiority of the Germanic races over peoples of color was the wish-fulfilling dream at a time when France threatened to overtake Germany politically and culturally.”³¹ Hegel comes close to joining this line of logic by claiming that the French notion of “freedom,” through violent revolution is not the same thing as being intellectually free and that the violent revolution they incite is reminiscent of the more passionate characteristics attributed to the Romans as a kind of uncivilized blood-lust. Hegel’s lectures,

²⁸ Demel, 650.

²⁹ Brandt and Purdy. P. 33.

³⁰ Bernasconi, Robert. “With What Must the Philosophy of World History Begin? On the Racial Basis of Hegel’s Eurocentrism.” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, (22), 2000. 171-201. P. 186.

³¹ Zantop. P. 14.

therefore, emerge as a synthesis of Buffon, Kant, and Meiners with regards to who is situated where on the racial totem pole of the world. Hegel's reinforces this totem pole by asserting that all races fall somewhere in the middle of a spectrum of degree to which they have collectively achieved mental freedom; at the bottom of this totem pole for Hegel, just like his predecessors, are Africans and Native Americans, in the middle are Oriental races, and towards the top European groups, with Germans at the pinnacle. As I will demonstrate in the course of this project, Hegel maintains that the Chinese Emperor and Old Testament God hold a presence over their respective subjects that compels those subjects to defer to the letter of law, defined by the Emperor and God respectively, inhibiting them from actualizing their ability to think for themselves; Kafka's works will undermine this by making the authority of God and the Emperor omni-absent.

In addition to Blumenbach's synthesis of Buffon and Kant's race theories, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) emerges as an immediate predecessor of race theories for Hegel, especially with regards to the "Oriental" races. Much like Buffon, Kant, and Hegel, Herder goes a step further than Hegel even with regards to the Chinese, as Herder considers Mongolia to be the origin of China, and therefore sees them as fundamentally nomadic³². Kafka's works recognize a strong difference between the Chinese and the barbaric nomads to the north. Hegel does not concede to Herder's claim of Mongolian origin for the Chinese, nor describe the

³² "The difference between nomadic and sedentary peoples is fundamental for Herder; it is also clear that Herder tends to favour sedentary cultures that organically have developed as a product of their specific climate and geography, although he does also caution, as one critic has pointed out, against privileging one type of society over others. In the text immediately following the passage that characterizes the Chinese as Asia's Jews, Herder seeks to explain what he characterizes as the superficiality of the Chinese through the fact that they are in origin a mobile and nomadic (instead of sedentary) culture." See Niekerk, Carl. "The Problem of China: Asia and Enlightenment Anthropology (Buffon, de Pauw, Blumenbach, Herder)." Bettina Brandt and Daniel Leonhard Purdy, Ed. *China in the German Enlightenment*. Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 2016. P. 105.

Mongolians, except when he discusses traces of zoolatry (an attribute Hegel ascribes to Oriental peoples) in the form of practicing falconry among the Mongolians. Whereas Hegel will not interpret the Chinese as originally a nomadic culture, he will indeed see the Chinese and Jews as very similar, indeed as Orientals with similar characteristics. Having a nomadic origin is one way to postulate a similarity between the Jews and the Chinese, in the case of Herder. The concept of a group of people being nomadic as a negative quality does not align well with Hegel's thesis as the concept does with Herder because geographical positions will, for Hegel, determine the various characteristics for the different peoples of the world.

Herder is also Hegel's forerunner in race theory, agreeing about peoples and their progress through time. In Herder's reading of China, we find that "The mummy, then, represents ancient Egypt's cultural stagnation and political oppression, which is why it was such a powerfully suggestive symbol for similar conditions in China"³³ and that "Herder, by contrast [to Leibniz], reads the Chinese script as pure otherness, as a dangerously arbitrary system of obscure signification diametrically opposed to his phonocentric ideology"³⁴. Hegel views not only the Chinese, but the Jews, whom he regards as Oriental Persians, as having stagnant histories. Historical progress compensates for geographical (dis)position and allows "Geist" to move and, in Hegel's readings of the histories of civilizations around the world, only European cultures afford "Geist" the ability to move through time. Bond points out that Hegel "treated human beings relation to geography under the heading 'subjective spirit', which constituted the first and

³³ Goebel, Rolf. "China as an Embalmed Mummy: Herder's Orientalist Poetics." *South Atlantic Review* (60:1), Jan. 1995. P. 117.

³⁴ *Ibid.* P. 119.

least concrete state in the progression from subjective to objective to absolute spirit”³⁵ and that “Hegel discussed humans’ connection to geography under the heading of ‘the natural soul’ because he believed geography influenced humans most at this early stage in spirit’s development”³⁶. This subjective “spirit” is also referred to as *Geist*, but is conceptually relegated to subjective, psychological outlook for an individual, one that for Hegel is stymied among the Chinese and Jews by the Emperor and Old Testament respectively; Objective and later Absolute Geist, which the Chinese and Jews have not attained as far as Hegel is concerned, is achieved when subjective spirit firstly actualizes freedom. Hegel also maintains Herder’s objection to the notion of Chinese as a possible universal language and instead a language of inaccessibility, which refutes the possibility of Leibnitz’s assertion of Chinese as a universal language and subsequently figures heavily in Kafka’s “An Old Manuscript,” *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, “The City Coat of Arms,” “The Metamorphosis,” and “In the Penal Colony”.

Concurrently with the more general theorization of race, the reception of China in late Enlightenment philosophy became more critical and insisted on boxing China into particular characteristics. As Brandt and Purdy observe, “The historical narrative often moves on to Charles de Montesquieu’s critical turn against the Chinese imperial system. Montesquieu describes the Asian monarch as being above the law, driven by moods and whim as opposed to rational reflection”³⁷ and “[w]hereas Leibniz views China and Europe as the two highest societies in human advancement, philosophers from Montesquieu to Hegel, by contrast, place

³⁵ Bond, Dean W. “Hegel’s Geographical Thought.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (32), 2014. P. 188.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Brandt, Bettina and Daniel L Purdy. “Introduction.” Bettina Brandt and Daniel Leonhard Purdy, Ed. *China in the German Enlightenment*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016. P. 4.

China at the start of a historical succession that ultimately led to a global European dominance. Implicit within these historical narratives is a correspondence between Chinese society and the European ancient régime, so that Hegel could readily critique China as if it were equivalent to the baroque court”³⁸. Hegel veils a critique of his predecessors in the Baroque just as he excoriates the French, except in this case there is a metaphoric correlation between an Occidental and Oriental culture with the Chinese and Baroque Courts, and a developmental correlation between the Romans and the French barbarians they would become. However, in contrast to his French counterpoint, Hegel embraces Montesquieu’s notion of the opposition to critical reflection and instead attribute to the Chinese people an inability to think for themselves because they are inclined to follow the letter of the law. Bernasconi affirms this reading, pointing out that “Hegel’s explanation of how nature participates in history without determining it absolutely is explored further in a section of the Introduction entitled ‘The Geographical Basis of World History.’” He acknowledges that the type and character of every people is formed in the geographical environment in which they are rooted but resists the geographical determination by which Montesquieu and to a certain extent Herder had been left in their reflections on the influence of climate on the spirit of a people”³⁹. Hegel’s use of geography favorably pedestals Europeans, and in particular Germans, ascribing to them Objective and even Absolute “Geist,” something Hegel will claim non-Europeans failed to achieve. Geography supports, rather than serves as the basis for, his claim, as the letter of the law enslaves the Chinese and Jews because of a stagnant history, something Hegel could not entirely attribute to geographical position.

³⁸ Ibid. P. 5.

³⁹ Bernasconi, Robert. “With What Must the Philosophy of World History Begin? On the Racial Basis of Hegel’s Eurocentrism.” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, (22), 2000. P. 186.

The letter of the law (and its spirit) factors greatly into studies of Kafka. Gasché has observed that “The law of Kafka’s world is neither a law anterior to difference and hierarchy, nor one that would consist of in creating a differential and hierarchical order. Rather, it is a law that feeds on hierarchy and difference”⁴⁰ and that “Kafka’s legal world is characterized by complete lawlessness. As we have already seen, in this world *Recht* and *Unrecht* blend without any way of distinguishing between them. Benjamin also emphasizes that, in Kafka, the law and its officers are thoroughly corrupt”⁴¹. Kafka’s legal worlds lack a visible head and its rules are dispatched from this obscure source. One could reasonably argue that Kafka’s depiction of the Chinese Emperor mirrors perfectly Hegel’s Chinese Emperor, since the Chinese Emperor relies on a kind of omnipresence to deny the Chinese their freedom of thought and, by extension, achievement of Objective and Absolute Spirit. However, whereas Hegel speaks broadly of China and its culture, Kafka narrows the scope of his view to the point of view of (fictionalized) everyday Chinese peoples. Bernasconi also points out that “the history of freedom begins here [with the Chinese], even though only the emperor is free and the people lack the subjectivity or inwardness that would be a precondition of their freedom. However, the formulation conceals a complexity which emerges only as Hegel’s accounts unfold”⁴². Although Hegel’s account of the Chinese is to some degree nuanced, he still denies the Chinese have achieved freedom of thought and asserts that the Emperor’s presence and strict control over daily life in China have denied them freedom of thought. Kafka will contrast the Emperor’s freedom by making the Emperor so free

⁴⁰ Gasché, Rodolphe. “Kafka’s Law: In the Field of Forces between Judaism and Hellenism.” *MLN* (117:5), Comparative Literature Issue, Dec. 2002, 977.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* P. 984.

⁴² Bernasconi, Robert. “With What Must the Philosophy of World History Begin? On the Racial Basis of Hegel’s Eurocentrism.” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, (22), 2000,. 179.

that he practically does not exist⁴³. In Kafka's universe, authority figures do not enjoy freedom. They are confined to a realm of omnipresent absence, or omniabsence, where (anti-)heroes pursue them to attain their freedom (as is the case, for example, with Josef K in *Der Prozeß*).

This letter of the law reading of the Chinese is one that Hegel also ascribes to the Jews, as part of a larger Persian race of what is now the Middle East. In addition to the notion of the Jews being historically stagnant, they are often understood and depicted in German theology and philosophy from Luther onward as holding tightly to the letter of the law, rather than its spirit. Kafka's fictional Chinese characters are much like his biblically Jewish characters who hold on so tightly to the letter of the law that they seem to act unnaturally in the Butlerian sense, bringing those actions to the attention of their readers. Yiramiyahu Yovel traces philosophical thought on the Jews and observes, "[f]or thinkers like Kant and Hegel, the goal of history no longer consisted of God's other-worldly kingdom but of human freedom, rational self-awareness, and (for Kant) universal morality and international peace"⁴⁴ and that "[t]he Jewish religion stood out for Kant as having no moral content at all; it was merely legalistic, a *political* constitution only"⁴⁵, which Kant appropriated from Spinoza. Kant and many other philosophers within the Enlightenment were working philosophically against religion largely because of the devastating impact the Thirty Years War had on continental Europe and the Holy Roman Empire. The ability

⁴³ "Only the figures in the intermediate world, that is, the assistants and the messengers, are (perhaps) free from the predicament in which all the other figures – the lowest who suffer the law, and the highest who exercise it— find themselves. Only for them, Kafka suggests, there may be hope. The curious figures of the assistants, all of which are messengers of some sort, are those who have escaped from the family circle and, given the analogy of the father-son relation to the paternalistic rules of the office world, the world of courts and registries as well." See Gasché, Rodolphe. "Kafka's Law: In the Field of Forces between Judaism and Hellenism." *MLN* (117:5), Comparative Literature Issue, Dec. 2002, 973-4.

⁴⁴ Yovel, Yiramiyahu. *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998. P. 3-4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 7.

to think freely was up through the Thirty Years War the way in which Catholics and Protestants alike separated themselves from the Jews. As Librett puts it, “theorization of the binary between Jewish and Christian as that between the anticipatory dead letter of the law of works and the fulfilled living spirit of merciful faith”⁴⁶. Enlightenment philosophy yielded rational self-awareness for Christians, but left the Jews in the dead letter office. Mendelssohn is the exception to this: “Mendelssohn also accepted Spinoza’s idea that Judaism had been a political religion, but claimed that this changed in the Diaspora. So long as the Jewish State existed, its authority was indeed the same as that of religion; but the destruction of the Temple brought an end to the Jewish identification of politics and religion”⁴⁷. Mendelssohn’s notion of the destruction of the temple within the Diaspora contradicts Buffon, Kant, and Hegel’s theorization of race as unchanged by migration and long-term relocation. Hegel thus fits in otherwise with his predecessors in the Enlightenment. Hegel makes this most clear in his geo-political cataloging of peoples that one encounters in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.

At the time of the lectures, Hegel employed the dialectical triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis throughout his lectures, and one can clearly observe his definition of “Geist” within the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Four editions of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* were published: one in 1837 by Hegel’s student, Eduard Ganz, two in 1840 and 1848 by Hegel’s son, Karl, and a critical edition by Georg Lasson in 1917. Whether or not Kafka or the post-Hegelians Kafka knew or had read the third edition is uncertain, but they certainly would have been familiar with the previous editions. I will refer to the 1961 Reclam edition, which combines the Ganz edition with Karl Hegel’s two editions, since, as Bernasconi points out, “Until the

⁴⁶ Librett, Jeffery. *Orientalism and the Figure of the Jew*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014, 10.

⁴⁷ Yovel, 11.

publication of [a critical] edition in 1996, it would have been impossible to recognize that Hegel changed his portrayal of China radically after 1823”⁴⁸.

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel applies his thesis in *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1807), looking at the extent to which each culture has achieved freedom of thought, which for Hegel is the pinnacle expression of “Geist.” As Librett notes, “The work of history is the work of spirit as God’s work. Letter and spirit achieve their sublation into spirit in and as the course of history itself. History as work is God’s freely self-given project.”⁴⁹ In Hegel’s protestant, yet secular reading of world history, the letter of biblical law and its spirit synthesize in Christianity, particularly in German/ Prussian, Lutheran-Protestant Christianity, with the letter of the law inherited by them from the Jews and its spirit of that law from their Germanic, pagan ancestors. This kind of synthesis occurs nowhere else in the annals of world history for Hegel. Hegel begins with Africa and Native Americans and claims that they ultimately do not have the ability to think abstractly, deferring instead to a fetish culture; these cultures, for Hegel, are stuck in a kind of historical infancy, lacking freedom of thought. If “Texture refers to efforts to integrate ethnic difference into an Enlightenment notion of universalism, whereas color stands in for differences perceived as irreducible and thus challenging claims of universality”⁵⁰, as suggested by Birgit Tautz, then “[Hegel] saw Africa as a threat based on its color,” in contrast to China, which Hegel “linked...by its texture to European

⁴⁸ Bernasconi, Robert. “China on Parade: Hegel’s Manipulation of His Sources and His Change of Mind.” *China in the German Enlightenment*. Daniel Purdy and Bettina Brandt, Eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016. P. 174, note 5.

⁴⁹ Librett. P. 136.

⁵⁰ Tautz, Birgit. *Reading and Seeing Ethnic Differences in the Enlightenment: from China to Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 4.

Enlightenment”⁵¹. The Enlightenment project and its goals for universalism needed to justify within its own lines of logic cultural differences and why a European way of life was objectively the best and overall most reasonable. Therefore, early thinkers in the Enlightenment were eager to highlight similarities between European and non-European cultures, for example the possession of a written history. This accounts for why Egypt would constantly get lumped with Persian/ The Middle East and not continental Africa: thinkers of the Enlightenment had to reasonably explain difference in order to justify superiority. The Chinese are for Hegel very similar to the Jews in that they only follow the letter of the law and embody a stagnant history, but they discursively challenge claims of universality in their constant, failed integration into European culture. Jews, by virtue of being the evasive, domestic, Oriental presence in Europe, are themselves a kind of synthesis, on the one hand integrated into European culture and society because, as Marchand points out, “key questions derived from centuries of theological debate – such as the trustworthiness of the Old Testament and the dependence (or not) of Christianity or Islam on Judaism, the meaning of ‘law’ and of Christian ‘freedom’ – were still central to orientalism in the later nineteenth century”⁵² and biblical scholars within Europe at that time relied on rabbis, who knew Hebrew, for assistance in reading and understanding the Old Testament; on the other hand, the Jews were constantly under scrutiny as an Oriental other occupying European space. Side by side the Jews and the Chinese represent then a kind of complementary types of Orientals in the larger picture of German thought: the Jew is the domestic Oriental “[a]gainst a backdrop [of] the persistent practice of identifying European Jews

⁵¹ Ibid. P. 5.

⁵² Marchand. P. 295.

with biblical figures”⁵³ that is physically much closer than the Europeans, but seen as more remote in their inability to integrate (read: convert) into European society at larger. The Chinese, in contrast, are a remote people in a distant, fantastical land known to the Germans only through second-hand sources, such as travel accounts and appropriations/ interpretations thereof in German literature and scholarship. And I will argue that this complementary perspective of the Jews and Chinese indeed comes together in Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, when Hegel reaches back into biblical and ancient histories of China and the Middle East to assess the development of free thought embodied in “Geist”. Bond offers perhaps the most concise explanation of “Geist” in the context of Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*: Hegel “treated human beings relation to geography under the heading ‘subjective spirit’, which constituted the first and least concrete state in the progression from subjective to objective to absolute spirit”⁵⁴. Objective and Absolute Spirit are the “Geist” within quotation marks to which I will refer throughout this project. They are achieved when an individual subject has attained mental freedom, something neither the Chinese nor the Jews have, as far as Hegel is concerned.

Hegel does not fall directly into the ranks of his predecessors. Hoffmeier rightly acknowledges that “Hegel more successfully avoided endorsing any competing theories of the origin of races”⁵⁵, just as Kafka does in both his fictional and non-fictional prose, and that “Hegel departed most radically from Blumenbach in his treatment of the spiritual characteristics

⁵³ Brunotte, Ulrike, Anna-Dorothea Ludewig and Axel Stähler. “Orientalis, Gender, and the Jews: Literary and artistic Transformations of European National Discourses.” Ulrike Brunotte et al., eds. *Orientalis, Gender, and the Jews: Literary and artistic Transformations of European National Discourses*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015. P. 5.

⁵⁴ Bond, Dean W. “Hegel’s Geographical Thought.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, (32), 2014. P. 188.

⁵⁵ Hoffheimer, Michael H. “Hegel, Race, Genocide.” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, (34), 2001. P. 42.

of race. There he relied implicitly on Kant's scheme and ranking, rejecting any mental or cultural implications of Blumenbach's hypothesis that American Indians mediated between Europeans and Asians"⁵⁶. Here Hoffmeier points out that Hegel's lectures, although racist in their own way, do not entirely line up with the conclusions reached by race theorists approaching differences between Europeans and non-Europeans. Moreover, as Bonetto also shows, "In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel had ridiculed physiognomy and phrenology (or crainoscopy), and in the Encyclopedia he explicitly opposes these pseudo-sciences – popularized during the latter half of the 18th century by Lavatar (1741-1801) and Gall (1758-1828), together with his pupil Spurzheim (1776-1832) respectively – which claimed to be able to explain human behavior through what Hegel regards as 'exterior and accidental' details, such as the characteristics of the body or the form of the head"⁵⁷. Indeed, Bonetto's study, whose thesis⁵⁸ I otherwise disagree with, shows the ways in which Hegel has no axe to grind with the Chinese or Jews, much less anyone else who is not European. While Bonetto is right to point out that Hegel elsewhere stood against the scientific studies of physiognomy and phrenology, particularly within the theoretical treatise that underlines his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, she narrowed definition of racism considers only Hegel's intent and does not account for the possible impact Hegel's representations of the Chinese and Jews could have had on the Chinese and Jews as a

⁵⁶ Ibid. P. 46.

⁵⁷ Bonetto, Sandra. "Race and Racism in Hegel – An Analysis." *Minerva – An Internet Journal of Philosophy*, (10), 2006. P.41.

⁵⁸ Bonetto reads not only Hegel's lectures and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in her paper, but also considers race theory as it is discussed in Hegel's *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaft (Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences, 1817)*, as well as in earlier writings and letter exchanges, nuancing what Hegel the person thought about race and racial difference. However, she narrows her definition of racism to one Dinesh D'Souza forms that fails to appreciate the larger, systematic consequences of Hegel's lectures and other writings where he makes false assumptions about the Chinese and Jews as people.

consequence of providing misleading information about those groups of peoples. This, I would argue, is why Kafka's works come into dialogue so closely with Hegel's theories without saying anything, creating a kind of critical engagement without pigeonholing race and racism into confined definitions. Again, I should emphasize here that I am not making any too large or personal of a claim about Hegel, Kafka, and racism. I cannot attribute derogatory language or acts of physical violence against non-European peoples biographically to Hegel. However, we must not ignore the impact Hegel's assumptions about non-Europeans had on his students listening to these lectures and what impression that made on those students, no matter what their future endeavors outside that lecture hall.

Admittedly, Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* do not have much of an afterlife in later, nineteenth century race theory, such as those of Arthur de Gobineau, as race theory shifted considerably with the European academy largely from a philosophical to a scientific debate and was taken over by biologists, zoologists, physiologists and physicians. However, as Bernasconi and Lott point out, "Like Hegel, Arthur de Gobineau understood the Caucasians as the producers of world civilizations"⁵⁹. Hegel's implied categorization of superior and inferior cultures would carry on in the scientific world and his ideas reverberate and are indeed critically received throughout the German philosophical tradition. His most obvious and strongest presence is in the works and philosophy of Karl Marx. We know that "Marx was indebted to Hegel at the level of some very general orientations. Thus both shared a fundamental emphasis on change. Both conceived history as the gradual emergence of human freedom

⁵⁹ Bernasconi, Robert and Tommy L. Lott. "Introduction." *The Ideas of Race*. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Limited, Inc., 2000. P x.

through a series of major stages”⁶⁰. Marx defers heavily to Hegel’s notion of humanity jumping through any number of hurdles towards civilized development. We also know that Marx read Hegel’s ally in race theory, Herder, and that

Karl Marx offers another intriguing twist to Herder’s metaphor by turning the mummy from a signifier for China’s political immobility into an image for the threat to China’s traditional self-isolation posed by the imperialist force of the ‘English cannon’ during the Opium War of 1840. Marx speculates that the financial, moral, and political ‘dissolution’ of the Celestial Empire ‘must follow as surely as that of any mummy carefully preserved in a hermetically sealed coffin, whenever it is brought into contact with the open air.’⁶¹

Marx’s regard for Hegel and Herder on the matter of history reflects their view of the Oriental races as historically stuck in a certain stage of development. Hegel’s ideas on Oriental races not only resonate positively in Marx, but also critically in the works of Arthur Schopenhauer and Søren Kierkegaard. Schopenhauer frequently criticized Hegel, largely because he opposed Hegel grounding his arguments in a cosmological/ontological claims for the existence of God, but in his writings, more often than not, he only says that Hegel’s philosophy as mere jargon, rather than directly engaging with it⁶². As to the Danish philosopher, “one of Kierkegaard’s main objections to Hegel’s philosophy is that it misunderstands the nature of religion by placing it on

⁶⁰ Chitty, Andrew. “Hegel and Marx.” Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur, Ed. *A Companion to Hegel*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd, 2011. P. 477.

⁶¹ Goebel. P. 120.

⁶² Schopenhauer, Arthur. *Über die Grundlage der Moral*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2007. P. 47/
Schopenhauer, Arthur. *On the Basis of Morality*. E.F.J. Payne, trans. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965, 80. Schopenhauer had a brief stint teaching in the same philosophy department as Hegel, right about the time Hegel began giving his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, but his lectures were less attended and he ultimately allowed himself in his philosophy to simply call Hegel names and deviate as far as possible from Hegel’s philosophy. Notably, as well, is the fact that Schopenhauer was far more receptive to Indology and Buddhist thought, which Hegel swept under the rug as inferior to European thought.

par with various forms of scholarship and knowing”⁶³ since, for Kierkegaard, “Unlike science...Christian faith requires a free decision on the part of the believer. By contrast, the goal of science is to construct discursive theories and proofs such that there are no gaps and every conclusion follows necessarily from these premises”⁶⁴. Kierkegaard bases his argument against Hegel on Hegel’s notion of Christian thought as being free, but Kierkegaard finds Christian thought itself confined in his dialectical method and notion of Geist. Kierkegaard, however, still follows the line of logic from Luther that situates the Jews in the Middle East as Oriental other that only follow the letter of the law and not its spirit, even if he disagreed with Hegel’s philosophical engagement of Christian ideas.

I mention Marx, Schopenhauer, and Kierkegaard as critical inheritors of Hegel because I believe these to be three major smoking guns from which Kafka lays out his own creative criticism of race theory. I cannot in this project definitely say that Kafka ever read Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, but I can show throughout this project how Kafka’s literary works are versatile enough to come into dialogue with Hegel’s lectures. However, Hegel’s vast circulation through European thought in the nineteenth and twentieth century, as well as the practice of comparative analysis, make Hegel a plausible intertext within Kafka’s writing that is worth probing. I must clarify here that this study is comparative and looks at Kafka alongside Hegel to demonstrate how Kafka’s literary works critically approach race theory and expose the ways in which race theorists defer to literary tropes in their construction of race. With this said, there is a fair amount of circumstantial evidence to support this claim. Binder’s

⁶³ Stewart, Jon. “Kierkegaard and Hegel on Faith and Knowledge.” Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur, Ed. *A Companion to Hegel*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd, 2011, 501.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 511.

Kafka-Handbuch tells us that the Karls Universität in Prague, where Kafka studied, was anti-Hegelian⁶⁵ and that *Phenomenology of Spirit* was required reading in philosophy courses at the turn of the century through World War I's onset⁶⁶. We know from Librett that Kafka "evades not only the ideology of inwardness common to Buber and Hegel, but also the synthetic telos of Orientalist dialectical typology in general"⁶⁷ and that "Kafka collapses the opposition Hegel posited between Chinese and Jew into a ghostly quasi identity, a textual fact that Clement Greenberg, Robert Alter, and others have observed, although not perhaps finally placed in its proper context, so to speak"⁶⁸. Benno Wager has also observed that, "Viennese Orientalist Adolf Wärmund offered a reading of history as an eternal conflict between two human types: the sedentary, culturally productive Aryan, and the nomadic, destructive Semite, who made a living out of raiding Aryan culture"⁶⁹. Additionally, we know that Kafka owned and read nine out of the twelve volumes of Schopenhauer's collected works⁷⁰, which featured both Schopenhauer's venomous disavowal of Hegel and affinity for Buddhism. Although Kafka may not have read Hegel directly, Hegel's thoughts were no doubt in circulation around Kafka in a variety of forms. We also have it on Max Brod's authority that Kafka read Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* both in the Anmerkung to Kafka's letters and notes from *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* that

⁶⁵ Binder, Hartmut, hrsg. *Kafka-Handbuch in zwei Bänden*. Band 1: Der Mensch und seine Zeit. Stuttgart: Kröner Verlag, 1979. P. 37.

⁶⁶ Ibid. P. 288.

⁶⁷ Librett. P. 229.

⁶⁸ Librett. P. 227.

⁶⁹ Wagner, Benno. "'Lightening No Longer Flashes': Kafka's Chinese Voice and the Thunder of the Great War." Jakob Lothe and Beatrice Sandberg, eds. *Franz Kafka: Narration, Rhetoric, and Reading*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011. P. 61.

⁷⁰ Born, Jürgen. *Kafkas Bibliothek: Ein beschreibendes Verzeichnis*. Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1990. P. 128-30.

Kafka's writing about Abraham emerges as a response to Kierkegaard. Although this circumstantial evidence does not put Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* into Kafka's library or reading lists, it contributes no less to the mediation of Hegel's ideas within Kafka's circles.

There are several stakes for Kafka in subverting the narrative developed by nineteenth century race theory both domestically and abroad. On the home front, these race theories fostered further sentiments of Anti-Semitism throughout Europe. As Boa mentions,

Notoriously, [Otto] Weininger aligned Jews with femininity and helped to stoke sexist and racist ideology. Muscular Christians and clean-limbed Germanic heroes alike contrast with the stereotypical Jew of anti-semitism who overlaps with the negro and, in sub-Darwinism discourse, with the ape. Jews and negroes lust after Christian or white women and evince a thick-lipped, animalesque sensuality, as do ape-like lower-class men who have not developed character and are especially prone to incest.⁷¹

By Kafka's time, race theory had reached the academic discipline of psychoanalysis and the self-hating Jew of the movement, Otto Weininger, who helped pigeonhole Jews into a specific type for the German speaking world. As Sander Gilman points, Weininger's depiction of the Jews was also tied up in the early research/ political movements of homosexuals in Germany:

Once 'gay' was constructed a psychopathology at the mid-nineteenth century, this psychopathology came to be given the medical label 'homosexuality.' No longer a 'sin,' it became the concern of the physician. But at the turn of the century, the Jewish male came to be another version of the 'third sex.' The idea of the 'third sex' had evolved with the work of the lawyer Karl Ulrichs in the 1860s, who argued that there were three 'natural' sexes—males, females, and 'uranians.' By the 1890s, this view dominated the debates within the homosexual emancipation movement. Homosexual, Jewish scientists such as Magnus Hirschfeld transmuted

⁷¹ Boa, Elizabeth. *Kafka: Gender, Class, and Race in the Letters and Fictions*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996. P. 115.

Ulrich's legal rhetoric into a language of medical science—and the idea of 'sexual intermediary classes' was developed.⁷²

Gilman's assessment of Jewish men finding themselves aligned with homosexuals as a kind of third sex joins his other thesis that "yellow, 'Oriental' skin is also part of the standard image of the diseased Jew"⁷³ to foster a discourse of racial otherness for the Jew grounded in biology. The continued and rabid racialization of the Jews in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is further inflamed by a string of Anti-Semitic driven trials against Jews⁷⁴. I will argue within this dissertation that racialization of the Jews is grounded firmly, but not exclusively, in readings/ interpretations of the Old Testament, which Kafka will refer to in order to demonstrate the constructedness of racial categorizations drawn from a source shared by Jews and Christians alike.

Gestus anstatt Geist: The Madness to this Method

The next two questions that need to be answered are: how, or perhaps more specifically on what terms or to what extent does Kafka come into dialogue with nineteenth century race theory? And how do I show you, the reader, this? To the first, Kalamar and Penslar have

⁷² Gilman, Sander. *Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient*. New York: Routledge, 1995. P. 156.

⁷³ Ibid. P. 107.

⁷⁴ In France, you have for example the Beiliss Incident, in which "Beiliss was accused of killing a Christian child before Passover in order to use his blood in the preparation for unleavened bread for the holiday". Important to note here is that the Beiliss incident has its highly questionable justification in the Old Testament narrative of Passover, one that Beiliss is accused of perversely recreating with the blood of a Christian. Indeed, Beiliss is accused of following the letter of the law by procuring blood in preparation for Passover in a kind of perversion of the spirit behind the Passover story. See Brand, Arnold. "Kafka and the Beiliss Affair." *Comparative Literature*, (32:2), Spring 1980. P. 170.

asserted, “Jews respond to the anti-Jewish orientalism of the late eighteenth to early twentieth century in three different ways (typical, we believe, for other targets of orientalisms, including Muslims, as well): first, by rejecting it wholesale; second, by idealizing and romanticizing the Orient and themselves as its representatives; and third, by setting up traditional Jews as orientals, in contrast to modernized Jewry which was described as ‘Western’”⁷⁵. Although their attempt at creating a taxonomy of responses is rather simplified, I think, so as long as we acknowledge there is room for bleeding, overlapping, and nuance within these three more general kinds of responses, Kalmar and Penslar offer a reliable starting point for understanding Kafka’s relationship to Oriental Jewishness. I would position Kafka towards the third category, but stipulate that Kafka’s works do not necessarily reveal his personal opinion explicitly. As Nina Berman⁷⁶ and Ritchie Robertson⁷⁷ note, Martin Buber, Else Lasker-Schüler, Max Brod and a

⁷⁵ Kalmar, Ivan Davidson and Derek J. Penslar. “Orientalism and the Jews: an Introduction.” Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar, Ed. *Orientalism and the Jews*. Lebanon, NH: Brandeis UP, 2005. P. xviii.

⁷⁶ According to Berman, “Die Identität der Figuren bewegt sich zwischen jüdischer, arabischer, vage orientalischer, aber auch männlicher oder weiblicher Zuordnung. Die Konstruktion dieser schillernden Charaktere wird hier im Zusammenhang mit einer zeitgenössischen Diskussion über orientalistisch-jüdische Identität gesehen. Diese Debatte, an der sich jüdische Intellektuelle wie Martin Buber, Hans Kohn, und Jakob Wassermann maßgeblich beteiligten, war selbst Teil einer umfassenderen Diskussion der in Deutschland lebenden jüdischen Minderheit, die eine Neubestimmung des jüdischen Selbstbilds zu formulieren suchte” / “The figures’ identities moved between Jewish, Arabic, vaguely oriental, but also masculine and feminine attributes. The construction of these polychromatic characters is here seen in the context of a contemporary discussion on oriental-Jewish identity. This debate, in which Jewish intellectuals such as Martin Buber, Hans Kohn, and Jakob Wassermann prominently took part, was itself part of a broader discussion of the Jewish minority living in Germany, who sought to form a new definition of the Jewish self-image.” See Berman, Nina. *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne—zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900*. Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 1997. P. 38. The English translation is my own.

⁷⁷ Robertson observes, “Buber wished to combat the widespread stereotype of the Jew as a rational being with no ‘deeper’ instinctive feelings of religious awe or intuitive patriotism.” See Robertson, Ritchie. “Antizionismus, Zionismus: Kafka’s Response to Jewish Nationalism.” J.P. Stern and J.J. White, eds. *Paths and Labyrinths: Nine Papers from a Kafka Symposium*. London: Humanities Press, 1985. P. 32.

number of other Jews in German-speaking Europe were involved in a debate on whether or not to adopt a Persian/ Middle Eastern identity as part of their Jewishness⁷⁸.

In order to elaborate on the position Kafka's works take in this debate, I rely predominantly on a small collection of performance theories. In her seminal work *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler points out that drag itself is not a parody of gender as something organic/ occurring in nature, but "The parody is *of* the very notion of an original"⁷⁹. Yes, there is an actual Emperor of the Chinese people when nineteenth century race theorists develop their theories, but none of them actually encountered the Chinese or their Emperor. Kafka's literary works expose how nineteenth century race theorists "make concessions to the technique of legend"⁸⁰ by reading travel logs and applying character tropes to "Oriental" others. Despite any officially noted interest in ethnology, race theory, psychoanalysis, etc., Kafka's works and their characters make what Said calls "the effort to break down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought and communication"⁸¹ even though a great amount of effort requires his readers to discerning that message. Kafka departs from Hegel in coming to recognizing his literary constructions of racial others as such and not ascribing to them any firm truth value in their representation, but rather making these characters seem unusual and therefore almost parodic of the races they represent.

⁷⁸ As I will show at greater length in chapter three, Kafka indirectly contributed to this debate by submitting his literary piece, "Schakale und Araber"/ "Jackals and Arabs" to Martin Buber's journal, *Der Jude (The Jew)* and I shall argue that this work engages heavily with the question of adopting an Oriental quality to Jewish identity in German-speaking Europe.

⁷⁹ Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 2007. P. 188.

⁸⁰ Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Willard R. Trask, trans. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003. P. 16.

⁸¹ Said, Edward. *Representations of the Intellectual*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996 P. xi.

In order to examine Kafka's exposure of race theory as deferring to tropes and stereotypes, this project is by and large an analysis of literary narrators and characters in the contexts of their settings as they compare with representations of peoples in Hegel's race theories. In her reading of Asian-American literature, Tina Chen provides a productive reading of the ways in which Asian-American characters perform their roles as racial others:

imposture depends upon a particular belief in the power of the authentic. As such, deception of this kind requires a seamless performance; the object is to fool others, to 'pull one over' by convincing your audience (and maybe even yourself) of the rightness of your performance. Impersonation, on the other hand, challenges the notion of the seamless performance; it is a paradoxical act whereby the notions of authenticity and originality are simultaneously paid homage to and challenged. Impersonation, by its very nature as an act of divided allegiance, lends itself to more resistant possibilities.⁸²

Chen's notions of imposture and impersonation, within the Asian American context, refer to Asian American writers, who ascribe and maintain a narrative that tells the "authentic" story of life for Asian Americans, and Asian American writers who then trouble that narrative; Asian American authors writing against the narrative do so because of the narrative's insistence on attributing a singular understanding of the Asian American experience. While *Kafka's Mei Lanfangs* neither takes up the discussion of "authentic" Asian American experience expressed in literature, nor transposes this debate onto the experience(s) of German-speaking Jews and their experiences, I think Chen's notions of impersonation comes close to the work done by Kafka's narrators and characters against nineteenth century race theory. Kafka's characters impersonate Chinese/ Jewish/ Oriental persons in their troubling performances of the races they represent, in order to challenge not only the trouble of representing race "authentically," but to expose its artificiality in nineteenth century race theory.

⁸² Chen, Tina. *Double Agency: Acts of Impersonation in Asian American Literature and Culture*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005. P. 7.

Chen, in part, transposes the theatrical philosophy of Bertolt Brecht, in particular his notions of Epic Theater and *Verfremdungseffekt*, onto Asian-American literature. In her reading of Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker*, Chen observes, "As Bertolt Brecht suggests in his concept of Alienation (*Verfremdungseffekt*), the distance between spectacle and spectator that foregrounds an audience's awareness of the ideology behind any performance is also what keeps the actor 'safe' from his enactments. This is doubly true in the case of the spy"⁸³. This Brechtian reading of how race plays out within Asian American literatures in Chen's monograph factors greatly into my understanding of how Kafka's represents racial otherness. According to John Willett in a footnote to his translation of Brecht's "The Modern Theater is Epic Theater," "The term translated as 'alienation' is *Entfremdung* as used by Hegel and Marx, and not the *Verfremdung* which Brecht himself was soon to coin and make famous"⁸⁴. This *Entfremdung*, according to Ernst Bloch, puts distance between two objects, rather than ontologically changing an otherwise familiar object for the intent of making it strange. Kafka's works, in particular his narrators and characters, change the otherwise familiar image of the racial other (made familiar by nineteenth century race theory) with the intent of making it seem out of place, so that the reader becomes more aware of their constructedness.

Brecht's methodology however, alongside Chen's reading of representing race, offer some insightful tools for reading the performance of race in Kafka's works. In his well-known essay on *Verfremdungseffekt* and Chinese Opera, Brecht observes, "Der chinesisiche Artist...verzichtet auf die restlose Verwandlung. Von vornherein beschränkt er sich darauf, die

⁸³ Ibid. P. 176.

⁸⁴ Willett. P. 76.

darzustellende Figur lediglich zu zitieren”⁸⁵/ “The Chinese performer... rejects complete conversation. He limits himself from the start to simply quoting the character played”⁸⁶.

Although Brecht fails to appreciate at the time that the Chinese performer is actually not limiting himself to quoting the character, as opposed to trying to personify the character, the notion of quoting the character reflects Bloch’s definition of *Verfremdungseffekt*⁸⁷, in that the actor modifies the person of the character to make the character into a parody of her/himself. Kafka’s characters behave in a way that is reminiscent of depictions of racial others in nineteenth century race theory, but act in such a way that demands the reader to ask why they take certain actions and not others, why they adopt a certain opinion and not the opposite, given their situation within that story. They act in such a way that seems unreasonable or irrational. However, this does not necessarily mean that Kafka’s characters, nor Brecht’s “Chinese artist” for that matter, abandon natural acting: “Selbstverständlich setzt der V-Effekt keineswegs ein unnatürliches Spielen voraus...[der Schauspieler] spielt so, daß fast nach jedem Satz ein Urteil des Publikums erfolgen können, daß beinahe jede Geste der Begutachtung des Publikums unterworfen wird”⁸⁸/ “The alienation effect does not in any way demand an unnatural way of acting...[the actor] acts in such a way that nearly every sentence could be followed by a verdict of the audience and

⁸⁵ Brecht, Bertolt. “Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst.” Siegfried Unseld, zsgst. *Schriften zum Theater: Über eine nicht-aristotelische Dramatik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1960. P. 79. All original Brecht works from here on out will come from this edition and be referred to as “Brecht.”

⁸⁶ Brecht, Bertolt. “Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting.” John Willett, trans. and ed. *Brecht on Theater: Development of an Aesthetic*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992. P. 94. All Brecht works in English translation will come from this source and be referred to as “Willett.”

⁸⁷ See Bloch, Ernst. “Entfremdung, Verfremdung.” *Verfremdung I*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1963. P. 82 and Bloch, Ernst. “‘Entfremdung, Verfremdung’: Alienation, Estrangement.” Anne Halley and Darko Suvin, trans. *The Drama Review: TDR*, (15:1), Autumn 1970. P. 121.

⁸⁸ Brecht. P. 82

practically every gesture is submitted for the public's approval"⁸⁹. A Kafkaesque concept, Brecht expects the audience to determine whether or not they approve or disapprove with the speech and actions of the actors/ characters. This verdict, to be rendered by the audience, is one in which the audience themselves determine whether or not an action or a choice of language/ linguistic expression is right or wrong, not in as much as it suits the character within that scene, but to determine whether or not there is something ethically right or wrong with the action/ speech of the character. In this way, Brecht keeps the audience from sympathizing with the characters and maintains a critical distance. Kafka does something similar, except instead of making the judgment a matter of ethics for his reader, the reader has to determine whether or not they are unable to sympathize with being able to reach a decision on their own. Writing as early as the turn of the century and as late as the aftermath of Great War, Kafka distanced himself from literary realism, which at the time was finding itself confronted with surrealism and the Avant garde. Kafka thus confronts his readers with the figuration of nineteenth century race theory; by, for example, confronting his readers with a Chinese narrator that cannot actualize freedom of thought or "Geist," readers are left guessing whether or not freedom of thought is really achievable as a human condition. The alienating performance compels the audience member to recognize the necessity of experiencing something for one's self before determining whether or not the representation of a Chinese character before them is correct or not. Frequently, Kafka situates his characters in strange circumstances and has them act against what most readers would say or do in that character's position. By having the characters choose the less logical/ reasonable action or response (for example by confronting a Chinese cobbler with invading nomads with no Emperor to guide him), especially when race theorists propose that those

⁸⁹ Willett. P.95.

behaviors fall in line with a given race's "character," the story unveils the manufacturing of the race.

Returning to Brecht, the main way one achieves the *Verfremdungseffekt* is through another concept Brecht uses, namely *Gestus*, frequently translated by "gesture," but contains a slightly different meaning⁹⁰. *Gestus* goes beyond simply being a movement that expresses a particular action, but the conveyance of an attitude. Brecht includes language in his definition of gesture:

Gestic ist eine Sprache, wenn sie auf dem Gestus beruht, bestimmte Haltungen des Sprechenden anzeigt, die dieser andern Menschen gegenüber einnimmt. Der Satz: 'Reiße das Auge, das dich ärgert, aus' ist gestic ärmer als der Satz 'Wenn dich dein Auge ärgert, reiße es aus.' Im letzteren wird zunächst das Auge gezeigt, dann enthält der erste Halbsatz den deutlichen Gestus des etwas Annehmens und zuletzt kommt wie ein Überfall, ein befreiender Rat der zweite Halbsatz.⁹¹

A language is gestic when it is grounded in a gest and conveys particular attitudes adopted by the speaker towards other men. The sentence 'pluck they that offends thee out' is less effective from the gestic point of view than 'if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out.' The latter starts by presenting the eye, and the first clause then comes as a surprise, a piece of advice, and a relief.⁹²

Syntactic rearrangement seems to underscore Brecht's notion of language being gestic; if we consider the subheading for this section, an inversion of the typical English-language adage, "There's method to this madness," which itself is a rewrite of Polonius' line from Shakespeare's Hamlet, "Though this be madness, yet there is method in't" (II.ii 206). Shakespeare's unique

⁹⁰ John Willett perhaps articulates best what Brecht conceptualizes as *Gestus*: "'*Gestus*,' of which '*gestisch*' is the adjective, means both gist and gesture; an attitude or a single aspect of an attitude, expressible in words and actions. Lessing used the term in his *Hamburger Dramaturgie* as something distinct from '*Geste*,' or gesture proper (entry for 12 May 1767)" See Willett. P. 42.

⁹¹ Brecht, Bertolt. "Über gestiche Musik." Siegfried Unseld, zsgst. *Schriften zum Theater: Über eine nicht-aristotelische Dramatik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1960. P. 252. See note 63 about citation.

⁹² Brecht, Bertolt. "On Gestic Music." Willett, John trans. and ed. *Brecht on Theater: Development of an Aesthetic*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992. P. 252. See note 64 about citation.

contributions to the English language provide the more gestic of the two expressions, as we are surprised that there is a careful train of thought (method) to what is otherwise seen (by the rest of the characters) as Hamlet's irrational angst for the death of his father and love for Ophelia. Kafka's language, I shall argue in the course of this work, makes similar arrangements in language to distance his readers from his representations of racial others.

There are two major camps of thought on the degree to which Kafka writes politically as an author. In one corner, scholars argue that Kafka's works occupy a world where failure is considered successfully, where the hero is frequently the victim of oppression. As Werner Hamacher puts it, "Modernity must fail in order to stay modern. This belief in the heroic negativity of the new and the newest has become so much a part of theoretical and literary-theoretical investigations into modernity that no one who repeats this axiom, no one who says that the foundation of modernity is failure, could ever risk failing. Indeed, failure is considered a victory, and foundering is understood as a sign of historical necessity"⁹³. Kafka's characters are often trapped in the Law and powerless to escape. There is thus an important line of interpretations that understands gesture as the limit of meaning, as an acknowledgement of the hopelessness of discourse, the impossibility of ever making a decision—these are clearly relevant to Kafka. At the far end of pessimism, we could even claim that Kafka shows Hegel to be correct, namely that he depicts exactly that despotism of the Law that Hegel denounces. Bullock notes that "In 1934, Brecht includes Kafka with Kleist, Grabbe, and Büchner as *failures*. Recollecting remarks in 1931, he says Kafka did look prophetically into the future, but lacking

⁹³ Hamacher, Werner. *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*. Peter Fenves, trans. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996. P. 294.

any commitment to a solution, was unable to see what it held in store,”⁹⁴ “revers[ing] his response to Kafka as ‘the only genuine Bolshevik writer.’”⁹⁵ The members of the other camp, such as but not limited to Rolf Goebel and Robert Lemon, whom I already introduced in this chapter. They have argued that Kafka’s works have a certain revolutionary potential, similar to the one rebuffed by Brecht, and have used that revolutionary potential to criticize European practices of Orientalisms and the crumbling Habsburg Empire respectively. This dissertation seeks a middle ground between those who argue that Kafka’s is revolutionary and those who are that Kafka is hopeless, modernist failure since Kafka’s hopelessness actually comes into dialogue with Hegel’s notions of a lack of spiritual/ mental freedom on the part of the Chinese and Jews. Kafka’s hopeless, modernist failure actually revolts against Hegel’s notion of mental entrapment by forcing the European reader to face the parallels between their own experience with authority and a “Chinese” or “Jewish” authority.

To show how futility and Gestus function within Kafka’s oeuvre, I turn to “An Old Manuscript,” one of Kafka’s signature Orientalist works. A prime example of Brechtian gesturing comes when the narrator, a cobbler posted outside the gates of an emperor’s palace describes a group of encroaching nomads: “Sprechen kann man mit den Nomaden nicht. Unsere Sprache kennen sie nicht, ja sie haben kaum eine eigene. Untereinander verständigen sie sich ähnlich wie Dohlen. Immer wieder hört man diesen Schrei der Dohlen”⁹⁶/ “Speech with the nomads is impossible. They do not know our language, indeed they hardly have a language of

⁹⁴ Bullock, Marcus. “Franz Kafka: The Politics of Disappointment in a Poetics of Patience (Benjamin-Brecht-Kafka).” *Journal for the Kafka Society of America* (16:1), 1992. P. 26. Emphasis in the original.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* P. 27.

⁹⁶ Kafka, Franz. “Ein altes Blatt.” *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008. P. 851.

their own. They communicate with each other much as jackdaws do. A screeching as of jackdaws is always in our ears”⁹⁷. While we do not know for certain what language the cobbler speaks, we infer it to be the language of the empire within the story, whether that empire is the Austria-Hungarian or Chinese. While I demonstrate later in this project how Kafka’s depiction of the nomads as having a language like that of jackdaws exposes the ways in which nineteenth century race theory defers to character tropes to construct race, I want to briefly demonstrate how it also employs Brecht’s notion of *Gestus*. “Sprechen”, literally translated as “to speak” or the infinitive form of “speak” in German, as a grammatical rule goes at the end of the sentence in German when completing the action of a modal verbs, in this sentence “kann” or “can.” The first sentence is punctuated with the negation of their ability to speak with the Nomads, “nicht”/ “not.” By moving the infinitive to the front of the sentence and ending it with the negative, Kafka’s gestures his language in a way described by Brecht in that Kafka presents language, the ability “to speak” first and surprises his reader at the end of the sentence with the negative. Kafka makes a similar syntactic arrangement in the second sentence, except he surprises his reader before they have the opportunity to feel comfortable with his syntactic arrangement of the sentence by giving the Nomads a language, in spite of their ability to speak. The third and fourth sentences are also Brechtian in their emphasis on how the itinerant others speak, this time though shifting their action of “understanding one another”/ “verständigen sie sich” and “screeching like Jackdaws”/ “Schrei der Dohlen.” Concluding the third and fourth sentences with the animal to which the Nomads is only impacted further by the ending of the two sentences from simile to metaphor (“similar to Jackdaws”/ ähnlich wir Dohlen” vs. “the screeching of Jackdaws”/ “Schrei

⁹⁷ Kafka, Franz. “An Old Manuscript.” Willa and Edwin Muir, trans. *The Complete Stories*. Naum N. Glatzer, Ed. New York: Schocken, 1971. P. 416.

der Dohlen). In four sentences Kafka uses syntax to transform characters from mere ethnic others with which the narrator cannot speak to animals with an impenetrable language of their own and he does so through what Brecht will later refer to as *Gestus*. This kind of linguistic *Gestus* is not limited to syntactical changes, but also to repetition, alliteration, consonance, dissonance, choosing Germanic-based words over Latin-based words, all of which are features throughout the texts treated in this project, as well as those works of Kafka not treated in this text.

Kafka's use of *Gestus* was first recognized by not only Bertolt Brecht, but also most notably, Walter Benjamin. Referring to Kafka's writings on the biblical Abraham, which will be treated in this work, Benjamin says, "Bereitwillig wie ein Keller' erscheint dieser Abraham. Etwas war immer nur im Gestus für Kafka faßbar. Und dieser Gestus, den er nicht verstand, bildet die wolkige Stelle der Parabeln. Aus ihm geht Kafkas Dichtung hervor"⁹⁸/ "'This Abraham appears 'with the promptness of a waiter.' Kafka could understand things only in the form of a *gestus*, and this *gestus* which he did not understand constitutes the cloudy part of the parables. Kafka's writings emanate from it"⁹⁹. For Benjamin, Kafka unknowingly does what Chinese actors do for Brecht, suggesting that there is a parallel between the two¹⁰⁰. Benjamin seems indirectly influenced by Hegel, no doubt through Marx, and suggests then that Kafka is an Oriental Jew. Indeed, he draws the parallel between Kafka and Chinese theater in his reading of Kafka's posthumously published novel, *Amerika oder der Verschollene* (*America or the Man*

⁹⁸ Benjamin, Walter. "Franz Kafka: Zur zehnten Wiederkehr seines Todestages." Rolf Tiedmann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Hrsg. *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. No. 2. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977. P. 427. Referred to throughout as "Benjamin."

⁹⁹ Benjamin, Walter. "Franz Kafka: One the Tenth Anniversary of His Death." Harry Zohn, trans. *Illuminations*. Hannah Arendt, ed. New York: Schocken, 1968. P. 129. Referred to throughout as "*Illuminations*."

¹⁰⁰ Benjamin does not necessarily make this claim, however, as he could not have; his seminal essay on Kafka was published months before Brecht, with whom he was in contact, watched Mei Lanfang's performance in Moscow.

who Disappeared), claiming, “in jedem Fall weist das Naturtheater von Oklahoma auf das chinesische Theater zurück, welches ein gestisches ist”¹⁰¹/ “the Nature Theater of Oklahoma in any case harks back to the Chinese theater, which is a gestic theater”¹⁰². Though Benjamin’s link between the Chinese theater and Kafka’s use of Gestus indirectly suggests that Kafka wrote as some oriental other, I want to avoid pigeonholing Kafka racially, as I argue his characters offer us a perspective that allows readers to see how constructs of race developed in the nineteenth century and how nineteenth century theories of race pigeonhole groups of people into certain traits and characteristics.

As Marx influenced Benjamin and was influenced by Hegel, Hegel’s indirect presence can be found within Benjamin’s understanding of “Gestus,” as Benjamin attempts to redeem the supposed failure of Kafka diagnosed by Brecht. Bullock importantly points out that “The freedom that is to be achieved by political intervention in Benjamin’s view of history does not have a symmetrical equivalent in Kafka’s view of human possibilities as he depicts them in that context, or, of course elsewhere. Kafka’s notebooks identify impatience with the deceptions of psychology, not history”¹⁰³; moreover, “The freedom to act in the interest of our true needs, in Benjamin’s view, is lost wherever history is pursued in its false nature as an objective science. Historical knowledge that is bound by the laws of causality has been emptied of human understanding because it is alienated from human freedom”¹⁰⁴. Admittedly, Benjamin’s position on Kafka is a historical one, even though Kafka himself was engaged with any number of ideas

¹⁰¹ Benjamin. P. 418.

¹⁰² *Illuminations*. P. 120.

¹⁰³ Bullock, P. 25.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*. P. 25.

(Bullock here claims psychology specifically), but Benjamin is very much engaged with the connections between history and freedom, which are key to Hegel's lectures, that he sees the ways in which those themes and ideas resonate in the works of Kafka.

With this said, of course, Kafka's literary works also employ the *Gesten* that comprise the other half of *Gestus*. Adorno famously notes, "Oft setzen Gesten Kontrapunkte zu den Worten: das Vorsprachliche, den Intentionen Entzogene fährt der Vieldeutigkeit in die Parade, die wie eine Krankheit alles Bedeuten bei Kafka angefressen hat"¹⁰⁵/ "Gestures often serve as a counterpoint to words: the pre-linguistic that eludes all intention upsets the ambiguity, which, like a disease, has eaten into all signification in Kafka"¹⁰⁶. The contrapuntal actions that predate language in Kafka's Orientalisms run the gamut from the devouring of live oxen with carnivorous horses to stabbing one's self; all actions resist firm, linguistic definition and are therefore defined as gestures, movements made by characters to express what cannot be expressed in words. Puchner observes that "Gesture...escapes rigid labeling and fixed meaning, and it is for this reason that the category of gesture has surfaced with such frequency in the several 'crises of language,' especially in the one that is most closely associated with Kafka, namely the turn-of-the-century crisis of language whose spiritual center is Vienna"¹⁰⁷. With the Habsburg Empire in a period of linguistic unrest, Kafka's literary works take the opportunity to address representations of race in nineteenth century race theory not by offering a more authentic representation, but offering a parody of something that cannot be conclusively proven true by the

¹⁰⁵ Adorno, Theodor. *Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955. P. 308.

¹⁰⁶ Adorno, Theodor. *Prisms*. Samuel and Sherry Weber, trans. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992. P. 248.

¹⁰⁷ Puchner, Martin. "Kafka's Antitheatrical Gestures." *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory*, (78:3), 2003. P. 190.

nineteenth century race theorists and their lack of first hand experience with foreign others and desire to excuse Anti-Semitism at home by portraying other races as backwards. Language's freedom from fixed meaning, as Puchner puts it, allows for the possibility of an imbedded critique of nineteenth century race theory through the parody of representation of races within Kafka, especially as they parallel on a smaller, more localized scale.

Benjamin has put it best that Kafka offers an array of means to alienate us from identifying with the struggle of his characters: "Kafkas ganzes Werk [stellt] einen Kodex von Gesten [dar], die keineswegs von Hause aus für den Verfasser eine sichere symbolische Bedeutung haben, vielmehr in immer wieder anderen Zusammenhängen und Versuchsanordnungen um eine solche angegangen werden"¹⁰⁸/ "Kafka's entire works constitutes a code of gestures which surely had no definite symbolic meaning for the author from the outset; rather, the author tried to derive such meaning from them in ever-changing contexts and experimental groups"¹⁰⁹. These gestures are not just themselves movements the characters make, but they are an assortment of literary devices and tropes. One can identify for example the use of the bed within "The Great Wall of China," *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, "An Old Manuscript," "Description of a Struggle," and "In the Penal Colony" as ones that signal, but obstruct dreaming/ fantasy for both the characters within these stories and for these stories' readers; this reading is amplified by Kafka's depiction of the biblical Paradise in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* as an inversion of the biblical locale situated in the Middle East by the Old Testament. Beds for Kafka are frequently places where, instead of dreams and fantasies freely flourishing, prevent imagination because death and outside disruptions are given leeway to force characters off these

¹⁰⁸ Benjamin 418.

¹⁰⁹ *Illuminations* 120.

places of rest. The obstructed fantasy in these texts can be read as the one Zantop describes of maintaining colonial power over non-European others in the world outside of German-speaking lands. Another trope, featured in “The Great Wall of China,” “The Refusal,” “Abraham,” and “The Metamorphosis” is a character’s relationship to authoritarians, particularly as those facing authority are linked either literally or metaphorically to children. In the context of race theory, the Chinese and the Jews were seen responding to their respective authorities (the Emperor in China and the Old Testament God for the Jews) as children awaiting proper instruction; Kafka’s characters, all facing opaque authority figures, show how thinking of the Chinese and Jews as mere children guided by an authoritarian simply does not hold water. As one could say that all his characters are trapped within the Law and have no escape as though Hegel were right, we have to embrace the imitation or resemblance of Kafka’s characters to Hegel’s representations in order to achieve any kind of parody. A parody is, after all, always already a resemblance of the original with modifications. Kafka’s characters signal through the arrangement of language, expressions, and movements, what normal language cannot. In addition to the bed and comparisons of children, Kafka’s animal like humans and human like animals depart from the typical talking creatures of fables and fairy tales, and instead take center stages as sentient beings trying to understand and address their relationships to humanity. Finally, Kafka’s other gestures include actions, phrases and smaller references to a network of literary works in both the Western and Eastern canons (most of which Kafka read in German translation). These gestures do not only refer back to previous texts, but, just as Brecht does in his adaptations set in far off, but familiar places with equally distant characters, Kafka’s present and the world in which Kafka lives, as well as the ideas circulating in that world. And nineteenth century race theory, with its continued circulation into the twentieth century, floated in the ether of Kafka’s present. While

Kafka's characters are trapped within the law of a static history and therefore unable to achieve freedom, they draw attention to their lack of freedom as a way of achieving that freedom. Kafka's gestures work as his characters, imitating, yet also loosening themselves from the static definitions of nineteenth century race theory. In "The Great Wall of China," Kafka's Chinese narrator asserts, "“Das menschliche Wesen. Leichtfertig in seinem Grunde, von der Natur des auffliegenden Staubes, verträgt keine Fesseln; fesselt es sich selbst, wird es bald wahnsinnig an den Fesseln zu rütteln anfangen und Mauer, Kette, und sich selbst in alle Himmelsrichtung zerreißen”¹¹⁰/ "Human nature, essentially changeable, unstable as the dust, can endure no restraint; if it binds itself it soon begins to tear madly at its bonds, until it rends everything asunder, the wall, the bonds, and its very self"¹¹¹. By binding his own characters, Kafka reveals how the desire for freedom, both in action and in thought, is not confined or limited by geographical position or racial disposition. Kafka's characters show us not only how nineteenth century race theory furnishes the fetters that, although they themselves wear, are to be torn asunder along with the establishment supporting them, and indeed even these characters themselves. Their lesson in who has and has not achieved freedom of thought is one that is shown, not told, by adopting limits and constraints of thought until those constraints no longer make sense for their audience.

¹¹⁰ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1089

¹¹¹ *Complete Stories*, P. 239

Chapter 1: Breaching the Great Wall of Geist: Kafka and the Chinese People

“Im Grunde bin ich ja Chinese”

“Fundamentally, of course, I’m Chinese”

---Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, 1916

The following chapter examines Franz Kafka’s literary works “Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer” (“The Great Wall of China,” written ca. 1917, published 1931) and “Ein altes Blatt” (“An Old Manuscript,” written 1919, published 1920), and excerpt from *Die Acht Oktavhefte* (*The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, 1917-1919) and “Die Abweisung” (“The Refusal,” written 1920, published 1970¹¹²), in tandem with the lectures on China in Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel’s *Vorlesung über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (*Lectures on the Philosophy of History*). More specifically, I compare Hegel’s general description of the Chinese Emperor and average Chinese person serving as the Emperor’s subjects with Kafka’s representations of the Emperor, of a Chinese mason/historian, and of a cobbler in order to demonstrate the way in which Kafka criticizes Hegel’s racist logic of Chineseness, borrowed and mediated through the views of the British Embassy, as noted by Robert Bernasconi¹¹³, and exposes Hegel’s notion of Chineseness as a construct lacking any natural quality. Hegel contends that the Chinese live in a state of static history, closely regulated by a hierarchical structure that places the familial father and Emperor at the top, who behave no differently than the Greek tyrant Solon in Hegel’s words. The persistent presence of the familial father and the Emperor in Chinese social thought, Hegel

¹¹² This was the last of Kafka’s literary works to be published, with only his Letters to Otta to be published four years later, and is not to be confused with another work of the same title by Kafka published in 1913, which has been translated as “The Rejection” in English.

¹¹³ Bernasconi, Robert. “China on Parade: Hegel’s Manipulation of His Sources and His Change of Mind.” *China in the German Enlightenment*. Daniel Purdy and Bettina Brandt, Eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016. P. 209.

argues, inhibits the average Chinese person from actualizing his free-will, effectively making them mental slaves to the letter of the law, laid down by the familial father and the Emperor. I maintain that Kafka works against this line of logic by putting his two, first-person, Chinese narrators into situations where they are confronted with dilemmas and the Emperor is nowhere in sight or mind to offer guidance, demonstrating to readers how ridiculous imagining a person without free thought is, performing the role of Hegel's two-dimensional people of China.

In order to elaborate on the abovementioned thesis, I look at how both Hegel and Kafka represent the Chinese Emperor since the Emperor is the root of Chinese static history and, by extension, the condition of these Chinese subjects, inasmuch as Hegel and his perspective are concerned. Once I have compared Hegel and Kafka's representations of the Emperor, I will examine their representations of the Chinese subject side by side. The first two texts, "The Great Wall of China" and "An Old Manuscript," will serve in this paper as the basis for comparison between Hegel and Kafka's proper representations of Chinese people. However, since Hegel's claim for difference in the Chinese people lies in their ability to only follow the letter of the law, I will look at the latter three stories, set in an ambiguous Empire, in tandem with Kafka's critique of Hegel's line of logic. The last text, "The Refusal," leads the chapter to its conclusion as it demonstrates one of the most important connections between Kafka's literary work and Hegel's depiction of China and the Chinese: the trope of the omnipresent authority figure.

Establishing Kafka as a counter to Hegel's discourse on the Chinese gives us a more complete sense of Kafka's literary potential, looking especially at the ways in which his literary fiction not merely reflects nineteenth century race theory, but comes into dialogue with it. This chapter is thus less about the relationship between Kafka's literary works and language and instead examines the way he uses that language towards more critical ends, straddling his literary

representations along that fine-line between fiction and “reality,” to show how the so-called hardline truths of philosophical and historical traditions, as Auerbach puts it, “make concessions to the technique of legend”¹¹⁴. Kafka is, as Edward Said puts it, an “individual with a vocation for the art of representing”¹¹⁵ or an intellectual, in his engagement of race theory generated out of the German-language academy. Reading Kafka alongside Hegel demonstrates a way one can use literature to confront racism in historical and philosophical discourses today through parodist mimicry, giving deeper meaning to his otherwise already fantastic use of language.

Scholarship on Kafka’s “The Great Wall of China” and “An Old Manuscript,” follows in a certain trajectory that orbits around, but never fully touches down on the subject of race. Rolf Goebel, perhaps the most prominent scholar on the topic, has written extensively on the texts post-colonial characteristics and their resistance to employing Orientalist tropes¹¹⁶, Goebel contends that Kafka uses narrative discourse in his works on China to combat earlier thought on China and that Kafka’s Orientalisms are ones that draw our attention to the question of determining cultural authenticity, metaphysical practice, and transnational dialogue¹¹⁷. Dennis McCort contends that spiritual affinity (some metaphysical force that connects the West to the East) is at the heart of Kafka’s relationship to the East because it fulfills cultural construction¹¹⁸,

¹¹⁴ Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Willard R. Trask, trans. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003. P. 20.

¹¹⁵ Said, Edward. *Representations of the Intellectual*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996. P. 12-3.

¹¹⁶ Goebel, Rolf. *Constructing China: Kafka’s Orientalist Discourse*. Columbia: Camden House, 1997.

¹¹⁷ Goebel, Rolf. “Constructing Chinese History: Kafka’s and Dittmar’s Orientalist Discourse.” *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association* (108:1), 1993. P. 191.

¹¹⁸ McCort, Dennis. “Kafka and the East: A Case for Spiritual Affinity.” *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures* (55:4), 2002. P. 210

responding in part to Goebel's claims about metaphysical practice and coming into dialogue with Clement Greenberg, who argues that "The Great Wall of China" renders spiritual Jewishness¹¹⁹ suspect¹²⁰. Patrice Djoufack, aligning more closely with Goebel's political readings of Kafka, argues that Kafka disrupts European discourse of the Orient by making his first person narrator Chinese¹²¹. Herbert Rappaport, an important prerequisite to these political readings, points out that Kafka's fictions often confront their critics with a collapse or collapsing center of authority, a dead or powerless father, who condemns those in his orbit to a circuitous ruin. Gerhard Oberlin makes a similar claim in his architectural reading of Kafka, claiming that the Chinese peoples in Kafka's parables establish and define civilization, something to keep barbarism out of civilization. Rappaport's argument fits with my argument, but I depart from Rappaport to claim that the dead/ powerless father figure is the centerpiece for a critique of nineteenth century race theory outlined by Hegel, just as Kafka's works serves as a critique of broader Orientalist discourses for Goebel and Djoufack.

There are scholars who claim that Kafka's criticism is directed less at the practice of Orientalisms in the German-speaking World, and more at other practices in Europe. Manfred Engel and Benno Wagner both claim that "The Great Wall of China" criticizes Europe's role in WWI, Engel specifically maintaining that "The Great Wall of China" aligns itself with *Die Ideen*

¹¹⁹ Goebel, Rolf. *Constructing China: Kafka's Orientalist Discourse*. Columbia: Camden House, 1997.

¹²⁰ Greenberg, Clement. "At the Building of the Great Wall of China." Angel Flores, ed. *Franz Kafka Today*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958. P. 80.

¹²¹ Djoufack, Patrice. "Orientalismus und Diskontinuität: Kafka und die Repräsentation des Anderen im chinesischen Diskurs." *Germanistik und in zwischen den Kulturen*. Esaie Djomo und Albert Gouaffor, hrsg. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2004. P. 139.

von 1914¹²² and Wagner asserting that “The Great Wall of China” responds to WWI propaganda emerging from universities in the Habsburg Empire¹²³. Robert Lemon, one of the few to discuss Kafka’s representations of both China and the Middle East, argues that Kafka’s Orientalisms lambaste the Habsburg Empire for its failed attempts at keeping imperial power because Kafka relies on his readers’ ability to parallel the fall of the Habsburg empire with the collapse of Imperial China, both of which occurred almost simultaneously¹²⁴. While Wagner rightly points out how Kafka’s representations of China parallel Hegel’s and how Kafka indirectly accessed Hegel’s thoughts on China through their academic dissemination¹²⁵, I depart from previous scholars with regards to their historical readings of Kafka and instead focus more on how Kafka castigates the German-language representations and understanding of “Oriental peoples” as claimed in the hardline truth claims of nineteenth century historical and philosophical traditions about world races

Several other scholars have also talked around, though never quite pinned down the connection between Kafka’s texts and the question of history. I should note first that, crucial to my own reading of Hegel, Kafka, and the Chinese People, is that Hegel adopts Herder’s reading of China as maintaining a static history and that Hegel’s thesis that the Chinese people lack “Geist” and therefore cannot make judgements on their own/ defer to the letter of the law as designated by the Emperor, explains their static history. J.M. Rignall believes that Kafka’s

¹²² Engel, Manfred. “Entwürfe symbolischer Weltordnung: China und China Revisited: Zum China-Komplex in Kafka Werk 1917-1920.” Manfred Engel and Ritchie Robertson, eds. *Kafka, Prag, und der Erste Weltkrieg*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2012. P. 232.

¹²³ Wagner, P. 59.

¹²⁴ Lemon, Robert. *Imperial Messages: Orientalism as Self-Critique in the Habsburg Fin de Siècle*. Rochester: Camden House, 2011.

¹²⁵ Wagner, P. 61, 64.

Chinese works intentionally drive a caesura between history and consciousness through his use of irony to defuse the assumed truth of history and this caesura is represented *par excellence* with the Great Wall¹²⁶, something I contend Kafka does by having his characters mimic Hegel's representations of Chinese people. Gerhard Neumann asserts that architecture and architectural discourse are meant to move Kafka's otherwise static plot and characters forward¹²⁷. Branching off of Neumann's argument, I contend that Kafka's static plot parodies notion of Herder/ Hegel's static history of China. Christopher Bush picks up a bit on this connection between Kafka and static history and expresses interest in "the reality of representation,"¹²⁸ as my project does, but focuses on representations of writing practice/ "technological and ethnographic imaginaries"¹²⁹. Indeed, my project is about how Kafka's parody destabilizes and reveals the (lack of) reality of Hegel's representations of the Chinese.

Since this chapter is still a character analysis grounded to some extent in a Brechtian reading of Kafka, albeit mediated through Walter Benjamin, there are two other readings that warrant mention. In a very recent article on Benjamin's interpretation of Kafka, Hillel Broder observes that "For Benjamin, Kafka here is demonstrating the actual usefulness of acting in gestures, of acting emptily"¹³⁰ and that "[i]n this reading of the gesture, active inaction, wu-wei,

¹²⁶ Rignall, J.M. "History and Consciousness in Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer." J.P. Stern and J.J. White, eds. *Paths and Labyrinths: Nine Papers Read at the Franz Kafka Symposium Held at the Institute for Germanic Studies on 20 and 21 October 1983*. London: Inst. Of German Studies, Univ. of London, 1985. P. 126.

¹²⁷ Neumann, Gerhard. "Chinesische Mauer und Schlacht von Babel: Franz Kafkas Architekturen." *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, (83:3), 2009. P. 452-3.

¹²⁸ Bush, Christopher. *Ideographic Modernism: China, Writing, Media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. P. xviii.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* P. xviii.

¹³⁰ Broder, Hillel. "Beyond the Kafka Koan: Kafka's Taoism as Modernist Aesthetic." *Journal for the Kafka Society of America*, (40:), 2015. P. 72

is hidden in plain sight.”¹³¹ Wu-wei, the Taoist notion of inaction or action that does not require struggle or excessive effort, Broder argues that wu-wei is an important aesthetic adopted by Kafka, which Benjamin picks up upon in his Chinese writings. If we think of Hegel’s assessment that Chinese history and by extension its culture have reached their limit and are no longer moving forward, we can see how the Taoist reading of Kafka’s aesthetic both works for and against Kafka’s uncovering the veil of nineteenth century race theory’s construction of race. I contend that if Kafka is adopting the Taoist aesthetic of wu-wei, he does so more so to parody Hegel’s claims about Chinese history and culture than as a face-value adoption of the aesthetic. I think Border is right to point out the ways in which wu-wei and Kafka’s literary techniques overlap, but Broder runs the risk of doing what Benjamin does and lumping the Jews with other “Oriental” groups, something that Benjamin indirectly gets from Hegel via Marx. Rather, I think we should see Kafka and wu-wei’s overlap as one similar to Brecht’s use of *Verfremdungseffekt*, which Brecht at least would later admit was mistakenly attributed to Peking Opera.

A Tale of Two Emperors: The (Un-)Enlightened Despot of China

Rather than seeing the Chinese as having a highly enlightened leader with a clear line of communication (as exemplified by their character system), as Leibnitz and Wolff both thought, Hegel argues that the Chinese have a super-imposed patriarchy marred by an opaque spoken language with an equally overwhelming written language. However, in order for one to understand the Chinese Emperor, its people, and their language, Hegel insists on starting with

¹³¹ Ibid P. 72.

how history is constructed in China; Hegel connects the construction of Chinese history to the construction of the Great Wall of China:

Den Einfällen der nördlichen Nomaden wurde die von Shi-hoang-ti erbaute lange Mauer entgegengesetzt, welche immer als Wunderwerk betrachtet worden ist. Dieser Fürst hat das ganze Reich in 36 Provinzen geteilt und ist auch dadurch besonders merkwürdig, daß er die alte Literatur und namentlich die Geschichtsbücher und die geschichtlichen Bestrebungen überhaupt verfolgte. Es geschah dieses in der Absicht, die eigene Dynastie zu befestigen durch die Vernichtung des Andenkens der früheren. Nachdem die Geschichtsbücher zusammengehäuft und verbrannt waren, flüchteten sich mehrere hundert Gelehrte auf die Berge, um das, was ihnen an Werken noch übrigblieb, zu erhalten. Jeder von ihnen, der aufgegriffen wurde, hatte ein gleiches Schicksal wie die Bücher. Diese Bücherverbrennen ist ein sehr wichtiger Umstand, denn trotz demselben haben sich die eigentlichen kanonischen Bücher dennoch erhalten, wie dies überall der Fall ist¹³².

The long wall built by Shi-hoang-ti—and which has always been regarded as a most astounding achievement—was raised as a barrier against the inroads of the northern Nomads. The prince divided the whole empire into thirty-six provinces, and made himself especially remarkable by his attacks on the old literature, especially historical books and historical studies generally. He did this with the design of strengthening his own dynasty, by destroying the remembrance of the earlier one. After the historical books had been collected and burned, many hundreds of literati fled to the mountains, in order to save what remained. Every one that fell into the Emperor's hands experienced the same fate as the books. The Book-burning is a very important circumstance, for in spite of it the strictly canonical books were saved, as is generally the case¹³³.

This anecdote appears as part of Hegel's prefatory description of China before he launches into any particular analysis of Spirit in China. According to Hegel, the construction of the Great Wall of China brought about a change in the canon of Chinese literature, history, and philosophy. The books that remained presumably became the new canon following the rise of Shi-hoang-ti (260

¹³² Hegel, G.W.F. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 1961. P. 187. Referred from here on out to as "Hegel"

¹³³ Hegel, G.W.F. *The Philosophy of History*. J. Sibree, trans. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004. P. 119. Referred from here on out to as "Sibree."

b.c.e- 210 b.c.e). Hegel uses this anecdote to demonstrate that there is a pervasive insistence in China on preserving material sources of knowledge, in spite of shifts in power to demonstrate the way in which China's long history stagnates. For implied within this anecdote is that the literature, philosophy, and history of China circulate almost unperturbed among the elite in China, unaffected by political turmoil and monumental change in Chinese identity, as exemplified by the creation of 36 new geo-political spaces and a giant structure that becomes synonymous with China. As mentioned before, the written literature, philosophy, and history of China matter because, in the era of Sinophilia with Leibnitz and Wolff, his mastery of these materials made the Chinese Emperor the embodiment of Plato's philosopher king and the epitome of the enlightened despot. Hegel wanted to undo this line of logic by demonstrating how the literati's attachment to the written materials seemed almost ludicrous in times of peril and how China was unable to move forward culturally from a previous way of life (presumably before the invasion of the Mongols) to their new regime.

Hegel's anecdote also sets up his ubiquitous thesis regarding the Emperor of China: namely that, rather than embodying a philosopher king, the Emperor is actually the manifestation of a Universal Will, an omnipresent *Spirit* within China that prohibits the Chinese subject from making individual decisions and judgements. Deferring to Inwood's *A Hegel Diction*, I should note that Hegel's notion of Geist is, inasmuch as the Chinese are concerned, an "'Objective Spirit,' ...of a social group, embodied in its customs, laws, and institutions"¹³⁴, which is included in the definition of Geist in *Phänomenologie des Geistes (Phenomenology of Spirit)*, but with one caveat: not all cultures have attained "'Absolute Spirit'...[which] has a pre theological

¹³⁴ Inwood, Michael. *A Hegel Dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992. P. 275.

flavor...[and] is the self-consciousness of God”¹³⁵. Hegel is convinced that virtually the entire world outside of his contemporary Western-Europe has attained this. *Spirit* explains why some cultures historically progressed, while others stagnated, as far as Hegel is concerned in the context of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. When Hegel says “the Emperor of China,” Hegel does not mean exclusively mean Shi-hoang-ti, his predecessors and successors, because this would work against Hegel’s phenomenological approach to history. Rather, the Emperor of China is also a stable reoccurrence of law and order in Chinese written history (again, as interpreted by Hegel) that the Chinese subjects (again, the persons over whom the Emperor reigns) come to see as the letter of the law. According to Hegel, the Emperor oversees the Spirit of his subjects and country with the result that the Emperor’s laws, edicts, etc. become morals for others to blindly follow, rather than fostering individual reason or freedom. I shall return to this point as well as closely read what Hegel specifically says on this point later, when I compare Hegel and Kafka’s representations of the Chinese subject. This level of oversight simultaneously explains why Shi-hoang-ti would theoretically want to eliminate the presence of his predecessors from Chinese history and, by extension, Chinese social thought, on the one hand, and why that attempt at elimination would never come to fruition, on the other hand. Shi-hoang-ti could have plausibly put more effort into burning the books and historians, but instead did not, allowing Chinese history to continue as it had before his reign.

However, in order to maintain this omnipresence of the abstract Emperor, Hegel also argues that the material Emperors (the physical individuals ruling over China) take on the role that the abstract Emperor represents. Here, I will admit that my interpretation of Hegel is

¹³⁵ Ibid. P. 275.

mediated to some extent through Ernst Kantorowicz thesis in *The King's Two Bodies*, wherein he argues “the king is immortal because legally he can never die”¹³⁶. I argue that Hegel views the Chinese Emperor in a similar vein, but that the presence of the material Emperor reinforces this. In this way, Hegel conflates the notion of the Emperor into one that is both an abstract idea embedded in Chinese everyday culture and a material person that embodies and enacts the role of the abstract Emperor that he represents. Hegel offers the following example: “Unter der Aufsicht des Kaisers wird ihre Erziehung geleitet, und früh wird ihnen gezeigt, daß der Kaiser der Haupt des Reiches sei und in allem auch [er] als der Erste und Beste erscheinen müsse”¹³⁷ / “Their education is conducted under the Emperor’s superintendence, and they are taught early that the Emperor is the head of state and therefore must appear as the first and best in everything”¹³⁸. The first clause contains the material person, for an abstract idea cannot possibly oversee the education of material persons. Additionally, we know from the anecdote on the preservation of history during the building of the Great Wall that not one Emperor is being held in regard as the best and the brightest because the abstract person transcends any attempt at obliterating the records of the previous person ruling over the empire. In other words, all material Emperors are held equally as the first and best because the Chinese have an abstract Emperor that each of these persons governing as Emperor represent.

In contrast to the omnipresent Emperor of Hegel, Kafka’s Emperor in “The Great Wall of China” and “An Old Manuscript,” is, if anything, omni-absent. In “The Great Wall of China,” a

¹³⁶ Kantorowicz, Ernst H. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951. P. 4

¹³⁷ Hegel, P. 192-3.

¹³⁸ Sibree, P. 123

Chinese scholar, and former mason, describes much of Chinese culture in the time that the Great Wall of China was under construction. He reflects on history, the Emperor, the Wall as an architectural structure, and even more on human nature. Contrastively, the cobbler in Kafka's "An Old Manuscript" is confronted with the presence of the invading nomads from the North occupying the gates of the imperial palace. Without guidance from the Emperor or support from the imperial army, the cobbler is left wondering how he and the other average citizens are going to defend the empire, much less the Emperor or the palace. Goebel has observed that when "An Old Manuscript" was published, Kafka noted in his diary that the original, working title for the short work had been "Ein altes Blatt aus China" ("An Old Manuscript from China") and that it was intended to be a sequel to the unpublished longer work, "The Great Wall of China"¹³⁹. Although the shorter and earlier published of the two works makes no direct reference to China, both texts do make explicit reference to "Nomaden aus dem Norden"¹⁴⁰ / "nomads from the North,"¹⁴¹, paralleling Hegel's description of the Mongol invaders of China during the Great Wall's construction. Although Kafka no doubt drew it from the discourse surrounding Chinese history in the German-speaking world from the Enlightenment to the early twentieth century, the role of the Emperor, both as an abstract idea and as a material person, figure greatly within Kafka's two works.

¹³⁹ Goebel, Rolf. *Constructing China: Kafka's Orientalist Discourse*. Columbia: Camden House, 1997. P. 91.

¹⁴⁰ Kafka, Franz. "Ein altes Blatt." *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008. P. 851. Referred to from here on out as "*Sämtliche Werke*".

¹⁴¹ Kafka, Franz. "An Old Manuscript." Willa and Edwin Muir, trans. *The Complete Stories*. Naum N. Glatzer, Ed. New York: Schocken, 1971. P. 416. Referred to from here on out as "*Completed Stories*." As an additional note, this is the phrase used in "Ein altes Blatt." In "Beim Bau," the Mongols are referred to as "Nordvölker" and "Nomaden" (Kafka 1086) in two paralleling sentences.

In “The Great Wall of China,” Kafka’s narrator invokes the distinction between the abstract idea of the Emperor and the material person. Wolf Kittler has already acknowledged that, “So stehen zwei Kaiser gegenüber: der reale Kaiser in Peking, der sich im Verhältnis zur Größe seines Landes als ein winziger Punkt bestimmt, und der andere Kaiser, den das Denken des Volkes konstituiert, groß, weil er im ganzen Land anwesend ist”¹⁴²/ “So stand two emperors across one another: the real emperor in Peking, who defines himself in relation to the size of his land as a tiny point, and another emperor, whom the reasoning of the people constitute, large, because he is present across the land.”¹⁴³ Kittler’s assessment demonstrates the obvious way in which Kafka not only splits the emperor into an abstract and concrete form, but how, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, the two make up an all-encompassing whole that stymies the Chinese people from actualizing the freedom to make their own decisions.

Kittler’s point comes from an instance, where the narrator accounts, “So groß ist unser land, kein Märchen reicht an seine Größe, kaum der Himmel umspannt es—und Peking ist nur ein Punkt und das kaiserliche Schloß nur ein Pünktchen. Der Kaiser als solcher allerdings wiederum groß durch alle Stockwerke der Welt. Der lebendige Kaiser aber, ein Mensch wie wir, liegt ähnlich wie wir auf seinem Ruhebett, das zwar reichlich bemessen, aber doch vergleichsweise nur schmal und kurz ist”¹⁴⁴ / “So vast is our land that no fable could do justice to its vastness, the heavens can scarcely span it—and Peking is only a dot in it, and the imperial palace less than a dot. The Emperor, as such, on the other hand, is mighty throughout all the

¹⁴² Kittler, Wolf. *Der Turmbau zu Babel und das Schweigen der Sirenen: Über das Reden, das Schweigen, die Stimme, und die Schrift in vier Texten von Franz Kafka*. Erlangen: Verlag Palm und Enke, 1985. P. 41.

¹⁴³ Translation my own.

¹⁴⁴ Kafka, Franz. “Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer.” *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008. P. 1093. Also referred to from here on out as “*Sämtliche Werke*”.

hierarchies of the world: admitted. But the existent Emperor, a man like us, lies much like us on a couch which is of generous proportions, perhaps, and yet very possibly may be quite narrow and short”¹⁴⁵. The abstract idea of the Emperor, in contrast to his city and home, is large and all encompassing: his might situates him at the top of all structures in the world, in contrast to the palace and the city he inhabits with respect to the empire as a whole. But he is simultaneously a material person engaged in the everyday activity of relaxing on what could be more accurately translated as a “daybed” than “couch” as the Muirs provided. I argue for “daybed” as a better translation because there were no “couches” in China in Ancient China, but daybeds, which were very characteristic of Chinoiserie from the Enlightenment onward in German-speaking Europe. The oscillation of the material Emperor’s size is paralleled in turn by the possible size of the daybed on which he stretches. Just like the abstract Emperor, who is larger than the space he occupies, so too is the material Emperor. The key difference, however, is that the material Emperor’s size is contingent on the size of the daybed. The abstract Emperor, who has no body, is vast, like China itself. The concrete and mortal emperor, on the other hand, though given a daybed suitable to his rank and standing, will still be sleeping/ relaxing on a surface that comparative speaking (vergleichsweise) is not going to be as large as all China, or the size of the abstract Emperor, but is rather going to be more or less on scale of a regular Ruhebett made for the size of humans, including the Emperor. The daybed is simply similar to other day beds (though sure of better quality etc.) but the point is that a daybed for an emperor is not going to be twenty times a regular daybed because it is based on the size of the human body and the physical body of the concrete emperor is going to be more or less the same as that of any other human

¹⁴⁵ Kafka, Franz. “The Great Wall of China” Willa and Edwin Muir, trans. *The Complete Stories*. Naum N. Glatzer, Ed. New York: Schocken, 1971. P. 243. Referred to from here on out as “*Complete Stories*”.

being. The daybed comparison offers a point of destabilizing imagery, one that undermines Hegel's thesis that the Emperor is such an omnipresence in Chinese culture that he impedes the ability for his subjects to make individual judgement calls, forcing them to follow the letter of the law.

The destabilizing effects of the bed occur in another part of "Beim Bau," which were published first in Jewish weekly journal *Selbstwehr* (*Self-Defense*) on September 24th, 1919 and subsequently published within the short story collection *Ein Landarzt* (*A Country Doctor*) in 1920: "Eine kaiserliche Botschaft"/ "An Imperial Message." The parable begins, "Der Kaiser, so heißt es, hat gerade Dir, dem einzelnen, dem jämmerlichen Untertanen, dem winzig vor der kaiserlichen Sonne in die fernste Ferne geflüchteten Schatted, gerade Die hat der Kaiser von seinem Sterbebett au seine Botschaft gesendet."¹⁴⁶ "The Emperor, so it runs, has sent a message to you, the humble subject, the insignificant shadow cowering in the remotest distance before the imperial sun; the Emperor from his deathbed has sent a message to you alone."¹⁴⁷ Once again the "bed," albeit the deathbed, is immediately tied to the Emperor, this time to emphasize the simultaneous power of the abstract and concrete power of the Emperor. Whatever message the Emperor has for the imperial subject, from the death bed the message, the possible new law, whose letter the Chinese subject will have to follow, has dispatched from the death bed and is now en route for dissemination. Only, the message never reaches the imperial subject: after attempting to get out of the palace with a message for the subject we learn the herald failed. According to Kafka's narrator, "Niemand dringt hier durch und gar mit der Botschaft eines Toten an einen Nichtigen. Du aber sitzt an Deinem Fenster und erträumst sie Dir, wenn der

¹⁴⁶ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1093.

¹⁴⁷ *Collected Works*, P. 244.

Abend kommt.”¹⁴⁸/ “Nobody could fight his way through here even with a message from a dead man. But you sit at your window when evening falls and dream it to yourself.”¹⁴⁹ Kafka’s imperial message getting lost on its way to the subject directly attacks Hegel’s notion of the abstract/concrete Emperors working as one to inscribe the Chinese subject to the letter of the law and that letter alone by impeding the possible letter of the law from reaching the imperial subject. We are reminded between the introductory and concluding sentences of the parable that the messenger “kommt auch leicht vorwärts wie kein anderer. Aber die Menge ist so groß; ihre Wohnstätten nehmen kein Ende”¹⁵⁰/ “also moves forward like no other. But the multitudes are so vast; the tenements have no end”¹⁵¹. The vastness of the imperial palace mirrors the vastness of China itself and the equally unrealistic ability for the Emperor to impose the letter of the law as the only form of judgment onto the Chinese people.

Despite acknowledging the difference between the two kinds of Emperors, Kafka’s narrator admits that the material Emperor holds virtually no presence in the lives of the Chinese subjects. The narrator asserts,

Das Kaisertum is unsterblich, aber der einzelne Kaiser fällt und stürzt ab, selbst ganze Dynastien sinken endlich nieder und veratmen durch ein einziges Röcheln. Von diesem Kämpfen und Leiden wird das Volk nie erfahren, wie Zuspötgekommene, wie Stadtfremde stehen sie am Ende der dichtgedrängten Seitengassen, ruhig zehrend vom mitgebrachten Vorrat, während weit vorn auf dem Marktplatz in der Mitte die Hinrichtung ihres Herrn vor sich geht¹⁵².

The Empire is immortal, but the Emperor himself totters and falls from this throne, yes, whole dynasties sink in the end and breathe their last in one death

¹⁴⁸ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1094

¹⁴⁹ *Collected works*, P. 244

¹⁵⁰ *Sämtliche Werke*, 1094

¹⁵¹ Translation my own.

¹⁵² *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1093.

rattle. Of these struggles and sufferings the people will never know; like tardy arrivals, like strangers in a city, they stand at the end of some densely thronged side street peacefully munching on the food they brought with them, while far away in front in the Market Square at the heart of the city, the execution of their ruler is proceeding¹⁵³.

Kafka uses the metaphor of the densely crowded, distant space between the average Chinese citizen eating his or her food, going about their business along some side street a great distance away from the Emperor's execution, in order to render Hegel's assertion that the material Emperor maintains an equal omnipresence of the abstract Emperor. Indeed, the omni-absence of the material Emperor almost calls into question the degree to which the abstract Emperor holds any kind of presence in the daily lives of his subjects at all, since the material Emperor physically and by extension mentally distances himself from those very subjects. Kafka's image of the physical distance between the Chinese subject and the material Emperor employs an "out of sight, out of mind" logic that undermines Hegel's prevailing assumptions about China and the relationship between subject and Emperor. To confirm the degree to which Kafka's representations of the Emperor undo Hegel's pessimistic representation of China, further investigation into Hegel's and Kafka's works is still required.

Kafka's narrator takes the suspicion surrounding the presence of the material Emperor one step further and literally suggests the possibility that the material Emperor does not exist: "Wenn man auch solchen Erscheinungen folgern wollte, daß wir im Grunde gar keinen Kaiser haben, wäre man von der Wahrheit nicht weit entfernt"¹⁵⁴ / "If from such appearances anyone should draw the conclusion that in reality we have no Emperor, he would not be far from the

¹⁵³ *Collected Works*, P. 243.

¹⁵⁴ *Samtliche Werke*, P. 1095-6.

truth”¹⁵⁵. The narrator acknowledges almost completely the non-existence of the Emperor among the Chinese subjects. Kafka has the narrator use the subjunctive at first to express the possibility that somebody (presumably an outside observer) determined there not to be an Emperor, as marked with the verb *wollte*, but continues to use the subjunctive in conceding the degree of truth to the Emperor’s lack of existence. However, the subjunctive denotes plausibility and not actuality; the truth statement connoted from the narrator’s statement above is something to the effect of, “Since one cannot/ would not want to draw from such appearances the conclusion that we have no Emperor, one is no closer to the truth.” The implied truth statement is much less about the Emperor’s presence and more about the Chinese subject under the material Emperor’s rule, but it nevertheless still holds the Emperor’s existence as suspect. And by suspect, I mean that the truth of the material Emperor’s existence or lack thereof is indeterminate, situating the material Emperor in some liminal space between existing and not existing like Schrodinger’s cat. The “appearances” (Erscheinungen), to which the narrator refers, include accounts of Chinese subjects confusing the living Emperor with dead ones, the burial of Emperors and how Chinese subjects laughed off the possibility of a revolt. Such incidents should theoretically include the presence of the material Emperor to rectify his misidentification with past Emperors and to quell rebellions. That the living, material Emperor gets confused with his dead predecessors and does not have to intervene with revolutions suggests that the abstract Emperor has done his job of maintaining his presence in the consciousness of the Chinese subject. For the Chinese subject admits the presence of an Emperor, even if that Emperor is not the material one, and that they laugh off the prospect of people turning against him. Thus we can conclude that Kafka’s Emperor in “The Great Wall of China” is a strictly abstract one that subverts Hegel’s

¹⁵⁵ *Collected Works*, P. 246.

duel material and abstract Emperors by empowering the Chinese subject without needing to maintain physical presence or actual existence.

If the Emperor of the posthumously published “The Great Wall of China” is, in a sense, a positive affirmation of the abstract Emperor, then the abstract Emperor, as well as his material counterpart, both fail the Chinese subject in “An Old Manuscript.” The three-page short story was initially featured in the short story collection *A Country Doctor* along with “An Imperial Message” As already mentioned, Goebel has noted that the short story was originally intended to be a sequel to “The Great Wall of China” with the phrase “aus China” affixed to the title. The Northern Nomads, who maintained no real presence of their own “The Great Wall of China” are now squatting outside the Imperial Palace in “An Old Manuscript.” As the narrator, a cobbler in a market place just outside the palace gates recounts, “Gerade damals glaubte ich den Kaiser selbst in einem Fenster des Palastes gesehen zu haben; niemals sonst kommt er in diese äußeren Gemächer, immer nur lebt er in dem innersten Garten; diesmal aber stand er, so schien es mir wenigstens, an einem Fenster und blickte mit gesenktem Kopf auf das Treiben vor seinem Schloß”¹⁵⁶ / “This was the occasion when I fancied I actually saw the Emperor himself at the window of the palace; usually he never enters these outer rooms but spends all his time in the innermost garden; yet on this occasion he was standing, or so it seemed to me, at one of the windows, watching with bend head the goings-on before his residence”¹⁵⁷. The setting of “An Old Manuscript” contrasts that of “The Great Wall of China,” in that the cobbler stands much closer to the Imperial Palace than does the village in the South, from which the narrator of “The Great Wall of China” hails. Therefore, the material Emperor has, presumably, a greater sense of

¹⁵⁶ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 852.

¹⁵⁷ *Collected Works*, P. 417.

presence in the context of “An Old Manuscript.” I specifically call it “sense of presence,” because, by the cobbler’s own admission, the Emperor is frequently invisible to those outside the palace, as he prefers to remain in the innermost garden of the Imperial Palace. Kafka uses this moment of the nomads encroaching outside the Imperial Palace to demonstrate something that he has omitted from “The Great Wall of China”: the material Emperor. The material Emperor appears at just the moment when the cobbler and the other tradesmen are baffled about what to do with regards to the nomadic invasion. The material Emperor does nothing but tilt his head at the sight of the predicament. He sends neither soldiers nor diplomats either to fight or to reason with the nomads, but instead observes the barbaric pillaging of the village unfold. Kafka’s highly ironic use of the material Emperor in this instance demonstrates the following: the material Emperor will not give orders and command the lives of his subject because, in this dilemma, he puts himself in peril. The lack of directive from the material Emperor prevents the subjects close to the palace from defending the palace and, just as the material Emperor ironically appears unable to guide his subjects, the abstract Emperor vanishes from the minds of the Chinese subjects defending the palace.

The People’s Republic of Geist

We presume from Hegel and by extension from Kafka that the abstract Emperor, who pervades the collective Spirit of the Chinese people, will act on behalf of the material Emperor and guide his subjects toward a solution, when we examine the predicament of the nomadic intrusion set up in “An Old Manuscript.” Instead, we are left with a narrator who says,

‘Was wird es werden?’ fragen wir uns alle. ‘Wie lange werden diese Last und Qual ertragen? Der kaiserliche Palast hat die Nomaden angelockt, versteht es aber

nicht, sie wieder zu vertreiben. Das Tor bleibt verschlossen; die Wache, früher immer festlich ein—und ausmarschierend, hält sich hinter vergitterten Fenstern [auf]. Uns Handwerkern und Geschäftsleuten ist die Rettung des Vaterlands anvertraut; wie sind aber einer solchen Aufgabe nicht gewachsen; haben uns doch auch nie gerühmt, dessen fähig zu sein. Ein Mißverständnis ist es, und wir gehen daran zugrunde'¹⁵⁸.

‘What is going to happen?’ we all ask ourselves. ‘How long can we endure this burden and torment? The Emperor’s palace has drawn the nomads here but does not know how to drive them away again. The gate stays shut; the guards, who used to be always marching out and in with ceremony, keep close behind barred windows. It is left to us artisans and tradesmen to save our country; but we are not equal to such a task; nor have we ever claimed to be capable of it. This is a misunderstanding of some kind; and it will be the ruin for us’¹⁵⁹.

The first sentence following the frustrating question is interesting because it employs a kind of synecdoche; the Imperial Palace as a structure does not fail to understand how to drive the nomads away, but rather the material Emperor and the other presumed occupants of the Imperial Palace, e.g. the courtiers, do not understand what to do in this predicament. The use of synecdoche here suggests that the Chinese subject, embodied here as the cobbler-narrator, can abstract the Palace as a substitute for the material Emperor, something similar, but not quite the same as the abstract Emperor. So we know that Kafka’s Chinese subject can conjure an idea of the Emperor. But we are still at an impasse because the abstract Emperor developed by both Hegel and Kafka fails to guide the cobbler-narrator and his fellow artisans and tradesmen towards getting rid of the nomads. In order to understand why the abstract Emperor fails to appear, we must return to Hegel’s discussion of the Chinese subject.

¹⁵⁸ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 852.

¹⁵⁹ *Collected Works*, P. 417.

As mentioned before, the Chinese subject and its Emperor, both abstract and material, seem to mostly go hand-in-hand for Hegel, as well as for Kafka. In describing the Emperor in tandem with the Chinese subject, Hegel notes,

[Der Kaiser] ist Patriarch, und auf ihn gehäuft ist alles, was im Staat auf Ehrfurcht Anspruch machen kann. Denn der Kaiser ist ebenso Chef der Religion und der Wissenschaft, wovon später noch ausführlich die Rede sein wird. —Diese väterliche Fürsorge des Kaisers und der Geist seiner Untertanen, als Kinder, die aus dem moralischen Familienkreise nicht heraustreten und keine selbständige und bürgerliche Freiheit für sich gewinnen können, macht das Ganze zu einem Reiche, Regierung und Benehmen, das zugleich moralisch und schlechthin prosaisch ist, d.h. verständig ohne freie Vernunft und Phantasie¹⁶⁰ (Hegel 192).

[The Emperor] is the Patriarch, and everything in the State that can make any claim to reverence is attached to him. For the Emperor is chief in both religious affairs and in science—a subject which will be treated of in detail further on.— This paternal care on the part of the Emperor, and the spirit of his subjects—who like children do not advance beyond the ethical principle of the family circle, and can gain for themselves no independent and civil freedom—makes the whole an empire, administration, and social code, which is at the same time moral and thoroughly prosaic—that is, a product of the Understanding without free Reason and Imagination¹⁶¹.

For Hegel, a hierarchical structure permeates Chinese culture, which depending on the social situation has an Emperor/ father-figure towards the head of the totem-pole and the Emperor, both abstract and material, at the absolute top. The consequence of these mirroring hierarchical structures is, once again for Hegel, a lack of rationality and imagination in the Chinese subject's thought processes. The Chinese subject is a child blindly obeying the Emperor's laws without question who accepts both the abstract and material Emperors' guidance in making decisions and judgements. This "Geist" does not refer to Hegel's notion of Geist in *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, but one that is an approximately equivalent to Hegel's notion. As Bernasconi remarks,

¹⁶⁰ Hegel, P. 192.

¹⁶¹ Sibree, P. 123.

“the Chinese are excluded from spirit”¹⁶². Under most circumstances we understand that the physical distance between most of the Chinese subjects and the material Emperor results in the insistence of an abstract Emperor on maintaining his omnipresence and by extension the structural integrity of the various social hierarchies.

If we return to the final passage of “An Old Manuscript,” we realize that the cobbler-narrator is confronted with the lack of both a material and an abstract Emperor. The material Emperor is visible on the one hand, but on the other hand offers no leadership or orders for the artisans and tradesmen to follow. We would expect an abstract Emperor to intercede and guide the cobbler toward a resolution, but alas he never comes. By removing the abstract Emperor, Kafka demonstrates how Hegel’s assertion that the Chinese have no ability to rationalize on their own is simply impossible. Kafka is of course aware that, at the time he wrote this text, the Habsburg Empire experienced its own collapse and that the subjects of the Habsburg Empire were undergoing a similar situation of impeding, uncertain change. Kafka also removes any specific geo-political names that would clearly demark a setting for “An Old Manuscript,” allowing for analogies with the Habsburg Empire¹⁶³. Of course, Kafka’s elimination of specific geo-political names also means that his critique of Hegel’s China-through-Eurocentric-eyes is lost on some readers, though those familiar with Hegel and/or with the discourse on China championed by Hegel, no doubt identified Kafka’s critique when reading this short story.

¹⁶² Bernasconi, Robert. “China on Parade: Hegel’s Manipulation of His Sources and His Change of Mind.” *China in the German Enlightenment*. Daniel Purdy and Bettina Brandt, Eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016. P. 207.

¹⁶³ The Nomads from the North serve as a metaphor for any number of things, such as the nationalism creeping in on the decaying Habsburg Empire, as pointed out by Ritchie Robertson (See: Robertson, Ritchie. *Kafka: Judaism, Politics, and Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985. P. 136.). For further reading, see John Breuilly’s *Nationalism and the State* and Robert Kann’s two volume book, *The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848-1918* listed in the bibliography.

In contrast to “An Old Manuscript,” “The Great Wall of China” contains clear geopolitical terms from the title onward. “The Great Wall of China” also contrasts its sequel in that the narrator seems to affirm, rather than deny, the existence of the abstract Emperor. The narrator explains, “Wir—ich rede hier wohl im Namen vieler—haben eigentlich erst im Nachbuchstabieren der Anordnungen der obersten Führerschaft uns selbst kennengelernt und gefunden, daß ohne die Führerschaft weder unsere Schulweisheit noch unser Menschenverstand auch nur für das kleine Amt, das wir innerhalb des großen Ganzen hatten, ausgereicht hätte”¹⁶⁴ / “We—and here I speak in the name of many people—did not really know ourselves until we had carefully scrutinized the decrees of the high command, when we discovered that without the high command neither our book learning nor our human understanding would have sufficed for the humble tasks which we performed in the great whole”¹⁶⁵. Speaking on behalf of the Chinese subject collectively with the pronoun “We,” Kafka’s narrator identifies the moment of enlightenment as the moment in which they realize that the sum of their knowledge was nothing without the hierarchical structure of the high command (Führerschaft). This high command within Kafka’s work parallels the work of the abstract Emperor and the hierarchical structures that position the Emperor on top and guide the Chinese subject. The human understanding (Menschenverstand) seems to parallel Hegel’s “Understanding without free Reason or Will” (verständlich ohne freie Vernunft oder Phantasie), in that this understanding is something built from individual experiences, trial-and-error, etc., but then never applied. Only with the high command in place and careful examination of the high command can the Chinese subject proceed with daily life. Kafka’s narrator intentionally works against the very tenets of the

¹⁶⁴ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1090.

¹⁶⁵ *Complete Stories*, P. 239.

European Enlightenment to fit the Chinese subject into Hegel's model of the Chinese subject; as Roy Pascal has observed, "the context bears repeated references to the position and thoughts of the person composing 'Building the Chinese wall' and throughout he puts his arguments, including the parable itself, as his modest attempt at explaining the nature of the relationship of the Chinese people to their emperor, the source of their unity as a people and of what we may call their awareness of their political identity."¹⁶⁶ This awareness of his political identity has the narrator render himself suddenly unreliable as a narrator for the European reader because the ability to closely examine the decrees of the high command should have resulted in the realization that the high command controls the Chinese subject like a shepherd does his flock. Instead, the Chinese subject, in this case the narrator, never sees the high command for what it is, namely a hierarchical structure designed to control the Chinese subject. Kafka's reader is therefore confronted once again with the logical flaw of self-awareness that emerges from Hegel's representation of China.

Hegel and Kafka thus seem to have opened up a debate on the degree to which the Chinese subject has free will for their respective readers. Hegel maintains that "Doch ist notwendig in China der Unterschied zwischen der Sklaverei und der Freiheit nicht groß, da vor dem Kaiser alle gleich, das heißt, alle gleich degradiert sind"¹⁶⁷ / "In China, however, the distinction between slavery and freedom is necessarily, not great, since all are equal before the Emperor—that is, all alike are degraded"¹⁶⁸. When Hegel talks of slavery in this context, he means both a social practice of forcing a group of people to perform a wide range of tasks

¹⁶⁶ Pascal, Roy. *Kafka's Narrators: A Study of his Stories and Sketches*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982. P. 165.

¹⁶⁷ Hegel, P. 201.

¹⁶⁸ Sibree, P. 130-1.

without the expectation of compensation or recognition of equal station with the person(s) forcing the aforementioned group of people to perform these tasks, as well as in reference to his master-slave dialectic¹⁶⁹. He wants to contrast this practice with conditions under which the abstract and material Emperor hold the Chinese subject. And, indeed for Hegel, there is no distinction between the practice of slavery and the hierarchical structure with the Emperor on top. This is not a reiteration of the master/slave dialectic within his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but rather a demonstration of its incompleteness, because the real Emperor is absent and insists on an abstract Emperor to keep the Chinese subject in check, there is no actualization of self-consciousness and therefore no trial of death for the Chinese subject. However, Kafka's narrator directly contradicts this and himself in one of the most profound statements ever written by Kafka: "Das menschliche Wesen. Leichtfertig in seinem Grunde, von der Natur des auffliegenden Staubes, verträgt keine Fesseln; fesselt es sich selbst, wird es bald wahnsinnig an den Fesseln zu rütteln anfangen und Mauer, Kette, und sich selbst in alle Himmelsrichtung zerreißen"¹⁷⁰ / "Human nature, essentially changeable, unstable as the dust, can endure no restraint; if it binds itself it soon begins to tear madly at its bonds, until it rends everything asunder, the wall, the bonds, and its very self"¹⁷¹. This statement follows the narrator's reading of a scholar's research on the building of the Tower of Babel and the Great Wall of China. Kafka's narrator writes the scholar off as crazy because the people building the Tower of Babel were full of varying ideas in an attempt to reach a singular goal. For the narrator, trying to reach a

¹⁶⁹ We know from Susan Buck-Morss that Hegel was aware of the paradoxes between the Enlightenment idealization of Freedom and the practice of African slavery, as well as from Bernasconi that Hegel read and exaggerated accounts of Chinese practices from British travelers to make the Chinese appear more savage. (See Buck-Morss, Susan. *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009.)

¹⁷⁰ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1089.

¹⁷¹ *Collected Works*, P. 239.

singular aim with a variety of ideas was an impossible feat because humans will not bind themselves long to a common goal. The narrator's statement regarding human nature admittedly comes before his statement on the high command, and he claims that the Chinese subject still falls in line with the high command, in spite of human nature. The narrator nonetheless fails to work out how and why it is that the Chinese subject has transcended human nature's desire to be free, nor how he has escaped the paradox of freedom that he describes. Failing to account for the relationship between the Chinese subject and freedom makes Kafka's narrator unreliable for ascertaining an authentic way of thinking about the Chinese subject.

The unreliability of Kafka's narrator extends to another contrast between "The Great Wall of China" and "An Old Manuscript," namely the physical distance between Kafka's narrators and their material Emperor. The narrator of "The Great Wall of China" reveals that "Es gibt vielleicht kein kaisertreueres Volk als das unsrige im Süden, aber die Treue kommt dem Kaiser nicht zugute"¹⁷² / "There is perhaps no people more faithful to the Emperor than ours in the south, but the Emperor derives no advantage from our fidelity."¹⁷³ Kafka purposefully distances the material Emperor from the narrator of "The Great Wall of China" in order to demonstrate the realistic distance between the Emperor, both material and abstract, from his subject. The narrator therefore has no reason to fear invasion of the nomadic Northerners and for this reason remains most loyal to the Emperor. However, he also realizes that the Emperor has nothing to gain from his loyalty because he is as distant from the Emperor as he is. Kafka relies to some extent on the possibility that his Austrian readers will relate to this distance from the Emperor and will see how Hegel's perception of the Chinese subject is wrong. On the one hand,

¹⁷² *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1096.

¹⁷³ *Collected Works*, P. 246.

the Habsburg Empire provides for its subjects during times of war in the form of a militarized defense, and the Habsburg subject will recognize this. On the other hand, the Habsburg subject realizes that there is nothing for the Emperor to gain from their loyalty, since the Emperor commands the army.

With Kafka's narrator being so unreliable, one might think that Kafka is fostering his own racist logic about the Chinese. The narrator claims, "Meine Untersuchung ist doch nur eine historische"¹⁷⁴ / "My inquiry is purely historical"¹⁷⁵ and maintains

Ich habe mich, schon teilweise während des Mauerbaus und nachher bis heute fast ausschließlich mit vergleichender Völkergeschichte beschäftigt—es gibt bestimmte Fragen, denen man nur mit diesem Mittel gewissermaßen an den Nerv herankommt—und ich habe dabei gefunden, daß wir Chinesen gewisse volkliche und staatliche Einrichtungen in einzigartigen Klarheit, andere wieder in einzigartigen Unklarheit besitzen. Den Gründen, insbesondere der letzten Erscheinung, nachzuspüren, hat mich immer gereizt, reizt mich noch immer, und auch der Mauerbau ist von diesen Fragen wesentlich betroffen¹⁷⁶.

I have occupied myself almost exclusively with the comparative history of races—there are certain questions that one can probe to the marrow, as it were, only by this method—and I have discovered that we Chinese possess certain folk and political institutions that are unique in their clarity, others again unique in their obscurity. The desire to trace the cause of these phenomena, especially the latter, has always intrigued me and intrigues me still, and the building of the wall is itself essentially involved in these problems¹⁷⁷.

The narrator's method of approaching history more strongly parallels Hegel's own methodology; Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* indeed employs this practice, examining the histories of China, India, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa side by side, organized as Librett

¹⁷⁴ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1091.

¹⁷⁵ *Collected Works*, P. 240.

¹⁷⁶ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1092

¹⁷⁷ *Collected Works*, P. 242.

has observed, “Hegel structures the course of human history as a grand series of interlocking typological steps”¹⁷⁸. The comparative method that Kafka’s narrator employs has led him towards understanding well his fellow Chinese subjects and political institutions, but has led the narrator into obscurity at the same time when considering his fellow subjects. Moreover, the narrator seems convinced that the problems with obscurity in understanding Chinese history can be traced back to the construction of the Great Wall of China, where Hegel claimed one prince tried to rewrite history by burning many historical documents¹⁷⁹. One thing omitted from Hegel’s description of historical practice in China, however, is the comparative method, which Hegel himself employs. The one conclusion that I can draw from Kafka’s depiction of his narrator and of the narrator’s practice of history is that the narrator is a parody of Hegel and/or a parody of the German and Austrian Orientalists following in Hegel’s footsteps, rather than a parody of a Chinese historian. We already know from Theodor Adorno that “Zur Hölle wird bei Kafka die Geschichte, weil das Rettende versäumt ward”¹⁸⁰/ “History becomes Hell in Kafka because the chance which might have saved was missed.”¹⁸¹ Kafka’s skepticism of history is marred further by a skepticism of the comparative method, which is and has been a European development; to rely on history as a way to hierarchically evaluate European alongside non-European cultures is already frowned upon in Kafka’s writing, since Kafka recognizes that history cannot save what has been lost. By having the Chinese narrator use the comparative method, Kafka demonstrates the flaws in applying the comparative method, particularly as they elucidate only certain parts of

¹⁷⁸ Librett, Jeffery. *Orientalism and the Figure of the Jew*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014. P. 133-4.

¹⁷⁹ Hegel, P. 187; Silbree, P. 119.

¹⁸⁰ Adorno, Theodor. *Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrpamp Verlag, 1955. P. 326.

¹⁸¹ Adorno, Theodore. *Prisms*. Samuel and Sherry Weber, trans. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992. P. 260.

history, while rendering other parts of history opaque. If Kafka sees inherent flaws in the comparative method of history, why does Kafka then set his works “The Great Wall of China” and “An Old Manuscript” in such a way that they contrast with Hegel’s representation of the Chinese in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*? This ironic use of the comparative method is indeed the true work and power of literature: to undermine defective notions of truth with fictional alternatives that point out the lack of truth existing in historical representations.

Prequel and Practice: Kafka’s Other Chinas

The narrator’s mimicry of Hegel’s practice of interpreting history is fascinating when we consider on the one hand that “An Old Manuscript” served as a sequel or sorts, perhaps a document literally shared to us by the narrator of “The Great Wall of China” demonstrating a contrary image of nomadic invasion where he had not previously predicted such an event. There is also the possibility that one excerpt from the first pages of Kafka’s *The Blue Octave Notebooks*, served as an abandoned prequel to “The Great Wall of China,” bringing the notion of the narrator’s discussion of Chinese history into dialogue with Europe. In the short excerpt we are told that a somewhat sickly man, who narrates the excerpt, is interrupted from his midday break by his maid, who informs him that a Chinese man has come to his home inquiring for him. After the man confirms that the Chinese man is, indeed looking for him, he sees the meek Chinese man trying to scurry away and catches him by the collar, ending the scene. The man “las

ein geschichtliches Werk”¹⁸² / “read a historical work”¹⁸³. Although we are not in a position to say the character is a parody of Hegel or European thought, the fact that he was reading a historical work when the Chinese man arrives suggests an interest in history, which would prompt a discussion of Chinese history. Additionally, any apparent language barrier does not seem to discourage the European narrator from accepting his Chinese guest. For, despite the fact that “Deutsch kann [der Chinese] nicht”¹⁸⁴ / “[The Chinese man] cannot speak German”¹⁸⁵ and the narrator confessing that he is “unbekannt in China”¹⁸⁶ / “unknown in China”¹⁸⁷, the narrator insists “Er soll kommen”¹⁸⁸ / “Let him come!”¹⁸⁹. We can infer from the European narrator’s desire to meet with the Chinese man, in spite of an apparent language barrier, that he either speaks Chinese or a language which he is convinced he and the Chinese man share. This common language, whether or not it is Chinese, would serve as the basis for a sharing of Chinese history embodied in “The Great Wall of China” and in its sequel, “An Old Manuscript.”

If, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the Chinese narrator of “The Great Wall of China” can be read as a parody of Hegel and the comparative method of the nineteenth century, does the European character of this excerpt parallel or provide an analogue to the Chinese somehow? The

¹⁸² Kafka, Franz. *Die Acht Oktavhefte*. Middletown, DE: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2014. P. 1. Referred to from here on out as “*Oktavhefte*.”

¹⁸³ Kafka, Franz. *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*. Max Brod, Ed. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins, Trans. Cambridge: Exact Change, 1991. P. 2. Referred to from here on out as “*Octavo*.”

¹⁸⁴ *Oktavhefte* P. 2

¹⁸⁵ *Octavo*, P. 2

¹⁸⁶ *Oktavhefte* P. 2

¹⁸⁷ *Octavo* P. 2

¹⁸⁸ *Oktavhefte* P. 2

¹⁸⁹ *Octavo*, P. 2

Chinese man is described by the European narrator in the following way: “Es war offenbar ein Gelehrter, klein, schwach, mit Hornbrille, schütterem grauschwarzem steifem Ziegenbart. Ein freundliches Männchen, hielt den Kopf geneigt und lächelte mit halbgeschlossenen Augen”¹⁹⁰ / “He was obviously a scholar, small, weakly, wearing horn-rimmed spectacles, and with a thin, grizzled, stiff goatee. An amiable manikin, his head inclined to one side, smiling, with half-closed eyes”¹⁹¹. The visitor denotes both stereotypical Chineseness and scholarliness in his description from the European’s perspective. The obvious downside to Kafka’s representation of the Chinese person in this plausible prequel to “The Great Wall of China,” is that Kafka cannot right away defer to Hegel’s racist representations of the Chinese, since the Chinese visitor has not had the opportunity to flesh out a parodic re-presentation of the static, letter-of-the-law abiding Chinese subject of Hegel’s philosophy. Deferring to the cheap use of the small, ineffectual intellectual from China would have made Kafka just as guilty of deferring to racial stereotyping in depicting, had he included the piece in “The Great Wall of China,” and makes him guilty of racial stereotyping within this excerpt itself. Of course, in an effort to make all other things equal, the European narrator is paralleled in a few interesting ways to the Chinese Emperor in “The Great Wall of China.” In addition to being as “unknown” in China as the physical emperor is to his subjects, he mentions that “Alt, in großer Leibesfülle, unter leichten Herzbeschwerden, lag ich nach dem Mittagessen, einen Fuß am Boden, auf dem Ruhebett”¹⁹² / “Old, in the fullness of the flesh, suffering slight palpitations, I was lying on the sofa after lunch,

¹⁹⁰ *Oktavhefte* P. 2

¹⁹¹ *Octavo* P. 2

¹⁹² *Oktavhefte* P. 1

one foot on the floor”¹⁹³. As you may recall earlier in the chapter, the Emperor is depicted at one point in “The Great Wall of China” as stretched out on the daybed (Ruhebett) that reflected the size of the abstract and concrete emperors. Moreover, we are told by the Chinese narrator of “The Great Wall of China,” that “Das Kaisertum ist unsterblich, aber der einzelne Kaiser fällt und stürzt ab, selbst ganze Dynastien sinken endlich nieder und veratmen durch ein einziges Röcheln”¹⁹⁴ / “The Empire is immortal, but the Emperor himself totters and fall from his throne, yes, whole dynasties sink in the end and breathe their last in one death rattle”¹⁹⁵. Tamia and James Stern, admittedly taking liberties with the translation by adding the throne to parallel the daybed that appears just a few lines above in the original, incidentally also draw another parallel to the sickly European narrator in the excerpt from *The Blue Octave Notebooks*, who is depicted sickly a top a daybed. Capturing the European’s fragility early on puts him, oddly enough, on equal standing physically with the Chinese visitor, in spite of the European’s “Riesengestalt”¹⁹⁶ / “gigantic form”¹⁹⁷. Kafka manages, to a limited extent, to redeem his deference to the Chinese stereotype, by weakening the European narrator and molding him into the fragile despot, which the Chinese visitor could well have told him about in *The Great Wall of China*.”

Returning briefly to the issue of language, the European narrator’s maid describes the Chinese man as having “eine unverständliche Sprache”¹⁹⁸ / “some incomprehensible

¹⁹³ *Octavo*, P. 2

¹⁹⁴ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1093.

¹⁹⁵ *Collected Works*, P. 243.

¹⁹⁶ *Oktavhefte*, P. 2

¹⁹⁷ *Octavo*, P. 2

¹⁹⁸ *Oktavhefte*, P. 2

language”¹⁹⁹, which parallels another text implicitly set in China: “Die Abweisung” (“The Refusal”). Published well after Kafka’s lifetime, “The Rejection” is also told by a first-person narrator of a village and its de facto leader, a former colonel (Oberst) turned tax-collector. After briefly describing the colonel in tandem with the town, the narrator recounts a story of his father and other villagers petitioning the colonel for leniencies on certain taxes. During this encounter with the colonel, the narrator says of the soldier serving under the colonel: “Die Soldaten sprechen einen uns ganz unverständlichen Dialekt, können sich an unsern kaum gewöhnen, dadurch ergibt sich bei ihnen eine gewisse Abgeschlossenheit, Unnahbarkeit, die überdies auch ihrem Charakter entspricht, so still, ernst und starr sind sie, sie tun nichts eigentlich Böses und sind doch in einem bösen Sinn fast unerträglich”²⁰⁰/ “The soldiers speak a dialect utterly incomprehensible to us, and they can hardly get used to ours—all of which produces a certain shut-off, unapproachable quality, corresponding, as it happens, to their character, for they are silent, serious, and rigid. They don’t actually do anything evil, and yet they are almost unbearable in an evil sense”²⁰¹. There are two ways of reading this description of the soldiers. The historical reading could interpret this as the Habsburg view of Prussian militarism, where there would be a sense of rigidity and a definite difference of dialect in how they speak German. Indeed, the idea of the old colonel coming into power can easily be read as protector position the newly minted Germany took after defeating Austria in the Austro-Prussian War and

¹⁹⁹ *Octavo*, P. 2

²⁰⁰ Kafka, Franz. “Die Abweisung.” *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008. P. 1121. Referred to from here on out as “*Sämtliche Werke*.”

²⁰¹ Kafka, Franz. “The Refusal.” Tania and James Stern, trans. *The Complete Stories*. Naum N. Glatzer, Ed. New York: Schocken, 1971. P. 265. Referred to from here on out as “*Collected Works*.”

becoming its protective big brother, indirectly overseeing Habsburg affairs. Kafka's more ambiguously set text affords this line of interpretation.

The other way of reading this passage involves an aesthetics of incomprehensibility attributed to Chinese as a language. Hegel claims, "Ihre Tonsprache besteht aus einer nicht beträchtlichen Menge von einsilbigen Worten, welche für mehr als eine Bedeutung gebraucht werden. Der Unterschied nun der Bedeutung wird allein teils durch den Zusammenhang, teils durch den Akzent, schnelles oder langsames, leiseres oder lauterer Aussprechen bewirkt"²⁰²/ "Their Spoken Language consists of a rather large number of monosyllabic words, which are used for more than one signification. The sole methods of denoting distinctions of meaning are the context, the accent, and the pronunciation—quicker or slower, softer or louder"²⁰³; Hegel gives the example of one word that has several meanings depending on context, accent, pronunciation and concludes that the Chinese, in contrast to Europeans (read: Germans) "bilden deshalb die Modifikationen der Laute nicht zu bestimmen, durch Buchstaben und Silben darstellbaren Tönen aus"²⁰⁴/ "do not form the modification of sounds in their language to distinct articulations capable of being represented by letters and syllables."²⁰⁵ The Chinese language, inasmuch as Hegel is concerned, develops in the same way Chinese history does: with a requirement of growth still required for the completion of Geist. Kafka's narrator from "The Great Wall of China" addresses the issue of linguistic variation among the Chinese, claiming, "Der Dialekt der Nachbarprovinz ist von dem unseren wesentlich verschieden, und dies drückt

²⁰² Hegel, P. 207.

²⁰³ Sibree, P. 135.

²⁰⁴ Hegel, P. 207.

²⁰⁵ Sibree, P. 135.

sich auch in gewissen Formen der Schriftsprache aus, die für uns einen etwas altertümlichen Charakter haben”²⁰⁶/ “The dialect of this neighboring province differs in some essential respects from ours, and this difference occurs also in certain turns of the written word, which for us have an archaic character.”²⁰⁷

Written originally around 1920, “The Refusal,” certainly fits in with Kafka’s two explicitly set stories of China, with villagers whose “Städtchen liegt nicht etwa an der Grenze”²⁰⁸ / “little town does not lie on the frontier,”²⁰⁹, on the one hand, but “viel weiter”²¹⁰/ “much further”²¹¹ from “die Hauptstadt”²¹² / “the capital”²¹³, on the other. The villagers are physically distanced from the capital, where the emperor presumably lives, much the way the narrator from “The Great Wall of China” is situated. The narrator’s remark about the soldier’s having a different accent suggests that the story could be set in China, since it was known to the German-speaking world that the Chinese had different accents. As I previously mentioned, one of Hegel’s critical departures from the Sinophiles of the eighteenth century, notably Leibniz and Wolff, was the incomprehensibility of the Chinese spoken and written languages, which Leibniz and Wolff posited had the potential to become a universal language. Kafka’s work highlights the irony that race theorists would claim that accents contribute to cultural stagnation/ racial inferiority, when

²⁰⁶ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1095

²⁰⁷ *Collected Works*, P. 246

²⁰⁸ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1119

²⁰⁹ *Collected Works*, P. 263.

²¹⁰ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1119

²¹¹ *Collected Works*, P. 263

²¹² *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1119

²¹³ *Collected Works*, P. 263.

there are accents among all languages. The difference in accents also seems to undermine Hegel's thesis on the Chinese people as the villagers cannot comprehend these symbols of authority. That this story is plausibly set in China is supported by the depiction of the Colonel who is holding "zwei lange Bambusstangen"²¹⁴ or "two poles of bamboo"²¹⁵ in his hands. The possession of two material objects associated with China and East Asia in general suggest that the story takes place somewhere not European, affirming Kafka's internal critique of Hegel's discourse on the Chinese.

The Colonel's authority is an interesting one because, as the narrator claims,

Dieser Oberst also beherrscht die Stadt. Ich glaube, er hat noch niemandem ein Dokument vorgezeigt, das ihn dazu berechtigt. Er hat wohl auch kein solches Dokument. Vielleicht ist er wirklich Obersteuereinnnehmer. Aber ist das alles? Berechtigt ihn das, auch in alle Gebieten der Verwaltung zu herrschen? Sein Amt ist ja für den Staat sehr gewichtig, aber für die Bürger ist es doch nicht das Wichtigste...Denn tatsächlich hat er nicht etwa die Herrschaft an sich gerissen und ist auch kein Tyrann²¹⁶.

This colonel, then, commands the town. I don't think he has ever produced a document entitling him to this position; very likely he does not possess such a thing. Maybe he really is chief tax-collector. But is that all? Does that entitle him to rule over all other departments in the administration as well? True, his office is very important for the government, but for the citizens it is hardly the most important...In reality, of course, it was not he who seized power, nor is he a tyrant²¹⁷.

Nobody in the town is quite certain how the Colonel came into power, but they seem to just accept that he has. The narrator's off-hand suspicion that the Colonel may not have the authority

²¹⁴ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1121

²¹⁵ *Collected Works*, P. 266

²¹⁶ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1120

²¹⁷ *Collected Works*, 264.

to run his village parallels the suspicion of the narrator in “The Great Wall of China” that the Emperor does not really exist. In matters of local governance within China, inasmuch as Hegel is concerned, he claims, “Das ganze dieser Verwaltung ist also mit einem Netz von Beamten überspannt. Für die Aufsicht der Landstraßen, der Flüsse, der Meeresufer sind Beamte angestellt”²¹⁸/ “The whole of the administration is thus covered by a network of officials. Functionaries are appointed to superintend the roads, the rivers, and the coasts”²¹⁹. The administrative network that Hegel attributes to the Chinese certainly opens the possibility that the law and the government, which enforces that law, operate opaquely, obscuring their work from their citizens. The level of opacity with which the Chinese government administrates its laws suggests that Kafka has found a hole in Hegel’s representation of the Chinese: if the Chinese in Hegel are only capable of following the letter of the law and have no sense of internal judgement, how then are subjects of the emperor far from the capital expected to know and follow the letter of the law laid down by the Emperor?

The only plausible explanation is that the local administrators, such as the Colonel/ Tax-collector, strictly enforce the emperor’s laws closely. Hegel affirms the possibility of local administrators strictly enforcing imperial laws by mentioning, “Die, welche zu hohen Staatsämtern gelangen wollen, müssen mehrere Prüfungen bestehen... Auch die Offiziere in der Armee müssen Kenntnisse besitzen, auch sie werden geprüft; aber die Zivilbeamten stehen, wie schon gesagt worden ist, in weit höherem Ansehen”²²⁰/ “Those who wish to attain high official posts must undergo several examinations... The officers of the army, also, must have some

²¹⁸ Hegel, P. 196.

²¹⁹ Sibree, P. 126.

²²⁰ Hegel, P. 194-5.

mental acquirements; they too are examined; but civil functionaries enjoy, as stated above, far greater respect”²²¹. The examinations, rather than demonstrating the qualitative, contemplative, and philosophical work Leibniz considered to be the work of the Chinese, these tests imply that those aspiring for higher rank and position in the government are learning the letter of the law verbatim in an effort to attain high enough power to enforce that law. These more ambitious administrators rise through the ranks to maintain a slightly higher position of the patriarchal totem pole that Hegel attributes to the Chinese. And, in keeping with Hegel’s representation, Kafka’s story ends with the failure of the Chinese people (of the local village) and their ability to stand up to the Colonel/ Tax-collector. As the citizens muster their courage to confront the Colonel, the narrator observes, “Auch sonst fand sich kein Geeigneter, der bereit gewesen wäre zu sprechen—von den Ungeeigneten boten sich allerdings einige an--, es war eine große Verwirrung und man sandte Boten an verschiedene Bürger, bekannte Redner aus”²²²/ “No other suitable person willing to speak could be found, albeit several unsuitable ones offered themselves; a great commotion ensued and messengers were sent in search of various citizens who were well-known speakers”²²³. The masses are themselves literally left at a loss for language as they stumble to find somebody with the ability to articulate their grievances. This loss of language is common in Kafka, but usually on the other end of communication, where the “other” is incomprehensible. The failure to be able to express their complaint falls in line with the Hegelian description of the Chinese subject, as the Chinese subjects are unable to make a thorough dissent against the law and its enforcer.

²²¹ Sibree, P. 125.

²²² *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1122.

²²³ *Collected Works*, P. 266.

The Colonel, nonetheless, reads their distress and in the climax of the story delivers his verdict on their complaint. As the narrator recounts, “‘Die Bitte ist abgewiesen. Entfernt euch.’ Ein unleugbares Gefühl, der Erleichterung ging durch die Menge, alles drängt sich hinaus, auf den Obersten, der förmlich wieder ein Mensch wie wir alle geworden war, achtete kaum jemand besonders, ich sah nur, wie er tatsächlich erschöpft die Stangen losließ, die hinfielen, in einen von Beamten herbeigeschleppten Lehnstuhl sank und eilig die Tabakpfeife in den Mund schob”²²⁴/ “‘The petition has been refused,’ he announced, ‘You may go.’ An undeniable sense of relief passed through the crowd, everyone surged out, hardly a soul paying any special attention to the colonel, who, as it were, had turned once more into a human being like the rest of us. I still caught one glimpse of him as he wearily let go of the poles, which fell to the ground, then sank into an armchair produced by some officials, and promptly put his pipe in his mouth”²²⁵. The extreme tension and by extension the relief expressed by both the crowd and the Colonel, in spite of the unfavorable outcome, expose the amount of thought and performance that goes into playing the angry crowd, on the one hand, and the steadfast administrator, on the other hand. By making the confrontation seem like a farce, Kafka stages the absurd way in which Hegel’s assessment of the Chinese would play out and demonstrates its lack of likelihood.

Kafka’s literary oeuvre is full of absent authoritarians and riddled with monstrous legal systems that arbitrarily punish Kafka’s primary characters. These networks of authoritarians, legal systems, and arbitrarily punished characters are one almost incredibly distinct to Kafka. Why should his works then not rub up against nineteenth century race theory, which holds that the reality of these tropes can be found among non-European races? If “The Great Wall of

²²⁴ *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1122

²²⁵ *Collected Works*, 267.

China,” “An Old Manuscript,” and “The Refusal” work towards undoing Hegel’s depiction of the Chinese people, “Zur Frage der Gesetze” (“The Problem with our Laws”) blatantly disavows Hegel’s thesis that the Chinese only follow the letter of the law. Kafka’s narrator for the one-page piece asserts from the start, “Unsere Gesetze sind nicht allgemein bekannt, sie sind Geheimnis der kleinen Adelsgruppe, welche uns beherrscht”²²⁶/ “Our laws are not generally known; they are kept secret by a small group of nobles who rule us”²²⁷. From the onset the narrator admits that they do not have knowledge of the edicts of the small group of nobility, much less these edicts memorized. The notion that the law is something belonging to a group shrouding themselves and the law in mystery is one that will pervade Kafka’s later works, particularly within the trial. But in the context of China, Kafka takes one step further from implying that there is no way for all of the people in China, especially those further away from the capital, would have this knowledge of the law because the Emperor, who issues these laws, is omni-absent from the everyday life of the Chinese. The ability to know the law inside and out is simply impossible and Kafka does a provocative job demonstrating its impossibility in “The Great Wall of China,” “An Old Manuscript,” and “The Refusal.” This depiction of the average citizen not knowing the letter of the law becomes especially important when Hegel implies that the Chinese do not have the internal ability to make value judgements of their own accord. Hegel will, as I shall demonstrate in chapter two, make the same claims he has made about the Chinese of the Jews, replacing the Emperor with the terrifying God of the Old Testament; Kafka will form a response of sorts with parables about the Old Testament, on which Hegel bases his theory

²²⁶ Kafka, Franz. “Zur Frage der Gesetze.” *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008. P. 1124. Referred to from here on out as “*Sämtliche Werke*.”

²²⁷ Kafka, Franz. “The Problem with Our Laws.” Willa and Edwin Muir, trans. *The Complete Stories*. Naum N. Glazer, Ed. New York: Schocken, 1971. P. 437. Referred to from here on out as “*Complete Stories*.”

of race for the Jews. When Hegel chose to apply his theories on the phenomenology of “Geist” to second-hand recordings of non-European cultures from the British, he exposed himself to criticism for attempting to separate the world cultures by race and practically invent reasons for the conditions fostered by their supposed separation.

Kafka literary works expose the constructedness of nineteenth-century race theory’s depictions of race through a variety of literary devices that one can also identify within representations of race by nineteenth century philosophers, philologists, and pseudo-scientists. Kafka’s use of humorous irony becomes necessary when he turns from representing the Emperors to representing the Chinese subject. Kafka’s Chinese scholar and cobbler, who are completely under the control of the two Emperors, should, according to Hegel, have no innate ability to make decisions on their own. The scholar acknowledges that he has no strong connection to either the abstract or the material Emperors and the cobbler is faced with making a decision without the guidance of either Emperors. Finally, Kafka’s villager in “The Refusal” recognizes through his narrative description of the ruling governor/colonel that his authoritarian persona is a show, in spite of the villagers’ fear of him. These ironic representations of the Chinese underscore Kafka’s method of undermining the racist logic concerning the Chinese as fostered by Hegel and disseminated into German discourse regarding China.

Chapter 2: Babel from the Tower of Geist: Kafka and the Oriental Jews

“Fast jeder gebildete Zeitgenosse war Maurer vom Fach und in der Frage der Fundamentierung untrüglich. Dahin zielte aber der Gelehrte gar nicht, sondern er behauptete, erst die große Mauer werde zum erstenmal in der Menschenzeit ein sicheres Fundament für einen neuen Babelturm schaffen”

“Almost every educated man of our time was a mason by profession and infallible in the matter of laying foundations. That, however, was not what our scholar was concerned to prove; for he maintained that the Great Wall alone would provide for the first time in the history of mankind a secure foundation for a new Tower of Babel”

---Franz Kafka, “Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer”/ “The Great Wall of China”

Just as Hegel claims that the Chinese are locked historically and culturally in a child-like stage of development, so too are the Jews, who defer to the letter of the law laid out in the Old Testament by God. Although the Jews are closer to attaining Hegel’s notion of Geist, inasmuch as Hegel is concerned, they are like the other Oriental counterparts, the Chinese trapped in deference to God. Hegel deferred to readings of the Old Testament and exploratory reports from what at the time was broadly called Persia, where for Hegel the Jews originate. Kafka’s excoriates and uncovers the constructedness of Hegel’s theories on a Jewish race in his short works, “Das Stadtwappen,²²⁸” (“The City Coat of Arms”) “Abraham,²²⁹” and “Das Paradies.” (“Paradise”)²³⁰.

²²⁸ Written 1920, published 1931

²²⁹ The parable of “Abraham” was drawn from aphorisms written in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* sometime after February 1918 and sections from a letter to Robert Klopstock dated 1921. “Abraham” as a parable itself first appears in *Parables and Paradoxes*.

²³⁰ The paragraphs of “Das Paradies” all come from *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*. They were reconstructed into a different order in *Parables and Paradoxes*, where the paragraphs are brought together under the heading “Das Paradies.”

I want here to bring my chapter into a related critical discussion to better clarify where my project stands in relation to Kafka's position as a Jew, writing against the Orientalizing of the Jews. As you may recall from this project's introduction, Kafka adopts what Kalamar and Penslar suggest is a position on the Orientalization of the Jews by comparing and contrasting the ancient, Oriental Jews, with their modern counterparts in the Diaspora; in doing so, Kafka had entered reluctantly into a debate as to whether or not European Jews should identify more closely with the Middle East as "Oriental" Jews, a debate that included Martin Buber and Else Lasker-Schüler, who more enthusiastically endorsed the idea of identification with ethnic otherness. This critical discussion begins with the seminal work, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in which they make a basis for defining a "minor literature" as one that "doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language,"²³¹ in which "everything in them is political"²³² and "everything takes on a collective value"²³³. Deleuze and Guattari devise this definition from Kafka's essay, "Über kleine Literaturen" ("On Minor Literatures,") as a way of defining Kafka as writing from the perspective of a Jewish minority in Prague. Accusing Deleuze and Guattari of making a bigger misinterpretation of Kafka than Brecht did of Peking Opera, Lowell Edmunds asserts, "Kafka saw himself as a German writer. Nor is there anything to suggest that Kafka in the entries on minor literature, despite the passages on Jewish themes included in these entries, is speaking as a Jewish writer... Yiddish theater is Kafka's main inspiration for his thoughts on minor literature. Paradoxically, then, without seeing himself as a Jewish writer, and certainly without any desire

²³¹ Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. Dana Polen, trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. P. 16.

²³² Ibid. P. 17.

²³³ Ibid. P. 17.

to become anything but a German writer, Kafka still idealizes Yiddish literature”²³⁴. Although Edmunds is right to point out that Kafka himself had no connection to Yiddish theater generated out of Warsaw, on which Kafka discusses (in contrast to his own work) as his definition of a minor literature, calling Kafka a “German” author is misleading because there was only a German Empire, to which Kafka did not belong, during the majority of Kafka’s life and career. German could connote belonging to a linguistic tradition, but as Yasemin Yildiz points out, that does not necessarily work either: “Kafka’s writing itself explores the modern problem of a putative homology between native language and ethno-cultural identity—that is, the monolingual paradigm—in a concentrated manner as part of his aesthetics”²³⁵. Stanley Corngold inflates Edmunds claim by maintaining,

Kafka’s relation to the traditions of his literary community is no different in principle from that of other German and European writers who turned for inspiration to non-European sources (thus Goethe to Persian poetry, Schopenhauer to Sanskrit literature, Yeats and Brecht to Noh, Pound to Chinese ideograms). This field covers Kafka’s increasing sensitivity to the themes of Jewish mysticism and the argumentative gestures of Talmud as these come to him through Yiddish literature from the East, as well as his attraction to Lao-Tze²³⁶.

Unlike Goethe, Schopenhauer, Yeats, Brecht, and Pound, Kafka faced a centuries-old system of oppression against the Jews in Europe, which was reinforced by the likes of Hegel and other scholars, who insisted on lumping the Jews in with other Orientals as a means of making Jews in the Diaspora seem culturally inferior, discursively and otherwise.

²³⁴ Edmunds, Lowell. “Kafka on Minor Literature.” *German Studies Review*, vol. 33, no. 2, May 2010. P. 364.

²³⁵ Yildiz, Yasemin. *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*. New York: Fordham UP, 2012. P. 34.

²³⁶ Corngold, Stanley. “Kafka and the Dialectic of Minor Literature.” *College Literature*, (21:1), February 1994. P. 99.

Walter Sokel, in his early intervention against Deleuze and Guattari and in contrast to Edmunds and Corngold, gets it right in that Kafka encountered “Jews who had not broken with their past and the idiom of their people, fellow Jews who seemed to offer him the possibility, no matter how faint, of redemption, of return to that cycle of salvation which connected past to future”²³⁷. Sokel’s statement acknowledges at once both the fact that Kafka did not see himself quite the same as these Yiddish theater performers from Warsaw, but also not as completely different either. As Sokel has shown, Kafka observed nuance and difference amongst the Jews in the Diaspora, which will be central to his critique of Hegel, who disavows the Diaspora in his reading of the Jews of the Old Testament and race-theory surround the Jews.

Hegel’s own theory of the Jews is that they are similar to the Chinese. I should once again iterate that Hegel stands in here as a key representative of the longer-standing tradition of race theory in Europe, nestled between the end of geo-historical based race theory in the German-speaking world and the emergence of anatomical/ physiological race-theory predominantly out of France. Hegel’s views on the Jews were not only common knowledge, but quite sadly, a widely held truism by the time Kafka was alive and writing. Hegel’s assessment of the Jews, while emerging also out of a longer theological and philosophical tradition related to and grounded in the philosophy of Christian religion, makes an interesting parallel between the Jews and the Chinese not found elsewhere:

Der allgemeine Wille betätigt sich unmittelbar durch den einzelnen: dieser hat gar kein Wissen seiner gegen die Substanz, die er sich noch nicht als Macht gegen sich setzt, wie z.B. im Judentum der eifrige Gott als die Negation des Einzelnen gewußt wird. Der allgemeine Wille sagt hier in China unmittelbar, was der

²³⁷ Sokel, Walter. “Two Views of ‘Minority’ Literature: Deleuze, Kafka, and the German-Jewish Enclave of Prague.” *Quarterly World Report*, vol. 6, no. 1-2, 1983. P. 6.

Einzelne tun solle, und dieser folgt und gehorcht ebenso reflexions- und selbstlos.²³⁸

The universal Will displays its activity immediately through that of the individual: the latter has no self-cognizance at all in antithesis to Substantial, positive being, which it does not yet regard as a power standing over against it—as (e.g.) in Judaism, the “Jealous God” is known as the negation of the Individual. In China the universal Will immediately commands what the Individual is to do, and the latter complies and obeys with proportionate renunciation of reflections and personal independence²³⁹.

There are three Hegelian terms at work in this passage, which link the Chinese and the Jews as Orientals in Hegel’s works: Wille, Substanz, and Geist. Allgemeine Wille/ Universal will, as Inwood observes, “is our capacity to abstract from all our desires, impulses, etc., and to satisfy none of them. This type of freedom is wholly negative and appears, in a pure form, only in such unsatisfactory enterprises as suicide, oriental mysticism and the destructiveness of the French Revolutionary terror”²⁴⁰. In other words, there is an amount of agency in those who have such a will, but there is something within that Will that inhibits one from actualizing true freedom of the mind to make decisions. Although this will be discussed at a slightly greater length in chapter four, the reason the French Revolution does not fit Hegel’s notion of freedom is because the French revert to a kind of violent barbarism, rather than rationalizing forms of freedom, inasmuch as Hegel (for all his Prussian bias) is concerned. As for Substanz, as Inwood notes, “On Hegel’s view...God is (at the level of Religion) a person, and (at the philosophical level) the concept. This explains the emergence of independent subjects”²⁴¹. The substance (translated in

²³⁸ Hegel, G.W.F. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 1961. P. 188. Referred to from here on out as “Hegel”.

²³⁹ Hegel, G.W.F. *The Philosophy of History*. J. Sibree, trans. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004. P. 120. Referred to from here on out as “Sibree”.

²⁴⁰ Inwood, Michael. *A Hegel Dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992. P. 312-3.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.* P. 286.

the *Philosophy of History* as “Substantial”²⁴², but the same word in German) exists in antithesis to the Universal Will, giving the Jews and the Chinese the ability to abstract their thought (in a way that Hegel will claim Africans and Native Americans cannot), but only to the point of recognizing those desires abstractly and never following through towards attaining them. Hegel differentiates the Jews from the Chinese by asserting that the universal Will negating individual thought in Jewish social thought and structure comes in the form of a Jealous God. The Chinese defer to the Emperor, who exists for them as both a physical person and an abstract entity. But what the Emperor is to the Chinese and what the Jealous God is to the Jews are two different embodiments. God maintains an omniscient and omnipresent status because he is a supernatural being, for the Jews still a concept and not a person, whereas the Emperor, even as an abstraction, is not necessarily vengeful, spiteful, and does not directly communicate/ direct his people, the way God does in the Old Testament.

I stress the Old Testament because Hegel defers to the Old Testament when he continues his analysis of the Jews as Orientals. Hegel employs the Old Testament firstly to evoke the long-standing position of German theologians and philosophers that the Jews only follow the letter of the law, whereas the Christians have free will to choose what they believe. The Old Testament grounds the Jewish people as one that originates in a space that is not specifically Western, and effectively denies the impact of moving into the Diaspora would have on this geo-historical assumption of the way Jews think. Of course, this line of logic matters to somebody like Kafka, who is a Jew in the Diaspora, and is clearly grappling with questions of free will and religion in his works. In contrast to the Chinese Emperor, the Jealous God does not exist as two separate

²⁴² Sibree. P. 120.

entities, but as one that, inasmuch as Hegel is concerned, is real, but misinterpreted by the Jews. Since the Jealous God is not mortal, there is no need to divide him into an abstract and concrete form to curb individual thought and will. Kafka's aphoristic writings on the Old Testament, namely "Das Stadtwappen," ("The City Coat of Arms") "Abraham," and "Das Paradies," ("Paradise") set the stage for a parody performance of Hegel's notion of what the Jewish person should be.

Setting the Stage by Rebuilding the Tower of Babel: The City Coat of Arms

The flashback the Chinese narrator has to his childhood contains within it an allusion, as previously stated, to another parallel between the China and the Middle East of the Jews: the construction of the Tower of Babel and the Great Wall of China. In "The Great Wall of China" we are told by the Chinese narrator that "Dahin aber zielte der Gelehrte gar nicht, sondern er behauptete, erst die große Mauer werde zum erstenmal in der Menschheit ein sicheres Fundament für einen neuen Babelturm schaffen. Also zuerst die Mauer und dann der Turm."²⁴³ "That, however, was not what our scholar was concerned to prove; for he maintained that the Great Wall alone would provide for the first time in the history of mankind a secure foundation for a new Tower of Babel. First the wall, then the tower"²⁴⁴, although this narrator's information tends to be unreliable. Again, Hegel ignores the interspersing and intermingling of human cultures and does his best to read them as separate entities. Thus, he sets the stage for his

²⁴³ Kafka, Franz. "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer." *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008. P. 1089. Referred to from here on out as "*Sämtliche Werke*".

²⁴⁴ Kafka, Franz. "The Great Wall of China." Willa and Edwin Muir, trans. *The Complete Stories*. Naum N. Glatzer, Ed. New York: Schocken, 1971. P. 239. Referred to from here on out as "*Collected Works*".

description of the Jews in the Biblical Middle East. Hegel, in making general geo-historical observations, notes,

Ker Porter, ein Engländer, bereiste vor ungefähr zwölf Jahren (seine ganze Reise dauerte von 1817-1820) die Gegenden, wo das alte Babylon gelegen war; auf einer Erhöhung glaubte er noch Reste des alten Turms zu Babel zu entdecken; er wollte Spuren von den vielen Gängen finden, die sich um den Turm herumwanden, und in deren höchstem Geschosse das Bild des Bel aufgestellt war; außerdem finden sich noch viele Hügel mit Resten von alten Gebäulichkeiten. Die Backsteine zeigen sich so, wie sie in der Bibel beim Turmbau beschrieben sind; eine ungeheuer Ebene ist von einer unzähligen Menge solcher Backsteine bedeckt, obgleich schon seit mehreren tausend Jahren beständig von dort welche geholt werden und die ganze Stadt Hila, die in der Nähe des alten Babylon liegt, von denselben gebaut wurde.²⁴⁵

Ker Porter, an Englishman, about 12 years ago (his whole tour occupied from 1817 to 1820) traversed the countries where ancient Babylon lay: on an elevation he thought he could discover remains still existing of the old Tower of Babel; and supposed that he had found traces of the numerous roads that wound around the tower, and in whose loftiest story the image of Bel was set up. There are besides many hills with remains of ancient structures. The bricks correspond with the description in the Biblical record of the building of the tower. A vast plain is covered with such bricks, although for many thousands of years the practice of removing them has been continued; and the entire town of Hila, which lies in the vicinity of the ancient Babylon, has been built with them²⁴⁶.

Hegel draws parallels between the Jewish people and the land where the Tower of Babel was constructed in order to further his claim for the Jews belonging to Persia, or the Middle Eastern Orient; he defers therefore to a British explorer who claims to have found the actual remains of a supposed biblical site. There is a certain amount of irony that the Babel story is one about the dispersing of peoples to different points of the world, which would remind one of the Diaspora and the migration of peoples, but that he uses it to give his Christian perspective some credence, neither confirming nor denying Porter's claims to finding the remains of the Tower of Babel. The

²⁴⁵ Hegel, P. 270.

²⁴⁶ Sibree, P. 184.

Tower of Babel is an iconic focal point that, on the one hand communicates Pre-Jewishness and Jewishness, but on the other demonstrates how the world came to be so diverse. Indeed Hegel claims, “Die Person der Semiramis schwankt überhaupt zwischen mythologischen und historischen Vorstellungen; ihr wird auch der Turmbau Babels zugeschrieben, von dem wir in der Bibel eine der ältesten Sagen haben”²⁴⁷/ “The personality of Semiramis wavers between mythological and historical representations. To her is ascribed the building of the Tower of Babel, respecting which we have in the Bible as one of the oldest traditions”²⁴⁸. Hegel entertains both the seemingly factual, but also exaggerated qualities of this geo-historical space attributed to the Jews. Hegel characterizes the geo-historical space attributed to the Jews as grounded in history and mythology to affirm the letter/ spirit of the law reading of the Bible that previous theologians and philosophers have maintained, namely wherein the literal, “Jewish” reading of the Genesis takes the mythological features at face value and the historical, “Christian,” reads the story simply as a hyperbolized account with a lesson against hubris embedded in the story.

Whereas Hegel draws his basis for comparison between the Jews and the Chinese on what he sees as a similar disposition of lacking free will, Franz Kafka, as a shown in the epigraph to this chapter, has his Chinese scholar/mason make an indirect claim that the Great Wall of China was meant to be a second attempt at the Tower of Babel. Kafka’s link between the Judaic and Chinese cultures hides within it a critical commentary that is expressed in his other texts that also take on the Tower of Babel as a topic. The discussion of diversity and the Tower of Babel converge in Kafka’s text posthumously published “The City Coat of Arms.” Many scholars,

²⁴⁷ Hegel, P. 269

²⁴⁸ Sibree, P. 183-4.

from Max Brod onward, have staked claims that this short work is about language politics in Prague under the Habsburgs. Hannelore Burger has pointed out,

In Kafkas fünftes Gymnasialjahr fällt—als Höhepunkt der Nationalitätenkonflikte – die Badeni-Kreise. Tschechisch als ‘innere Amtssprache,’ die zweisprachige Ämterführung aller Zivilbehörden und die unabdingbare Kenntnis beider Landessprachen für Beamte stehen auf der politischen Agenda. Die Absicht der Badenischen Sprachverordnungen war ein Mehr an ‘Sprachgerechtigkeit’ für die tschechische Bevölkerung Böhmens und Mährens. Was jedoch auf den Erlass der Verordnungen folgte war eine Orgie an Gewalt, Rohheit, und politischer Dummheit. Antitschechische und antisemitische Pöbeleien im Abgeordnetenhaus und auf den Straßen führten zur Lähmung des Parlaments und am Ende in eine Staatskrise, die den von vielen als unvermeidlich gesehenen Untergang der Monarchie vorwegzunehmen schien²⁴⁹.

In Kafka’s fifth year of Gymnasium the Badeni Crisis —as highpoint of nationalist conflicts—occurred. Czech as ‘inner administrative language,’ which was the bilingual administrative head of all civil service and the inalienable knowledge of both languages of the land for civil servants stands on a political agenda. The purpose of the Badeni language ordinances were more in response to ‘language-justice’ for the Czech people of Bohemia and Moravia. What followed however from the enactment of the ordinances was an orgy of violence, barbarism, and political stupidity. Anti-Czech and Anti-Semitic acts of vulgar behavior in the House of Representatives and on the street led to a paralysis of parliament and in the end a statewide crisis, which appeared to many to anticipate the inevitable, watched collapse of the monarchy.²⁵⁰

Kafka’s occupation with the Tower of Babel is understandable in view of political turmoil emerging from language within the Habsburg Empire; the account of its construction in “The City Coat of Arms” and its subsequent rebuilding in the form of the Great Wall of China in “The Great Wall of China” suggest an irretrievable desire to return to monolingual language. Burger points to a specific political incident of language politics in Kafka’s formative years, when he is

²⁴⁹ Burger, Hannelore. “Das mehrsprachige Unterrichtswesen der Verfassungszeit (1867-1918) und die sprachnationale Identität der Juden.” Marek Nekula et al., Hrsg. *Franz Kafka im sprachnationalen Kontext seiner Zeit*. Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2007. P. 152.

²⁵⁰ Translation my own.

no doubt and quite ironically, hearing and rehearing about the Babel story in Genesis. While I have no doubt that Kafka's rewritings of the Babel story contain within them a veiled critique of Habsburg language policy, I want to argue that there is also a veiled critique of nineteenth century race theory within these stories.

Kafka's narrator in "The City Coat of Arms" claims that the people building the Tower of Babel were in no rush to complete construction: "Anfangs war beim babylonischen Turmbau alles in leidlicher Ordnung; ja, die Ordnung war vielleicht zu gross, man dachte zu sehr an Wegweiser, Dolmetscher, Arbeiterunterkünfte und Verbindungswege, so als habe man Jahrhunderte freier Arbeitsmöglichkeit vor sich. Die damals herrschende Meinung ging sogar dahin, man könne gar nicht langsam genug bauen"²⁵¹/ "At first all the arrangements for building the Tower of Babel were characterized by fairly good order; indeed the order was perhaps too perfect, too much thought was taken for guides, interpreters, accommodation for the workmen, and roads of communication, as if there were centuries before one to do the work in. In fact the general opinion at the time was that one simply could not build too slowly"²⁵². Kafka calls the Tower of Babel the Babylonian Tower, as opposed to Babelturm (Babel Tower), which he mentions in "The Great Wall of China," situating it geographically in the Middle East the way Hegel does when he effectively affirms the existence of the Tower of Babel through the supposed ruins of the Tower found by a British explorer. The syntactic and lexical break down of

²⁵¹ Kafka, Franz. "Das Stadtwappen/ The City Coat of Arms." Willa and Edwin Muir, trans. *Parables and Paradoxes: Bilingual Edition*. Nahum N. Glatzer, ed. New York: Schocken Books, 1975. P. 36. Referred to from here on out as "Parables and Paradoxes".

²⁵² *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 37.

this passage featured in Christine Ohno's book²⁵³ reveals how Kafka uses these lexical and syntactic arrangements to achieve linguistic Gestus, as suggested in the introduction of this dissertation. Rather than giving us the subject (alles) first or third in the sentence, we get "Anfangs" ("in the beginning") in the front and "beim babylonischen Turmbau" ("at the construction of the Babylonian tower") and "Ordnung" at the end, suggesting that, just like this sentence, completion of the Tower of Babel was slowly coming together and shaping up into a productive, well organized task. However, when Kafka begins the second half of the sentence, another independent clause separated from the first by a semicolon, we learn that to call it "Ordnung" ("Order") was preemptive, because of the lethargic production of construction emerging from the participants in the building process. "Ordnung" may have begun the clause, but it ended forward movement, bringing construction of the tower to a sluggish halt.

Kafka also turns the myth of Babel on its head by including "interpreters" in his construction of the Tower. Indeed, not just interpreters but a list of positions and spaces (Wegweiser, Dolmetscher, Arbeiterunterkünfte und Verbindungswege), whose names all express processes of architectural construction and translation, Wegweiser, "literally the way-knower"; Verbindungswege, literally "connection-ways"; The Tower of Babel story within Genesis is generally meant to explain why it is that there are so many people scattered around the world, speaking different languages and to teach a lesson about acting hubristically against God. God presumably destroys the tower and scatters its builders around the world, giving them different languages so that they are unable to completely communicate with each other again and jointly attempt such affront to God. Why would the construction of the Tower of Babel require

²⁵³ Ohno, Christian. *Die Semiotische Theorie der Pariser Schule: Band 1- Ihre Grundlegung und ihre Entfaltungsmöglichkeiten*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2003. P. 329-31.

interpreters if we are to presume they not only spoke the same language, but spoke it so well that they communicated to each other in an effective way of attempting to equalize themselves with God that God would then in turn feel threatened by their construction? In fact, mentioning of interpreters within the construction of the Tower of Babel even interrupts Kafka's logic about the Tower's construction: there was a general consensus that mankind had so much time to work on the Tower that they could not possibly build it slowly enough. They presumably had all the time they wanted because there was nothing standing in the way of construction, including language barriers. One possible explanation is that Kafka acknowledges an implicit contradiction within the Old Testament, where the Tower of Babel story in Genesis is preceded by the line in Genesis 10:5, "Of these were the isles of nations divided in their lands, everyone after his tongue, after their families, in their nations." The people to whom this passage refers are the sons and grandsons and even great-grandsons of Noah, who had just survived the Great Flood. Genesis 10 in general seems to assume that as the descendants of Noah eventually formed their own dialects or even complete languages from one another and that these languages became then interspersed throughout the Middle East. Noah's great-grandson Nimrod may have well fathered a dialect specific to his own nation, which included Babel. Only under this logic that otherwise contradicts with the opening of Genesis 11 could there have been a need for interpreters at the Tower of Babel's construction, as presented by Kafka. I can only conclude that Kafka alludes towards this inconsistency within Genesis to illustrate the problem of using the Old Testament as the basis for assessing a human culture, particularly Hegel's use of Genesis as the basis for making claims about the Jews.

Indeed, there is additional evidence within "The City Coat of Arms" that undermines biblical logic. "The City Coat of Arms" was a short parable that was originally published in 1931

in the first posthumously published collection of short stories, *Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer* (*The Great Wall of China*), which features the longer short story of the same title. No doubt this was an editorial decision on Max Brod's part because "The Great Wall of China" also alludes to the Tower of Babel (in comparison with the Great Wall of China), as Brod must have noticed the allusion to the Tower of Babel in both texts and decided to situate them together in a short story collection as a way of illustrating how Kafka's stories of the distant past speak to modernity and the present. Keeping on the same line of thought about multiple national identities, Kafka's narrator for "The City Coat of Arms" also mentions, "Jede Landsmannschaft wollte das schönste Quartier haben, dadurch ergaben sich Streitigkeiten, die sich bis zu blutigen Kämpfen steigerten. Diese Kämpfe hörten nicht mehr auf; den Führern waren sie ein neues Argument dafür, dass der Turm auch mangels der nötigen Konzentration sehr langsam oder lieber erst nach allgemeinem Friedensschluss gebaut werden sollte"²⁵⁴ / "Every nationality wanted the finest quarters for itself, and this gave rise to disputes, which developed into bloody conflicts. These conflicts never came to an end; to the leaders they were a new proof that, in the absence of the necessary unity, the building of the tower must be done very slowly, or indeed preferably postponed until universal peace were declared"²⁵⁵. Kafka makes interesting use of the term "Landsmannschaft," which is not the term used for this context in Genesis. In the Luther Bibles from 1545 and 1912, the words "Lender" and "Länder" appear respectively as the German equivalents for the aforementioned "nations" in the previous paragraph. Peter Demetz points out, "Unter den Worten, die so klingen, als hätte sie der Text gleichsam von der Straße her oder aus den Zeitungen absorbiert (in Kafkas Texten nicht eben häufig), fällt, 'die Landsmannschaft,' sogleich auf, weil sie, zumindest für eine

²⁵⁴ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 38.

²⁵⁵ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 39.

neuere Leserschaft, einen Organisationsbegriff späterer politischer Auseinandersetzungen vorausnimmt”²⁵⁶/ “Among the words that sound like they came straight off the street or were absorbed from the newspapers (a rarity in Kafka’s texts) ‘die Landsmannschaft’ stands out readily, because at least for a newer readership it anticipates an organizational term of later, political contention.”²⁵⁷ Landsmannschaft would have referred to old fraternities at German universities developed in a kind of guild system during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries²⁵⁸. These fraternities were determined geographically and frequently referred to themselves as nations, out of which the term “Landsmannschaft” emerged. By Kafka’s time and thereafter, the definition extended more generally to territorial organizations and for a newer (read: post-war) readership “Die Vertriebenen” of Germans settled in Eastern Europe before the end of World War II and were forced out with the defeat of Germany and/or the highly problematic politics of those Landsmannschaften. But Kafka seems to use the term specifically to refer to the German-speaking countries and their imperialistic desire to take the most resourcefully plentiful spaces for themselves, something that Germany and the Habsburg Empire never managed to actually achieve on the same scale as France or Great Britain. Kafka’s stake in making this veiled jab at the Germans is that the Jews of Europe endured Anti-Semitism partially out of the Orientalist logic that the Jews never have been, nor will they ever be European, but an Eastern other incapable of thinking for themselves.

²⁵⁶ Demetz, Peter. “Prag and Babylon: Zu Kafkas ‘Das Stadtwappen’.” Kurt Krolop and Hans Dieter Zimmermann, Hrsg. *Kafka und Prag: Colloquium im Goethe-Institut Prag 24.-27. November 1992*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994. P. 136.

²⁵⁷ Translation is my own.

²⁵⁸ For further information, see Schurz, Carl. *Lebenserinnerungen, bis zum Jahre 1850*. Edward Manley, Ed. Chicago: Allyn and Bacon, 1913.

Following the description of the Landsmannschaft, Kafka's narrator makes three admissions: 1. that the goal of the Tower is to reach heaven, noting "Das Wesentliche des ganzen Unternehmens ist der Gedanke, einen bis in den Himmel reichenden Turm zu bauen"²⁵⁹/ "The essential thing in the whole business is the idea of building a tower that will reach to heaven"²⁶⁰. 2. that there's a chance the next generation will tear the Tower down and start again, saying, "Das Wesentliche des ganzen Unternehmens ist der Gedanke, einen bis in den Himmel reichenden Turm zu bauen"²⁶¹/ "The essential thing in the whole business is the idea of building a tower that will reach to heaven"²⁶², 3. that building a new and improved Tower with rapidity is not outside the realm of possibility because of the expansion of human knowledge, noting "In dieser Hinsicht aber muss man wegen der Zukunft keine Sorgen haben, im Gegenteil, das Wissen der Menschheit steigert sich, die Baukunst hat Fortschritte gemacht und wird weitere Fortschritte Machen, eine Arbeit, zu der wir ein Jahr brauchen, wir in hundert Jahren vielleicht in einem halben Jahr geleistet werden und überdies besser, haltbarer"²⁶³/ "That being so, however, one need have no anxiety about the future; on the contrary, human knowledge is increasing, the art of building has made progress and will make further progress, a piece of work which takes us a year may perhaps be done in half the time in another hundred years, and better done, too, more enduringly"²⁶⁴. These admissions gesture towards an ineffectual Tower of Babel that would never threaten God because it would constantly detract from construction and never actually

²⁵⁹ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 36

²⁶⁰ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 37

²⁶¹ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 36

²⁶² *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 37

²⁶³ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 36.

²⁶⁴ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 37.

reach Heaven. Readers of Genesis, however, know that Kafka's paradoxes never come to fruition, as the Tower is not only being constructed, but at a rate that threatens God enough for him to strike it down and for him to give the peoples of the world different languages to prohibit them from joining forces in such an act of hubris again. The setting of "The City Coat of Arms," then temporarily sets itself in an undetermined length of time between the initial constructions in Genesis 11:4, and when God scatters the people in 11:8. Here Kafka manipulates Biblical time itself in his recreation of the Babel story, exposing logistical problems with making literal readings of the Babel myth. The logic that follows is that since one cannot really determine how much time passed before the beginning of construction and the time God intervened, situating it historically does not work. The manipulation of biblical time to question using the Old Testament as the basis for determining Jewish history and by extension qualifying the Jewish Spirit is Kafka's affront to Hegel's Orientalist work.

In an interesting interpretation of this passage, Stéphane Mosès observes that, "In der Philosophie der Aufklärung erscheint Geschichte als ein Prozeß, der von einem Weniger zu einem Mehr verläuft, von Verwirrung zu Ordnung, von Unklarheit zu Klarheit... Diese teleologische Auffassung gipfelt in Hegels Interpretation der Geschichte als dialektischen Prozeß, im Verlauf dessen sich das Absolute selbst verwirklicht"²⁶⁵ / "History appears in the philosophy of the Enlightenment as a process that proceeds from less to more, from confusion to order, from obscurity to clarity... This teleological notion peaks in Hegel's interpretation of history as dialectical process, during the course of which the Absolute actualizes itself."²⁶⁶ This

²⁶⁵ Mosès, Stéphane. "Geschichte ohne Ende: Zu Kafkas Kritik der historischen Vernunft." Kurt Krolop and Hans Dieter Zimmermann, Hrsg. *Kafka und Prag: Colloquium im Goethe-Institut Prag 24.-27. November 1992*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994. P. 143-4.

²⁶⁶ Translation my own.

remark is paired with another that notes, “Es ist bezeichnend, daß die Geschichte bei Hegel endlos dasselbe Szenario zu wiederholen scheint, nämlich dasjenige des Auftretens und Verschwindens ‘geschichtlicher Völker’ auf der Bühne des Werdens. In dieser Hinsicht wird der *telos* der Geschichte nicht als eine zu jenem Zeitpunkt, z.B. ‘schon heute’ aktualisierbare Wirklichkeit verstanden, sondern vielmehr als ein Postulat, oder als eine Linie, deren Ende sich in dem Maße entfernt, wie wir uns ihm annähern”²⁶⁷/ “It is significant that history in Hegel appears to repeat endlessly the same scenario, namely that of the occurrence and disappearance of ‘historical peoples’ from the stage of becoming. In this regard the *telos* of history is not understood as something already realizable at this point in time, for instance ‘already today’ but rather as a posit, or as a line, whose end removes itself to the extent that we approach it.”²⁶⁸ Mosès brings to our attention the way in which Kafka assails Hegel’s dialectical representation of history coming to its end by holding the Germanic Prussians as the highest, most developed race in world history, where there should be an antithetical race of people to synthesize into something with a greater spirit than the Germanic Prussians. That Hegel’s history of peoples reaches an end, when his method should not permit an end is, as Mosès here indirectly points out, one that unfairly privileges his own people at the expense of reinforcing discursive Anti-Semitism as well as Orientalist logic.

Unto Abraham, Undo Nathan: Performing the (Un) Enlightened Jew

²⁶⁷ Mosès, P. 144.

²⁶⁸ Translation my own.

With the Tower of Babel setting the stage for both Hegel and Kafka, we now turn to a character who features prominently not only in Hegel and Kafka, but has been the subject of several debates: the biblical Abraham. Unlike the wise Jew of Jerusalem portrayed in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* (*Nathan the Wise*), Hegel and by extension Kafka's representations of the biblical father of the three Western religions is absent of wisdom, and indeed, of free will. I emphasize Nathan here too because, on Lessing's own dramaturgical terms, Nathan and by extension all his fellow characters are supposed to solicit an emotional (?) response from their audience to convey a point about religious tolerance, particularly towards the Jews, during a time when rational thought reigned supreme. However that message was for naught because Anti-Semitism continued throughout Europe and is equally present in Hegel's depiction of Middle Eastern Jews in his *Philosophy of History*. Rejoining his previous claim about the similarities between the Chinese and the Jews, Hegel is quick to limit the amount of individuality dwelling in the Jewish spirit. Hegel claims,

Das Subjekt kommt nie zum Bewußtsein seiner Selbständigkeit, deswegen finden wir bei den Juden keinen Glauben an die Unsterblichkeit der Seele, denn das Subjekt ist nicht an und für sich seiend. Wenn das Subjekt aber in Judentume wertlos ist, so ist dagegen die Familie selbständig, denn an die Familie ist der Dienst Jehovas gebunden und sie somit das Substantielle. Der Staat aber ist das dem jüdischen Prinzip Unangemessene und der Gesetzgebung Mosis fremd. In der Vorstellung der Juden ist Jehova der Gott Abrahams, Isaaks, und Jakobs, der sie aus Ägypten ausziehen hieß und ihnen das Land Kanaan gab²⁶⁹

The individual never comes to the consciousness of independence; on that account we do not find among the Jews any belief in the immortality of the soul; for individuality does not exist in and for itself. But though in Judaism the *Individual* is not respected, the *Family* has inherent value; for the worship of Jehovah is attached to the Family, and it is consequently viewed as a substantial existence. But the State is an institution not consonant with the Judaistic principle, and it is alien to the legislation of Moses. In the idea of the Jews, Jehova is the

²⁶⁹ Hegel, P. 286.

God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob; who commanded them to depart out of Egypt, and gave them the land of Canaan²⁷⁰.

The heritage that the Jews inherit from God via Abraham and allows them some wiggle-room for individual thought is, for Hegel, a familial soul that does not allow the individual person to actualize their own independence. The Jews are much like the Chinese in this regard, as Hegel remarks how much familiar hierarchies matter in Chinese culture. However, unlike with the Chinese, the value of Family is not meant to create a mirroring hierarchical structure the way reverence of one's father is supposed to mirror reverence for the Emperor in China, because Jews are always already descended from Abraham, as far as Hegel is concerned. The heritage that the Jews receive from God, however, does not afford them the opportunity to make individual judgment calls and in this key way the Jews and the Chinese are similar. The Jews may have "das reine Herz, die Büßung, die Andacht"²⁷¹/ "the pure heart, repentance, devotion"²⁷², which the Chinese may lack, but these are not enough for them to abstract their ability to make individual decisions; the Jews must defer to God's law when they are caught in a conundrum. Hegel's assumption that the omnipresent, Jealous God keeps any individual decision making abilities, but allows them the ability to recognize the consequences of following God's law seems to contrast to the Chinese, who in his view do not maintain a pure heart, repent, or are completely devoted to the Emperor. God, for Hegel, brings the Jews closer to but not quite at *Spirit*, as Hegel defines it in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in a way that the Chinese Emperor simply does not.

²⁷⁰ Sibree, P. 197.

²⁷¹ Hegel, P. 286.

²⁷² Sibree, P. 197.

Hegel also tends to affirm biblical narratives as historical facts in his analysis of the Middle East. In one such passage, he claims: “So wanderte Abraham mit seiner Familie aus Mesopotamien gegen Westen in das gebirgige Palästina. Noch heute wird auf diese Weise Bagdad von streifenden Nomaden umschwärmt”²⁷³/ “Thus Abraham wandered forth with his family from Mesopotamia westwards, into mountainous Palestine. Even at this day the country round Bagdad is thus infested by roving Nomads”²⁷⁴. Abraham serves as a very important character in Hegel’s text because he links the Hegel’s Jewish/ Oriental condition of lacking free will with an actual, geo-historical positing. Abraham is the father of all the people, who lack individual will, and is situated in places one can find on a non-fictional map. Interestingly, Hegel also nods to the Diaspora by inferring the Jews as nomadic. Kafka will pick up on the term nomadic and its use in “An Old Manuscript,” to which I will turn in chapter three. However, even though Hegel hints at the Diaspora, he confines the wandering of Abraham to specific region that we know today as the Middle East.

Kafka’s Abraham²⁷⁵, much like his Chinese narrators in “The Great Wall of China,” “An Old Manuscript,” and “The Refusal,” embodies and by extension performs a parody of Hegel’s conception of Abraham as a Middle Eastern Jew, one that draws attention to himself as a parody. In this way, Kafka’s Abraham is less like Lessing’s Nathan, who elicits the emotions of his

²⁷³ Hegel, P. 269.

²⁷⁴ Sibree, P. 183.

²⁷⁵ “Abraham” is a set of parables about the biblical Abraham originally partially published posthumously in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* and in a 1921 letter to Robert Klopstock, later republished in *Parables and Paradoxes*. The first two paragraphs, in which Kafka engages with the Biblical character directly, appear in the fourth of *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, which follow the last dated entry on February 26th, 1918. Therefore, we can presume that Kafka began speculating about Abraham between 1918 and 1919. Kafka begins imagining another Abraham in a letter addressed to Robert Klopstock in 1921, who was being treated for tuberculosis alongside Kafka in the early 1920s, but made a recovery and outlived Kafka by another 48 years.

audience members through his wise view of tolerance and more like one of Peachum's beggars from *Threepenny Opera*, in that he wears (a few) costumes of suffering that do not reflect his own, causing us to question his motivations. Determining whether the voice of the two paragraphs belongs to Kafka proper or to a narrator or narrators that sneak in and out of Kafka's notebook, which functions sometimes also as a diary with specifically dated entries through February 26th, 1918, poses a challenge. Here again is where Kafka's perspective as an Orientalized Jew comes into play.

Kafka's "Abraham" is very much a response to the Abraham of Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*. We have it on Max Brod's authority that Kafka read *Fear and Trembling* both in the Anmerkung to Kafka's letters and notes from *The Blue Octave Notebooks* that Kafka's writing about Abraham emerges as a response to Abraham. To put it in Theodore Adorno's terms, "Als Kritiker, nicht als Erbe hat er Motive aus Kierkegaards *Furcht und Zittern* verwandelt"²⁷⁶/ "Kafka used motifs from Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* not as heir, but as critic"²⁷⁷. Kafka's position against Kierkegaard seems somehow odd because Kierkegaard was, himself, critical of Hegel and by extension the use of Christian thought in the Enlightenment thought that sought to denounce religion's irrationally destructive force. With regards to Kierkegaard's relationship to Hegel, Jon Stewart observes, "One of Kierkegaard's main objections to Hegel's philosophy is that it misunderstands the nature of religion by placing it on par with various forms of scholarship and knowing"²⁷⁸ and that "Unlike science...Christian faith

²⁷⁶ Adorno, Theodor. *Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrpamp Verlag, 1955. P. 388.

²⁷⁷ Adorno, Theodor. *Prisms*. Samuel and Sherry Weber, trans. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992. P. 286.

²⁷⁸ Stewart, Jon. "Kierkegaard and Hegel on Faith and Knowledge." Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur, Ed. *A Companion to Hegel*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd, 2011. P. 510.

requires a free decision on the part of the believer. By contrast, the goal of science is to construct discursive theories and proofs such that there are no gaps and every conclusion follows necessarily from these premises”²⁷⁹. Stewart’s observations suggest here that Kafka had no reason to affirm Hegel to criticize Kierkegaard for, although Kierkegaard chastises Hegel for getting Christian thought wrong for confining it within the rationalist logic of the Enlightenment, Kierkegaard still affirms the age-old position that Jews only believe in the letter of the law indirectly by affirming Christian thoughts freedom from the rationalist boundaries developed by the Enlightenment. According to Patrice Djoufack, Kafka’s critique of Kierkegaard extends beyond this: “Kafka übt Kritik daran, dass Kierkegaard den Schritt Abrahams vom ethischen Standpunkt zur religiösen Dimension als Sprung charakterisiert”²⁸⁰/ “Kafka criticizes Kierkegaard’s characterization of Abraham’s move from an ethical standpoint to a religious dimension as a leap.”²⁸¹ Although I cannot delve at any particular length into ethics here, Kafka’s criticism of Kierkegaard’s hyper-religious reading of the Old Testament character is one that still reinforces my point about the difference between Jews and Christians echoed from Luther onward into the Enlightenment.

Kafka’s parable on Abraham is rather short, but poignant. Kafka writes “Abrahams geistige Armut und die Schwebeweglichkeit dieser Armut ist ein Vorteil, sie erleichtert ihm die Konzentration oder vielmehr sie ist schon Konzentration, wodurch er allerdings den Vorteil verliert, der in der Anwendung der Konzentrationskraft liegt”²⁸²/ “Abraham’s spiritual poverty

²⁷⁹ Ibid, P. 511.

²⁸⁰ Djoufack, Patrice. *Der Selbe und der Andere: Formen und Strategien der Erfahrung der Fremde bei Franz Kafka*. Wiesbaden: Der Deutsche-Universitäts Verlag, 2005. P. 39.

²⁸¹ Translation my own.

²⁸² *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 40.

and the inertia of this poverty are an asset, they make concentration easier for him, or, even more, they are concentration already—by this, however, he loses the advantage that lies in applying the powers of concentration”²⁸³. There are in a sense two key statements about Abraham in this beginning paragraph: 1. Abraham lacks spirit (Geist) but this lack of spirit helps him concentrate (or indeed this lack of spirit is concentration itself) and 2. The irony of gaining concentration from lacking spirit is that he loses the advantages that come with having concentration because he does not have spirit. Kafka does not break these two thoughts up as concisely as the English translation does, but lets the two thoughts flow as one in a run-on sentence strung together by a set of commas to break down the clauses. We notice already a lack of Em dash separating the two clauses in the original and the importance of “wodurch” (translate as “by this” in the translation) as it literally allows the paradox of the relationship between spirit and concentration to flow seamlessly. Kafka’s run-on sentence is important here because it lacks concentration itself, detracting the reader from the original subject, suggesting that the delivery of the statement does not itself lack in “spirit”; Kafka’s narrator is therefore somebody, in a way, who does not lack “spirit”. I therefore contend that Kafka’s narrator is adopting and/or echoing the voice of the European Orientalist, who in Hegel’s opinion, should have well achieved “spirit.” This notion of “spirit” is important because it gestures back towards Hegel’s idea of *Spirit* that pervades his lectures, even though within Kafka’s context “spirit” is a qualifier for poverty. If we think of concentration as an important prerequisite to reaching rational thought, Kafka’s paradox of losing “spirit” to gain concentration, Kafka seems to critique Abraham as not only a precursor to Jewish thought, but also to Christian thought that serves as the precursor to the “Enlightened” (read: thought conceptualized in the Enlightenment). After all, Abraham also

²⁸³ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 41.

prefigures Mosaic Law, the very letter of the law theologians and philosophers claim ensnare Jewish thought and prevent it from actualizing free will.

Another point of interest to consider is Max Brod's notes about this particular passage. When Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins translated *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* into English, Max Brod included a series of notes and commentary, in which Brod explains the origins/ background behind certain passages from *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, that were later removed when published in 1954 under the title, *Reflections on Sin, Suffering, Hope, and the True Way*. According to Brod, "In the original manuscript it can be clearly deciphered that this aphorism was originally formulated in the first person. It began: 'My spiritual poverty' and so on"²⁸⁴. A number of questions rise from Brod's claim: why would Kafka decide to change the subject of this statement to the biblical Abraham, of all possible subjects? Why would Kafka describe his own lack of spirit as an asset of concentration, only to ironically undercut the usefulness of that concentration? I maintain that the answer lies very much in Kafka's identity as a Jew and, perhaps specifically, as an Orientalized Jew. Kafka chose to distance himself from these ideas because of how close they dialogue with the language circulating about Jews and the Orient fostered by Hegel. Kafka, as we already saw in our analysis of "The Great Wall of China," has no problem mimicking the arm-chair anthropologist's voice and taking the European ethnological perspective when describing other cultures in order to parody this voice. Kafka repeats this gesture in his reading of the oldest Jew, Abraham. This note to Max Brod reveals that he put himself in the shoes of the ancient Jew of the Middle East first before shifting to the objective, third-person analysis.

²⁸⁴ Kafka, Franz. *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*. Max Brod, Ed. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins, Trans. Cambridge: Exact Change, 1991. P. 105.

Kafka takes another inadvertent stab at Hegel's historical racism in the second paragraph on Abraham in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*. According to Kafka/narrator, "Abraham ist in der folgender Täuschung begriffen: Die Einförmigkeit dieser Welt kann er nicht ertragen. Nun ist aber die Welt bekanntlich ungemein mannigfaltig, was jederzeit nachzuprüfen ist, indem man eine Handvoll Welt nimmt und näher ansieht. Die Klage über die Einförmigkeit der Welt ist also eigentlich eine Klage über nicht genügend tiefe Vermischung mit der Mannigfaltigkeit der Welt"²⁸⁵/ "Abraham falls victim to the following illusion: he cannot stand the uniformity of this world. Now the world is known, however, to be uncommonly various, which can be verified at any time by taking a handful of world and looking at it closely. Thus this complaint at uniformity of the world is really a complaint at not having been mixed profoundly enough with the diversity of the world"²⁸⁶. This paragraph comes into dialogue with the passage from the previous paragraph in that both employ imagery of weight. In the first paragraph, we have the image of inertia (Schwerbeweglichkeit, literally "heavy-movability") of poverty making things easier (erleichtern, to lighten), creating this paradoxical tension and setting up the paradoxical problem of poverty, where poverty enables him to concentrate, only to also lose the advantages that come with that concentration because of that very poverty. In this case, he cannot bare (ertragen) the uniformity of the world. There is an assumed uniformity of the Middle East from the perspective of the narrator that suggests the narrator is a European orientalist, for, as Rohde observes, "Hegel...like numerous other scholars and philosophers of this period, 'thought of Judaism and Islam as two of a kind,' and in contrasting both against Christianity, which he considered the only truly universalist and sublime religion, he 'reformulated the old supersessionist faith and the

²⁸⁵ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 40.

²⁸⁶ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 41.

traditional conflation of Jew and Muslim, in the language of his new grand narrative of history as the progressive self-revelation of the Spirit or Geist”²⁸⁷. The lack of diversity seems to be the conflation of the various “Lender/ Länder” of Genesis during the construction of the Tower of Babel, future Middle Eastern Jews and Muslims wandering around a desert, unable to attain their free will.

Abraham’s domain within the Old Testament is the Middle East, of which he only acquires knowledge from his limited wandering. He knows nothing of East Asia, the Americas, or even Europe for that matter. He is completely separated from that global diversity. Confronting Abraham with lack of diversity seems to be a jab at Hegel, whose *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* compartmentalize different world cultures and resist reading the intermingling of cultures and migratory patterns, effectively ignoring the Diaspora. Indeed, Hegel reads the Jews through the Old Testament in order to separate them as a culture that does not belong to or within European cultures. Important to note is that Abraham’s belief in the uniformity of the world, is an “illusion” that Abraham “falls into” and that Abraham is therefore not bearing any real burden. What we see here then between the two sentences is an augmentation in voice: sentence one makes a distanced observation of Abraham that mimics the European Orientalist, criticizing his falling victim to the illusion of diversity. The second sentence, however, seems to be same voice, but the critically Saidian version of the European Orientalist, which Said echoes by virtue of being trained by the Orientalists, only to subvert that very thought. The voice in the second sentence recognizes the reality of diversity and the

²⁸⁷ Rohde, Achim. “Asians in Europe: Reading German-Jewish History through a Postcolonial Lens.” Ulrike Brunotte, Anna-Dorothea Ludewig, and Axel Stähler, ed. *Orientalisms, Gender, and the Jews: Literary and Artistic Transformations of European National Discourses*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015. P. 23.

likelihood that Abraham would never have had the opportunity to experience that diversity, redeeming Abraham in a way. If Kafka originally thought of himself as Abraham, we once again see how Kafka resists falling for the illusion of cultural uniformity reinforced by Hegel's work as a scholar of world history and world cultures. Kafka as the Orientalist Jew literally seizes the opportunity to distance himself from falling completely into Hegel's racist logic by deferring to a Saidian echo of the Orientalist voice in his analysis of Abraham.

Kafka would not build anymore on Abraham in his notebooks, but would take up the question of Abraham again in a 1921 letter to friend and fellow patient of tuberculosis, Robert Klopstock. Again, as Danta has pointed out and footnotes in the collected letters written by Kafka confirm²⁸⁸ Kafka's comments on Abraham are directed towards his reading/ interpretation of Kierkegaard's interpretation of Abraham in *Fear and Trembling*, which had come out in German translation just two years earlier. I would like to note here that Kierkegaard engages rather heavily with Hegel and his philosophical positions, particularly on ethics. Kafka mentions to Klopstock,

Ich könnte mir einen anderen Abraham denken—der freilich würde es nicht bis zum Erzvater bringen, nicht einmal bis zum Altkleiderhändler—der die Forderung des Opfers sofort, bereitwillig wie ein Kellner, zu erfüllen bereit wäre, der das Opfer aber doch nicht zustande brächte, weil er von zuhause nicht fort kann, er ist unentbehrlich, die Wirtschaft benötigt ihn, immerfort ist noch etwas anzuordnen, das Haus ist nicht fertig, aber ohne dass sein Haus fertig ist, ohne diesen Rückhalt kann er nicht fort, das sieht auch die Bibel ein, denn sie sagt: 'er bestellte sein Haus,' und Abraham hatte wirklich alles in Fülle schon vorher; wenn er nicht das Haus gehabt hätte, wo hätte er denn sonst den Sohn aufgezogen, in welchem Balkan das Opfermesser stecken gehabt?²⁸⁹

I could conceive of another Abraham for myself—he certainly would have never gotten to be patriarch or even an old-clothes dealer—who was prepared to satisfy

²⁸⁸ "Bezieht sich auf Kierkegaards >>Furcht und Zittern<<." Kafka, Franz. *Briefe: 1902-1924*. Max Brod, hrsg. New York: Schocken Books, 1958. S. 513.

²⁸⁹ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 40/42.

the demand for a sacrifice immediately, with the promptness of a waiter, but was unable to bring it off because he could not get away, being indispensable; the household needed him, there was perpetually something or other to put in order, the house was never ready; for without having his house ready, without having something to fall back on, he could not leave—this the Bible also realized, for it says: ‘He set his house in order.’ And, in fact, Abraham possessed everything in plenty to start with; if he had not had a house, where would he have raised his son, and on which rafter he would have stuck the sacrificial knife?²⁹⁰

Kafka’s alternative Abraham absurdly undermines the biblical figure torn between devotion for his God and love for his son. Instead, Kafka reads Abraham as Hegel would: more concerned with pleasing God and following that letter of the law set down by God over his son’s life, but to the extent that his cleanliness, or lack thereof, prohibit him from carrying out the sacrifice. Here we are faced with an Abraham, different from the biblical Abraham, but likewise follows God’s command to sacrifice Isaac. The second Abraham cannot fulfill his obligation directly given to him by God because he cannot overcome the task of having his household in order. This “household” can be, and indeed, should be read both literally as the inane, everyday household one has to manage. As Rolf Goebel observes, “Bei Kafka bleibt Abraham derartig in der weltlich-endlichen, deutlich mit satirischem Spott als klein-bürgerlich-spießige Enge geschilderten Sphäre des Häuslichen verhaftet, daß er der existentiellen Herausforderung der Glaubensprüfung nicht gewachsen ist”²⁹¹/ “Kafka’s Abraham remains stuck, to such a degree, in the limitation of the profane-finite domestic sphere, clearly sarcastically portrayed as that of the petty-bourgeoisie, that he cannot measure up to the existential challenge of the testing of the

²⁹⁰ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 41/43.

²⁹¹ Goebel, Rolf. *Kritik und Revision: Kafkas Rezeption mythologischer, biblischer, und historischer Traditionen*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1986. P. 97.

faith.”²⁹² The other is the terminology “das Haus bestellen,” which is higher-level idiom, referring to not just any household, but as the Grimm Wörterbuch observes,

sein haus bestellen, *gewöhnlich vor dem sterben, extrema mandata dare, seine angelegenheiten auf den todesfall ordnen*: bestelle dein haus (*LXX τάξει περὶ τοῦ οἴκου σοῦ, vulg. dispone domui tuae*), denn du wirst sterben. *Es. 38, 1, wobei sich wieder ein umstellen des hausgeräths, ein vasa colligere für die ausreise denken liesze. doch bei MAALER 63^d überhaupt conducere domum und GÖTTE setzt es vom ordnen, einrichten des hauses*: sobald er fort ist, eile ich mein haus zu bestellen, um wieder bald bei ihnen zu sein. *an Schiller 454. da gebot mir der schöpfer aller dinge, bestellet mir eine wonung. Sir. 24, 12, d. i. paravit mihi sedem, wie einem herberge bestellen, parare hospitium*: und er sandte boten vor im hin, das sie im herberge bestellete, *ὥστε ἐτοιμάσαι αὐτῷ, goth. svê manvjan imma. Luc. 9, 52. hierbei ist zu.*²⁹³

Kafka’s alternative Abraham would be committing a paradox if getting his household in order meant not just merely as doing daily chores, but preparing his house for a death, namely that of Isaac. Abraham’s oscillation between the everyday event of cleaning and the special even of funerary groundwork echo the oscillation between the abstract and concrete Emperors of Hegel and Kafka’s China. Kafka equates Abraham to the Chinese Emperor and, also by extension, creates a veiled critique of the Haus Habsburg. In the veiled critique of the empire, the Habsburgs failed in the attempt to keep their house in order by letting the Archduke Franz Ferdinand’s sacrifice justify a war that led to their downfall. This is not to say that the Habsburgs sacrificed Franz Ferdinand in order to (fail to) gain Serbia, but that they failed to keep secure their line of succession by letting him go to Sarajevo.

If we take the register of household down to something more local, and consider household within the context of Hegel and the biblical Middle East, we can see how our reading

²⁹² Translation my own.

²⁹³ Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. “Bestellen.” Def. 3. *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*. Woerterbuchnetz.de. Grimm Wörterbuch. Web. 21 July 2016. Italics in the original.

of Abraham excoriates nineteenth century race theory. In this reading, getting the household in order is having the household spick and span in preparation for the sacrifice, thus no longer a paradoxical problem, but one of simple absurdity. The representation of the alternative Abraham undermines Hegel's Orientalist assumption that the Jews would only obey direct and indirect orders of God. Under Hegel's logic, failing to get the household in order would impede Abraham from performing the sacrifice because, as a Jew, Abraham would not have enough of an independent will to simply overlook the household matters and proceed to the sacrifice. Kafka also employs the same run-on sentence that lacked in concentration, which suggests the narrator is performing the Jew lacking *Geist*. We get the sense again that Kafka is embedding his text with a Said-like criticism. Here even the alternative Abraham is unable to concentrate on the task at hand, namely serving God with the sacrifice of his son Isaac, because he cannot put his house in order. Kafka undermines Hegel's logic of the Jews by highlighting Abraham's lack of independence from God's will as a problem. The Abraham that Kafka imagines in a way is more like the Hegelian image of the Jew as dependent upon God's directions than the actual Abraham that Kafka first describes.

In the following paragraph, Kafka returns to his discussion of the biblical Abraham, where he asserts:

Dieser Abraham—aber es sind alte Geschichten, nicht mehr der Rede wert. Besonders der wirkliche Abraham nicht, er hat schon vorher alles gehabt, wurde von der Kindheit an dazu geführt, ich kann den Sprung nicht sehen. Wenn er schon alles hatte und doch noch höher geführt werden sollte, musste ihm nun, wenigstens scheinbar, etwas fortgenommen werden, das ist folgerichtig und kein Sprung. Anders die anderen Abrahame, die stehen auf ihrem Bauplatz und sollen nun plötzlich auf den Berg Moriija; womöglich haben sie noch nicht einmal einen Sohn und sollen ihn schon opfern. Das sind Unmöglichkeiten und Sarah hat recht, wenn sie lacht. Bleibt also nur der Verdacht, dass diese Männer absichtlich mit ihrem Haus nicht fertig werden und—um ein sehr grosses Beispiel zu nennen—

das Gesicht in magischen Trilogien verstecken, um es nicht heben zu müssen und den Berg zu sehen, der in der Ferne steht²⁹⁴

This Abraham—but it's all an old story not worth discussing any longer. Especially not the real Abraham; he had everything to start with, was brought up to it from childhood—I can't see the leap. If he already had everything, and yet was to be raised still higher, then something had to be taken away from him, at least in appearance: this would be logical and no leap. It was different for the other Abrahams, who stood in the houses they were building and suddenly had to go up on Mount Moriah; it is possible that they did not even have a son, yet already had to sacrifice him. These are impossibilities, and Sarah was right to laugh. Thus only the suspicion remains that it was by intention that these men did not ready their houses and—to select a very great example,— hid their faces in magic trilogies in order not to have to lift them and see the mountain standing in the distance²⁹⁵

Referring to Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, as well as to Kafka's frienemy and fellow Habsburg-Jewish author, Franz Werfel's expressionist play *Spiegelmensch: Magische Trilogie*, Kafka's narrator returns to his critique of Jewish Orientalism, asserting that he fails to see Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac as a leap, which Kierkegaard stakes as an essential difference not only between religion and (Enlightenment) philosophy, but implicitly between Oriental Jews and Christians. At the same time, however, he insists on deferring to "logic" over Kierkegaard's leap of faith, deferring to the Enlightenment position on interpreting the religious character. Kafka is careful, interestingly enough, not to use the German "logisch" from the Ancient Greek, but to use the German "folgerichtig," which combines the German "folgen" (to follow) and "richtig." Kafka puts emphasis on the Germaness of his line of thought by using the Germanic, instead of the Greek, word. Indeed, Kafka reads Abraham much the way Horace prescriptively reads the tragic hero in dramatic theater, as Abraham "schon alles hatte und doch noch höher geführt werden sollte"/ "already had everything and should still have risen further":

²⁹⁴ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 42.

²⁹⁵ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 43.

Abraham's forced choice between God and son is, as far as Kafka is concerned, informed by the literary need for him to have everything and all losing it, as Erzvater (patriarch) and not Altkleiderhändler (old clothes dealer). The almost explicit, literary reading of Abraham suggests a literary intervention against nineteenth century race theory by pointing out the ways in which one can read Abraham towards their own ends, whether it is the Hegelian reading from the late Enlightenment or Kierkegaard's religious response thereto.

The theatrical element of this text is reinforced by Kafka's allusion to Werfel's play from 1920 in his invocation of the play's subtitle towards the end of the passage. Werfel's play tells the Faustian tale of a man who wants to become a Buddhist monk in an effort to attain Enlightenment and free himself from earthly desires, but is ensnared by the devil. Werfel's play already comes around to some of the themes and issues Kafka himself is tackling, namely the overlapping theme of Enlightenment that defines 19th Century race theory and Eastern thought, in which Kafka expresses through in his writings on China. Of Kafka's allusion to Werfel, Robertson notes, "the biblical Abraham continued to typify for Kafka the man who receives a divine summons"²⁹⁶, which "people like Werfel were going to ignore"²⁹⁷. Alluding also to the unreceived message in Kafka's "An Imperial Message", a work frequently read with "The Great Wall of China" and "An Old Manuscript" on China and their Emperor, Robertson reads this to some extent on spiritual terms, as part of his exploration of Judaism. While I agree that the reception of the divine summons does characterize Kafka's experience with Judaism, I argue ultimately that his reading of Abraham goes beyond Judaism into the Jews as a race. The connection between the Chinese and Jews is reinforced as well by the description of building

²⁹⁶ Robertson, Ritchie. *Judaism, Politics, and Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985. P. 223.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

houses, which evokes the construction of the Great Wall of China, again by this doubled notion of Haus being both a physical structure, but also an imperial project of establishing and maintaining lineage. The lack of access to the Emperor's message and divine summons, perhaps because these Abrahams are compelled into the non-complete (nicht fertig) busy work of building structures simply for the sake of building them, underscores Kafka's critique of Hegel's thesis that both the Jew and the Chinese lack free will and only obey the letter of the law because the letter of that law can also be denied to them, in the form of the divine/ imperial message.

Kafka's final word on Abraham is a lengthy one, but continues along the thin line between history and literature, between the personal and the intellectual:

Aber ein anderer Abraham. Einer der durchaus richtig opfern will und überhaupt die richtige Witterung für die ganze Sache hat, aber nicht glauben kann, dass er gemeint ist, er, der widerliche alte Mann, und sein Kind, der schmutzige Junge. Ihm fehlt nicht der wahre Glaube, diesen Glauben hat er, er würde in der richtigen Verfassung opfern, wenn er nur glauben könnte, dass er gemeint ist. Er fürchtet, er werde zwar als Abraham mit dem Sohne ausreiten, aber auf dem Weg sich in Don Quichotte verwandeln. Über Abraham wäre die Welt damals entsetzt gewesen, wenn sie zugesehen hätte, dieser aber fürchtet, die Welt werde sich bei dem Anblick totlachen. Es ist aber nicht die Lächerlichkeit an sich, die er fürchtet—allerdings fürchtet er auch sie, vor allem sein Mitlachen—hauptsächlich aber fürchtet er, dass diese Lächerlichkeit ihn noch älter und widerlicher, seinen Sohn noch schmutziger machen wird, noch unwürdiger, wirklich gerufen zu werden. Ein Abraham, der ungerufen kommt! Es ist so, wie wenn der beste Schüler feierlich am Schluss des Jahres eine Prämie bekommen soll und in der erwartungsvollen Stille der schlechteste Schüler infolge eines Hörfehlers aus seiner schmutzigen letzten Bank hervorkommt und die ganze Klasse losplatzt. Und es ist vielleicht gar kein Hörfehler, sein Name wurde wirklich genannt, die Belohnung des Besten soll nach Absicht des Lehrers gleichzeitig eine Bestrafung des Schlechtesten sein²⁹⁸.

But take another Abraham. One who wanted to perform the sacrifice altogether in the right way and had a correct sense in general of the whole affair, but could not believe that he was the one meant, he, an ugly old man, and the dirty youngster that was his child. True faith is not lacking in him, he has the faith; he would make the sacrifice in the right spirit if only he could believe he was the one

²⁹⁸ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 42/44.

meant. He is afraid that after starting out as Abraham with his son he would change on the way into Don Quixote. The world would have been enraged at Abraham could it have beheld him at this time, but this one is afraid that the world would laugh itself to death at the sight of him. However, it is not the ridiculousness as such he is afraid of—though he is, of course, afraid of that too and, above all, of his joining in the laughter—but in the main he is afraid that this ridiculousness will make him even older and uglier, his son even dirtier, even more unworthy of being really called. An Abraham who should come unsummoned! It is as if, at the end of the year, when the best student was solemnly about to receive a prize, the worst student rose in the expectant stillness and came forward from his dirty desk in the last row because he made the mistake of hearing, and the whole class burst out laughing. And perhaps he had made no mistake at all, his name really was called, it having been the teacher's intention to make the rewarding of the best student at the same time a punishment of the worst one²⁹⁹.

Kafka's final incarnation of Abraham becomes aware that the sacrifice of his son would not only change the way he perceives and interacts with the outside world, but that his actions may actually distort it in a quixotical way. The apparent a priori knowledge of another literary character's personality makes a very important point: Abraham has enough free will to consider how he will be perceived for his actions. Abraham has this preemptive after-thought that seems like precognition, but is not. He still would have presumably followed through with the sacrifice and not necessarily let the fear of looking stupid, as Kafka details later on the paragraph, stop him. Indeed, Kafka never says that the fear of looking ridiculous would impede Abraham's faith and by extension following through with the sacrifice. Rather, Abraham merely evokes one of the qualities Hegel had previously ascribed to the Jews as a qualification to his thesis that the Jews are letter-of-the-law orientals. As I mentioned earlier in Hegel's assessment of the Jews, Hegel distinguishes the Jews as having repentance (*Büßung*), something that requires reflection and the ability to look back and actualize a past action as bad or incorrect. Kafka's final Abraham anticipates wanting to repent for being unfit as an old man to perform the sacrifice with

²⁹⁹ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 43/45.

an offering/ son that is equally as unfit for sacrifice. He fears he and his son will be, to use the term from Kafka's "Die Verwandlung," ("The Metamorphosis") "ein Ungeziefer," or something unfit for sacrifice, placing strong emphasis on the Jewish, kosher tradition and making Abraham seem more Jewish. Abraham is thinking like a Jew with the repentance as far as Hegel would define one, since he has the ability to regret his actions, but he repents his uncleanness before the sacrifice takes place, which goes against Hegel's thesis. Kafka takes something that would be imbedded within God's guidance of the Jewish people (cleanliness and purity in anticipation of a sacrifice) to impede a directive given by God to Isaac in his reading of an alternative Abraham to illustrate the paradoxical problem of Abraham performing the sacrifice.

Kafka's paragraph on the last kind of Abraham also parallels "The Great Wall of China," in particular when the Chinese narrator recounts his childhood³⁰⁰. Kafka's narrator in "The Great Wall of China" experiences effectively what Kafka's final Abraham dreads: disapproval from the person guiding them, characteristic for many of Kafka's characters. The teacher in "The Great Wall of China," under Hegelian logic, would function much like the father figure in Hegel, who is simultaneously synonymous with the Emperor, like the Emperor of the school, to put it differently. But for Abraham, being a school child is not literal, but figurative. He is afraid of being punished like an idiotic school child for thinking he did something right, when indeed he did something wrong in the eyes of God. The overlapping dread that the Chinese narrator as a

³⁰⁰ Ich erinnere mich noch sehr wohl, wie wir als kleine Kinder, kaum unserer Beine sicher, im Gärtchen unseres Lehrers standen, aus Kieselsteinen eine Art Mauer bauen mußten, wie der Lehrer den Rock schürzte, gegen die Mauer rannte, natürlich alles zusammenwarf, und uns wegen der Schwäche unseres Baues solche Vorwürfe machte, daß wir heulend uns nach allen Seiten zu unseren Eltern verliefen. *Sämtliche Werke*, P. 1087.

I can still remember quite well us standing as small children, scarcely sure on our feet, in our teacher's garden, and being ordered to build a sort of wall out of pebbles; and then the teacher, girding up his robe, ran full tilt against the wall, of course knocking it down, and scolded us so terribly for the shoddiness of our work that we ran weeping in all directions to our parents. *Collected Works*, P. 236.

school child and Abraham sympathizing with a school child underscore a problem with the way Hegel reads both the Chinese and the Jews: eventually both of them will partially forget the hold that the Emperor and God have on them. Demel points out that “Dementsprechend sahen Hegel oder Herder die chinesische Kultur im Kinderheitsstadium steckengeblieben”³⁰¹/ “Accordingly, Hegel and Herder considered Chinese culture to be stuck in a childhood stage”³⁰². As we saw from our previous readings of the Jews in Persian, Hegel holds the Jews in almost equal regard to the Chinese in their cultural stagnation being a childhood stage of cultural development. The narrator from “The Great Wall of China” obviously no longer fears his teacher, who was training him to anticipate building the Great Wall, but is able to move on from any fear of that teacher. Kafka’s theoretical Abraham reminds us in his paralleling to the school child that he is merely theoretical and that the real Abraham would have forgotten to clean Isaac or be less self-conscious of his age and standing when the time came to sacrifice Isaac. Thus, connecting Kafka’s Chinese narrator and Abraham metaphorically and explicitly through word choice and gestures undermines the hold Hegel assumes the Emperor and God hold over the Chinese and the Jews respectively. The one key difference between Kafka’s Abraham and his Chinese narrator is that, in being imagined as a schoolchild, this Abraham does not, as the English translation suggests, merely make a mistake in hearing the teacher, but has a “Hörfehler,” which is a medical term for an auditory defect. The “Hörfehler” impedes the teacher’s message from reaching the student, paralleling the failure in communication between the divine/imperial and

³⁰¹ Demel, Walter. “Wie die Chinesen gelb wurden: Ein Beitrag zur Frühgeschichte der Rassentheorien.” *Historische Zeitschrift*, Bd. 255, H.3 (Dec. 1992). P. 659.

³⁰² Demel, Walter. “How the Chinese Became Yellow: A Contribution to the Early History of Race Theories.” Bettina Brandt and Daniel Purdy, trans. Bettina Brandt and Daniel Leonhard Purdy, eds. *China in the German Enlightenment*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016. P. 37.

the subject as mentioned in the previous paragraph. Here Kafka offers a critical inversion of Hegel's thesis that the Jews and Chinese only receive the letter of the law by suggesting that Hegel and other nineteenth century philosophers with no experience in the East are physically impeded from ever actually receiving the divine/imperial message, creating uninformed assumptions about the world outside their own. By performing as several plausible Abrahams, the biblical Ur-father of the three Western religions, two of which were Easternized in nineteenth century race theory, pokes a series of holes in Hegel's theory on the Jews and Chinese as being strictly letter of the law in Geist.

Paradise Lost or The Unattainable Orient: Towards a Conclusion

As the title suggests, I now want to broaden the scope of my discussion to return to the larger stakes for Hegel and Kafka's Jewish Orientalisms and I would like to do so through a series of small excerpts on the biblical Paradise. Genesis 2:11-14 situates Eden somewhere in the Middle East, as the Tigris and Euphrates rivers both run through Eden, making it just as much part of Hegel's biblical Middle East as the Tower of Babel. But much like drag is a parody of something that does not exist for Judith Butler, so too is Paradise an unreal parody of the Oriental-space never thoroughly explored, much less attained as a colony by the German-speaking world. Kafka's Brechtian parodies of Tower of Babel, Abraham and Paradise expose the lack of reality behind Hegel's, and by extension much of Europe's theorization on the Jews as a race. Kafka, as a Jew, albeit reluctant to cosign on to the community wholesale, realizes the stakes involved in creating an imaginary orient and pinning the Jews within it: systematic oppression within Europe in the form of rampant de facto and de jure Anti-Semitism. Kafka no doubt noticed to some extent that what France and Britain were inflicting on the Middle East and

Africa respectively was also being inflicted, although under different terms, on the Jews in the Habsburg Empire. His writings of the Jewish, Middle Eastern Orient that includes Paradise destabilize the illusion of supposed reality postulated by Orientalists/ race theorists through careful mimicry of European discourse.

Although Hegel makes no explicit reference to Paradise in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, he opens the door to the possibility of Paradise existing or having existed on earth by virtue of having implied that human beings once built a Tower not only to recover from the fall from Eden, but to equalize themselves with God. We should factor Kafka's reading of Paradise into the discussion of Hegel and Kafka's biblical Orientalisms because Paradise comes out of this biblical logic. "Paradise," as mentioned before, exists as a set of fragments scattered throughout *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* and were later republished in a different order within *Parables and Paradoxes*. The work "Paradise" with *Parables and Paradoxes* does not include every allusion that Kafka makes towards biblical Paradise, which he often, though not always, reads in tandem with the Fall of Adam and Eve. Kafka had been diagnosed with Tuberculosis in August 1917 and was staying in a Bohemian village called Zürau, where his sister and brother-in-law lived, when he was writing these aphorisms, so Kafka reflecting on the origins of the world knowing he likely had a few more years left to live should not come as too much of a surprise to us. Kafka's meditations on the Old Testament line up with other aphorisms in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* that discuss issues of "Good" and "Evil" largely within the Judeo-Christian context. However, for the purposes of my analysis, I will confine this study to the ones that are included in *Parables and Paradoxes* and those within *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* that otherwise more explicitly refer to biblical Paradise, since I want to zero in on Paradise as a Jewish concept, because it was very much a Jewish question for Kafka.

The first of these aphorisms appears in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* and *Parables and Paradoxes* was likely written December 11th or 12th, 1917, based on the dating within *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*. Kafka's entry reads, "Die Vertreibung aus dem Paradies ist in ihrem Hauptteil ewig: Es ist also zwar die Vertreibung aus dem Paradies endgültig, das Leben in der Welt unausweichlich, die Ewigkeit des Vorgangs aber (oder zeitlich ausgedrückt: die ewige Wiederholung des Vorgangs) macht es trotzdem möglich, dass wir nicht nur dauernd im Paradies bleiben konnten, sondern tatsächlich dort dauernd sind, gleichgültig ob wir es hier wissen oder nicht"³⁰³/ "The expulsion from Paradise is in its main significance eternal: Consequently the expulsion from Paradise is final, and life in this world irrevocable, but the eternal nature of the occurrence (or, temporally expressed, the eternal recapitulation of the occurrence) makes it nevertheless possible that not only could we live continuously in Paradise, but that we are continuously there in actual fact, no matter whether we know it here or not"³⁰⁴. This first passage returns to our discussion of Kafka's sense of biblical time, in his temporal measurement of Paradise. In his previous assessment of time within "The City Coat of Arms," Kafka demonstrates the undetermined amount of time between the beginning of the Tower of Babel's construction and God's punishment for it. Kafka's conception of Paradise is not a single act of being expelled from Paradise, but that because mankind is forevermore expelled from paradise, we exist in a perpetual loop of being in paradise and then forcibly expelled from it. Kafka changes "Vertreibung" from a singular act into something that is constantly happening, allowing us to be in Paradise and not be there, equating humanity to Schrödinger's cat. By situating the paradisiacal Fall in an infinite loop in which mankind is simultaneously within and outside of

³⁰³ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 28.

³⁰⁴ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 29.

Paradise, Kafka indirectly reminds his reader that Paradise is situated also between two rivers one can find on a world map and two that one cannot, exposing the logic of imagined Orientalism and by extension imaging people from such spaces and making claim that those imagined conceptions are somehow real, as Hegel does with the Jews.

In addition to speculating on the temporal state of Paradise and mankind's temporal relationship to Paradise, Kafka ponders on the spatial remains of Paradise. In one aphorism³⁰⁵, Kafka claims, "Wir wurden geschaffen, um im Paradies zu leben, das Paradies war bestimmt, uns zu dienen. Unsere Bestimmung ist geändert worden; dass dies auch mit der Bestimmung des Paradieses geschehen wäre, wird nicht gesagt"³⁰⁶/ "We were fashioned to live in Paradise, and Paradise was destined to serve us. Our destiny has been altered; that this has also happened with the destiny of Paradise is not stated"³⁰⁷. Kafka questions what has become of Paradise now that it does not serve mankind, since it was designed with mankind in mind. Paradise remains, but the question is whether or not Paradise is suitable for human habitation or if God somehow rendered it uninhabitable for human beings, or quite possibly if Paradise has a different function altogether. If Kafka really defers to the Old Testament's claims about Paradise being situated in a place where both the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flow through it, then the question Kafka seems to be asking is whether or not there is a place on Earth that is uninhabitable by human beings, since Paradise is presumably a place on earth. Paradise's plausible existence as a space in the Middle East is marked by the subjective (geschehen wäre). Paradise's lack of existence is

³⁰⁵ Appears between January 18th and 22nd, 1918 in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, third in a sequence of aphorisms on Paradise. It's later reordered as the fourth paragraph of "Das Paradies/Paradise" in *Parables and Paradoxes*.

³⁰⁶ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 28.

³⁰⁷ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 29.

equally plausible and indeed could be a mere construct of the imagination. Mankind was rendered in such a way that it could not return to Paradise, but whether or not Paradise as a space in the Middle East has been altered so that we could not access that same space that was once Paradise, or if Paradise exists as a space in the Middle East mankind simply cannot access remains unclear. Kafka answers this in another aphorism³⁰⁸, observing, “Wir wurden aus dem Paradies vertrieben, aber zerstört wurde es nicht. Die Vertreibung aus dem Paradies war in einem Sinne ein Glück, denn wären wir nicht vertrieben worden, hätte das Paradies zerstört werden müssen”³⁰⁹/ “We were expelled from Paradise, but Paradise was not destroyed. In a sense our expulsion was a stroke of luck, for had we not been expelled, Paradise would have had to be destroyed”³¹⁰. Kafka suggests that Paradise must still exist somewhere intact because it would have been destroyed, were we able to be expelled from it. Kafka’s overall positive outlook on Paradise as a place that not only physically exists somewhere, may plausibly house humans, and was not otherwise destroyed works against Hegel’s logic on two fronts: the Christian tradition out of which Hegel works asserts (in contrast to the Judaic tradition) that Paradise becomes this place to which one can return if they are in God’s good graces after having lived a pious life; Kafka’s notion that Paradise is somewhere on Earth, intact and plausibly accessible, and indeed one from which we fall daily, disregard Paradise in the Christian sense. On the second front, Kafka takes to task Hegel’s notion that the biblical Middle East could have existed, by exposing the lack of evidence that identifies the existence of what could have been or could be Paradise in

³⁰⁸ This aphorism was the second in a sequence of paradisiac aphorisms written between January 18th and 22nd, 1918 in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*. It was later reordered as the fifth paragraph of “Das Paradies/ Paradise” in *Parables and Paradoxes*.

³⁰⁹ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 28/30.

³¹⁰ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 29.

the Middle East. Kafka assails the production of imagined spaces and, by extension, their peoples in Orientalist discourse of the German-speaking world, who defer to second-hand sources for information about the reality of those spaces and peoples and Kafka does so by toying with the plausibility of Paradise's existence as a space on earth, in the Middle East.

Kafka takes a bit of effort maintaining Paradise as a Jewish concept in his writings on the subject. Indeed, Kafka suggests that although Paradise was meant to remain unharmed, mankind was to meet another fate:

Gott sagte, dass Adam am Tage, da er vom Baume der Erkenntnis essen werde, sterben müsse. Nach Gott sollte die augenblickliche Folge des Essens vom Baume der Erkenntnis der Tod sein, nach der Schlange (wenigstens konnte man sie dahin verstehen) die göttliche Gleichwerdung. Beides war in ähnlicher Weise unrichtig. Die Menschen starben nicht, sondern wurden sterblich, sie wurden nicht Gott gleich, aber erhielten eine unentbehrlichen Fähigkeit, es zu werden. Beides war auch in ähnlicher Weise richtig. Nicht der Mensch starb, aber der paradiesische Mensch, sie wurden nicht Gott, aber das göttliche Erkennen³¹¹

God said that Adam would have to die on the day that he ate of the Tree of Knowledge. According to God, the instantaneous result of eating of the Tree of Knowledge would be death; according to the serpent (at least it can be understood), it would be equality with God. Both were wrong in similar ways. Men did not die, but became mortal; they did not become like God, but received the indispensable capacity to become so. Both were right in similar ways. Man did not die, but paradisiacal man did; men did not become God, but divine knowledge³¹².

God indeed says in Genesis 3:3 that Adam and Eve would lose their lives for touching, much less eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the serpent too says in Genesis 3:4-5 that they will not die, but gain God's insight into Good and Evil. Kafka here wants to emphasize

³¹¹ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 30.

³¹² *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 31. The last in a sequence of paradisiacal aphorisms to appear between January 18th and 22nd, 1918 in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* and as the sixth paragraph of "Das Paradies/ Paradise" in *Parables and Paradoxes*.

the paradoxical ways in which the assertions made by God and the serpent are correct and incorrect. Mankind gains the capacity to both die and attain all possible knowledge about Good and Evil, bringing them as close to death and being God without actually crossing a certain threshold towards those two actions. Likewise, the human capable of living in Paradise dies and becomes the embodiment of God's knowledge inherited from eating from God's Tree of Knowledge. Interesting to note here is the expression "in ähnlicher Weise unrichtig," which is translated as "wrong in similar ways," and is contrasted with "in ähnlicher Weise richtig" or "right in similar ways." Much the way Kafka used the word "folgerichtige" instead of "logisch" to emphasize the spatial component of thinking as a way of critiquing the imagining of Oriental spaces, Kafka makes a similar move here, choosing "unrichtig," a negation of "richtig," which means "correct," on the one hand, but also serves as an adjectival form of "Richtung," ("Direction") instead of "falsch," which is a cognate to the English "false," and connotes something "incorrect" or "wrong." Here Kafka's reading of Paradise is implicitly spatial to emphasize the ways in which Orientalist logic projects its own notion of what those spaces and their peoples grounded exclusively in the imagination of the Orientalist. Mankind is capable of differentiating Good from Evil of their own accord by virtue and do not require God's guidance in this capacity, undermining Hegel's thesis about the Jews and their incapacity for being able to make decisions without God's guidance because they (and presumably the rest of humanity) have divine knowledge embedded within them.

Kafka makes a number of other claims about Paradise, which include the fact that mankind is sinful, but not guilty for the expulsion³¹³, and the notion that mankind is not satisfied

³¹³ "Wir sind nicht nur deshalb sündig, weil wir vom Baum der Erkenntnis gegessen haben, sondern auch deshalb, weil wir vom Baum des Lebens noch nicht gegessen haben. Sündig ist der Stand, in dem wir uns befinden, unabhängig von Schuld." *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 28. / "We are sinful not merely because we have eaten of the

merely knowing about good and evil, but practically kills itself by taking good and evil as lived experiences, only to want to be ignorant of both again³¹⁴. One could and also should read these passages as pushing back against Hegel's notion that Jews cannot discern Good and Evil for themselves, but must defer to God in order to make these such judgment calls. Kafka also asserts that Evil and the ability to recognize it as such are one in the same thing³¹⁵ and that if Paradise

Tree of Knowledge, but also because we have not yet eaten of the Tree of Life. The state in which we find ourselves is sinful, quite independent of guilt" *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 29. This passage is the first in a sequence of paradisiacal aphorisms to appear between January 18th and 22nd, 1918 in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* and as the third paragraph of "Das Paradies/ Paradise" in *Parables and Paradoxes*.

³¹⁴ "Seit dem Sündenfall sind wir in der Fähigkeit zur Erkenntnis des Guten und Bösen im Wesentlichen gleich; trotzdem suchen wir gerade hier unsere besonderen Vorzüge. Aber erst jenseits dieser Erkenntnis beginnen die wahren Verschiedenheiten. Der gegenteilige Schein wird durch folgendes hervorgerufen: Niemand kann sich mit der Erkenntnis allein begnügen, sondern muss sich bestreben, ihr gemäß zu handeln. Dazu aber ist ihm die Kraft nicht mitgegeben, er muss daher sich zerstören, selbst auf die Gefahr hin, sogar dadurch die notwendige Kraft nicht zu erhalten, aber es bleibt ihm nicht anderes übrig als dieser letzte Versuch. (Das ist auch der Sinn der Todesdrohung beim Verbot des Essens vom Baume der Erkenntnis; vielleicht ist das auch der ursprüngliche Sinn des natürlichen Todes.) Vor diesem Versuch nun fürchtet er sich; lieber will er die Erkenntnis des Guten und Bösen rückgängig machen, (die Bezeichnung: 'Sündenfall' geht auf diese Angst zurück); aber das Geschehene kann nicht rückgängig gemacht, sondern nur getrübt werden. Zu diesem Zweck entstehen die Motivationen. Die ganze Welt ist ihrer voll, ja die ganze sichtbare Welt ist vielleicht nichts anders als eine Motivation des einen Augenblick lang ruhenwollenden Menschen. Ein Versuch, die Tatsache der Erkenntnis zu fälschen, die Erkenntnis erst zum Ziel zu machen." *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 32. / "Since the Fall we have been essentially equal in our capacity to recognize good and evil; nonetheless it is just here that we seek to show our individual superiority. But the real differences begin beyond that knowledge. The opposite illusion may be explained thus: nobody can remain content with the mere knowledge of good and evil itself, but must endeavor as well to act in accordance with it. The strength to do so, however, is not likewise given to him, consequently he must destroy himself trying to do so, at the risk of not achieving the necessary strength even then; yet there remains nothing for him but this final attempt. (That is moreover the meaning of the threat of death attached to eating of the Tree of Knowledge; perhaps too it was the original meaning of natural death.) Now, faced with this attempt, man is filled with fear; he prefers to annul his knowledge of good and evil (the term 'the fall of man' may be traced back to this fear); yet the accomplished cannot be annulled, but only confused. It was for this purpose that our rationalizations were created. The whole world is full of them, indeed the whole visible world is perhaps nothing more than the rationalization of a man who wants to find peace for a moment. An attempt to falsify the actuality of knowledge, to regard knowledge as a goal still to be reached." *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 33. This passage appears on January 22nd, 1918 in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* and is the final paragraph of "Das Paradies/ Paradise" in *Parables and Paradoxes*.

³¹⁵ "Im Paradies, wie immer: Das, was die Sünde verursacht und das, was sie erkennt, ist eines. Das gute Gewissen ist das Böse, das so siegreich ist, daß es nicht einmal mehr jenen Sprung von links nach rechts für nötig halt" (AO 31)/ "In Paradise, as always: that which causes the sin and that which recognizes it for what it is are one. The clear conscience is Evil, which is so entirely victorious that it does not any longer even consider that leap from left to

was destructible, than it was not crucial, but that if it was, then we are living a false belief³¹⁶ (presumably because it should have been destroyable as an alternative to expelling mankind from it). Here we not only see the collapsing of Good and Evil into one concept as a means of undermining Hegel's logic, but we recognize as well that Kafka is drawing attention to Paradise and its believability as such in a similar vein to his previous passages on Paradise as a physical space. However, there is one passage on Paradise that resonates with Kafka's "The Great Wall of China." In the passage, Kafka elucidates,

Er ist ein freier und gesicherter Bürger der Erde, denn er ist an eine Kette gelegt, die lang genug ist, um ihm alle irdischen Räume frei zu geben, und doch nur so lang, dass nicht ihn über die Grenzen der Erde reisen kann. Gleichzeitig aber ist er auch ein freier und gesicherter Bürger des Himmels, denn er ist auch an eine ähnliche berechnete Himmelskette gelegt. Will er nun auf die Erde, drosselt ihn das Halsband des Himmels, will er in den Himmel, jenes der Erde. Und trotzdem hat er alle Möglichkeiten und fühlt es; ja, er weigert sich sogar, das Ganze auf einen Fehler bei der ersten Fesselung zurückzuführen³¹⁷

He is a free and secure citizen of the world, for he is fettered to a chain which is long enough to give him the freedom of all earthly space, and yet only so long that nothing can drag him past the frontiers of the world. But simultaneously he is a free and secure citizen of Heaven as well, for he is fettered by a similarly designed heavenly chain. So that if he heads, say, for the earth, his heavenly collar throttles him, and if he heads for Heaven, his earthly one does the same. And yet all the possibilities are his, and he feels it; more, he actually refuses to account for the deadlock by an error in the original fettering³¹⁸.

right necessary" (BO 33). This passage appears in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* on either December 23rd or 24th, 1917 and was not included in *Parables and Paradoxes*.

³¹⁶ "Wenn das, was im Paradies zerstört worden sein soll, zerstörbar war, den war es nicht entscheidend; war es aber unzerstörbar, dann leben wir in einem falschen glauben (AO 30)/ "If what is supposed to have been destroyed in Paradise was destructible, then it was not decisive; but if it was indestructible, then we are living in a false belief" (BO 34). This passage was written between December 30th, 1917 and January 2nd, 1918 in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* and does not appear in *Parables and Paradoxes*.

³¹⁷ *Parables and Paradox*, P. 30.

³¹⁸ *Parables and Paradoxes*, P. 31. This passage was written on December 14th, 1917 in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* and appears as the penultimate paragraph of "Das Paradies/ Paradise" in *Parables and Paradoxes*.

The ambiguous pronoun at the beginning of paragraph obscures the reader's ability to discern a definitive identity for the subject of this paragraph. The reader can infer, as Nahum Glatzer did when editing *Parables and Paradoxes*, that "Er" refers to the biblical Adam because of his dual citizenship in both the Earth and Heaven and being bound to both. However, we cannot leave out the possibility that "Er" could refer to any of several men and could even refer to the word "Mensch" (human) or "Mann" (man). Yet we also infer that the subject is Adam because there is an original fettering, one binding him firstly to the Earth and then back to Heaven. We do not know quite what the error in chaining Adam, and by extension all of humanity, to the Earth is, but this also seems irrelevant to Adam because there is quite literally a world of possibilities for Adam.

The image of fettering evokes the same image of the fetter binding the abstract human being that appears in "The Great Wall of China." I could simply say that Kafka is drawing a parallel between the Chinese experience of being bound to the Emperor's laws and the Jew's being bound to God's laws. But I would be ignoring the contradictory message in the passage from "The Great Wall of China," which claims that mankind tears itself asunder with any self-fashioned fetter and that to which mankind fetters itself. Here Adam is doubly fettered by Earth and Heaven, has a long enough chain that he can move around the world freely, but the second fetter, which allows Adam to move freely in another realm, restricts him if he tries to move freely in the first realm. Unlike Kafka's Chinese narrator, who examines a scholar's reading of the constructions of the Tower of Babel and the Great Wall of China, the fettering here is not distanced by a distinct narrator; in a sense, we just have a voice that wavers between Kafka's own and a narrator's voice. As Kafka's text becomes more personal, we are inclined to see this as a kind of surrender of the Jew to God's law, with the physical binds as a metaphor for Hegel's

appraisal that the Jews are confined to such law, unable to break free of them. However, read through the more complex history of Jewish diaspora, we see the presence of Heaven as being a kind of Christian oversight that confines the Jew to a state of perpetual movement; what guides the Jewish diaspora is not God, but Heaven, something far more prevalent in the Christian than Judaic tradition. The suggested metaphor is that Christians usher Jews into a diaspora throughout the world, denying them the world if they want entry into Heaven, and denying them Heaven if they choose to remain on Earth. Within the context of this paragraph, the reader is lead to believe that the error in the original fettering is one in which Adam is allowed to roam free, since the ability to freely roam deludes him into thinking he is not without restraint. Adam is not confined to his Middle Eastern origins and as a wandering Jew refuses to explain why he is confined to move within one realm, while being unable to move into another. Kafka uses the metaphor of the Heaven representing Christianity and Adam representing the Jewish people to assail Hegel, and by extension other scholarly attempts to pin down or confine Jewishness as something only Middle Eastern, incomplete in contrast to European Christians.

Hegel's Jewish Orientalisms isolate the Jews as a race of people whose spirit is defined by their origins in the Middle East. Much like their far Eastern counterparts, the Chinese, they do not have, as far as Hegel is concerned, introspective judgment. In contrast to their Chinese counterparts, however, the Jews defer to God's divine law and guidance for all matters of judgment and decision-making. Kafka's dialogue with the German Orientalization of the Jews, particularly with Hegel's, comes into view through his Biblical aphorisms, the aphorisms on Abraham, which stem from *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* and a 1921 letter to Robert Klopstock, employ not only a biblical allusion to the Ur-father of Judaism, but intertextual dialogue with Kierkegaard, run-on sentences, and careful diction which together call into question the notions

that the original Jews of the Middle East were as one dimensional as Hegel would want them to be. The posthumously published short story “The City Coat of Arms” discussed above draws attention to logical fallacies within Genesis 11 with regards to language and the construction of the Tower. The aphorisms on Paradise pick up on this close reading and interrogation of Genesis by question the degree Paradise was a real space somewhere in the Middle East and the degree to which we are temporally and physically distanced from it by virtue of the fall from Eden. The actions of Abraham, the builders of the Tower of Babel, and Adam all come into question as those guided by a God over a Middle Eastern people within this Biblical time called the Jews. Kafka also recycles his imagery of school children and teachers, the building of large architectural projects (The Tower of Babel and the Great Wall of China), and of being chained from his work “The Great Wall of China.” Even though *Parables and Paradoxes* was edited by a German-Jewish Orientalist, Nahum N. Glatzer, to highlight the similarities between representations of Oriental Jews and the Chinese, the paralleling language between the two representations suggest that Kafka did not see Jews as independent from the Chinese. Indeed, Kafka seems to wrestle between his own identity as a Jew, who is descended from these one-dimensional Jews within European discourse, and one of the European ethnographer, writing on other cultures, particularly of ancient, Middle Eastern Jews and the Chinese. Kafka creates a constellation of paradoxes and contradictory allusions to the Old Testament and literary devices to undermine the two contradictory logics of the self-reflective Jew and the European ethnographer and synthesize them into one line of critical thought.

Chapter 3: Of Jackals, Jackdaws, and Scarabs: Kafka's Beasts of the East

“Das erste Haustier Adams nach der Vertreibung aus dem Paradies war die Schlange”

“Adam's first household pet after the expulsion from Paradise was the snake.”

---Franz Kafka, *Die Acht Octavhefte*, 21 December 1917

Franz Kafka's fascination with animals pervades his body of work, referred to by Jacques Derrida as his “vast zoopoetics,”³¹⁹ which are described more broadly, but concretely by Aaron Moe as “the process of discovering innovative breakthroughs in form through an attentiveness to another species' bodily *poiesis*”³²⁰. Whether the animals are themselves the subject of a given work, or they are mere similes for human counterparts, animals function frequently for Kafka as liminal figures, stuck between ancient and modern contexts with humans, who are frequently struggling at the nexus of these contexts. We see this represented in the above epigraph: The snake, situated in the biblical context of Adam's expulsion from Paradise, is no longer this talking stranger persuading Adam and Eve to do something that would change humanity forever, but now is something that dwells in the same domicile as Adam as his pet. As I demonstrated in chapter two, the paradisiac expulsion is tied to Kafka's notions of Jewishness and Jews as peoples belonging to the Orient. I claim that Kafka's representations of the paradisiacal fall dialogue with and indeed refute a long-standing trope asserted in nineteenth century race theory that Jews, whom Hegel geographically situated as originating in the Middle East, have no internal sense of judgement or decision-making abilities. In this chapter, I will examine another

³¹⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal that Therefore I am*. Marie-Louise Mallet, ed. David Willis, trans. New York: Fordham UP, 2008. P. 6.

³²⁰ Moe, Aaron. *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry*. Lahham: Lexington Books, 2014. P. 10.

trope that Kafka actively wrote against: animals performing the roles of barbaric others in Orientalist discourse, i.e. how animals and barbaric humans are represented in Kafka's works "Schakale und Araber," ("Jackals and Arabs") (1917) "Ein altes Blatt," ("An Old Manuscript") (1919) and "Die Verwandlung," ("The Metamorphosis") (1915) allude to and challenge any literary paralleling between racial groups, specifically "Oriental races" and animals as a way of suggesting that those racial groups are somehow culturally inferior to others. I will conclude by demonstrating how some of Kafka's other animals disavow Hegel's thesis, when we consider them as a stand-ins for Jews or other races.

I am looking at animals as possible analogues for racial others because they, much like some of the characters and narrators we have already encountered, have the capacity to employ Gestus and to expose the constructedness of nineteenth-century race theory. As Walter Benjamin points out, "Die größte Rätselhaftigkeit mit größter Schlichtheit verbindet dieser Gestus als tierischer. Man kann die Tiergeschichten Kafkas auf eine gute Strecke lesen, ohne überhaupt wahrzunehmen, daß es such gar nicht um Menschen handelt"³²¹/ "This animal gesture combines the utmost mysteriousness with the utmost simplicity. It is possible to read Kafka's animal stories for quite a while without realizing that they are not about human beings at all"³²².

Benjamin, who aligned his theories closely with Brecht's notions of Gestus and *Verfremdungseffekt*, characterizes the ways in which Kafka's animals deviate from the fable-creature-predecessors. The jackals of "Jackals and Arabs," confront a European traveler and request his assistance in killing off his Arab hosts with a pair of rusty scissors; the nomads of

³²¹ Benjamin, Walter. "Franz Kafka: Zur zehnten Wiederkehr seines Todestages." Rolf Tiedmann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Hrsg. *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. No. 2. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977. P. 419.

³²² Benjamin, Walter. "Franz Kafka: One the Tenth Anniversary of His Death." Harry Zohn, trans. *Illuminations*. Hannah Arendt, ed. New York: Schocken, 1968. P. 121-2.

“An Old Manuscript” communicate like jackdaws and eat raw flesh along with their carnivorous horses; Gregor Samsa’s transformation into an unnamed vermin, which itself is shrouded in mystery, struggles to survive as his family struggles to figure out how to live on without him as a human. In each instance their animal quality distances their audience from these human-like beasts and beast-like humans by making them the center of conflict, rather than casting them in a similar role as they would in a fairytale or fable. Yet, these creatures make no attempt at complicating their situations, nor do the humans that interact with them. Readers are lead to conclude that the animals and the people with whom they interact stand in for something. This is important because, as Brecht points out, “Das mimische Prinzip wird sozusagen vom gestichen Prinzip abgelöst”³²³/ “The gestic principle takes over, as it were, from the principle of imitation”³²⁴, and the animals in their mysterious simplicity suggest that are imitations of animals, standing in for something else.

I chose to look at these three works because they implicitly engage with this question of equating Jews and East Asian peoples with animals. The trope of equating peoples from the Global East with animals suffuses the field of Orientalisms since the study of the Orient was, from the perspective of scientists, the ecological categorization and examination of flora and fauna in the East. Ethnographers would then take the characteristics for flora and fauna from the Orient to fashion and justify racist conclusions about non-European others in the East. Even Hegel engages with this trope, in his Orientalist reading of Ancient Egypt. Rolf Goebel has

³²³ Brecht, Bertolt. “Über die Verwendung von Musik für ein episches Theater.” Siegfried Unseld, zsgst. *Schriften zum Theater: Über eine nicht-aristotelische Dramatik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1960. P. 243.

³²⁴ Brecht, Bertolt. “On the Use of Music in an Epic Theatre.” John Willett, trans. and ed. *Brecht on Theater: The Development of an Aesthetic*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992.

already observed that Egypt was “an ethnological parallel to China”³²⁵ and Christopher Bush notes, “Like those Egyptian hieroglyphs, interpretations of Chinese writing were used to authorize cultural and political as well as linguistic conclusions, both frequently drawing on this ‘ethnological parallel’”³²⁶. The ethnological parallel extends to the Hegelian/ Herderian reading of Oriental histories as fossilized or stagnant, just as their languages are. Hegel’s opinions of the Jews line up consistently with German thought on Jewishness since Luther. In the earliest parallels between Hegel and the Lutheran perspective on the Jews, Munk points out, “The metaphor of Jews as ‘Kot’ goes back to Luther, and from Luther back to St. Paul. When Hegel says that divinity cannot make its home in Kote, he recalls Paul’s letter to the Philippians, in particular, Paul’s use of the Greek word for ‘dung’—*skybala*—a word that Luther in his German Bible translates as Kot”³²⁷. Munk’s remark is important for two reasons: one, it situates perhaps the crudest terms possible of the equation of the Jews to fecal matter in the Catholic and Protestant minds of German theology and philosophy and two because Luther and by extension Hegel, evoke St. Paul’s *skybala*, from which the term scarab arises. Hegel will reiterate the scarab in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* while discussing Oriental zoolatry and he will use zoolatry to equate the Ancient Egyptians to Jews as kinds of Persians, equally as historically stagnant as the Chinese. Kafka’s use of animals and their possible metaphoric capacity reveals the way in which those animals expose nineteenth century race theories

³²⁵ Goeble, Rolf. *Constructing China: Kafka’s Orientalist Discourse*. Columbia: Camden House, 1997. P. 20.

³²⁶ Bush, Christopher. *Ideographic Modernism: China, Writing, Media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. P. 11.

³²⁷ Munk, Linda. “What Does Hegel Make of the Jews?: A Scato-logical Reading of Kafka’s *Die Verwandlung*.” *History of European Ideas* (18:6), 1994. P. 915.

construction of race by not only referring back to Hegel's argument about zoolatry, but the broader characterization of non-European others animal-like within theories of race.

For Hegel, the Ancient Egyptians were neither proper Africans, who for Hegel could not think abstractly, nor were the Egyptians on par with Europeans, with whom they had plenty of historical interaction. According to Hegel, "Man kann die Sphinx als ein Symbol für den ägyptischen Geist ansehen: der menschliche Kopf, der aus dem tierischen Leibe herausblickt, stellt den Geist vor, wie er anfängt sich aus dem Natürlichen zu erheben, sich diesem zu entreißen und schon freier um sich zu blicken, ohne sich jedoch ganz von den Fesseln zu befreien"³²⁸/ "The Sphinx may be regarded as a symbol of the Egyptian Spirit. The human head looking out from the brute body, exhibits Spirit as it begins to emerge from the merely Natural—to tear itself looks therefrom and already look more freely around it; without, however, entirely freeing itself from the fetters Nature had imposed"³²⁹. For Hegel, the Egyptians are more advanced in a sense than the other Africans on the continent, wrestling between primal/ animal like instincts, but maintaining a civilized/ human-like mind. The Egyptians are in a state of being freed from barbarism as a *geistliche* (read: Hegel's notion of *Spirit*) predicament, inasmuch as Hegel is concerned, chained by animal bodies with emerging human heads, like the Sphinx.

Hegel does not limit this reading of being in between barbaric and civilized to the Egyptians, but says that it underlines other "Oriental" cultures at different degrees:

Das dumpfe Selbstbewußtsein der Ägypter also, dem der Gedanke der menschlichen Freiheit noch verschlossen bleibt, verehrt die noch in das bloße Leben eingeschlossene, verdumpfte Seele und sympathisiert mit dem Tierleben.

³²⁸ Hegel, G.W.F. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 1961. P. 288. Referred to from here on out as "Hegel."

³²⁹ Hegel, G.W.F. *The Philosophy of History*. J. Sibree, trans. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004. P. 199. Referred to from here on out as "Sibree."

Die Verehrung der bloßen Lebendigkeit finden wir auch bei anderen Nationen, teils ausdrücklich, wie bei den Indern und bei allen Mongolen, teils in Spuren, wie bei den Juden: “Du sollst das Blut der Tiere nicht essen, denn in ihm ist das Leben des Tieres³³⁰

The obtuse self-consciousness of the Egyptians, therefore, to which the thought of human freedom is not yet revealed, worships the soul as still shut up within and dulled by the physical organization, and sympathizes with brute life. We find a veneration of mere vitality among other nations also: sometimes expressly, as among the Hindoos and all the Mongolians; sometimes in mere traces, as among the Jews: “Thou shalt not eat the blood of animals, for in it is the life of the animal³³¹”.

Important to note about the abovementioned tension between the barbaric and civilized in Hegel is that the philosopher reads Egypt as a primarily zoolatrous culture, a consequence of this tension, and that, as one can see in this passage, is visible at different levels in all the cultures Hegel deems to be “Oriental”. In the case of the Jews, animal worship is generally reduced to kosher dietary restrictions. Hegel omits the Chinese here because he maintains that the Chinese have a state religion loosely associated with nature, which helps them maintain their mummified history and trajectory of civilization. The Mongols, who in Hegel’s writings on the Chinese come off as a barbaric counterpart to the Chinese, will be important later in this chapter. Also important to observe is this notion of the thought of human freedom not yet revealed (der Gedanke der menschlichen Freiheit noch verschlossen): here we see an echo of Hegel’s thesis about the Chinese and the Jews, that they are incapable of independent thought and by extension, personal judgement and decision-making abilities. Hegel seems to maintain on some level that something amongst these cultures collectively suppresses the ability to freely rationalize and in

³³⁰ Hegel, P. 305.

³³¹ Sibree, P. 212.

the case of the Egyptians, barbarism itself in the form of zoolatry keeps the Egyptians from actualizing independent thought the way the Emperor (the state religion of China) and the Judeo-Christian God do for the Chinese and the Jews respectively.

The notion of zoolatry as a suppressing agent of rational thought is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the long-standing trope of animals being equated to Oriental (and indeed additional kinds of) others. Kafka, interestingly enough, evokes a couple of animals that Hegel (and actually any number of other Orientalists, especially Egyptologists) would have known about, in his literary works. I am of the opinion that these uses of animals within Kafka's works dialogue not only with Hegel, but with the longer-standing trope of equating Easterners to animals. They are particularly present in Kafka's "Jackals and Arabs," "An Old Manuscript," and "The Metamorphosis."

"Jackals and Arabs" was first published in Martin Buber's journal, *Der Jude (The Jew)*, which "concerned itself with promoting issues related to social, political, and cultural life of European Jewry"³³² in 1917; according to Gray et al., "Already in November 1915, just a few months prior to the journal's initial issue in April 1916, Buber followed a suggestion made to him by Max Brod and invited Kafka to be a corresponding contributor to *The Jew*, an invitation Kafka refused."³³³ Kafka's reluctance to submit to *The Jew* is rather telling because it reinforces what Hanssen suggests, namely that Kafka was reluctant to associate himself with Jewish culture because he was reluctant to align himself with Zionism and a return to the Middle East. Kafka would later send "twelve prose pieces—in larger part the stories that would eventually appear in

³³² Gray, Richard T., et al. *A Franz Kafka Encyclopedia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005. P. 148.

³³³ *Ibid.* P. 148.

the collection *Ein Landarzt* [*A Country Doctor*]—from which...Buber opted to publish ‘Schakale und Araber’ [‘Jackals and Arabs] and ‘Ein Bericht für eine Akademie,’ [‘A Report to an Academy’] which appeared in the October and November 1917 issues”³³⁴. Martin Buber remains an important contact for Kafka because, as Librett has observed,

Of the thinkers who participated in [the numerous versions of the Jewish-Oriental conjunction from this modernist epoch], none was more importantly influential than Martin Buber, [whose “Der Geist des Orients und das Judentum,” given as a speech in 1912 and published in 1916]...constructs a miniphilosophy of history that is methodologically reminiscent of Hegelian dialectics, ...reverses and displaces the Hegelian polarities [and] sees the Eastern sensibility as characterized precisely by its inwardness, Innerlichkeit (40), which is exactly what Hegel denied that the East can possess in its extreme or pure form (China)³³⁵.

Here we have one of the smoking guns connecting Kafka to Hegel, namely through the mediation of Martin Buber. Buber’s 1912 speech was given at the Bar Kochba Society in Prague, of which Kafka was “not a member... [but] had close relationships with a number of its members”³³⁶, so there is a fair chance Kafka’s knowledge would have been mediated through Buber’s inversion of Hegel. And although Kafka is not known to have been in possession of *Vom Geist des Judentums* (*Of Judaism’s Spirit*), wherein Bubar’s essay appears, we know that Buber’s *Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten* (*Chinese Spiritual and Love Stories*) “fand sich auf einem beidseitigen beschriebenen Blatt in seiner Handschrift”³³⁷/ “appeared on a two-

³³⁴ Ibid, P. 148. Bracketed information my own addition.

³³⁵ Librett, Jeffery. *Orientalism and the Figure of the Jew*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014. P. 214-5.

³³⁶ Gray et al. P. 26. Ivan Kalmar contests this, claiming that “Kafka was a member of the Association, though probably a marginal one” (See: Kalmar, Ivan. “Jewish Orientalism.” Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Sáenz-Badillos, ed. *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: Proceedings from the 6th EAJS Congress Toledo, July 1998*. Vol. 2: *Judaism from the Renaissance to Modern Times*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1999. P. 313).

³³⁷ Born, Jürgen. *Kafkas Bibliothek: Ein beschreibendes Verzeichnis*. Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1990. P. 177.

sided sheet of paper recorded in his handwriting,”³³⁸ indicating a fascination in Bubar’s reception of Chinese texts and possible connections between Jewishness and Chineseness. Bubar’s decision to publish “Jackals and Arabs” early on suggests a desire to feature a critical voice on being Jewish, one that drew on Jews belonging to the deserts of the Middle East and reflects a desire to have Kafka engage in the dialogue on Jewish identification with the Middle East and the “Oriental” roots attributed to the Jews by nineteenth century race theory.

Set in a desert occupied by jackals and Arabs, “Jackals and Arabs” is about a lost European traveler asked by a pack of talking jackals to kill the local Arabs with a pair of rusty scissors because they cannot dirty themselves with such a task. A recent scholarly debate has asserted that the jackals are a metaphor for Jews in the text and that the message of the story is intrinsically tied to Jewish nationalism. Judith Butler observes, “Kafka was avidly attending meetings and reading journals, gaining a sense of Palestine as much from stories written and told as from public debates. In the course of those debates and reports, Kafka understood that there were conflicts emerging in the region. Indeed, his short story ‘Jackals and Arabs’, published in *Der Jude* in 1917, registers an impasse at the heart of Zionism”³³⁹; Jens Hanssen builds on this and asserts, “Kafka’s ambiguity towards Zionism has to do less with his general indecision than with his disapproval of Zionism’s colonial turn.”³⁴⁰ Both Butler and Hanssen thus argue that Kafka’s use of the jackals can be interpreted as a metaphor for Jews which for both critics implies that Kafka strongly resisted the formation of a Jewish national state in the Middle East.

³³⁸ Translation my own.

³³⁹ Butler, Judith. “Who Owns Kafka?” *The London Review of Books*. Vol. 33, No 5.3. 3 March 2011. PP 3-8. Web. 29 April 2016.

³⁴⁰ Hanssen, Jens. “Kafka and Arabs.” *Critical Inquiry*, (39:1), 2012. P. 169.

This thesis is also supported by Nell Hadea Kriesberg, who observes, “A Jew could study at the university yet find himself called a dog. In German and Austrian anti-Semitic political publications, Jews were frequently referred to as ‘rats,’ ‘mice,’ ‘insects,’ and ‘vermin.’”³⁴¹ Jay Geller polemically contests Hanssen’s thesis that jackals stand in for Jews to the end of opposing Zionism, observing, “no articles on Jew-Arab interaction in Palestine had appeared in the journal prior to the story’s publication”³⁴² and concluding that, “Kafka’s ‘Jackals and Arabs,’ like his other animal stories, sought to undermine the authority of the dominant Gentile society’s demeaning and dehumanizing Jewish identifications by uncannily rendering their purported Jewish referent indefinite—as both human (anima) and (nonhuman) animal and neither, as both Jew and Gentile and neither”³⁴³. The metaphor goes beyond only the jackals as representative of Jews for Geller, with the caveat that “Jews as jackals” tends to be the more conventionally read metaphor within “Jackals and Arabs.” My chapter will pick up on this debate by answer the question of what informs Kafka’s fictionalized jackals and what role anthropomorphizing plays in animals associated with the Orient.

Since this debate ushers in the question of animals standing in for identification with either nationalism/ the Nation state or imperialism and the Empire, I will examine the degree to which animals in Kafka’s works stand in as analogues for nations, states, or national movements. In order for us to even consider whether or not a given animal-character in a specific Kafka text

³⁴¹ Kriesberg, Hadea Nell. “Czechs, Jews, and Dogs Not Allowed: Identity, Boundary, and Moral Stance in Kafka’s ‘A Crossbread’ and ‘Jackals and Arabs.’” Marc Lucht and Donna Yari, Ed. *Kafka’s Creatures: Animals, Hybrids, and Other Fantastic Beings*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010. P. 34.

³⁴² Geller, Jay. “Kafka’s ‘Schakale und Araber’ and the Question of Genre: Gleichnis, Tiergeschichte, oder dialektisches Bild?” Ulrike Brunotte, et al., eds. *Orientalism, Gender, and the Jews: Literary and Artistic Transformations of European National Discourses*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015. P. 130.

³⁴³ Ibid. P. 136.

stands in for a nation, state, or national movement, we have to acknowledge the racial logic behind equating animals to geo-political institutions. I contend that the analogues between animal/ human characters and geo-political institutions are unstable because of the critique of race theory at play within Kafka's works. I therefore bring "Jackals and Arabs" into dialogue with "An Old Manuscript," partially because, as Carol Bedwell points out, "Since the name of Kafka is the Czech word for jackdaw, the bird which was the emblem of Hermann Kafka's company and appeared embossed on the business envelopes of the firm, the repeated references to jackdaws constitutes undeniable evidence that the Nomads represent the attributes which Franz Kafka associated with his father"³⁴⁴. Kafka seems to refer to himself, when he talks of barbaric nomads from the north who talk like jackdaws, which in Czech is *kávka*, a variation of his own name. Lemon points out that this self-reference matters because, "By linking his own name with the uncivilized and animalistic nomads, he parodies the notions of the bestial and sub-human found in the racist theorization of ethnic difference at the time"³⁴⁵. The objective of this chapter is, in part, to expand upon where Kafka's beasts and sub-humans are situated in such race theory. I defer once more to Hegel as the race theorist *par excellence* because, as Margot Norris observes, "Kafka's fictions allowed him to participate in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century shifts from anthropocentric toward a more biocentric philosophical orientation"³⁴⁶ and Hegel himself represents the end of an anthropocentric, geo-historical reading of race that would later be superseded by the advent of anatomical/ physiological readings of race in the nineteenth

³⁴⁴ Bedwell, Carol. "The Forces of Destruction in 'Ein altes Blatt.'" *Monatshefte* (58:1), Spring 1966. P. 44.

³⁴⁵ Lemon, Robert. *Imperial Messages: Orientalism as Self-Critique in the Habsburg Fin de Siècle*. Rochester: Camden House, 2011. P. 139.

³⁴⁶ Norris, Margot. "Kafka's Hybrids: Thinking Animals and Mirrored Humans." Marc Lucht and Donna Yari, Ed. *Kafka's Creatures: Animals, Hybrids, and Other Fantastic Beings*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010. P. 18.

century. I argue that these two works, one set in the Middle East and the other in China, need to be read in tandem to understand the way in which Kafka oscillates between animal/ human and Eastern/Western identities and destabilizes animalization as a practice within Orientalisms in the process.

Kafka's Gregor Samsa enters this discussion as his insectification could stand for Kafka's notion of Jewishness within the Diaspora. If indeed the giant bug into which Samsa transforms makes him a metaphorical Jew, we should look into any possible connections between Samsa and the Orient through any connection between what Samsa may have transformed into, whether vermin, insect, or dung beetle, and the Middle East. In my reading of Gregor Samsa, alongside with Kafka's jackals and barbarians with jackdaw-speech, I defer to Linda Munk's brilliant, scatological reading of "The Metamorphosis" as a response to Hegel's early views of the Jews: "Hegel's idea of a Jewish tragedy [lacking arousal of terror or pity] is provocative. For Gregor Samsa there may be two sorts of tragedy: Jewish and Greek...*Die Verwandlung* [has] all the characteristics of a Greek tragedy, including terror and pity...[and] Kafka's tragedy effects its proper *katharsis*—a *katharsis* or purgation that appears in Kafka's text as filth, stuff, refuse, rubbish, trash, dung, excrement, offal, crap, that builds up in and is discharged in Gregor's room"³⁴⁷. My only caveat to Munk's observation is that Gregor's performance, much like that of Kafka's other "Oriental" characters, works to elicit critical thought about the representation of other races, rather than garnering pity/ sympathy. Indeed, I maintain that Kafka's jackal, jackdaw, and scarab serve as key metaphors for both Orientalized Jews and other Orientalized

³⁴⁷ Munk. P. 917.

persons simultaneously in spite of unclearly demarked spaces, which are implicitly Middle Eastern or Chinese by virtue of material clues that gesture towards the locations that they inhabit.

How History Shackles the Jackal

If we return to the Hanssen/ Geller debate, I think we can reach a quick solution that could reconcile Geller's polemical response to Hanssen's provocative reading of "Jackals and Arabs" as a dialectical image critiquing Zionism's future imperial endeavors in Palestine. The dialectical image, if we may recall from Benjamin's reading of Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus*, implies that the angel that can see both the past and the future at the same time. The historical synthesis of past and future is a catastrophe and a storm is emerging from Paradise³⁴⁸, the place where history starts, or at least is not stagnant, the same place which functions as a stand-in for Kafka as the unattainable Orient. What I think Geller fails to appreciate, however, is how Benjamin's dialectical image, and by extension Hanssen's use of the dialectical image to read Kafka's "Jackals and Arabs" relates quite closely to Jewish Orientalisms. The dialectical image captures the way nineteenth century race theorists insist that Orientals, such as the Chinese and the Jews, are fossilized in language and history, unable to make "progress" because they are guided strictly by the letter of the law and lack free will. With regard to the question of Zionism, Kalmar and Penslar observe, on the one hand that, "It is, therefore, perhaps understandable if writers primarily concerned with a critique of Zionism overlook other aspects of the relationship between orientalism and the Jews. They generally see Zionism as an example

³⁴⁸ Benjamin, Walter. "Über den Begriff der Geschichte." Rold Tiedmann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, hrsg. *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 1.2. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005. P. 697-8.

of orientalist ideology in the service of Western colonialism, and consequently link the creation of Israel to the West's imperial expansion in the Orient"³⁴⁹, but "[o]n the other hand, there is more to Zionism than that: it has also been a response to racist discrimination, and the discrimination has often been expressed in orientalist terms"³⁵⁰. Kafka's "Jackals and Arabs" thus occupies this historical standstill, critically mimicking the stagnation of Oriental history: the text looks towards a past where there is a long-standing history of European Anti-Semitism in which the Jew is inherently Oriental and receive the brunt of the German-speaking world's "fantasies of colonial mastery"³⁵¹. The text looks towards the future through the present, where a European power, England, justifies another imperial intervention for the Jews, pitting Oriental against Oriental. Together, just as Tahia Reynaga discerns, "The jackals in their brief forays outside of themselves, easily revert to their natural state... This is Kafka's mortality, a history configured as a circle, in which the expulsion recurs while the possibility of reconciliation is preserved (though never achieved)"³⁵².

There is, however, one issue of Hanssen's reading which has not yet been reconciled: the question of analogues. If Kafka's jackals are indeed analogues for Jews, why are the Arabs and European not analogues for something else? Why are there not animals standing in for them? Rumold argues that "Kafka's animal image-based narratives are much closer to, though not

³⁴⁹ Kalmar, Ivan Davidson and Derek J. Penslar. "Orientalism and the Jews: an Introduction." Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar, Ed. *Orientalism and the Jews*. Lebanon, NH: Brandeis UP, 2005. P. xv.

³⁵⁰ Ibid. P. xv.

³⁵¹ Zantop, Susanne. *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997. P. 3.

³⁵² Reynaga, Tahia Thaddeus. "Agents of the Forgotten: Animals as the Vehicles of Shame in Kafka." Marc Lucht and Donna Yari, Eds. *Kafka's Creatures: Animals, Hybrids, and Other Fantastic Beings*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010. P. 76-7.

identical with, the anti-metaphorical and anti-symbolic oneiric surrealist vision” (Rumold 76) and maintains that “Kafka’s heterogeneous creatures are not simply chimeric composites of human forms with animal forms. Nor are they comparable with the chimeric figures of primitive cultures from the days of the minotaur or from high cultural Egyptian symbolic representations, for instance the falcon’s head on a human body, as they had an identifiable religious significance”³⁵³. I think Rumold is only half-right in his assessment of Kafka’s animals because, in order to resist identification with the Jews, or indeed with anything, for which the jackals can stand in, the jackals have to perform in such a way that the reader becomes aware that the jackals stand in for something else, so much so that the jackals are no longer acting as jackals. Schumsky aptly shows us that “‘Jackals and Arabs’ incorporates a dual reference to the relations between Jews and non-Jews in both Bohemia and Palestine, compatible with the manner in which these multinational arenas were analyzed in the views of the Zionist of the Bar Kochba circle who were close to Kafka, first and foremost Hugo Bergmann and Max Brod”³⁵⁴. Kafka’s jackals, and by extension his other beasts, have the capacity to stand in for any number of things, whether for ethnic groups, political groups, or other institutions. I contend that Kafka’s jackals use this flexibility to demonstrate the way in which nineteenth century race theory pigeonholes Jews as strictly Oriental persons.

The reading of the jackal as a Jew is a very tempting one because textual events stack very quickly in its favor. The first and maybe the most prominent of which is the matrilineal leadership of the jackals. As the jackals approach the camp, the first words from the leader of the

³⁵³ Rumold, Rainer. *Archaeologies of Modernity: Avant-Gard Bildung*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2015. P. 77.

³⁵⁴ Schumsky, Dimitry. “Czechs, Germans, Arabs, and Jews: Franz Kafka’s ‘Jackals and Arabs’ between Bohemia and Palestine.” *AJS Review* (33:1), 2009. P. 77.

pack are, “Ich bin der älteste Schakale, weit und breit. Ich bin glücklich, dich noch hier begrüßen zu können. Ich hatte schon die Hoffnung fast aufgegeben, denn wir warten unendlich auf dich; meine Mutter hat gewartet und ihre Mutter und weiter all ihre Mütter bis hinauf zur Mutter aller Schakale. Glaub es!”³⁵⁵ / “I am the oldest jackal far and wide. 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. It is true, believe me!”³⁵⁶ By placing emphasis on the mothers waiting for the European to arrive as their intervention against Arabs, the jackal alludes to the inheritance of Jewishness on the mother’s side of the family. We also infer, not impossibly, that the jackal who speaks is also a female and the leader of the pack, being the eldest to speak. Any reader of the *The Jew* would have picked up on the implication that the jackals could be stand-ins for Jews because of the long-standing trope of the Jews wandering through the deserts of the Middle East. However, there is also another way to read this matrilineality: an implication of empire. The notion of a mother country, an empire that oversees colonies from remote parts, comes into play here and it actively contrasts the notion of a Vaterland (fatherland), which is a highly prevalent image during Kafka’s time with the decline of the empire and the rise of the nation. The weakened jackals as stand-in for the Habsburg Empire would imply that the Arabs, in particular the leader of the caravan, then represent nationalism, which in 1917 would have had a strong hold over the crumbling empire.

³⁵⁵ Kafka, Franz. “Schakale und Araber.” *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008. P. 854. Referred to from here on out as “*Sämtliche Werke*”.

³⁵⁶ Kafka, Franz. “Jackals and Arabs.” Willa and Edwin Muir, trans. *The Complete Stories*. Naum N. Glatzer, Ed. New York: Schocken, 1971. P. 408. Referred to from here on out as “*Complete Stories*.”

Matrilineality is not the only description that gestures towards Jewishness in the text and the dichotomy between empire and nationalism. The jackals are physically described as “in mattem Gold, verlöschende Augen; schlanke Leiber, wie unter einer Petisch gesetzmäßig und flink bewegt”³⁵⁷/ “eyes gleaming dull gold and vanishing again, lithe bodies moving nimbly and rhythmically, as if at the crack of a whip”³⁵⁸. The jackals thin and fragile bodies echo Sander Gilman’s reading of Jews, as sickly and frail in contrast to the fit, Aryan image of the German of early twentieth century, the one that Kafka makes aware of his own sickly body. The dull gold in their eyes and the rhythm of their bodies allude albeit awkwardly to Habsburg decadence, again suggesting that they represent Empire. But of course, the jackals do not stand in for an empire at its prime: their movements foreshadow the ending of the text, in which the Arab caravan leader will crack a whip upon them. They are an empire beaten into submission by nationalism. But they also want the European (who has still yet to be determined in this allegorical reading) to intervene. As the matriarch of the pack explains, “‘Du mißverstehst uns,’ sagte er, ‘nach Menschart, die sich also auch im hohen Norden nicht verliert. Wir werden sich doch nicht töten. Soviel Wasser hätte der Nil nicht, um uns rein zu waschen. Wir laufen doch schon vor dem bloßen Anblick ihres lebenden Leibes weg, in reinere Luft, in die Wüste, die deshalb unsere Heimat ist’”³⁵⁹/ “‘You misunderstand us,’ said [s]he³⁶⁰, ‘a human failing which persists apparently even in the far North. We’re not proposing to kill them. All the water in the Nile

³⁵⁷ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 854.

³⁵⁸ *Complete Works*. P. 407.

³⁵⁹ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 855.

³⁶⁰ I want to observe here that Willa and Edwin Muir translate a masculine pronoun “er” as “he,” when the text itself does not necessarily support a gender for the jackal. The masculine pronoun reflects the grammatical gender for the German “Schakal,” which is a masculine noun.

couldn't cleanse us of that. Why, the mere sight of their living flesh makes us turn tail and flee into cleaner air, into the desert, which for that very reason is our home"³⁶¹. The jackals cannot kill the Arabs because it would make them unclean. The notion of uncleanness is one tied to Jewishness and echoes the dilemma of Abraham sacrificing a dirty Isaac that we saw in Kafka's parable from chapter two and heavily suggests, as Judith Butler has mentioned, that the jackals represent Jews. However, this notion of cleanliness and not getting one's hands dirty also jives with the jackals as analogs for empire, much less the Habsburg Empire. The Habsburgs frequently left the non-Austrian nations of the empire or the Bavarians to fight their battles in the greater part of European history. What we have then are jackals that vaguely echo Jewishness and the notion of Empire.

In contrast to the jackals reverberating Jewishness and Empire, their contrastive analogs, the Arabs echo, as far as Geller is concerned, European Antisemitism and Nation. This argument may not be too farfetched, as the jackals describe the Arabs as possessing "Schmutz ist ihr Weiß; Schmutz ist ihr Schwarz; ein Grauen ist ihr Bart; speien muß man beim Anblick ihrer Augenwinkel; und heben sie den Arm, tut sich in der Achselhöhle die Hölle auf"³⁶²/ 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 the armpit"³⁶³. Interestingly, the jackals hold that the Arabs represent all that is filthy, having both a sense of dark and light, with frightening beards and armpit that must reek of death if the murk of hell yawns from them. However, these stereotypes are somewhat empty as they do not seem to gesture to stereotypes

³⁶¹ *Complete Works*. P. 409.

³⁶² *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 856.

³⁶³ *Complete Works*. P. 409-10.

limited to Arabs and the Middle East. Indeed, beardedness for example evokes notions of Ancient Germanness and how the Germanic tribes were depicted by Tacitus, barbaric in contrast to the more civilized Romans. The notions of cleanliness and filth also hint that the jackals see beardedness as a critical marker between being civilized and barbaric and this seems to be a point on which they can negotiate and commiserate with the European. Overlapping the Germans with the Arabs is also a provocative prospect considering that Germany nationalized before any of the soon-to-be countries within the Habsburg Empire and was quick to not only subordinate the Habsburg Empire in its rise to nationalism with the Austro-Prussian war, but to demonstrate thereafter that the Nation could offer the Empire's citizens a stronger sense of support than the Empire itself by becoming the Empires more successful younger brother. By connecting the image of the beard with the clichés of being filthy, Kafka joins notions of the Nation with notions of Germanness on a Middle Eastern stage with jackals that simultaneously represent the contrastive protagonists Empire and Jewishness.

If we keep within the reading of the jackals as Empire, however, we are left with an important question: exactly who or what does the European of the north represent? The minimal knowledge the reader receives about the European is from the jackals point of view, even though the story is largely told from the European's point of view: "‘Wir wissen,’ begann der Älteste, ‘daß du vom Norden kommst, darauf eben baut sich unsere Hoffnung. Dort ist der Verstand, der hier unter den Arabern nicht zu finden ist’"³⁶⁴/ "‘We know,’ began the eldest, ‘that you have come from the North; that is just what we base our hopes on. You Northerners have a kind intelligence that is not to be found among the Arabs’"³⁶⁵. The description of the European is

³⁶⁴ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 855.

³⁶⁵ *Completed Works*. P. 408.

reduced to one of his geographical origins and single quality: understanding (“Verstand,” translated as “intelligence”). The European’s capability for understanding his situation suggests that he is the Enlightened Habsburg subject wavering to identify with the old empire and the new nationalism. However, if the European is indeed none other than himself reconfigured into a metaphoric context, then the notion that the story is an allegory proper still does not stick, for the European should be an analog to something that is not a European. The only alternative is that the European stands in for rationality itself and that the jackals curry to rationality because the notion of rationality emerged out of the European Enlightenment, wherein the Habsburgs still reigned, albeit not as the leaders of the Holy Roman Empire. Northernness has no special or particular place in Hegel’s schema. Kafka is engaging with an inconsistency in climatologically based race theory, which argues for Germanic superiority because they are further north, in a cooler climate that makes them less temperamental than others. Hegel, in contrast to this line of race theory, however, makes the exact opposite argument for the Mongols in contrast to the Chinese proper.

Even by exposing this inconsistency within race theories, we are left with a prop in the text that requires contextualization within the *Tiergeschichte*: a pair of sewing shears: “und einem Ruck seines Kopfes kam ein Schakal herbei, der an einem Eckzahn eine kleine, mit altem Rost bedeckte Nähsschere trug”³⁶⁶/ “And in answer to a jerk of [her] head a jackal came trotting up with a small pair of sewing scissors covered in ancient rust, dangling from an eyetooth”³⁶⁷. With the sewing scissors the jackals request that the European do away with the Arabs. Sewing scissors are reminiscent of tailoring in Jewish literature and tailoring as a profession associated

³⁶⁶ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 856

³⁶⁷ *Completed Works*. P. 410.

with Jews, as exemplified by Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye and his Daughters* (1894), as the tailor is the first suitor whom Tevye's eldest daughter marries, forging the break from tradition for his family. The scissors have no known symbolic meaning in terms of Nation or Empire, except that a pair of scissors look vaguely like a pair of crossed swords, an icon that never occurred on any of the Habsburg coat of arms. Indeed, in Kafka's time there are only a small number of local coats of arms within the German speaking world. The crossed swords typically means war and can be seen usually on the flags and coats of arms for armies and local places, such as cities, principalities, duchies, etc. At best, the scissors could represent war, and perhaps in particular World War I, suggesting that he views Habsburg's incitement for war as an attempt to futilely fight nationalism. Kafka is quiet likely constructing some kind of metaphor for World War I as well with "Jackals and Arabs," if we impose an analog onto the specific material points (the characters and the sewing scissors). Kafka's characters therefore function much like Brechtian actors, who gesture towards Jewishness in Europe, as suggested by Geller on the one hand, and to perceived politics of World War I on the other hand; the scissors in this case serve as a prop to both trigger images of war and to signal the entry of the Arabs following the very line in which the scissors appear.

So far, we have acknowledged that some symbolic logic/ allegorizing of World War one is possibly at play here, but how do we know for certain that Kafka's representations suggest that they are playing off of racial/ Orientalist tropes, but we have yet to identify where the jackal fits in Orientalist discourse. If we return briefly to Hegel's assessment of, we notice he has something to say about the use of jackals in Egyptian zoolatry:

Die Ägypter haben selbst auch den menschlichen Gestaltungen der Götter die Erklärung durch Tierköpfe und Tiermasken hinzugefügt; der Anubis z.B hat einen Hundekopf, die Isis den Löwenkopf mit Stierhörnern usf. Auch die Priester sind

bei ihnen Funktionen in Falken, Schakals, Stieren usf. maskiert; ebenso der Chirug, der dem Toten die Eingeweide herausgekommen (als fliehend vorgestellt, denn er hat sich am Lebendigen versündigt), sowie die Einbalsamierer, die Schreiber.³⁶⁸

The Egyptians appended an explanation to the human forms, even of the gods, by means of heads and masks of the brutes; Anubis e.g. has a dog's head, Isis, a lion's head with bull's horns, etc. The priests, also, in performing their functions, are masked as falcons, jackals, bulls, etc.; in the same way the surgeon who has taken out the bowels of the dead (representing, for he has laid sacrilegious hands on an object once hallowed by life); so also the embalmers and the scribes³⁶⁹.

The jackal in Hegel's conception of Ancient Egypt has a performative function, wherein Egyptians wear masks of animals, among them jackals, to execute a number of rituals, among these positions are the person performing evisceration and the person recording the lives of those being eviscerated. Kafka makes two important connections by conjuring the image of the jackal in his short story. Firstly, Kafka makes a connection observed by Rolf Goebel and Christopher Bush, to which I refer in the introduction of this chapter, among the German Orientalists of the late Enlightenment: viewing Chinese and Egyptian script in tandem within one another as that, which stymied Chinese and Egyptian history, as observed in the philosophical works of Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann David Michaelis. Hegel adds into the mix a performative connection between his notion of the pervasive zoolatry of Oriental cultures and the creation of language. The connections made between Egypt and China on their history, language, and religion were in circulation when "Jackals and Arabs" was written because studies in Sinology and Egyptology were still in full swing in the early twentieth century, with increased communication between China and the German speaking world, on the one hand, and increased

³⁶⁸ Hegel, P. 307-8.

³⁶⁹ Sibree, P. 213-4.

discoveries in Ancient Egypt on the other. Kafka, as we may recall, even nods to Ancient Egypt as a setting for this text, when the jackals suggest that there is not enough water in the Nile to purify them of that. Presumably, with their otherwise limited geographical knowledge, the Nile River must be in close proximity to the jackals and by extension the caravan, if the jackals are able to so quickly name that geographically specific space.

The other, more specific, iconographic parallel between Hegel's representation of the Egyptians in jackal masks and Kafka's jackal is, to some degree this image of disemboweling. Upon the Arab discovering the jackals conspiring with the European, we see that

Vier Träger kamen und warfen den schweren Kadaver vor in. Kaum lag er da, erhoben die Schakale ihre Stimmen. Wie von Stricken unwiderstehlich jeder einzelne gezogen, kamen sie, stockend, mit dem Leib den Boden streifend, heran. Sie hatten die Araber vergessen, den Haß vergessen, die alles auslöschende Gegenwart des stark ausdunstenden Leichnams bezauberte sie. Schon hing einer am Hals und fand mit dem ersten Biß die Schlagader. Wie eine kleine rasende Pumpe, die ebenso unbedingt wie aussichtslos einen übermächtigen Brand löschen will, zerrte und zuckte jeder Muskel seines Körpers an ihrem Platz. Und schon lagen in gleicher Arbeit all auf dem Leichnam hoch zu Berg³⁷⁰

Four men came up with the heavy carcass and threw it down before us. It had hardly touched the ground before the jackals lifted up their voices. As if irresistibly drawn by cords each of them began to waver forward, crawling on his belly. They had forgotten the Arabs, forgotten their hatred, the all-obliterating immediate presence of the stinking carrion bewitched them. One was already at the camel's throat, sinking his teeth straight into an artery. Like a vehement small pump endeavoring with as much determination as hopefulness to extinguish some raging fire, every muscle in his body twitched and labored at the task. In a trice they were all on top of the carcass, laboring in common, piled mountain-high.³⁷¹

³⁷⁰ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 857.

³⁷¹ *Complete Works*. P. 410-1.

Kafka depicts the jackals practically tearing the organs out of the camel's carcass as they revert quickly from the sentient canines that could communicate with humans into the beasts with little awareness of the humans around them. The Arab eliminates the possibility of the jackals maintaining a more civil and human-like decorum upon enticing them with the camel's carcass. In one fell swoop Kafka inverts the very notion of domestication by using the act of barbarizing rather than civilizing the jackals, suggesting that barbarism itself emerges from how a dominant culture treats any other culture. If the jackals are indeed Jews, or moreover Zionists, what we see here then is the foreshadowing of the barbarization process. However, if we read against this metaphor, what we see is the reversion of Empire into something more primal, over which the newly cultivated Nation can take charge by feeding it a dead carcass. The historical metaphor seems only possible in Kafka's case through a performance of "Oriental" races in an "Oriental" setting.

The performance of the jackal as an "Oriental" creature in an "Oriental" setting becomes all the more fascinating because jackals, particularly the *Canis aureus*, or the golden jackal was never exclusively native to what was considered to be the "Orient." Indeed, as a zoological survey on the golden jackal reports, "One specimen was shot in 1891 at Bélyye (now Belje, Osijek-Baranja County, Croatia) property of Archduke Albrecht, which was moved by the taxidermist Eduard Hodek in the Natural History Museum in Vienna and later placed in the Museum in Zabrab. In the same year another specimen was shot near Ruma (Vojvodina, Serbia) (Anonymous 1891, Méhely 1898, Nagy 1942a, 1942b). *The taxonomic knowledge of the scientific stuff in the two museum spaces implies a correct identification of the species.*

Certainly jackal³⁷². I include this passage not to assert necessarily that Kafka was aware of the golden jackals as being native to parts of the Habsburg Empire, in addition to the Middle East, North Africa, and even Western China, but to stress that Kafka's jackals, much like the real jackals on which they are based, cannot be pinned down to one space. Indeed, as the aforementioned survey points out, Europeans were reporting sightings of what they thought was a Rohrwolf (reed-wolf). Only, the Rohrwolf never existed: it was, according to this survey, likely stray dogs or jackals, which the Europeans encountered, breaking the illusion of an exclusively European equivalent. Kafka's jackals, and indeed *Canis aureus*, break the discursive spell of European dominance over the Orient by evasively occupying European spaces, both physically for *Canis aureus*, and metaphorically for Kafka's jackals.

A Jackdaw of all Trades: The Allegory Conundrum of "An Old Manuscript"

Under almost a complete inverse of the circumstances of "Jackals and Arabs," we witness a very similar scene of disembowelment in Kafka's "An Old Manuscript." I say inverse because, as you may recall from chapter one, the nomads from the North are the ones who barbarically contrast the shoe-making narrator and his compatriots outside the imperial palace. In the parallel passage, we see that,

Letzthin dachte der Fleischer, er könne sich wenigstens die Mühe des Schlachtens sparen, und brachte am Morgen einen lebendigen Ochsen. Das darf er nicht mehr wiederholen. Ich lag wohl eine Stunde ganz hinten in meiner Werkstatt platt auf dem Boden und alle meine Kleider, Decken und Polster hatte ich über mir aufgehäuft, nur um das Gebrüll des Ochsen nicht zu hören, den von allen Seiten

³⁷² Tóth, Tamás, et al. "Records of the golden jackal (*Canis aureus* Linnaeus, 1758) in Hungary from 1800th until 2007, based on a literature survey." *North-Western Journal of Zoology* (5:2), 2009. P. 394. Bold and italic emphasis in the original.

die Nomaden ansprangen, um mit den Zähnen Stücke aus seinem warmen Fleisch zu reißen³⁷³

Not long ago the butcher thought he might at least spare himself the trouble of slaughtering, and so one morning he brought along a live ox. But he will never dare to do that again. I lay for a whole hour flat on the floor at the back of my workshop with my head muffled in all the clothes and rugs and pillows I had simply to keep from hearing the bellowing of that ox, tearing morsels out of its living flesh with their teeth³⁷⁴.

We see the scene off stage, so to speak, in which the northern nomads devour a live ox. They are different from the jackals, in that they devour their food either raw or cook and in this particular instance, while the ox is still alive. The reoccurring image evokes the same image of evisceration in the context of Ancient Egypt. Both stories appeared together in 1919, two years after the initial publication of “Jackals and Arabs” in *The Jew*. Inverse images of the jackals and the nomads devouring the flesh of larger herbivores and equating them with notions of Asiatic barbarism are much more present when the two were published alongside each other in *A Country Doctor*. These notions of Asiatic barbarism likely have roots themselves; Jianming Zhou notices, “There is evidence that Kafka knew some animal stories from Pu Songling’s collection *Liaozhai zhiyi*. In 1914 in Jena there appeared a volume entitled *Chinesische Volksmärchen* (Chinese Folk Tales)...Kafka had this volume in his possession, which he then, with a dedication, gave as gift to his sister Ottla”³⁷⁵. Zhou later points out how both “Jackals and

³⁷³ Kafka, Franz. “Ein altes Blatt.” *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008. P. 852. Referred to from here on out as “*Sämtliche Werke*.”

³⁷⁴ Kafka, Franz. “An Old Manuscript.” Will and Edwin Muir, trans. *The Complete Stories*. Naum N. Glater, Ed. New York: Schocken, 1971. P. 417. Referred to from here on out as “*Complete Stories*.”

³⁷⁵ Zhou, Jianming. “Literary Rendition of Animal Figures: A Comparison between Kafka’s Tales and Pu Songling’s Strange Stories.” Jerry Krauel and Dariuz Rybicki, trans. Adrian Hsia, Ed. *Kafka and China*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996. P. 126-7.

Arabs” and “An Old Manuscript” parallel a tale titled “The Realm of the Ogres” from that volume³⁷⁶. And of course, with the rise of nationalist groups in Austria after the Great War, readers would have made the connection of seeing the Northerners in both texts as the influence of German Nationalism in the freshly fallen Habsburg Empire.

There are ostensibly at least two ways of reading the characters and their relationships in “An Old Manuscript”: as the struggle between Empire and Nation (an allegorical reading), the struggle between the Chinese and the invading Mongols (somewhat historical). These two readings have already been observed by several scholars, notably by Robert Lemon. What I want to suggest here in the following section is that these two readings are plausible because of Kafka’s practice of equating people to animals.

Indeed, the first reading is only possible because of the plausibility of the second reading: Kafka originally intended “An Old Manuscript” to be a sequel to “Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer” (“The Great Wall of China”) by affixing “aus China” (“from China”) to the title, though never did.³⁷⁷ If we briefly return to “The Great Wall of China,” we are told by Kafka Chinese narrator, “stehende Mauerteilen können ja immer wie leicht von den Nomaden zerstört werden...mit unbegreiflicher Schnelligkeit wie Heuschrecken ihre Wohnsitze wechseln”³⁷⁸/ “blocks of wall left standing...could be easily [destroyed] again and again by nomads, especially

³⁷⁶ Ibid. P. 126-7.

³⁷⁷ Kafka, Franz. *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente I, Apparatband*. Malcom Pasley, ed. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993. P. 303.

³⁷⁸ Kafka, Franz. “Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer.” *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008. P. 1086.

as tribes...[who] kept changing their encampments with incredible rapidity, like locust”³⁷⁹. Referring to the Mongols as “locusts” has several implications that intertwine with Kafka’s thoughts on the Chinese and the Jews, or perhaps more appropriately, the Mongols and the Jews. Firstly, we have an implicit evocation of the Diaspora, which Hegel ignores in his assessment of the Jews because he wants to geographically distance the Jews from Europe and claim that there is a Jewish “Spirit” that is inferior to a European one. This connection is made all the more important by the allusion to the Old Testament plague of locust in Exodus, as a precursor to Jewish expulsion from Egypt (the Orient) into the Diaspora. We know the Chinese narrator is familiar with the Bible from his implication that the Great Wall was supposed to be a rebuilding of the Tower of Babel. So we can reasonably infer that the Chinese narrator uses this metaphor as a comparative historian like Hegel, to an implied audience that would see the simultaneous equation of the Mongols and Jews to the ravenous insect that caused turmoil for the biblical Egyptians. In a way this is perhaps too perfect an allegory for the spread of nationalism and the equation of Nation as something infectious causing the Empire to crumble and falter.

The description of the nomads in “An Old Manuscript” has a similar triangularity between Mongols, Jews, and Egyptians. The cobbler explains, “Sprechen kann man mit den Nomaden nicht. Unsere Sprache kennen sie nicht, ja sie haben kaum eine eigene. Untereinander verständigen sie sich ähnlich wie Dohlen. Immer wieder hört man diesen Schrei der Dohlen”³⁸⁰/ “Speech with the nomads is impossible. They do not know our language, indeed they hardly have a language of their own. They communicate with each other much as jackdaws do. A

³⁷⁹ Kafka, Franz. “The Great Wall of China.” Will and Edwin Muir, trans. *The Complete Stories*. Naum N. Glatzer, Ed. New York: Schocken, 1971. P. 235-6.

³⁸⁰ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 851.

screeching as of jackdaws is always in our ears.”³⁸¹ Within Jewish, Egyptian, and even European traditions, there have been long standing parallels made between birds and language/ birds and prophecy: the Ancient Egyptian God Thoth was depicted as a bird and represented written language and the Ancient Egyptian term for hieroglyphs literally translates into ‘divine language’. In the *Jerusalem Talmud*, Solomon is said to have received his knowledge and wisdom from an understanding of bird language granted to him by God. Even in European, especially “Germanic” traditions, bird speech is equated to divine language and knowledge within the *Saga of the Volsungs*; bird language in this regard has a crucial link to German nationalism through Richard Wagner and the transformation of the *Saga of the Volsungs* into an emblem of German Nationalism, which Kafka implicitly resists in his orientalist texts.

Ornithomancy also frequently appears in the Greco-Roman tradition usually as foreshadowing a calamity, the most notable example in *The Odyssey*, just before Telemachus sets off to find his father, where a hawk kills a dove and the local prophet on Ithaca asserts it foretells the death of the suitors occupying Odysseus’ home. I mention ornithomancy within the Greco-Roman context for two reasons: firstly because Greco-Roman iconography was integral for the nationalist movements in the German speaking world, as well as in queer rights movement within Germany, that, as Mark Anderson notes³⁸², contrasted the Germans, with Greco-Roman physiques, to the sickly Jews; secondly, Hegel himself suggests that ornithomancy in Greek culture is a remnant from a previous stage of cultural development within the Greeks, stating, “Auch die Griechen und Römer haben in den Vögeln die Wissenden gesehen, in dem Glauben, daß, was dem Menschen im Geiste nicht aufgeschlossen, das Unbegreiflichen und Höhere, in ihnen vorhanden

³⁸¹ *Collected Works*. P. 416.

³⁸² For further discussion of this, see the introduction to chapter 4.

sei”³⁸³/ “The Greeks and Romans also regarded birds as specially intelligent, believing that what in the human spirit was not revealed—the Incomprehensible and Higher—was to be found in them”³⁸⁴. Kafka’s use of bird-language can and indeed should be read as an obstruction of this harking back to the Greeks, as well as a gesture towards Kafka’s undermining Hegel’s refusal to accept the idea that cultures influence one another by insisting that any cross-sections of thought are merely remainders from a false linear progression towards what the continental philosopher would call *Spirit*. Curiously enough, the only cultures in this configuration that do not link birds to divine language and knowledge are the Mongols and Chinese, although the Mongols have a long-standing tradition of falconry and Mongol tribes did worship falcons. Indeed, Kafka’s Mongols are not the masters or worshippers of birds, but are themselves birds. They are the inverse of any access to knowledge, as their jackdaw-like language prohibits them from being understood. The incomprehensibility of the nomads seems to play well into the Nation/ Empire allegory, as nationalism would have been a relatively new subject to the average, Habsburg citizen. This reading is also reinforced by the absence of the Emperor, as mentioned in chapter one, as the disappearance of the Habsburg Dynasty from power.

Kafka, as already noted by several scholars, nods self-reflexively towards his own Jewishness, as “jackdaw” (Dohle) is *kávka* in Czech, a homonym for the author’s name. By alluding to his own name, Kafka suggests that he as the author is denying the reader access to a message through a cryptic, bird-language, aligning himself with northern nomads, who themselves cannot communicate with each other, much less with the narrator and the other villagers. If we ask the same question of “An Old Manuscript” that Hanssen and Geller ask of

³⁸³ Hegel, P. 305.

³⁸⁴ Sibree, P. 212.

“Jackals and Arabs” (i.e. could this story somehow be about Zionism and Kafka’s position on Zionism) the answer is no. Kafka was skeptical of nationalism in general, both Zionism and the rise of Austrian Nationalism, but as “Kafka was not a prophet”³⁸⁵, claiming that Kafka anticipates problems that will rise out of either Zionism or Austrian Nationalism seems problematic. Kafka’s gesturing to the racial link of Jews with other “Orientals,” as largely defined by Hegel, sustains both Hanssen and Geller’s arguments. Kafka only resists, or seems to resist, Zionism in his writings because, I argue, Zionism affirms Hegel’s racist claims that the Jews think in an inherently different way from Europeans, by claiming a need to return to a Jewish homeland.

If we are to consider the nomads Jews and/or nationalism, there is a bestial remainder in “An Old Manuscript” that needs to be addressed: the nomads’ horses. We are told by the cobbler that, “Ich kann aber darüber nicht klagen, wenn ich zum Beispiel zusehe, wie es dem Fleischer gegenüber geht. Kaum bringt er seine Waren ein, ist ihm schon alles entrissen und wird von den Nomaden verschlungen. Auch ihre Pferde fressen Fleisch; oft liegt ein Reiter neben seinem Pferd und beide nähren sich vom gleichen Fleischstück, jeder an einem Ende.”³⁸⁶ “But I cannot complain when I see how the Butcher, for instance, suffers across the street. As soon as he brings in any meat the nomads snatch it all from him and gobble it up. Even their horses devour flesh; often enough a horseman and his horse are lying side by side, both of them gnawing at the same joint, one at either end”³⁸⁷. Largely regarded as herbivores, few traditions include stories of

³⁸⁵ Kontje, Todd. “Germany’s Local Orientalisms.” James Hodkinson et al., Eds. *Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History: From Germany to Central and Eastern Europe*. Rochester: Camden House, 2013. P. 63.

³⁸⁶ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 852.

³⁸⁷ *Collected Works*. P. 417.

flesh-eating horses, the only one of particular notoriety being the Mares of Diomedes/ Mares of Thrace in the Ancient Greco-Roman traditions. A reference to these beasts gestures towards Kafka's broader repetition of appropriating ancient traditions, the Greco-Roman one in several parables and indirectly cited in "The Metamorphosis." Greco-Roman iconography was frequently employed by and associated with nationalist, particularly the German Nationalist movements from the latter half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.

Although not carnivorous, horses have a nasty reputation within Judaic traditions. As noted by Ronald Isaacs, Isaiah 31:3 proclaims, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and trust in horses"³⁸⁸ and that in the Talmud Pesachim, the following is stated: "Six things are said of a horse: it loves promiscuity, it loves battle, its spirit is haughty, it despises sleep, it eats much but excretes little, and it walks at the sides of the road. Some say it also wishes to slay its master in battle"³⁸⁹. If the Jewish tradition holds the horse as a species already distant because of its assumed arrogance and affront to human beings, why would Kafka arrange them to be the pets, who behave more like dogs than horses with their nomadic masters? Once again, Kafka also seems to be pointing towards Ancient Egypt, for the horses in the context of Isaiah 31:1 represent the irreligious militarism of the Ancient Egyptians. Indeed, 31:1 falls under Isaiah's second prophecies within that book, one of which being the return to Jerusalem from the oppressors of the Jews. Kafka alludes to Isaiah 31:1 indeed to comment on Zionism as a restoration of Jerusalem from the oppressive possession of Europe, but of course does so with an inverse irony. If we read the nomads as Jews, then the Jews have gone against Isaiah 31:1 because the nomads trust their horses so well that they eat live, raw meat with them. If we try to

³⁸⁸ Isaacs, Ronald. *Animals in Jewish Thought and Tradition*. Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 2000. P. 119.

³⁸⁹ Ibid. P. 119-20.

reverse our reading, and interpret the cobbler and his comrades at the imperial gates as Jews, we see a lack of prophecy, as the cobbler admits at the end of the passage a lack of knowing how this conflict will end. Again, I want to emphasize that Kafka's opposition to Zionism does not look towards the future, but reflects what already has been said concerning the Jews, as exemplified by Hegel. Kafka wants to literarily refute the notion of Jewishness stemming from/belonging in the Middle East because they come from a space that is not European and are therefore not capable of the complex thought that Europeans supposedly have. Aligning the Jews for or against a species that could well wish to come into conflict with, rather than serve, their masters also gestures concurrently with the Greco-Roman allusions of those horses to suggest a lack of trust in nationalism, as perpetuated by German Nationalism, to inspire a Jewish Nationalism that would affirm whatever crude or racist beliefs that the German-speaking world would hold over the Jews. Kafka's Asiatic animals in both "An Old Manuscript" and "Jackals and Arabs" can only make this line of critique possible in a Brechtian way, by vaguely performing in the capacities of Nation/Empire in Oriental roles that distance themselves from Europe.

Gregor Samsa: Sovereign Scarab or Diasporic Dung Beetle?

Four years before "An Old Manuscript" und "Jackals and Arabs" would be featured together and a year after the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was shot in Sarajevo, Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" was published. One does not readily associate Kafka's novella with Orientalisms because the text takes place in a bourgeois household within a European city in what we can only roughly assume to be the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. However, as I will discuss in this final section, Kafka's protagonist serves a crucial prerequisite for

understanding how Kafka's use of Oriental animals configures into his critique of earlier thought on "Oriental" races. Admittedly, the question of whether or not Gregor Samsa fits into the allegorization of Habsburg politics must be tabled because 1915 is not really the time in which Kafka can speculate on the question of nationalism as the Habsburgs in the south and even the Hollenzollers in the north, still maintain a level of imperial power, where any sense of nationality is qualified by imperial oversight in 1915. This novella has already been scrutinized through several interpretations for what Gregor Samsa, his family, his boss, the three servants that come in and out of his household, and the three boarders that move into the Samsa home could represent. What I want to emphasize is the way an implicit, underlying Orientalist logic within "The Metamorphosis" allows these interpretations to even be possible.

One very interesting Orientalist reading of Kafka's novella warrants our attention. According to Michael Ryan, "Kafka toys with the idea of rebirth and transmigration. By combining *Gregor the Große* (Pope Gregory I, 540-604 a.d.e.) and *Samsara*, he makes the statement that this is a story not only about punishment, but also of atonement, and that this atonement, this process of purification, is performed through the transmigration of souls"³⁹⁰. Ritchie Robertson affirms this interpretation, attesting,

Although Kafka may have read Schopenhauer seriously only in 1917, he would have known a good deal about Schopenhauer from reading Nietzsche, who quotes Schopenhauer especially in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and from conversations with his friend the Schopenhauer devotee Max Brod. He would have known, therefore, about Schopenhauer's portrayal of the world as a prison from which one can only escape by renouncing the Will; it is even possible, as has recently been suggested by Michael P. Ryan, that the [word] Samsa was suggested by Samsara, the term denoting enslavement to the world, which Schopenhauer took from the Hindu Upanishads. Kafka would have known also that Schopenhauer assigns a special

³⁹⁰ Ryan, Michael P. "Samsa and Samsara: Suffering, Death, and Rebirth in 'The Metamorphosis.'" *The Germanic Quarterly* (72.2), Spring 1999. P. 142.

status to music as the direct utterance of the Will, and hence as the closest we can ever come to penetrating the veil of illusion that holds us captive³⁹¹.

Kafka's possible engagement with Indic traditions mediated through Schopenhauer is interesting for two reasons: firstly, Schopenhauer frequently criticized Hegel, largely because he opposed Hegel grounding his arguments in a cosmological/ontological claims for the existence of God. The "Hindoos," were, for Hegel, the Antithesis to the Chinese, which synthesized into the Europeans, in that the "Hindoos" judgement is entirely internal and there is no letter of the law binding them: "Der träumende Inder ist daher alles, was wir Endliches und Einzelnes nennen, und zugleich als ein unendlich Allgemeines und Unbeschränktes an ihm selbst ein Göttliches"³⁹²/ "The dreaming Indian is therefore all that we call finite and individual; and, at the same time—as infinitely universal and unlimited—a something intrinsically divine"³⁹³. Here is a clear-cut example of grounding his assessment of the Indians in a cosmological claims, emphasizing the intrinsically divine quality of their individual spirit. One could see how Schopenhauer would oppose Hegel in his view of the Indians, and by extension their philosophical outlook in principle. However, I hesitate to claim here that Kafka accepted Schopenhauer's interpretation of Indians wholesale and therefore made Gregor into this embodiment of Samsara, though he likely drew from it. As Librett observes in a footnote on Martin Buber, "[Buber] contests Schopenhauer's view of the Jew as a superficial optimist: 'He [the Jew] has not just experienced the anxiety of the world, he has suffered it; in his will to becoming-one beats the longing of the

³⁹¹ Robertson, Ritchie. "Kafka as Anti-Christian: 'Das Urteil,' 'Die Verwandlung,' and the Aphorisms." James Rolleston, Ed. *A Companion to the Works of Franz Kafka*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002. P. 109. Word in brackets my own addition.

³⁹² Hegel, P. 214.

³⁹³ Sibree, P. 141.

world, and what he completes with himself... he also does in a primally secret connection [*in ungeheimem Zusammenhang*] to the heart of the world”³⁹⁴. I therefore take Robertson’s position that Kafka had a “critique of religion in general and Christianity in particular,” and that, when Max Brod “gave a paper on his idol Schopenhauer in which he attacked Nietzsche”³⁹⁵, Kafka kept a critical distance of Schopenhauer, if for no other reason than his views on the Jews. Yes, he may have the name of Gregor Samsa from the Hindu notion of punishment/ atonement/ purification while entrapped here on Earth in a physical form, but the physical form which Gregor Samsa takes, namely that of the indeterminate insect/ dung beetle, comes very closely into dialogue with Ancient Egyptian Orientalisms and this where I pick up on the appropriation of Orientalism to make claims about race in the nineteenth century.

Before delving into the text itself, we should look once more to Hegel’s reading of the Egyptians as an Oriental culture. Hegel observes,

Ich erinnere hier an die unzählige Menge von Figuren auf den ägyptischen Denkmälern, von Sperbern oder Falken, Roßkäfern, Skarabäen usf. Man weiß nicht, von welchen Vorstellungen solche Figuren die Symbole gewesen sind und darf auch nicht glauben, daß man es in dieser von Hause aus trüben Sache zur Klarheit bringen könne. So z.B. soll der Mistkäfer das Symbol der Zeugung, der Sonne und des Sonnenlaufes sein, der Ibis das Symbol der Nilflut, der Geier das der Weissagung, des Jahres, der Erbarmung³⁹⁶

I refer here to the innumerable figures on the Egyptian monuments of sparrow-hawks or falcons, dung-beetles, scarabæi, etc. It is not known what ideas such figures symbolized, and we can scarcely think that a satisfactory view of this very obscure subject is attainable. The dung-beetle is said to be the symbol of

³⁹⁴ Librett, P. 331-2.

³⁹⁵ Robertson, P. 102.

³⁹⁶ Hegel, P. 306-7.

generation—of the sun and its course; the Ibis, that of the Nile’s overflowing; birds of the hawk tribe, of prophecy—of the year—of pity³⁹⁷.

Hegel acknowledges the logic of symbols at work within Ancient Egyptian zooaltry, as the animal Gods stand in for abstract concepts (pity, prophecy) and natural functions (course of the sun, overflowing of the Nile, etc.). Firstly, I would like to observe that Hegel notices and affirms the connection between birds and prophecy, a point that I made in the previous section, Hegel also specifically acknowledges the role of the dung beetle (Mistkäfer, Roßkäfern)/ scarab (Skarabäen) as an animal important within Egyptian civilization. Hegel’s brief reference to dung-beetles creeps up in two different ways within Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis.” Although never specifically designated as a particular species of vermin by the narrator, Gregor is called a “Mistkäfer”³⁹⁸ by a charwoman (Bedienerin) the Samsa family employs towards the end of the novella. On the one hand, there is no specific allusion to the Ancient Egyptians in this reference. Various species and subspecies of dung beetles can be found on every continent except Antarctica and associating somebody with fecal matter is not exclusive to any racial discourse either. Within European literary traditions, the dung beetle features prominently in Aristophanes’ play, *Peace*, and in an allusion to that play made by Han Christian Andersen in a short story aptly titled “Dung beetle.” Kafka’s tragedy of a person turned into vermin also refers to the hubristic tragedy of Arachne in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. When we consider that Kafka discovers

³⁹⁷ Sibree, P. 213.

³⁹⁸ Kafka, Franz. “Die Verwandlung.” *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008. P. 805. Referred to from here on out as “*Sämtliche Werke*.”

his transformation “eines Morgens”³⁹⁹/ “one morning”⁴⁰⁰, dies in the “dritte Morgenstunde”⁴⁰¹/ “third hour of morning,”⁴⁰² and is discovered by the very woman, who called him a dung-beetle “am frühen Morgen”⁴⁰³/ “early in the morning,”⁴⁰⁴ we realize that Kafka makes a point of connecting Gregor Samsa’s life as an insect, one tied from onset to end to the rising sun, to dawn, to the morning, thrice in the novella. Kafka nods toward Gregor Samsa as an Ancient Egyptian scarab by connecting Samsa to the dawn/ rising sun. True to the betrayal of Christ and Kafka’s fashion, Gregor Samsa is the ironic antithesis of generation and is undone under the very sun he represents as a dung-beetle designated by the charwoman.

What we must acknowledge here, however, is that dung-beetle is a term designated to Samsa solely by the charwoman. Kafka’s narrator chooses to call Gregor Samsa an “Ungeziefer” in the first line of the novella. Susan Bernofsky notes in her introduction to a recent translations of “The Metamorphosis” the term Ungeziefer “comes from the Middle High German *zebar* (related to the Old English *tūbar*), meaning ‘sacrifice’ or sacrificial animal.’ An *ungezibere*, then, is an unclean animal unfit for sacrifice, and *Ungeziefer* describes a class of creepy-crawly things”⁴⁰⁵. Gregor Samsa then has presumably become an animal of small, creepy-crawly stature

³⁹⁹ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 770.

⁴⁰⁰ Kafka, Franz. “The Metamorphosis.” Susan Bernofsky, trans. Mark Anderson, Ed. *The Metamorphosis: A New Translation; Texts and Contexts; Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. P. 3. Referred to from here on out as “*Metamorphosis*.”

⁴⁰¹ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 813.

⁴⁰² *Metamorphosis*. P. 43.

⁴⁰³ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 813.

⁴⁰⁴ *Metamorphosis*. P. 43.

⁴⁰⁵ Bernofsky, Susan. “Translator’s Note.” Mark Anderson, Ed. *The Metamorphosis: A New Translation; Texts and Contexts; Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. P. xvi.

that cannot be sacrificed. Samsa's new identity is ironic within "The Metamorphosis" because Gregor Samsa is otherwise the bread-keeper in his family, paying off his father's debt and paying for household expenses with his job as a traveling salesman. And, as I illustrated in chapter two, Kafka alludes to this notion of being unfit for sacrifice in his depiction of an alternative Abraham, namely the one that cannot bring himself to sacrifice Isaac because Isaac is not clean enough for sacrifice. The notion of uncleanness is also inverted in "Jackals and Arabs," as we recall, when the jackal tells the European there is not enough water in the Nile to wash them clean of killing the Arabs themselves, which is why they hand off the scissors for the sacrifice to the European. We see then how Gregor's identity, designated by the narrator also fits into the framework of Middle Eastern Orientalisms by coming into dialogue with the issue of sacrifice and cleanliness.

Biblical imagery, both Old Testament and New Testament, crop up over and over again within the text. The most apparent biblical allusion from the Old Testament relates closely to the expulsion from Eden: when Gregor's father pelts him with apples. As we also recall from chapter two, Kafka's paradisiacal Adam is one, whose double fettering to heaven and earth represents the inability for Jews to wander the Earth without being able to return to paradise on the one hand and who cannot get into heaven unless they convert to Christianity on the other hand. Gregor also embodies this notion of being caught between two alternatives when "doch fühlte er sich wie festgenagelt"⁴⁰⁶/ "he felt nailed to the spot"⁴⁰⁷. One of the apples thrown by his father strikes and embeds itself in his back and when the second the apple hits him, he comes to feel pinned to the ground, between an apple and a hard place. The image not only echoes in the tethering of

⁴⁰⁶ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 801.

⁴⁰⁷ *Metamorphosis*. P. 31.

mankind to heaven and earth, but also alludes to Christ and the New Testament, particularly when Jesus is nailed to the cross. Alluding to Jesus, and in particular Jesus' sacrifice reverberates the debate of whether or not Gregor is fit for sacrifice, as embedded within the word Ungeziefer. These images suggest that Gregor as an animal of some kind fits within as one associated indirectly with the biblical Middle East, prompting the proposition that Gregor represents Jewishness, and especially in my own line of thought, Orientalized Jewishness. Reinforcing this reading is the notion of an insect being 'pinned' to become a specimen in a collection, as no doubt nineteenth century entomologists and biologists did when they explored the Orient, indirectly contributing to the subsequent colonialization of the East largely by the British and French. However, Gregor's contextual Catholicism seems to stymie this line of logic: he evokes "Himmlicher Vater!"⁴⁰⁸/ "Heavenly father"⁴⁰⁹ upon discovering he's late work, his family and even the charwoman cross themselves upon seeing his dead corpse, and his sister mutters "Anrufe der Heiligen"⁴¹⁰/ "words of supplication to the saints"⁴¹¹ when cleaning his room. All of these actions signal that the Samsas are a Catholic family. In what way then do we split the contextual Catholic from the symbolic Jew?

If we return to Hegel's logic within *The Philosophy of World History* and Hegel's thesis on the Jews, Gregor does not fit such a logic. Much like the animal, he decisions are impulsive, but seem somehow instinctive, but they are his own: he insists on going into work, in spite of his condition, he makes saving the picture of the woman in furs in his room a mission, he decides to

⁴⁰⁸ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 771.

⁴⁰⁹ *Metamorphosis*. P. 4.

⁴¹⁰ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 789.

⁴¹¹ *Metamorphosis*. P. 21.

eat the food unfit for human consumption over the food that is. Gregor Samsa does not have what Hegel would consider a Jewish *Spirit*. But this is exactly where a Brechtian reading of “The Metamorphosis” would offer its answer: he is still vaguely Jewish/ “Oriental” in appearance as something that could be called a dung-beetle or Ungeziefer. Gregor’s unknowing performance as an Orientalized Jew is reminiscent of the scene from Brecht’s *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*The Three Penny Opera*) with Peachum’s five costumes of five types of beggars based on their suffering, and how Peachum explains to one beggar that one will not be believed if he communicates his own suffering, which is why they must mask one form of suffering with another. The Orientalization of Jews as a justification for European Antisemitism could very well mask any number of things, based on readings of “The Metamorphosis,” such as, but not limited to, the existential crisis of the modernist condition as one example. The animals and peoples of “Jackals and Arabs” and “An Old Manuscript” do a similar kind of performance, doubling as Empire, Nation, or any other abstract or concrete concept within such a schema.

How Samsa performs the role of an Orientalized Jew then remains to be discussed. Samsa is described as having a “Tierstimme”⁴¹² / “animal’s voice”⁴¹³, which prohibits him from expressing himself to his family and boss at the beginning of the novella. We see this echoed later in “An Old Manuscript,” with the nomads with bird speech and their inability to communicate with the villagers at the gates of the imperial palace. The perspective of the narrator inclines the reader to experience some kind of pathos, whether empathy or sympathy with Gregor Samsa and his condition, but this is something that Gregor cannot express to his family or the other characters and the reader is then presented with the frustration of Gregor’s

⁴¹² *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 779.

⁴¹³ *Metamorphosis*. P. 11.

interior monologues later because he will never express them. By sealing off Gregor's ability to express himself, Kafka makes a Brechtian move of distancing Gregor emotionally from his reader. Samsa's lack of human voice is complemented by his dramatic croaking at the end of the novella; Samsa is said to have "krepirt"⁴¹⁴ / "croaked"⁴¹⁵, a term that was carried over from Italian in the seventeenth century, quite likely with the Thirty Years War, and is defined as "für Sterben, als stärkes Kraftwort"⁴¹⁶. This same verb is used by the Jackals in "Jackals and Arabs," in their jackals request of the European to get rid of the Arabs because "ruhig soll alles Getier krepieren"⁴¹⁷ / "every beast [should] die a natural death"⁴¹⁸. I should note here that the Muirs' translation here is misleading and could be more accurately translated as "all creature should croak peacefully," creating a clash in expressions, as the verb likely emerged out of the horrendous death of the Thirty Years War, and is identified as a swearword. The use of the term in "The Metamorphosis" underscores the crudeness of his transformation, which is far different from the more beautiful, Ovidian transformations to which his metamorphosis alludes. The crudeness of the verb, krepieren, reverberates five years later, this time in an oxymoronic clash that leads the audience to think that these animals are no longer merely animals, but stand-ins for racial others, who are treated with the crudeness of animals discursively in nineteenth century race theory.

⁴¹⁴ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 813.

⁴¹⁵ *Metamorphosis*. P. 44.

⁴¹⁶ Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. "krepieren." Def. 1. *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*. Woerterbuchnetz.de. Grimm Wörterbuch. Web. 22 July 2016.

⁴¹⁷ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 856.

⁴¹⁸ *Complete Works*. P. 409.

Conclusion

Gregor Samsa's performance in "The Metamorphosis" serves as an important precursor for the animals in Kafka's later Orientalist works. Although he is situated in a European, Catholic, middle class household, he very much echoes an ancient past and in particular, Ancient Egypt. Gregor Samsa is referred to as a dung-beetle and Ungeziefer, suggesting that he is an animal of filthy habits and nature, unfit for sacrifice; these terms situate Samsa curiously in the Orient because they gesture back towards notions of cleanliness in Judaism and Scarab worship in Ancient Egypt. By taking on the role of a beast associated with the Orient, he takes on the opportunity to represent European concerns, since his Oriental-animalness provides geographical distance for comparison. The way he speaks and dies gestures both towards the problematic history of the Czechs and the Habsburgs, from the onset of the Thirty Years War in Prague to the Great War, in which the Czechs reluctantly fight alongside the German-speaking Habsburgs in Vienna, as well as Kafka's own traumatic death from laryngeal tuberculosis. Gregor Samsa sets the precedent of bringing Oriental animals into dialogue with questions of Nation and Empire.

This dialogue would be picked up again two years after "The Metamorphosis" in Kafka's Tiergeschichte (animal story), "Jackals and Arabs." A European traveling with caravan of Arabs through a desert is beseeched by a pack of talking jackals to kill in Arabs with a pair of rusty scissors because the jackals cannot live alongside beings that have to kill their meals instead of waiting for their prey to die of natural causes. Scholars have debated at length the degree to which Kafka predicts neo-imperialist actions of Zionism. I maintain that Kafka was in a historical position to be skeptical of all forms of nationalism, Zionism just as much as Austrian or Czech nationalisms following the Great War. He knew that German nationalism did not stop Germany from pursuing colonial power, so to claim that Kafka could not have possibly

contemplated colonial practices of Zionism or Austrian/Czech nationalism is also incorrect. What matters more in this study though is how Kafka expresses this skepticism: he defers to a number of Jewish stereotypes and allusions to Jewish cultures, such as the notion of Jews being frail and weak as expressed in “The Metamorphosis,” as well as gesturing toward cleanliness and matrilineality in Jewish culture in his description of the jackals. The jackals also seem to represent the frail state of the Habsburg Empire in contrast to the bearded Arabs they so detest, who otherwise physically resemble notions of German-ness and could equally be a stand-in for German nationalism as that, which puts the old Empire in its place through a kind of domestication that looks like coexistence. The European, from whose perspective this story is told, remains undescribed physically, but seems to represent the failings of rational, enlightened thought in deciding which of the two, Nation or Empire, to choose. But again, this reading of the Tiergeschichte as an allegory would not be possible without considering how the constituent roles relate to one another on the literal and not the metaphoric reading. Setting the story in the Middle East and suggesting that the jackals represent Jews is another way of applying skepticism vis-à-vis Zionism. Again, Zionism is not the only form of nationalism which Kafka hesitates to affirm, but it is also no exception.

The more rounded allegory, “An Old Manuscript,” oscillates between a literal and metaphorical/ allegorical interpretations of the characters, a cobbler, his fellow citizens, the Emperor, and nomads from the north squatting at the imperial gates, ravaging the village occupied by the cobble just outside the palace. The nomads talk like jackdaws and eat raw flesh alongside their carnivorous horses. Originally, “An Old Manuscript” was conceived of as a sequel to “The Great Wall of China,” taking place in China and suggesting that the nomads were Mongolians; the nomads therein are described as locusts not for their ravenous appetites, but

because of how they move from one resource-pool to another. On an allegorical level, we see German Nationalism impinging upon the Habsburg Empire, with the Emperor to offer no support. The average citizen does not know what to do with these nomads. The barbaric nomads evoke notions of German Nationalism through German Nationalist movements' association with older, Germanic tribes, and an indirect allusion to the Mares of Thrace via the carnivorous horses. But we also see ways in which the nomads stand in for Jews and Europeans simultaneously, speaking like *kávka* on the one hand, but riding on horses, which is regarded a haughty beast in Jewish culture. Oscillating between Jewishness and Europeaness through these textual hints, Kafka underscores the problem of lumping the Jews with East Asians and other Orientals, without taking the Diaspora into account.

Franz Kafka flips the notion of Oriental zoolatry on its head by employing animals associated with Oriental Spaces in early twentieth century notions of "Oriental" cultures, as mediated by nineteenth century thought on the Orient. His three works "Jackals and Arabs," "An Old Manuscript," and "The Metamorphosis" undermine harmful associations of Oriental peoples with simple-minded religion and spirit by writing these three texts into the context of European history as Tiergeschichten of sorts. By compelling readers to think about what jackals, northern nomads, Arabs, carnivorous horses, cobblers, emperors, and three-foot tall vermin would mean or represent in the context of war and European history, as well as the European present for Kafka, Kafka forces his European readers to think about for what these animals stand in. Yes, the animals reveal Kafka's skepticism about the rise of nationalism, but this is part of the way Kafka wants to expose us to the harm of assuming that such allegorical reading is something done either subtly or completely amongst "Oriental" peoples as a religious practice. Kafka's Oriental animals expose the racist assumptions Orientals, as outlined by Hegel, by forcing European

readers to do exactly as Hegel and others will claim Oriental people do: see the animals as stand-ins for forces of nature and abstract concepts.

Chapter 4: Kafka's Homoerotic Struggles in (and out of) the Penal Colony

“Da strich der Führer kräftig mit der scharfen Peitsch kreuz und quer über sie. Sie hoben die Köpfe; halb in Rausch und Ohnmacht”

“And now the caravan leader lashed his cutting whip crisscross over their backs. They lifted their heads, half swooning in ecstasy”

---Franz Kafka, “Schakale und Araber”/ “Jackals and Arabs”

“da sah er an der im übrigen schon leeren Wand auffallend das Bild der in lauter Pelzwerk gekleideten Dame hängen, Kroch eilends hinauf und preßte sich an das Glas, das ihn festhielt und seinem heißen Bauch wohltat”

“but then his eyes lit on the picture of the lady clad all in furs, conspicuous now on the otherwise empty wall, and quickly he made his way up to it and pressed himself against the glass, which adhered to him, pleasantly cool against his hot body”

---Franz Kafka, “Die Verwandlung”/ “The Metamorphosis”

Just as a parade of non-human animals march through the literary works of Franz Kafka, so too do a number of human animals with bodily deformities, who undergo non-heteronormative sexual experiences, primarily in a submissive, masochistic manner. This chapter examines the interplay between sexuality and violence in the orientalist settings of Kafka's two implicit representations of China: “Beschreibung eines Kampfes” (“Description of a Struggle”) and “In der Strafkolonie” (“In the Penal Colony”). These two texts are examined here because they bring Hegelian, geo-historical notions of race into dialogue with the biologically based Scientific Racism based predominantly in France in the latter half of the nineteenth century. They also deserve particular attention because they both defer to fantastic settings, one a vaguely Asian jungle situated somewhere on a hill in Prague, the other an imperial colony on a tropical island. Kafka's settings are complemented by descriptions of anatomical features that refer implicitly to the nineteenth century scientific racism, by allusions to *The Odyssey* in “Description

of a Struggle” and to Octave Mirbeau’s *The Torture Garden* (*Le Jardin des supplices*, 1899)⁴¹⁹ in both “Description of a Struggle” and “In the Penal Colony”, and finally by homoerotic tension and acts of violence between exclusive male casts of characters. I argue that the synthesis of these literary features demonstrates the unfulfilled colonial impulse of the German-speaking world to impose order onto the Orient by maintaining an oppressive system of Anti-Semitism in Germany and the Habsburg Empire, cracking down on their invasive Oriental insider. I make this claim in part because these two texts enter an intertextual dialogue with The Dreyfus Affair⁴²⁰. I maintain that Kafka’s “Description of a Struggle” was an early experiment in engaging this question of the Jew as an Oriental and that the incorporation of homoerotic tension and violence reflect, to some extent, early literary reflections on French colonialism in the Pacific and its relationship to Anti-Semitism in Europe. Kafka’s later work, which in contrast to the earlier was published in its entirety within his life, is a more fully developed engagement with the larger questions of colonialism and race theory, alluding heavily to the Dreyfus Affair and Mirbeau’s engagement thereof in *The Torture Garden*. Indeed, I argue that the homoerotic tension and violence developed early on in “Description of a Struggle” and executed more concretely in “In the Penal Colony,” not only respond to French colonialism in the “Orient,” but mark the undoing of Hegel’s racist logic by gesturing to the upheaval of Imperial China, the foundation on which Hegel builds his claim that the Chinese have a stagnant history and all of the racial characteristics tied to that historical stagnation. This chapter will take three steps to establish this task: 1. Examine how race and orientalisms are coded in “Description of a Struggle,” 2. Look at

⁴¹⁹ The first German translation, *Der Garten der Qualen*, was translated by Franz Hofen and published in Hungary in 1901.

⁴²⁰ The Dreyfus Affair was a political act of Anti-Semitism in which a Jewish army officer was falsely accused of a crime and sent to a penal colony for said crime.

how these codes of race come into dialogue with the relationship between the homoerotic tension between characters and physical violence between the characters, 3. Evaluate how “In the Penal Colony,” differs from Kafka’s earlier, more experimental work with regards to representations of race and the tension between male homoeroticism and violence. I should note here that I used the term experimental because, as one of Kafka’s earliest works, “Description of a Struggle” marks the first time Kafka engaged with the themes and ideas surrounding race and race theory that I have traced thus far in the works that preceded it. Moreover, Kafka’s chose to write this text more fantastically than realistically and wrote two different drafts of this text, suggesting that he wanted to venture away from Realism, which was itself declining by the time Kafka began writing “Description of a Struggle.”

Before I can proceed with my analysis of these texts, I will first outline the relationship between race and race theory on one side and homoeroticism and violence on the other. With regards to Hegel’s race theory and violence, we have already observed in Kafka’s constant use of fettering as an image in “The Great Wall of China” in chapter one, “Paradise” in chapter two, as well as in Hegel’s description of Egyptian spirit/ zoolatry, which Kafka discursively parallels with his use of Oriental animals, especially the pinning of Gregor Samsa to the floor with an apple thrown into his back by his father, in chapter three. The image of fettering in Kafka’s works dialogues with Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, which is at play in Hegel’s reading of the Orient, and in particular, how that dialectic informs the freedom to reach decisions on one’s own. Hegel maintains that the Chinese and “Persian” (read Jews and others native to the Middle East) peoples are incapable of coming to decisions on their own because they are blinded by some larger power, whether that power is the Emperor for China, the Judeo-Christian God for the Jews, or a pantheon of half-animal gods for the Ancient Egyptians. Within this line of logic, the

subordination of “Oriental peoples” to their respective higher powers prevents them from actualizing what Hegel calls *Spirit*, but allows them to experience something evolving in the direction of *Spirit*. So far, Kafka has brushed up against this logic with characters acting in tandem with Hegel’s assumptions about Eastern peoples, demonstrating the logical problems of the continental philosopher’s diagnosis of Oriental peoples. However, none of the characters previously examined in “The Great Wall of China,” “An Old Manuscript,” “The Refusal,” “Abraham,” “The City Coat of Arms,” “Paradise,” “Jackals and Arabs,” or “The Metamorphosis,” subvert nineteenth century’s race theory through sexuality. In “Description of a Struggle” and “In the Penal Colony” thus differ from the other texts examined in this dissertation because these text intertwine violent acts in the Orient with homoerotic tension.

Several notable scholars have made key observations about the relationship between sexuality and race/ race theory in Kafka’s oeuvre, Elizabeth Boa, for instance, has noted that

Sensuality was exotic or effeminate: others are sensual, whether it be the coarse sensuality of the lower classes—a favourite of naturalist motif—the exotic sensuality of the odalisque, or the perverse sensuality of men of other races. Unlike the exotic African, Arab, or Asian Other of European colonialism, the Jewish racial Others of the hegemonic German culture in central Europe were not geographically distant but were familiar neighbours who were moving into the cities and out of the ghettos, were engaging in trade, were socially ambitious. As such they were represented as an insidious threat, aping the dominant Germans as they tried to assimilate yet remain different⁴²¹.

Away from either the German or the Habsburg Empire seats in Europe, people of “Oriental” races were the product of what Zantop will call “Colonial Fantasies,” objects for the taking; at home, they were seen as a domestic threat. Important to observe here is that geographical movement makes the Oriental Jew a threat to Germans, having moved out of where

⁴²¹ Boa, Elizabeth. *Kafka: Gender, Class, and Race in the Letters and Fictions*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996. P. 230-1.

they belonged under the logic of race theory (the Middle East) and their ability to continue to move within Europe. Oriental Jews were not the only threat; as Sabine Doran observes, “Kaiser Wilhelm II used the term [“yellow peril”] as part of his sinophobic rhetoric during his so-called ‘Hunnenrede’ speeches to his troops. Wilhelm II’s biggest fear was a pact between China and Japan”⁴²². With this notion of “yellow peril” came the fear that East Asian laborers⁴²³ would flood Europe, creating an unwanted, geographically hybrid Europe. The anxiety of cultural mixing, I contend, is a consequence of the insistence by Hegel and other nineteenth century race theorists that various cultures of the world inherently belonged to specific geographical locations and were predisposed to be in a certain developmental stage historically (Africans and Native Americans allegedly unable to express abstract thought, the Oriental world’s historical stagnation, etc.), which would justify Europe’s (the most advanced and well developed) colonial and imperial projects.

When the “inferior” races intermingle with the “superior” races in European discourse about gender and sexuality in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (and, indeed, even in other parts of the world through today), the image of the predatory, racial other that imposes a threat onto the European subject arises. The way, I argue, Kafka disrupts this discourse is through the homoerotic tension within “Description of a Struggle” and “In the Penal Colony.” In his major work on the depictions of male homoerotic French Orientalisms of the Middle East, Joseph Boone claims, “the lens of male homoeroticism... dislodge[s] Eurocentric biases and historicist logic that have traditionally organized the binary relation of Orient and Occident in an

⁴²² Doran, Sabine. *The Culture of Yellow or The Visual Politics of Late Modernity*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. P. 124.

⁴²³ Ibid.

unequal hierarchy”⁴²⁴. Boone demonstrates through his examples, where male, European characters are removed from sexually normative situations where he simply imposes himself sexually onto Middle Eastern women. While in principle I agree with Boone’s position, I argue that male homoeroticism does not necessarily completely disrupt European, colonial gaze onto the Orient, but can merely reset it; the human object of the Orient can be a pretty boy instead of a pretty girl. One only has to look to the domestic reality in the German-speaking world at the turn of the century to see that, even within male, homoerotically based, political/ artistic/ scientific movements of the early twentieth century, there was an already racial bias. Within the movement to undo Paragraph 175, the German Empire’s anti-sodomy law, there were two camps: a scientific one dominated by Jews who insisted that homosexuals were a third sex of their own, spear-headed by sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, and “another competing account of homosexual identity, [relying] on the same kind of racial and sexual stereotypes...[was] the virile ‘Aryan’ or ‘Greek-German’ male who formed physical as well as emotional bonds with men of his kind...which Adolf Brand and his circle celebrated”⁴²⁵. And if Brand and his camp were the epitome of Aryan health, then Hirschfeld’s belonged to the camp where “yellow, ‘Oriental’ skin [was] also part of the standard image of the diseased Jew”⁴²⁶. I am therefore not inclined to subscribe to Boone’s approach wholesale, but rather in combination with another key theme that underscores Kafka’s two works: violence.

⁴²⁴ Boone, Joseph. *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*. New York: Columbia UP, 2014. P. xxii.

⁴²⁵ Anderson, Mark. “Kafka, Homosexuality, and the Aesthetics of ‘Male Culture.’” *Gender and Politics in Austrian Fiction*. Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms, ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996. P. 81.

⁴²⁶ Gilman, Sander. *Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient*. New York: Routledge, 1995. P. 107.

Kafka's fascination with violence as partially determined by sexuality stems from his reading of fellow Habsburg author Leopold von Sacher Masoch's *Venus im Pelz* (*Venus in Furs*). The echoes of Sacher-Masoch's work are audible in Kafka's "Jackals and Arabs" and "The Metamorphosis," as can be seen in the epigraphs to this chapter. In the first quote, we see the jackals revert from sentient animals that can communicate with humans to primal canines, torn between their attraction to the camel's carcass and their aversion to the Arab's whip. The reversion to a submissive beast nods to Gregor's submission to his torturess, Wanda, in *Venus in Furs*. Gregor Samsa, likewise, nods to the Sacher-Masoch work not by bearing the brunt of the whip, but the main character's name, while he protects the photograph of a woman in furs that alludes to the novel's title and the torturess, Wanda. In the context of the "Description of a Struggle" and "In the Penal Colony," the masochistic violence comes into contact with tropes about the Chinese, namely in their ability to sustain a tremendous amount of violence. Hegel does not mention much of this, except that "Ein drittes Moment ist, daß die Strafen meist körperliche Züchtigungen sind"⁴²⁷ / "A third point is, that punishments are generally corporeal chastisements"⁴²⁸. Just twenty years before Hegel gave his lectures, George Henty Mason had released two books, *The Costumes of China* and *The Punishments in China*, which depicted illustrated representations of China (ungrounded in particular events), that categorized the kinds of punishments inflicted upon Chinese subjects for their crimes, as well as expressing temperance for such crimes. Eric Hayot points out, "by declaring his respect for Chinese temperance - and therefore by tempering the complete picture of China's punishments - Mason

⁴²⁷ Hegel, G.W.F. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 1961. P. 198. Referred to from here on out as "Hegel."

⁴²⁸ Hegel, G.W.F. *The Philosophy of History*. J. Sibree, trans. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004. P. 128. Referred to from here on out as "Sibree."

opens the possibility that the Chinese are not that temperate after all. Saying you don't wish to judge someone implies that there is something there to be judged"⁴²⁹. Kafka's characters in "Description of a Struggle" and "In the Penal Colony" are violent so as to confront its readers with violence for its associations with oriental colonialism and European Anti-Semitism. My proposal is not too different from Boa's claim that "In Kafka's day as now, the most pressing threats of violence came from racism, but the most intimate threat to identity came from gender. Cross-cutting to express racial tension through gender anxiety marks many of Kafka's figures"⁴³⁰. The only difference between Boa's statement and my thesis is that Kafka's representations of racial others of the "Orient" are not merely marked by the cross-cutting of racial tension and gender anxiety, but are actively wearing that marker and performing their roles in those markers to make the audience think critically about how they represent racial others.

Description of a Racial Struggle or How the Yellow Men Vanish

Kafka's "Description of a Struggle" has a rather complicated history that requires some discussion so as to explain the way in which I am approaching the text(s). Two drafts⁴³¹ were composed in the first decade of the twentieth century, one between 1904 and 1907, the other between 1909 and 1910. Two excerpts from Manuscript A, "Gespräch mit dem Beter" ("Conversation with the Suppliant") and "Gespräch mit dem Betrunkenen" ("Conversation with

⁴²⁹ Hayot, Eric. *The Hypothetical Mandarin: Sympathy, Modernity, and Chinese Pain*. New York: Oxford UP, 2009. P. 71.

⁴³⁰ Boa. P. 44.

⁴³¹ For citation purposes, I defer to the following source for citations of Manuscript A (Marked by "FA" and the page number): Kafka, Franz. *Beschreibung eines Kampfes*. Stroemfeld: Roter Stern, 1999. For Manuscript B (Marked by "FB" and the page number), I defer to: Kafka, Franz. *Gegen zwölf Uhr [...]*. Stroemfeld: Roter Stern, 1999. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

the Drunk”) appeared in the literary journal *Hyperion* in spring of 1909 and an excerpt from Manuscript B, not included in Manuscript A, titled “Kinder auf der Landstraße” (“Children on a Country Road”) appeared in his first story collection, *Betrachtung (Contemplation)*, in 1912. The two manuscripts were edited together into one manuscript with text from both drafts and published by Max Brod first in 1936 and were then published as two separate manuscripts in 1969. The plot of Manuscript A follows the basic summary: a man and his acquaintance leave a party to hike the Laurenziberg on the outskirts of Prague, the narrator leaps on his acquaintance’s back and finds himself transported to a fantastic space where a fat man on a litter is floating down a river. The fat man recounts the story of the supplicant, whom he encounters at a church, while he is being swept away by the current of the river. The supplicant recounts his own story within the fat man’s account of a supplicant, causing the first-person perspective to change thrice. Once the stories conclude, the fat man drowns and the original narrator returns to his friend on the Laurenziberg. Manuscript B makes minor changes in the beginning, but includes a new flashback to the narrator’s childhood. The fat man as a character is effectively eliminated, and the ending is extended to the narrator bringing his friend to another social gathering, creating a kind of circular ending. Because I focus on character development and performance throughout this project, I will look at both manuscripts side-by-side in my discussion, regarding both manuscripts as two parts of a whole project that informs Kafka’s subsequent thoughts on “Oriental” races.

Kafka codes his “Oriental” races within this text not directly through the Hegelian/historical reading of these races, but through the more conventionally known marker of yellow skin. As he imagines his acquaintance describing him to others the day after their hike, the narrator thinks in the voice of his acquaintance, “Er sieht aus, – wie soll ich es beschreiben –

wie eine Stange in baumelnder Bewegung auf die ein gelbhäutiger und schwarzbehaarter Schädel ein wenig ungeschic[ht]kt aufgespießt ist. Sein Körper ist mit vielen, ziemlich kleinen, grellen, gelblichen Stoffstücken behängt, die ihn gestern vollständig bedeckten, denn in der Windstille dieser Nacht lagen sie glatt an”⁴³²/ “He appeared—how should I describe it—like a pole in dangly movement, on which a yellow-skinned and black haired skull was awkwardly impaled. His body was draped with many, relatively small, garish, yellowish pieces of fabric that covered him completely yesterday because they abutted smoothly in the dead calm.” Describing himself as having the appearance of yellow skin and black hair codes him as East Asian, if not Chinese specifically, through the nineteenth century’s broader standing of “yellow” as a defining characteristic of East Asian/ Chinese races. As Walter Demel points out, “Die auf Blumenbach zurückgehende, bis in die Gegenwart in einigen Schulbüchern verbreitete Auffassung von fünf durch ihre Hautfarbe unterscheidbaren Rassen ist unhaltbar. Speziell die Existenz einer ‘gelben Rasse’ ist nicht nachgewiesen worden”⁴³³/ “The belief, which dates back to Blumenbach and continues to appear in some schoolbooks today, that there are five races, distinguishable through their skin colour, is untenable. The existence of a ‘yellow race’ has never been demonstrated convincingly”⁴³⁴. Notions of a yellow race are a scholarly invention dating back to Blumenbach, a contemporary of Hegel, and went hand-in-hand with Hegel’s geo-historical reading of the Chinese. Yellow is also a color not only used to represent the Jew, as Sander Gilman points

⁴³² FA. P. 32.

⁴³³ Demel, Walter. “Wie die Chinesen gelb wurden: Ein Beitrag zur Frühgeschichte der Rassentheorien.” *Historische Zeitschrift*, Bd. 255, H.3 (Dec. 1992). P. 665-6.

⁴³⁴ Demel, Walter. “How the Chinese Became Yellow: A Contribution to the Early History of Race Theories.” Bettina Brandt and Daniel Purdy, trans. Bettina Brandt and Daniel Leonhard Purdy, eds. *China in the German Enlightenment*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016. P. 40.

out⁴³⁵ in the introduction to this chapter, but one to stigmatize them: “Yellow stigmatization has a long and convoluted history going back to the European Middle Ages, when Jews and prostitutes were forced to wear yellow signs or clothes to separate them from the general population and to emphasize their marginal status”⁴³⁶. The decision to racially code the narrator as yellow in the first draft in a very early work of Kafka’s shows an emerging interest in the question of representing other races, especially where anatomical and physiological parallels are drawn between the Jews and East Asians, especially the Chinese; one has to remember that, while Hegel’s geo-historical reading of race was still in circulation as a means of understanding race, nineteenth century race theory was characterized more by anatomical and physiological readings and understandings of race. In the interest of full disclosure, I should note here that in the second draft, the word ‘yellow’ in both sentences is curiously removed, suggesting that Kafka wanted to engage the question of race and the Chinese in his literary oeuvre, but later chose to abstain from anatomical and physiological coding of race within this context.

Just as the yellow of the narrator vanishes between versions, so too does the presence of the most Asian-looking character in “Description of a Struggle”: The Fat Man. As Rolf Goebel has aptly pointed out, “the Fat Man synecdochically represents the indeterminacy, flexibility, and ambivalence of orientalist metaphors, topoi, and concepts, which can be manipulated, rewritten, disseminated, and, if necessary, discarded by authors displaying various ideological positions and poetic intentions”⁴³⁷. Part of the goal in this section is to untangle some of the orientalist

⁴³⁵ See note 431.

⁴³⁶ Doran. P. 5.

⁴³⁷ Goebel, Rolf. *Constructing China: Kafka's Orientalist Discourse*. Columbia: Camden House, 1997. P. 40.

metaphors, topoi, and concepts evoked by the Fat Man. With great ceremony, the Fat Man enters as such:

Aus den Gebüsch des andern Ufers traten gewaltig vier nackte Männer, die auf ihren Schultern eine hölzerne Tragbahre hielten. Auf dieser Tragbahre saß in orientalischer Haltung ein ungeheuerlich dicker Mann... Seine faltigen Fettmassen waren so sorgfältig ausgebreitet, daß sie zwar die ganze Tragbahre bedeckten und noch an den Seiten gleich dem Saume eines gelblichen Teppichs hinunterhiengen, und ihn dennoch nicht störten. Sein haarloser Schädel war klein und glänzte gelb. Sein Gesicht trug den einfältigen Ausdruck eines Menschen der nachdenkt und sich nicht bemüht es zu verbergen⁴³⁸.

From the brush of the riverbanks powerfully emerged four naked men, who held on their shoulders a wooden litter. On this litter sat a monstrously fat man in Oriental fashion...His wrinkled rolls of fat were so carefully spread that they dressed the entire litter and hung down like the seams of a yellow carpet and yet didn't faze him. His hairless skull was small and shined yellow. His face wore the fatuous expression of a person who is reflecting and makes no attempt to hide it.

Here we see several parallels between the way in which the narrator self-reflexively describes himself through his acquaintances voice and the way he describes the Fat Man: Emphasis is placed on description of the skin, color particularly of the head, which are yellow in both narratives. The narrator and the Fat Man complement each other: the narrator describes himself as gaunt and the man on the litter as corpulent. In Doran's reading of the systematic use of yellow to code "yellow peril," one could read the Fat Man as "a singular, supernatural yellow figure, a kind of synecdoche of an uncontrollable power targeting the West from within"⁴³⁹. Kafka's characterization of the Fat Man echoes this supernatural figure, as we will see later in this chapter, by using chants and prayers to manipulate the natural surroundings of his scene. The yellowness of the skin, denoting illness, would affirm this reading in a way, since German mystics believed in fasting and disavowing worldly possessions (in what modern times would be

⁴³⁸ FA. P. 96/99.

⁴³⁹ Doran. P. 126.

considered an unhealthy fashion) in order to be closer to God, a concept the West also frequently associated with the Buddhist pursuit of Enlightenment. By giving his narrator and the Fat Man the same skin color, but different body types, Kafka exposes issues with coding the race of characters on the basis of skin color alone and with the Western misconceptions of Buddhism and how those conceptions are mediated through Western parallels, such as German Mysticism.

Another fascinating parallel, whose trace remains in the second version of “Description of a Struggle,” between the narrator and the Fat Man, is the material use of the carpet and the chair. The Fat Man’s folds of yellow skin are likened to yellow carpet, which awkwardly imply a decadent materialism in contrast to Budai and by extension the Buddhism with which a Western reader would associate him. Within the narrator’s inner monologue, while hiking alongside his acquaintance, he says, “In meinem Zimmer würde ich die Stehlampe anzünden, welche in dem eisernen Gestelle auf dem Tische ist, ich würde mich in meinen Armstuhl setzen, der auf dem zerrissenen morgenländischen Teppich steht”⁴⁴⁰/ “In my room I would turn on the floor lamp, which is in its iron stand next to the table, I would sit in my arm chair that stands over a torn, Oriental rug.” The narrator imagines returning home instead of continuing his hike with his acquaintance and recalls two very specific objects we see in another iteration with the Fat Man: a rug and a chair. The narrator’s furniture is arranged in a very European way, with the chair standing on top of the imported from the East. There is a symbolic logic at play, the armchair representing the European practice of scholarly Orientalisms, literally standing over the Orient, as represented by the carpet, in an imperialistic fashion. Contemporary readers are readily reminded of the expression “arm chair anthropology,” which refers to the practice of assessing groups of peoples and their practices based on the records and reports of others, rather than

⁴⁴⁰ FA. P. 24.

traveling to and interacting with these peoples themselves. Although the term “arm chair anthropologist” has no German equivalent and was not in circulation at the turn of the century, the practice of assessing distant peoples and cultures through accounts of explorers and missionaries rather than through direct observation was frequently criticized from the Enlightenment onward. In contrast to the image of the chair and carpet that the narrator will never reach except in his imagination, what he actually beholds (or at the very least seems to behold in the story) is a fat man, sitting “oriental style” atop a litter. In a sense we see two contrastive images, one that does exist in the narrative: the Fat, yellow Man sitting Oriental-style on his litter cushioned and one that does not: the narrator's arm chair on an Oriental rug. The image that does not exist is what the Orientalist would like to see: just an arm chair and a carpet, an embodiment of deep thought and consideration. What we actually see though is an obese man burdening others. In a sense, we have a point of view that will reoccur in “The Great Wall of China,” where the Chinese narrator adopts a position reminiscent of the European Orientalist mocking the Orientalist gaze (namely Hegel's comparative history, later mimicked by the narrator in “The Great Wall of China”), by inverting the reality of the two images: the arm chair and carpet as the presumed reality of the Orientalist are imagined and never materialize for the character in the text and the Fat Man with yellow skin, seated Oriental style on a litter, mocks the description of Oriental peoples as it becomes a fantastic reality for the narrator. Kafka's representations, we have to remember, derides other representations of “Oriental races” that stake a claim on being hard-truth reality by fashioning a fantastic representation of an Oriental person alongside the image of something frequently associated with the creators of “realistic accounts” of Oriental persons.

Smothering Fantasies: A Description of a Homoerotic Struggle

The reference to the narrator's arm chair and Oriental carpet is rewritten in an interesting way in Manuscript B⁴⁴¹ of "Description of a Struggle." Throughout the first part of the second draft, more emphasis is placed on the temperature of places, whether actual or imagined by the narrator, with the adjective "hot" (heiss) "warm" and "cool" (kühl) occurring in adjectival, nominal, and verbal forms throughout the first section. The references to temperature begin within the second section with the acquaintances telling the narrator, "die Kühle wird gut tun"⁴⁴²/ "the cold will do good" and ending with this exchange,

'Pfui die kalte Hand', rief er, 'mit einer solchen Hand mochte ich nicht nachhause gehn. Sie hatten sich mein Lieber auch küssen lassen sollen, das war ein Versäumnis, nun Sie können es ja nachholen. Aber schlafen? In dieser Nacht? Was fällt Ihnen denn ein? Bedenken Sie doch, wieviel glückliche Gedanken man mit der Decke erstickt, wenn man allein in seinem Bette schläft, und wieviel unglückliche Träume man mit ihr wärmt.'
'Ich erstickte nichts und wärme nichts', sagte ich.⁴⁴³

'Pfew, a cold hand,' he said, 'I wouldn't wanna go home with such a cold hand. You should have also let yourself be kissed, good sir; that was a mistake that only you can correct. But sleep? Tonight? What are you thinking? Consider, good sir, how many lovely thoughts one smothers with a blanket, when one sleeps alone in bed and how many unfortunate dreams one warms up with it.'
'I smother nothing and warm nothing,' I said

The emphasis placed on coldness between the time the narrator and his acquaintance depart from the party is impacted with irony. They leave the party presumably for fresh air to sober

⁴⁴¹ "In meinem Zimmer wird mir bei der Ankunft warm sein, ich werde auf meinem Tisch die Stehlampe in ihrem eisernen Gestell entzünden und, bin ich damit fertig, werde ich mich in meinen Armstuhl legen, der auf dem zerrissenen morgenländischen Teppich steht" (FB 14)/ "In my room I will be warm upon arrival, I will ignite the floor lamp in the iron stand beside my table and, when I finish with that, I will lie in my armchair that stands over the torn, Oriental rug"

⁴⁴² FB. P. 6.

⁴⁴³ FB. P. 16/18.

themselves from the warmth of the crowded room and alcohol at a party, at the suggestion of the narrator, only for the acquaintance to complain about the coldness of the narrator's hands. However, the acquaintance reverses his preference for coolness when the possibility of calling it a night is suggested, noting that warmth yields bad dreams and eliminates pleasant (and presumably conscious) thoughts. The narrator offers the cool retort of being unable to smother or warm something, suggesting that he has a cold personality on the one hand, but on the other hand appealing directly to the acquaintance's thermal preference. The image of the bed, particularly the daybed, occurs in "The Great Wall of China," and in *The Blue Octave Notebooks*, wherein the Emperor and the German gentleman interested in history both fall off their daybeds, a destabilizing image which leads the reader to believe that the Emperor is not as omnipotent as one may think or that the historian has traveled too much from that bed to be any kind of authority on histories outside of Europe. Coolness and warmth, thus become not only a way of gauging comfort, but also attraction in these passages, as the narrator's retort comes off as a come on to his acquaintance; the bed becomes a means by which Kafka smothers the fantastic image or dream like quality of the mysterious Orient.

Coolness and warmth also allude indirectly to Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* within this homoerotic tension between the narrator and his acquaintance. As Deleuze observes, "the coldness is used here, as it were, to suppress pagan sensuality and keep sadistic sensuality at bay"⁴⁴⁴. The person⁴⁴⁵ inflicting pain on the masochist has to be a reluctant, if not almost entirely

⁴⁴⁴ Deleuze, Gilles. "Coldness and Cruelty." Jean McNeil, trans. *Masochism*. New York: Zone Books, 1989. P. 52.

⁴⁴⁵ Deleuze heteronormatively rejects the masochist's torturer as possibly male, explaining that it can only be a woman that can be coerced or convinced to inflict pain on the masochist. Deleuze's reasons for rejecting homoerotic masochism are unclear, except that he probably rejects it because it does not fit within the Freudian framework through which he reads *Venus im Pelz*.

unwilling participant in the act, otherwise the act cannot rightly be considered masochism, since any desire to inflict pain on another would be considered sadistic and would conflate the two.

The narrator expresses a kind of masochism, on the one hand wanting to be warmed by return to his room and being away from his acquaintance, on the other hand appealing to his acquaintance preference for coolness over warmth. Whether or not he views himself as the masochist proper or the torturer remains to be seen, but Kafka definitely deviates experimentally from Sacher-Masoch of course by moving away from the heterosexual matrix into a homoerotic one and secondly by doing so with a character who was, in an earlier draft, coded as Chinese. As I will discuss later in this chapter with regards to “In the Penal Colony,” Kafka was familiar with Mirbeau, having been in possession of *Enthüllungen einer Kammerzofe* (*Le Journal d'une femme de chambre/ Diary of a Chambermaid*, 1900) and *Laster und andere Geschichten* (*Vice and Other Stories*, 1903)⁴⁴⁶, so Kafka having read *The Torture Garden*, which takes place partially in a Chinese penal colony and involves a sadistic French woman named Clara, who tortures people to quell her hysteria, is not outside the realm of possibility. Kafka no doubt recognized traces of both the Marquis de Sade and Sacher-Masoch in Mirbeau’s novel, which was a coded criticism of French Anti-Semitism in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair in France. I maintain that Kafka was originally inspired by Mirbeau’s mediation of Sadism and Masochism in China as a critique of Anti-Semitism, but oscillated between representing people coded as Oriental or peoples coded as Homosexual in “Description of a Struggle” as a way of talking about Anti-Semitism within his early work.

⁴⁴⁶ Born, Jürgen. *Kafkas Bibliothek: Ein beschreibendes Verzeichnis*. Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1990. P. 42.

More attention, I think, should be given to the homoerotic tension within both drafts of “Description of a Struggle,” to elaborate on the question of coding and representation within the text. Some scholars have already pointed out the ways in which homoerotic tension communicate issues with colonial discourse. For example, Robert Lemon notes, “Taken into conjunction with the speaker’s discussion of his yellow skin (NS, 62), his sexual orientation serves to undermine the automatic assumption that any first person narrator must be a white heterosexual male. Only the presumption of male gender remains intact. In this way the text disorients the Western, heterosexual, male reader by thwarting his desire to identify with the narrating protagonist”⁴⁴⁷. Already the colonial gaze is thrown off by Kafka’s adoption of the vaguely “Oriental,” vaguely not-heterosexual males perspective. Lemon has also drawn attention to the Fat Man’s own sadistic behavior, mentioning, “[w]hile the sado-masochistic relationship between the Fat Man and his bearers suggests the deviant sexuality routinely associated with the Orient, the speaker’s evident arousal at this scene undermines the notion of the Western observer as dispassionate and objective”⁴⁴⁸. While I agree that Kafka undermines the objective gaze of the Western observer by portraying what is considered to be an “Oriental” scene fantastically and encouraging an “Oriental” character to lead us to it, I disagree with Lemon here only because he points out on the next page, the narrator in question is not a dispassionate and objective Western observer, though the readership he leads is. Secondly, irrational and passionate is not a feature Hegel, much less other race theorists of the nineteenth century, ascribe to the Chinese or the Jews, except within, as Boa points out, a heterosexual matrix, where the Jew represents a threat to

⁴⁴⁷ Lemon, Robert. *Imperial Messages: Orientalism as Self-Critique in the Habsburg Fin de Siècle*. Rochester: Camden House, 2011. P. 83.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.* P. 82.

Christian/ European women. Rather, this scene points out the disjuncture between a dispassionately/ objectively Western gaze toward the Orient and the constant portrayal of the Orient as a colonial fantasy, to use Suzanne Zantop's term. The Fat Man's sado-masochistic homoerotic enslavement of his bearers both fosters the fantastic features of the scene and echoes the Dreyfus Affair and Mirbeau's novel, with the Fat Man acting as a very lazy and passive kind of colonial overseer. The speaker's evident arousal draws the reader further into the fantastic gaze of the European, who gets the rare opportunity to see an "Oriental" space from the perspective of an "Oriental" guide, one who sees the Orient as rich with plunder for the taking.

The relationship between the narrator and his equally Oriental counterpart, the Fat Man, is quite different from his relationship to his object of love and affection: the European acquaintance. The acquaintance's advice for the narrator to let himself be kissed is neither the first nor the last time the word kiss (in either the nominal or verbal form) appears in the first section of the story. Kissing features somewhat prominently in this first section, as the narrator both witnesses and is told by his acquaintance of amorous kissing with a parlor maid, which prompts the narrator to think about his acquaintance kissing others. In Manuscript B, the narrator is prompted to think, "Wenn sie ihn küssen, küssen sie mich ja auch ein wenig, wenn man will; mit dem Mundwinkel gewissermaßen; wenn sie ihn aber entführen, dann stehlen sie mir ihn. Und er soll immer bei mir bleiben, immer, wer soll ihn beschützen wenn ich nicht"⁴⁴⁹ / "When they kiss him, they also kiss me a bit in a sense., virtually with the corner of the mouth; but when they carry off with him, they steal him from me. And he should always be by my side, always, who else would protect him, if not me?" The homoerotic possessiveness of the narrator lends itself easily to be understood in the context of the psychological works published within a few years by

⁴⁴⁹ FB. P. 18/20

Sigmund Freud, namely *The Interpretation of Dreams* and the *Three Essays on Sexuality*. We have to remember, however, that the narrator does not necessarily become European or another race by default simply by virtue of having his racial coding removed. Kafka may well still have intended his narrator to be ambiguously Chinese/ Jewish, but chose to place more emphasis on the sado-masochistic parallel to *The Torture Garden* in his critique of European Anti-Semitism. For this reason, I dismiss the possibility that the narrator simply becomes white when not otherwise coded with yellow skin.

However, the failure to include this line in the first draft of “Description of a Struggle” does not necessarily mean Kafka intended to divorce the homoerotic tension from the representation of the narrator as Oriental. The passage from the second draft places a lot of stress on the vowels “u” and “ü”, which force the lips to pucker in a kissing formation. The puckering is held or eased into position by the “k” in “küssen” (to kiss) and the “m” in “Mundwinkel” (corner of the mouth). In both drafts, “küssen” appears quite frequently and is homophonically supported by the use of “kühl,” which suggests a connection between his obsession with his acquaintance’s mouth and his masochistic affection for that acquaintance. The lip action of puckering is emphasized not only in the direct mentioning of “Lippen” a few times in both drafts, but also in the similar sounding “Lampe” (Lamp) and “liebe” (lovely, dear) which occur in close proximity to one another and a few times apiece through the first section of both versions, notably before and just as the narrator and his acquaintance leave the party. Most notable perhaps though is the word “Mund” (mouth), which only appears thrice, but is amplified by five uses of the word “Mond” (moon in English), two appearances of “Mühe” (effort), and one use each of the words “Munterkeit” (playfulness) and “Mühlenturm” (mill-tower); in the second draft, “Mund” appears more frequently, along with about the same amount of

homophonically similar words. Descriptions of the mouth, lips, and kissing refer to the narrator's own, his acquaintances, and the women with whom the acquaintance associates. The constellation of erotically charged language, we must remember, is coming out of the presumably Oriental narrator's mouth, so to speak, suggesting that he has a strong, sexual adoration for his acquaintance. When we see this level of adoration as one a plausibly Jewish or Chinese man may have for one who is otherwise not coded, we are confronted with an uncomfortably unrealistic image of the implicitly oppressed Oriental falling in love with the European oppressor.

This masochistic adoration goes a bit over the top towards the ending of the first section and in the final section of both drafts of "Description of a Struggle." Whereas we get frequent repetition of "Mond" and "Moos" (moss) in Manuscript A as the first section comes to end, in Manuscript B, the narrator thinks to himself, "Jetzt kam offenbar der Mord. Ich werde bei ihm bleiben und er wird das Messer, dessen Griff er in der Tasche schon hält, an seinem Rock in die Höhe führen und dann gegen mich"⁴⁵⁰ "Now comes the murder, evidently. I will remain by him and he will raise the knife, whose handle he's already holding in his bag, along his cloak high and then into me." The word "Mord" enters into and indeed abruptly ends the consonant repetition of lip-puckering caused by "Mund," "Mond," and other similar words preceding it. The narrator anticipating his own murder at the hands of his acquaintance, paired with the narrator's extreme attraction for his acquaintance, echoes the contract in *Venus in Furs*, which specifically gives Wanda permission to kill Severin/ Gregor, giving the contract the subversive edge it has over the sadist's simply disavowal of law. Kafka suggestively makes his narrator a masochist by having him anticipate his own imagined murder.

⁴⁵⁰ FB. P. 32/4.

The image of the knife and the anticipation of death occurs in the first draft, but in a manner that structurally and narratively complements Kafka's revision. Rather than occurring in the first section of Manuscript A, we see at the end of the first draft, "Da zog mein Bekannter ohne Umstände aus seiner Tasche ein Messer, öffnete es nachdenklich und stieß es dann wie im Spiele in seinen linken Oberarm und entfernte es nicht"⁴⁵¹/ "Then my acquaintance removed from his bag without circumstances a knife, opened it pensively and then stabbed it like in some game into his upper, left arm, without removing it." Contextually, the acquaintance does this upon learning that the narrator is engaged to be married after they resume their conversation about love and women. The scene is jarring in a way because it implies that the acquaintance had some reciprocal feelings of attraction for the narrator, but the narrator chose to conceal those feelings with the confession of an engagement, since his acquaintance kept going on about being an ardent lover, who kissed many a woman. The image inverts the one created in Mirbeau's novel by revealing an implicitly masochistic European stabbing himself in torment upon learning that a man, to whom he is attracted, seems unwilling to reciprocate his feelings. The delicateness of the implicitly European acquaintance highlights the fragility of European, imperial logic of an affinitive gaze towards the Orient and its people. Kafka parodies fantastically a suppressed, sadistic logic of colonialism and imperialism built into the "understandings" of non-European race issued by the nineteenth century philosophical and historical traditions, to disavow any implication that the representations of Oriental peoples in philosophical treatises on race are themselves a parody of anything that can be considered real.

Indeed, the question of reality and fantasy, which underscores the transitions of layered narrative in "Description of a Struggle," mirror Kafka's work against claims of representing real

⁴⁵¹ FA. P. 219.

descriptions of Oriental peoples and this is present not only in the relationship between the narrator and his acquaintance, but also between the Fat Man and the Suppliant, who exist within the inner narrative. Kafka alludes to *The Odyssey*, particularly books eight and nine structurally, iconographically and linguistically in “Description of a Struggle.” Before I launch into the parallels between the canonical, epic poem and Kafka’s experimental works, I should note three points about the significance of this paralleling. Firstly, as mentioned before, the two drafts of “Description of a Struggle” were among Kafka’s earliest experiments in literary writing; Kafka wanted to engage multiple ideas on multiple fronts, some of which were added and dropped between drafts in order to create a complete narrative. Kafka would later split his interpretations of China and the Ancient Greek tradition into several works, including not only “The Great Wall of China” and “An Old Manuscript” on the China side, but “Poseidon” and “Das Schweigen der Sirenen” (“The Silence of the Sirens”) in a period that Pietro Citati identifies as the “Sino-Greek Intermezzo” of Kafka’s writing career, pointing out, “This modern Ulysses [from “Das Schweigen der Sirenen”] is Kafka, the man who has taught us to coexist with the death of gods”⁴⁵². The second point I want to bring up is the German-speaking world’s appropriation of Ancient Greek culture. Kafka’s engagement with Greek Antiquity, as observed in my third chapter, had a lot to do with the defining of the “German” image as one that was Greco-Roman, which was contrasted with the sickly, yellow image of the Jew, that Kafka knowingly embodied in many ways. As Anderson points out, “Whereas Hirschfeld took pains to point out the separateness of a homosexual identity, [Brand and his circle] considered same-sex relations between men to be one part of a broad spectrum encompassing ancient Greek forms of male love, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German tradition of male friendship, the aesthetic

⁴⁵² Citati, Pietro. *Kafka*. Raymond Rosenthal, trans. New York: Knopf, 1990. P. 170-1.

appreciation and cultivation ('Pfleger') of the naked male body (hence their interest in gymnastics, nudism or 'freie körperliche Kultur', clothing reform, etc.)"⁴⁵³. The Ancient Greeks themselves were notoriously xenophobic and othering by representing non-Greeks as Barbaric (from the Ancient Greek meaning being only able to babble) and monstrous was part of that appropriation and seemed to be easily adopted⁴⁵⁴. As Edith Hall points out, "Civilization respects guests and looks kindly on suppliants, whereas Odysseus' men are maltreated by most of the beings they encounter... Battles against the Persians are now represented as reiterations of the gods' and heroes' wars on Titans, Giants, Amazons, and Centaurs. Lawlessness, incest, cannibalism, and other deviations from the socially authorized way of life are 'discovered' by Greek ethnographers not amongst mythical tribes, but in known barbarian communities"⁴⁵⁵. *The Odyssey* and its set of backwards monsters served as a literary analog to the encounters with the Persians and other non-Greeks for Athenians, something well known already in Kafka's time. The Oriental Jew, in the appropriation of the Classical Greek image by "Aryan", German men became the equivalent of one of these backwards, barbaric others against which they were juxtaposed. The third point worth observing, which nods back to chapter three, is that Hegel saw the Ancient Greeks as a historical "missing link" between *Spirit* and Oriental zoolatry in their practice of ornithomancy, of which there is an early example in the first books of *The Odyssey*, where a prophet on Ithaca foretells the fall of the suitors when a hawk captures a dove mid-air.

⁴⁵³ Anderson. P. 81.

⁴⁵⁴ For a larger treatment of barbarism and civilization in the context of Ancient Greece,, please see the following titles in the bibliography: Hall, Edith. *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*, "The I and the Other in Odysseus's Story of the Cyclops" in Pucci, Pietro. *The Song of the Sirens: Essays on Homer*, and "Xerxes' Homer" by Johannes Haubold in Bridges, et al., Ed. *Cultural Responses to the Persian Wars: Antiquity to the Third Millennium*.

⁴⁵⁵ Hall, Edith. *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. P. 53.

Although Kafka does not allude to ornithomancy from *The Odyssey* in “Description of a Struggle,” Kafka’s other references to *The Odyssey* in this experimental work of his engage with the question of barbarism and its relation to race in his contemporary contexts.

Kafka’s work parallels *The Odyssey* most generically through structure. In both *The Odyssey* and “Description of a Struggle,” there is a framing narrative that separates the most fantastical elements of the narrative from the otherwise more realistic. Odysseus is prompted by King Alkinoös to regale his journey back from the Trojan War, which prompts the discussion of the various gods, monsters, and witches, whom Odysseus encountered on his journey. In a similar scene, the Fat Man is prompted by seeing the Narrator in Kafka’s “Description of a Struggle” to tell his story of the encounter with the Supplicant. The narrative parallel to *The Odyssey* connects back the earlier discussion of armchair anthropology and the reliability of reported speech. Of course, the stories of Odysseus’ wild adventures go unquestioned by his audience, but Kafka then adds more layers of narration, distancing the reader from the original speaker and by extension the truth. Kafka shows how receiving information second, third, and even fourth hand becomes more and more fantastic with its retelling, even and especially when there is still a claim of truth to that information. The iconographic parallel between *The Odyssey* and “Description of a Struggle” is a parallel between the Fat Man and Polyphemus, the larger-than-life cyclops that ensnares Odysseus and his crew in his cave during book nine. The Fat Man is seen moving a mountain by praying⁴⁵⁶ at one point and moving the elements through prayer⁴⁵⁷.

⁴⁵⁶ “Jetzt aber – ich bitte Euch – Berg Blume Gras, Buschwerk und Fluß, gebt mir ein wenig Raum, damit ich athmen kann” (FA 104)/ “But now—I implore you—mountain flowers grass shrubbery and river, give me some room so that I can breathe.”

⁴⁵⁷ “Da entstand eine eilfertiges Verschieben in den umliegenden Bergen, die sich hinter hängende Nebel stießen” (FA 104)/ “There occurred, then, a hasty shift in the surrounding mountains, which stowed away behind lingering fog.”

These are both iconic parallels to Polyphemus, who both physically moves a boulder blocking the entrance to his cave and his prayer to Poseidon, his father, at the end of book nine, to obstruct Odysseus' journey home for as long as possible. Kafka ironizes this parallel of course by killing off the Fat Man through drowning, whereas Polyphemus is avenged by praying to his God-of-the-Sea father for being blinded by Odysseus. In the context of *The Odyssey*, Polyphemus is one of several stand-ins demonstrating the disavowal of Ancient Greek hospitality with his barbaric and cannibalistic behavior. Kafka's equivalent to Polyphemus serves as a trace of this lack of hospitability and a reposition of barbarism with yellow skin.

Dictionally, the Odyssean trace lies not in the first, but the second draft of the text. When the narrator gets separated from his acquaintance and subsequently lost, the narrator shouts at one point,

Wenn niemand kommt, dann kommt eben niemand. Ich habe niemandem etwas Böses getan, niemand hat mir etwas Böses getan, niemand aber will mir helfen, lauter niemand. Aber so ist es doch nicht. Nur daß mir niemand hilft, sonst wäre lauter niemand hübsch, ich würde ganz gerne, (was sagen Sie dazu?) einen Ausflug mit einer Gesellschaft von lauter niemand machen. Natürlich ins Gebirge, wohin denn sonst? Wie sich diese Niemand aneinander drängen, diese vielen quergestreckten oder eingehängten Arme, diese vielen Füße durch winzige Schritte getrennt!⁴⁵⁸

If nobody comes, then nobody comes. I've wronged nobody, nobody's wronged me, but nobody will help me. But that's not how it is. Only that nobody helps me, otherwise nobody would be purely handsome, I would happily (what do you say to that?) go on a jaunt with a community of pure nobodies. Of course in the mountains, to where else? How these Nobodies press upon each other, these many arms either crossed or hanging at their sides, these many feet separated by tiny steps.

The passage is an allusion to Odysseus' famous trick in book nine, when he plies Polyphemus with a powerful wine and tells the cycloptic cannibal that his name is "nobody," a play on the

⁴⁵⁸ FB. P. 48.

Ancient Greek word for ‘cunning,’ which underscores Odysseus’ character. Odysseus’ trickery comes to fruition when Polyphemus bellows to other cyclopes that “nobody” blinded him. Kafka ironizes this allusion by letting his narrator complain about there being “nobody” around when he and his friend get lost. Here we are reminded that the narrator himself goes by no special name, as Odysseus does and later hubristically reveals, leading to his ten years of exile from Ithaca. The narrator never discloses his name and in this scene remains lost. He also describes “nobody,” as handsome, on the condition “nobody” helped, suggesting that he does not find his acquaintance attractive. However, the narrator also seems to be using sarcasm to attract the attention of his acquaintance, marked by the rhetorical question in parentheses and his sudden enthusiasm to go walking with the nobodies. The narrator’s sarcastic remark also seems to undermine the craftiness of the contrastively civilized Odysseus in his treatment of the barbaric other.

Kafka’s ironic uses of structures, iconography, and the repetition of “nobody” from *The Odyssey* gesture towards the general Ancient Greek practice of othering that underlies much of the Greek tradition and is very much appropriated by the German-speaking world in the 19th and early 20th Century. Kafka employs the experimental fusion of Buddhist imagery, particularly embodied in the Fat Man, with allusions to the Ancient Greek tradition, as a way of experimentally criticizing the adoption of Ancient Greek xenophobia by the German-speaking against Jews and other “Orientals.”

If Cantati is correct and Kafka’s Odysseus/Ulysses from the later works teaches us to exist with the death of gods, “Description of a Struggle” challenges the question of faith through the Fat Man’s discussion with Suppliant (literally Beter, an agentive form of beten, to pray) and the Suppliant’s story of his conversation with the drunk. In the Fat Man’s conversation with the

Suppliant, the suppliant alludes strangely towards two Biblical references: The Tower of Babel and Noah's Arch. After the Suppliant gives an explanation as to why he slammed his head against the floor when he prayed, the Fat Man asserts, "Die Pappel in den Feldern, die Ihr den 'Thurm von Babel' genannt habt, denn Ihr wußtet nicht oder wolltet nicht wissen, daß es eine Pappel war, schaukelt wieder namenlos und Ihr müßt sie nennen 'Noah, wie er betrunken war'"⁴⁵⁹ / "The poplars in the fields, whom you called the 'Tower of Babel', because you didn't know or didn't want to know, that it was a poplar, swinging nameless once more and you have to call them "Noah, how drunk he was." I should note here that in Manuscript B, the Narrator espouses this very sentiment with little deviation in phrasing from the Fat Man⁴⁶⁰. Although the Tower of Babel will take on a different contextual role in Kafka's later works, as shown in chapters one and two, the comparison between the Tower and Noah is fascinating because they are two stories within the Bible about the creation of races/ groups of peoples. In the Babel story, humanity is scattered and given different languages to prevent them from communicating with one another in a unified fashion to defy God again. The reference to Noah's drunkenness alludes heavily to the biblical incident known as The Curse of Ham, in which Noah's son Ham was cursed by his father for beholding Noah drunk and naked under a tent. Walter Sokel has mentioned in his interpretation of this passage that, "The metaphor following 'Tower of Babel,' 'Noah in his cups,' alludes to the rebellion of son against father, reported in Genesis... The first rebellion of son against father, Ham's against Noah, is in turn followed by mankind's self-assertion against God in building of that tower that was to reach into Heaven and ended in the

⁴⁵⁹ FA. P. 131.

⁴⁶⁰ "Die Pappel in den Feldern, die Ihr den 'Turm von Babel' genannt habt, denn Ihr wolltet nicht wissen, daß es eine Pappel war, schaukelt wieder namenlos und Ihr müßt sie nennen 'Noah, wie er betrunken war'" (FB 86) / "The poplar in the fields that you call the 'Tower of Babel,' because you didn't want to know that they were poplars, swing again namelessly and you should call them, 'Noah, how drunk he was.'"

breakup of the human family into isolated, mutually uncomprehending groups of individuals—the atomized, strife-ridden societies of history”⁴⁶¹ and David Brenner has pointed out that, “Perhaps most important for interpreting Kafka is the element of homoeroticism in the biblical story. Whereas one might argue that Noah’s son Ham is merely observing his father’s nakedness, ‘gazing is enough to generate desire’ in the Tanakh (and in the Talmud and Midrash) insofar as ‘the male gaze and desire were linked to the Israelite imagination’”⁴⁶². There is, therefore, already an implicit working of the Freudian anxiety of the father and the biblically (read: Jewish in Brenner’s argument) homoerotic implication of beholding one’s father naked.

Another popular interpretation tends to read The Curse of Ham as an explanation of how the three Abrahamic religions split and that Ham’s family line remained cursed. David Goldenberg’s book, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, expands upon this to explain how the Curse of Ham became a means of justifying black slavery by labeling black Muslims in northern Africa as descendants of Ham. For the Fat Man and Narrator to claim the Supplicant is mistaken in understanding the creation of races gestures heavily towards Kafka’s early interest in race theory and understandings of race, especially as religion impacted race theory. Lest we forget, Hegel’s notion of *Spirit* is Euro-Christian centric, and those who are not Christian and not Germanic in Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*, did not have a complete *Spirit*, but were imposed by cultural practices and barriers that prevented them from having *Spirit*.

⁴⁶¹ Sokel, Walter. “Language and Truth in the two Worlds of Franz Kafka.” *German Quarterly* (52:3), 1979. P. 367.

⁴⁶² Brenner, David A. “Uncovering the Father: Kafka, Judaism and Homoeroticism.” *Kafka, Zionism, and Beyond*. Mark H. Gelber, ed. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004. P. 212.

If we turn back to the conversation in which the Fat Man/ Narrator tells the Supplicant the abovementioned statement, we know that the Fat Man/ Narrator is not commenting himself on the origin of races, but rather is criticizing the Supplicant's religious zeal. One can see the parallel development in the relationship between the Fat Man/ Narrator with the Supplicant, as well as The Supplicant and the Drunkard, that was fostered between the Narrator and his acquaintance at the beginning of the story as being ambivalently homoerotic, with one insisting his presence on the other as much as possible. As mentioned earlier, the Supplicant's religious zeal is borderline masochistic in his smashing his head on the floor⁴⁶³. Indeed, Kafka codes the Supplicant as a masochist with homoerotic tendencies, paralleling him narratively to the Narrator. Shortly before the Fat Man/ Narrator criticize the Supplicant for his seemingly over-religious zeal, he mentions (only in the second draft) wanting to be nailed for a short period of time⁴⁶⁴, an image we will see occur in "The Metamorphosis." The masochistic images of the Supplicant suggest not only his Jesus-like quality, but also gesture back to true and false conceptions of Buddha in the west, alluding not only to Jesus, but also the emaciated Siddhartha Gautama. The masochistic imagery and depiction of characters is an exchange for the Drunkard's evocation of Venus⁴⁶⁵ when he regales the Supplicant with the story of him picking up a woman. Venus, of course, another allusion to the Ancient Greek Tradition, also appears

⁴⁶³ "ich unwillig auf die Betenden blickte fiel mir ein junger Mensch auf, der sich mit seiner ganzen magern Gestalt auf den Boden geworfen hatte. Von Zeit zu Zeit packte er mit der ganzen Kraft seines Körpers seinen Schädel und schmetterte ihn seufzend in seine Handflächen, die auf den Steinen auflagen" (FA 115-6/ FB 58/60). "I looked reluctantly towards those praying, a young man, who threw his emaciated body to the ground, caught my eye. From time to time, he clutched his skull with the full force of his body and battered it in the palms of his hands, which abut on stones, sighing." The line appears exactly the same in both drafts.

⁴⁶⁴ "Bedürfnis ist es für mich, Bedürfnis, von diesen Blicken mich für eine kleine Stunde festhämmern zu lassen, während die ganze Stadt um mich herum--" (FB 84)/ "Need is for me, Need, to be hammered down by these gazes for a short hour, while the entire city gathers around me—"

⁴⁶⁵ "Dort ist Venus, der Abendstern" (FA 152)/ "There's Venus, the evening star"

directly in the title and beginning of Sacher-Masoch's *Venus im Pelz*. The masochism in the conversations between the Fat Man and Supplicant, as well as the Supplicant and the Drunkard, are homoerotically charged with a similar constellation of references to lips, mouths and kissing with homophones reinforcing the puckering of lips. Indeed, the constellation of references to the lips, mouths, and kissing culminates in the Supplicant kissing the Fat Man once he is finished the story of his encounter with the Drunkard, fulfilling the parallel between the experiences of the Fat Man/Supplicant with that of the Narrator/Acquaintance. By making the inner narrative layer similar to the outer narrative layer in "Description of a Struggle," Kafka's early experiment in critically approaching nineteenth century depictions of races, particularly 'Oriental races' serves as the basis for his later engagements in the topic, which expose more fully the way he addresses the problem of representing races remotely.

Subtropical Sadism *In der Strafkolonie* or Undoing Hegel's Chinese Emperor

If "Description of a Struggle" served as the laboratory from which Kafka could experiment with questions of race, especially in relation to their representation in various genres of writing, "In the Penal Colony" serves as the more firm engagement into the question of not only how 'Oriental races' are represented, but the consequences of insisting that otherwise literary depictions of 'Oriental races' are somehow real. "In the Penal Colony" was first published on its own in 1919, after first having been written in 1914. The story tells of a European traveling on research to a tropical penal colony, wherein an office in charge of punishing prisoners explains to the traveler the methods of execution employed. One of these methods comes in the form of a machine that transcribes the crime of the prisoner into their bodies, forcing them to bleed to death. In the analysis of the last text treated in my dissertation, I

would like to look specifically at how not only the homoeroticism and violence from “Description of a Struggle” manifests itself in “In the Penal Colony,” but also look at how the interplay between the Oriental officer and the European explorer come into dialogue and network with the Orientalist works treated in the first three chapters of my project.

Before jumping into my analysis, I should point out that many scholars have already pointed out that, of all Kafka’s works, “In the Penal Colony” is the closest Kafka comes to a direct criticism of colonialism as a practice and the racism that supports colonialism. Russell Berman characterizes the postcolonial critique embedded in Kafka’s tale best, observing,

The brutality of the machine is quite enough to understand that a fundamental criticism of domination is at stake. Yet it is the text itself and not the explorer that makes the criticism. The text, however, goes much further than a trivial denunciation of colonialism by displaying how even the anticolonialist traveler, prepared from the start to denounce the backward and illiberal practices on the island, is himself deeply implicated in hierarchal notions of culture and—the prototype of the effete liberal—has no practical aid or advice to offer.⁴⁶⁶

Kafka forces Enlightenment thought to recognize the very barbarism which it attempts to counter through its philosophical understanding, anticipating Adorno’s critique of art before the Holocaust as being something generated out of Enlightenment thought. The implementation of a bureaucratic system in another part of the world while Europe at large enjoyed freedom becomes exposed, causing us to see the racism within it.

Kafka’s work not only scrutinizes the racism generated from the Enlightenment project’s colonialism abroad, but the consequences of it on the continent. As Hanssen points out, “The setting of the story in the tropics of the French empire has evoked Devil’s Island, where Captain

⁴⁶⁶ Berman, Russell A. *Enlightenment or Empire: Colonial Discourse in German Culture*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. P. 232.

Alfred Dreyfus was incarcerated following the infamous anti-Semitic travesty of justice⁴⁶⁷. The tropical penal colony served as the perfect location for sending Europe's undesirable Oriental: the Jews and, in particular, a Jewish army officer falsely accused of espionage. The Dreyfus Affair represents an interesting intersection between domestic and alien orientalisms, as the Anti-Semitism buried within Dreyfus's conviction stems out of Hegel and his predecessors' view that the Jews inherently belonged to the Middle East and not Europe and he would then be imprisoned in a place where the French would justify colonial rule by insisting the natives of Devil's Island needed administrative oversight from their intellectual authority over that small part of the world. Kafka's reference to the Dreyfus affair in this text is mediated by allusions to Mirbeau's *The Torture Garden*, which was an implicit critique of the Dreyfus Affair and a more explicit critique of colonialism.

There is another dimension to this incident, which Sander Gilman points out that is important to my analysis of "In the Penal Colony":

If we begin with Alfred Dreyfus and the accusation of treason that robbed him of his role as soldier and as a man, the primary witnesses against him at his first trial were revealed to have been homosexuals. Their homosexuality plays an important role in the conventional understanding of the case, especially among the homoerotic culture of the French and German armies. The homosexual is ill or at least repressed in the medical discourse of the time, the homosexual is the Jew in that same discourse, and the homosexual is the false witness who betrays the Jew⁴⁶⁸.

The homosexual dimension of the Dreyfus Affair reveals the ways in which Orientalized subjects were one and the same with homosexuals in being not only demonized, but pit against one another for favoritism among the otherwise dominant, European, heterosexual majority in

⁴⁶⁷ Hanssen, Jens. "Kafka and Arabs." *Critical Inquiry*, (39:1), 2012. P. 182.

⁴⁶⁸ Gilman, Sander. *Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient*. New York: Routledge, 1995. P. 161.

the early twentieth century. Kafka's use of sado-masochism in his tropical tale undoes this conflict in part by outing its European administrator of torture as a homoerotically charged sadist turned masochist. As John Zilcosky puts it, "In Kafka's 'colony,' politics and perversity become inseparable"⁴⁶⁹ and "Kafka's story...like *Torture Garden*, stages itself in between the psychoanalytical and political modes of interpretation: it is...Kafka's meditation on the entanglement of sado-masochism and colonial politics at the fin de siècle."⁴⁷⁰ The more explicit merger of politics and sexuality in the context of colonial politics and issues of domestic Anti-Semitism underscores Kafka's critique of Orientalist race theory, which makes the Oriental subject at home and abroad one and the same in European discourse.

One of Kafka's homoerotically charged critiques of racial representations within "In the Penal Colony" stems from a literary device used in "Description of a Struggle": the repetition of the words "Lippen"/ "lips" and "Mund"/ "mouth," which occur a total of seven and ten times respectively. In one instance, a description of the condemned man, we are told, "Aber die Bewegung seiner wulstig aneinander gedrückten Lippen zeigten offenbar, daß er nicht verstehen konnte"⁴⁷¹/ "Yet the movement of his thick lips, closely pressed together, showed clearly that he could not understand a word"⁴⁷². The expression is itself a bit off because the lips somehow communicate that the condemned man lacks enough intelligence to understand that the device before him functions as it is described by the Officer. Boa suggests that the engorged lips imply

⁴⁶⁹ Zilcosky, John. *Kafka's Travels: Exoticism, Colonialism, and the Traffic of Writing*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. P. 105.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid. P. 111.

⁴⁷¹ Kafka, Franz. "In der Strafkolonie" *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008. P. 822. Referred to from here on out as "*Sämtliche Werke*."

⁴⁷² Kafka, Franz. "In the Penal Colony." Willa and Edwin Muir, trans. *The Complete Stories*. Naum N. Glatzer, Ed. New York: Schocken, 1971. P. 144. Referred to from here on out as "*Completed Works*."

belonging to another race, mentioning “Thick lips are a racist marker suggesting African features, although the tea house on the island points more to an Asian location...Such vagueness of geographical location and national/ racial identity suggests an overarching system of subordination”⁴⁷³. What communicates homoerotic tension through careful attention to these body parts also communicates vague notions of racial otherness through familiar visual culture of Africans in the diaspora at the turn of the century. Boa’s remark that an overarching system of subordination is at play in this text is very telling because, as Hegel has suggested more specifically with only “Oriental” races, the Emperor and Old Testament God represent the focal points of overarching systems of subordination for the Chinese and Jews, respectively, as they prevent those races (in Hegelian logic) from actualizing the freedom to think for themselves. To perhaps put this notion in different terms, as observed by Thomas Beebee, “The law does not direct the machine: it simply is the machine, a point made in the story ‘In the Penal Colony’ when the Commandant becomes a victim of torture[-]apparatus he formerly directed.”⁴⁷⁴ Kafka’s allusion to race as a systematic whole is reference to the fact looking at a concept, such as but not limited to race, as a overreaching, overwhelming whole that denies freedom is just as much a product of the Enlightenment as the racist theories that come out of it. For this reason, the undoing of the apparatus also becomes necessary.

The destruction of the apparatus and its director, the Officer, are also homoerotically and sado-masochistically charged. When we are introduced to the machine in question, we are informed, “Also hier ist das Bett, wie ich sagte... Auf diese Watte wird der Verurteilte bäuchlings

⁴⁷³ Boa. P. 139.

⁴⁷⁴ Beebee, Thomas O. *Citation and Precedent: Conjunctions and Disjunctions of German Law and Literature*. New York: Continuum, 2012. P. 99.

gelegt, natürlich nackt; hier sind für die Hände, hier für die Füße, hier für den Hals Riemen, um ihn festzuschnallen”⁴⁷⁵/ “Well, here is the Bed, as I told you... On this cotton wool the condemned man is laid, face down, quite naked, of course; here are straps for the hands, here for the feet, and here for the neck, to bind him fast”⁴⁷⁶. The machine denies freedom to the condemned person much the way one’s race for Hegel denies them freedom of thought, but this time through physical restraint. Zilcosky rightly points out that “The old commandant’s machinery is geared precisely to achieve such an omnivoyeurism: the harrow is made of glass so that ‘everyone’ can ‘scrutinize the carrying out of the sentence.’ No effort is spared to get the needles mounted in the glass because ‘everyone’ must be able to ‘look through the glass and see how the inscription on the body takes place”⁴⁷⁷ and that “As in the Sadean narratives, the voyeur must also be a sexual actor”⁴⁷⁸. The bed, along with the condemned lying naked, adds a highly sexualized component to the already sadistic act of looking at the torture. Beds, as we recall in Kafka’s “The Great Wall of China” and its plausible prequel in *The Blue Octave Notebooks*, demonstrate doubt in the all-encompassing power/ believeability of Emperor/ German-speaking intellectual interested in history respectively and this bed will eventually not only cast doubt about the Officer and his insistence on violence against colonial subjects as punishment, but undo him and his machine. For not only would the Officer lie on that bed to receive his self-inflicted punishment, much the way the Acquaintance would do in “Description of a Struggle,”

⁴⁷⁵ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 820.

⁴⁷⁶ *Collected Works*. P. 142.

⁴⁷⁷ Zilcosky. P. 113.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid*.

but his “Lippen waren fest”⁴⁷⁹/ “lips were firmly pressed together”⁴⁸⁰. We also see that “nun stand [der Offizier] nackt da. Der Reisende biß sich auf die Lippen und sagte nichts”⁴⁸¹/ “Now [the soldier] stood there naked. The explorer said bit his lips and said nothing”⁴⁸², a situation where “Der Soldat und der Verurteilte verstanden zuerst nichts”⁴⁸³/ “The soldier and the condemned man did not understand”⁴⁸⁴. The image of the lips married the image of the bed to spell out destruction for the “Enlightened” belief that sadistic administration is necessary for parts of the world that were culturally and racially “underdeveloped” in the opinions of philosophers and historians from the Enlightenment.

“In the Penal Colony” reverts to coding race as geographical, otherwise maintaining distance from anatomical descriptions of race. We find out from the officer that the explorer is “Ein großer Forscher des Abendlands”⁴⁸⁵/ “A famous Western investigator”⁴⁸⁶ “in europäischen Anschauung befangen”⁴⁸⁷/ “conditioned by European ways of thought”⁴⁸⁸. The officer says this of the explorer to the explorer to explain to him why he cannot appreciate the machine used for executions. Kafka uses of the biblical term for the occident (Abendland, literally ‘land of the evening’ or ‘land where the sun sets’), which contrasts the carpet belonging to the Narrator, from

⁴⁷⁹ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 841.

⁴⁸⁰ *Collected Works*. P. 166.

⁴⁸¹ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 838.

⁴⁸² *Collected Works*. P. 163.

⁴⁸³ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 839.

⁴⁸⁴ *Collected Works*. P. 163.

⁴⁸⁵ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 832.

⁴⁸⁶ *Collected Works*. P. 156.

⁴⁸⁷ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 831.

⁴⁸⁸ *Collected Works*. P. 155.

the orient (Morgenland, literally ‘land of the morning’ or ‘land where the sun rises’). In contrast to the explorer, steeped in European thought, the officer is not specifically denoted as Chinese or Asian, but implicitly as non-European by virtue of not being like the explorer. Material artifacts such as the “Teehaus”⁴⁸⁹/ “teahouse”⁴⁹⁰ on sight and a reference to “Schönschrift”⁴⁹¹/ “calligraphy”⁴⁹², both associated with East Asia, notably China and Japan, during the early twentieth century. The reference to calligraphy is particularly interesting as the Officer uses it to describe the way in which the Apparatus inscribes the crime onto the condemned person’s body, noting “es ist keine Schönschrift für Kinder”⁴⁹³/ “it’s no calligraphy for school children”⁴⁹⁴. This expression reverberates the Hegelian and Herderian notion that China is stuck in a child-like state culturally and historically that we also see in “The Great Wall of China” and “Abraham.” Kafka’s choice to associate the explorer with thought (Anschauung) and research (Forscher), and the officer (along with the soldier, condemned, and even the Commandant) with material culture imported from the East. The underlying implication of this contrast is that the Europeans are understood in Kafka’s terms as intellectual and advanced, in contrast to the more barbaric Chinese culture, in spite of their material culture.

This racist logic works interestingly in tandem with the historical collapse of Imperial China in 1917. I bring attention to this fact at this point in my discussion because, I argue, here is where Kafka critiques Hegel’s notion of China’s static history, which Hegel uses to explain their

⁴⁸⁹ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 841.

⁴⁹⁰ *Collected Works*. P. 166.

⁴⁹¹ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 826.

⁴⁹² *Collected Works*. P. 149.

⁴⁹³ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 826.

⁴⁹⁴ *Collected Works*. P. 149.

letter-of-the-law inability to think for themselves. The revolution from Imperial China and subsequent creation of China's first Republic represents the total undoing of Hegel's characterization of the Chinese. In addressing the potential for revolutionary overthrowing of the Empire, Hegel observes from an anecdote on Chinese history that,

Bei der Revolution in der Mitte des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts war der letzte Kaiser der damals herrschenden Dynastie sehr sanftmütig und edel, aber bei seinem milden Charakter erschlafften die Zügel der Regierung, und es entstand notwendigerweise Empörung. Die Aufrührer riefen die Mandschu ins Land. Der Kaiser selbst entleibte sich, um den Feinden nicht in die Hände zu fallen, und mit seinem Blute schrieb er noch auf den Saum des Kleides seiner Tochter einige Worte, in welchen er sich über das Unrecht seiner Untertanen tief beklagt.⁴⁹⁵

In the instance of the revolution that occurred in the seventeenth century, the last Emperor of the dynasty was very amiable and honorable; but through the mildness of his character, the reins of government were relaxed, and disturbances naturally occurred. The rebels called the Manchus into the country. The Emperor killed himself to avoid falling into the hands of his enemies, and with his blood he wrote on the border of his daughter's robe a few words, in which he complained bitterly of the injustice of his subjects.⁴⁹⁶

There are two parallels between Hegel and Kafka's characterizations of China to note beginning with this passage. Firstly, the anecdote resembles Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" in the Emperor's use of his own blood to write about injustice as the Officer's apparatus bleeds the condemned person out with an inscription of their crime onto their bodies. Kafka seems to invert this image of the suicide of the Emperor during a time of social upheaval by using the blood to write rather than obscure the injustice which in Kafka is the corrective to the crime committed by the condemned. The consequence of the Emperor's suicide is, from the looks of it, a loosening of policies on the Chinese people and even the opportunity to think for themselves, realizing their leader is a despot using them to maintain power. Of course, the revolution born from a loosening

⁴⁹⁵ Hegel. P. 197.

⁴⁹⁶ Sibree. P. 127.

of the laws serves a kind of proof to Hegel's position that the Chinese cannot think for themselves. One also has to remember that revolution for Hegel is not positive, but rather an act of barbarism itself, one that he will address as such towards the end of his lectures when he discusses the French Revolution⁴⁹⁷. For Hegel, the French were "hot headed" in their haste to resort to violence rather than thoroughly think through the very idea of freedom, a kind of barbarism characteristic of their Roman ancestors, according to Hegel.

In the case of Kafka's work and its relation to the French, the revolution has already occurred. The officer admits, "Dieses Verfahren und diese Hinrichtung, die Sie jetzt zu bewundern Gelegenheit haben, hat gegenwärtig in unserer Kolonie keinen offenen Anhänger mehr. Ich bin ihr einziger Vertreter, gleichzeitig der einzige Vertreter des Erbes des alten Kommandanten"⁴⁹⁸/ "This procedure and method of execution, which you are now having the opportunity to admire, has at the moment no longer any open adherents in our colony. I am its sole advocate, and at the same time the sole advocate of the Old Commandant's tradition."⁴⁹⁹ A regime change has left the officer the remaining proponent of a seemingly barbaric practice of capital punishment. The regime change from more barbaric to more civilized could be read in terms of China's transition from an imperial state to a republic. Of course, implying that imperial ways are barbaric and the ways of a republic are more civilized doubles back as a critique of the Habsburgs in their *Fin de Siècle*, in a similar way as Kafka implies in "An Old Manuscript" and

⁴⁹⁷ The third chapter of "Die neue Zeit"/ "The Modern Time," titled "Die Aufklärung und Revolution"/ "The Eclaircissement and Revolution" uses differences between the French and German Enlightenments, particularly the French Revolution, to show how the French used physical violence, rather than freeing the human "Geist" through exercises in thought made the French more barbaric than the Germans. See Hegel, P.583-605 and Sibree, P. 483-57.

⁴⁹⁸ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 829.

⁴⁹⁹ *Collected Works*. P. 153.

“Jackals and Arabs.” Whether or not Kafka suggests that the Habsburgs were barbaric in their judicial oversight, we are still left with the Hegelian logic that the Chinese were inferior culturally for their barbaric practices grounded in Hegel’s mediated representation of Chinese culture and civilization.

However, Kafka’s work finds an interesting way to undermine that Hegelian logic. When the officer expresses fear that the European explorer’s observations will influence the new Commandant to close down the machine, of which the explorer admits disapproval, the explorer admits, “Der Kommandant hat mein Empfehlungsschreiben gelesen, er weiß, daß ich kein Kenner der gerichtlichen Verfahren bin”⁵⁰⁰ / “[T]he Commandant has read my letter of recommendation, he knows that I am no expert in criminal procedure”⁵⁰¹. The European explorer’s admission of ignorance on the matter of criminal procedure comes off as a jab at Hegel’s self-appointed expertise in determining whether or not groups of people do or do not have the capacity for personal judgment. Just as Kafka undermines Hegel’s position as a historian through the Chinese narrator in “The Great Wall of China,” so too does he undermine Hegel’s position as an expert in understanding personal judgement and the law with the European explorer in “In the Penal Colony.” We even have the fulfillment of a dialogue between the Orient and the Occident, which Kafka never brings to fruition in “The Great Wall of China.” We see this iterated again when the Officer says, explaining the Apparatus, “Verstand geht dem Blödesten auf”⁵⁰² / “Enlightenment comes to the most dull-witted”⁵⁰³, using it to describe the barbaric, seemingly incomprehensible

⁵⁰⁰ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 832-3.

⁵⁰¹ *Collected Works*. P. 156.

⁵⁰² *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 827.

⁵⁰³ *Collected Works*. P. 150.

others, such as the condemned, whose lips convey his ignorance. This word for “Enlightenment” in the English translation is “Verstand,” or “understanding,” to use an etymologically closer word, which we recall is the same term Kafka’s Chinese narrator in “The Great Wall of China” claims the Chinese lack and parallels Hegel’s notion of having understanding without free will of thought. The same Verstand is also what the jackals of “Jackals and Arabs” attribute to the European traveler in an effort to convince him to kill off the Arabs. Verstand in all three texts is used ironically to talk about the lack of understanding. In “The Great Wall of China,” the Chinese narrator recognizes he does not have it, but by recognizing the lack of free thought, he seems to already be thinking freely against the overarching the Empire and the Emperor which supposedly enslave his mind. In “Jackals and Arabs,” the jackals defer to logic to persuade him to kill the Arabs, only for themselves to lose all reason and revert from sentient animals to wild beasts. In “In the Penal Colony,” the Officer asserts that anyone could understand why they are being punished by the machine through the machine’s punishment, when we already “know” from the condemned man’s lips that he does not understand the situation he is in. Kafka’s ironic use of “Verstand” undermines the Enlightenment notion of rationality as something universally endowed by mankind, yet not attributed to non-European cultures/ races.

The ironic use of “Verstand” extends to his implicit critique of French colonialism as well as Hegel and the Enlightenment’s notion of “understanding.” When we see at the beginning the condemned and the soldier watching the condemned fail to follow the discussion between the explorer and the officer, we are told, “Der Reisende wunderte sich nicht darüber, den der Offizier sprach französisch und französisch verstand gewiß weder der Soldat noch der Verurteilte”⁵⁰⁴/

⁵⁰⁴ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 820.

“That did not surprise the explorer, for the officer was speaking French, and certainly neither the soldier nor the prisoner understood a word”⁵⁰⁵. The word “French,” is emphasized twice in the German and points heavily towards several connections. The first refers back to the fact that this short story is heavily influenced by Mirbeau’s *The Torture Garden*. Kafka seems to lump together the implementation of Orientalisms, particularly in its colonial practice, with the French because of their success in maintaining colonial power in the Orient. Kafka’s Habsburg Empire, which like France was a bully of early German nationalism in the form of Bismarck’s military campaigns to establish dominance in Western Europe, was not very successful in maintaining colonial power in the Orient. By conjuring the image of France in this context, Kafka’s work not only lambastes the German-language practice of armchair anthropology, but the exercise of colonial control that comes in tandem with said armchair anthropology.

The evocation of the French is a remnant from “Description of a Struggle,” reconfigured around the criticism created by the Kafka’s masochistic and homoerotic inversion of French sadism. In the first draft, when the Suppliant recounts his encounter with the Drunkard⁵⁰⁶ to the Fat Man in a story that parallel’s the Narrator’s experience with his acquaintance, the Drunkard mentions the city of “Paris”⁵⁰⁷ six times, asking the Suppliant if he hails from the French

⁵⁰⁵ *Collected Works*. P. 142.

⁵⁰⁶ Kafka compounds this reference to Paris with the name and a specific street, on which the Drunkard lives, as the only name and specific address attributed to a character in the story. Identified as “Jerome Faroche,” of “rue de Cabotin,” (FA 176), Kafka plays on the Old French term for wild, untamed animal, Faroche, and Cabotin, a ham in the theatrical sense (i.e. one who over exaggerates a role or performance). Faroche reminds one of the ambiguous “Ungeziefer” from “The Metamorphosis” and suggests that the ones who are truly barbaric or uncivilized are the Europeans and this is reinforced by idea that the more uncivilized European lives/ is situated in a sense of over exaggerating. This over exaggeration suggests that any attempt at him being civilized is an act, that he effectively performs civility, but really embodies barbarism. Flipping the civilized person for a barbaric one, especially when racial undertones suggest otherwise, is a fairly standard trope in post-colonial literature and one that Kafka appears to be employing here in the context of French colonialism.

⁵⁰⁷ FA. P. 171-2, 175-6, 179.

capital. The Drunkard's repetition of the city's name is followed closely by a story he shares of hitting on a woman, which the Supplicant finds rather annoying in the same vein as the Narrator getting annoyed by his acquaintance's boasting of kissing women. Kafka associates France with the heteronormative romance and sexuality in his early work and in this context France becomes negatively charged because this scene parallels the Narrator's experience with his acquaintance and his lack of ease with his acquaintance's casual approach to kissing him while insisting on spending time alone with him.

The lack of ease with heteronormative sexuality in the French context remains within "In the Penal Colony." In his fear about the change in administration, the officer admits, "Soll wegen dieses Kommandanten und seiner Frauen, die ihn beeinflussen, ein solches Lebenswerk' -- er zeigte auf die Maschine--'zugrunde gehen?'"⁵⁰⁸ / "because of this Commandant and the women who influence him, is such a piece of work, the work of a life time' -- he pointed to the machine--'to perish?'"⁵⁰⁹. Here the officer implicitly blames the women in the new Commandant's life for making him soft and posing a threat to his sadistic machine. The officer brings up the women again when he is concerned that they are plying his convicted prisoners with candy, when they need to fast in preparation for their executions⁵¹⁰ and when he fears the women will endorse the European explorer's recommendation to discontinue use of the machine. The officer's gynophobia correlates with the narrator and the Supplicant's in "Description of a Struggle." I borrow the term "gynophobia" from Ann Katharina Schaffer's essay "Seasick in the

⁵⁰⁸ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 830.

⁵⁰⁹ *Collected Works*. P. 153.

⁵¹⁰ "Die Damen des Kommandanten stopfen dem Mann, ehe er abgeführt wird, den Hals mit Zuckersachen voll. Sein ganzes Leben hat er sich von stinkenden Fischen genährt und muß jetzt Zuckersachen essen!" (829) / "The Commandant's ladies stuff the man with sugar candy before he's led off. He has lived on stinking fish his whole life long and now he has to eat sugar candy!" (152).

Land of Sexuality: Kafka and the Erotic” partially to work both with and against notions of misogyny within the works of Kafka. If Kafka portrays women negatively anywhere, fostering an anti-feminist discourse, then it should be pointed out that his male characters are never positive/ corrected contrasts. Kafka’s “conception of heterosexual encounters as abject and unclean”⁵¹¹ is a consequence of a male point of view that makes one aware of its misogynistic view of women; we never sympathize with Kafka’s anti-heroes and, if we do, we are misreading him. However, unlike the masochistically homoerotic tension from which the Narrator and Supplicant’s gynophobia stem, the officer’s originates from the threat the new Commandant’s ladies pose to his torture device. This gynophobia leads the officer to kill himself by having his machine stab him to death, a scene drawn from “Description of a Struggle,” when the narrator’s acquaintance stabs himself upon learning that the narrator is engaged to marry a woman; the acquaintance and the officer both stab themselves upon believing that something they desire will be taken away from them. Kafka has fashioned a kind of homoerotically charged sadism, which preemptively disavows the removal of the machine that serves as a remnant from the previous administration. Kafka’s gynophobic sadist performs two critiques of Orientalisms in one feat: firstly, he embodies the Chinese subject, who cannot deal with the change of administration (which represents the end of Imperial China, putting a wrench in Hegel’s theory that the Chinese merely follow the letter of the law) and kills himself with his own torture device, rather than face having it taken away from him. Secondly he also embodies the sadistic, colonial logic of the French, who apply race theory to the Asians abroad in their colonies, at the Jews at home.

⁵¹¹ Schaffner, Anna Katharina. “Seasick in the Land of Sexuality: Kafka and the Erotic.” *Modernist Eroticisms: European Literature after Sexuality*. Anna Katharina Schaffner and Shane Weller, Ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2012. P. 86.

With this said, we come across a problem with trying to criticize Hegel's logic and the French colonial logic simultaneously: if the new Commandant is really more lenient on punishment, is Kafka giving the French colonial logic some apologetic credit by portraying the new Commandant as a much softer and more caring administrator? When the officer explains to the explorer the condemned man's crime, we learn, "Er holte die Reitpeitsche und schlug ihm über das Gesicht. Statt nun aufzustehen und um Verzeihung zu bitten, faßte der Mann seinen Herrn bei den Beinen, schüttelte ihn und rief, 'Wirf die Peitsch weg, oder ich fresse dich.' –Das ist der Sachverhalt. Der Hauptmann kam vor einer Stunde zu mir, ich schrieb seinen Angaben auf und anschließend gleich das Urteil. Dann ließ ich dem Mann die Ketten anlegen"⁵¹²/ "He took his riding whip and lashed him across the face. Instead of getting up and begging pardon, the man caught hold of his master's legs, shook him and cried, 'Throw that whip away or I'll eat you alive.' ---That's the evidence. The captain came to me an hour ago, I wrote down his statement and appended the sentence to it. Then I had the man put in chains"⁵¹³. First, I should mention something that has already been implied by not directly addressed: the officer is an unreliable character when it comes to fully understanding how the penal colony as a whole operates. At first he insists, while giving his tour and demonstration of the machine, that executions administered by the machine are normal. But as his description of the machine and how it functions unravel, he suggests that he is actually an outlier among those in the penal colony, particularly as he supports the old method of execution and others seem to have abandoned it. However, how much of an outlier could the officer have been if a captain gave him reason enough and approval for the execution of somebody who disobeyed an order? Moreover,

⁵¹² *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 823.

⁵¹³ *Collected Works*. P. 146.

the captain (at least according to the officer) in question used a whip to keep the would-be condemned man in line, reinforcing our suspicion that the penal colony is under no threat of doing away with sadistic practices. Nothing really affirms the officer's paranoia and there is no exterior intervention from the rest of the penal colony stopping said sadistic practices, suggesting that Kafka's penal colony is not undergoing an actual change in administrative practice with the change in administration, thus not implicitly alleviating the French colonial logic of its guilt.

Kafka's limited scope of the penal colony through the eyes of the officer seems to affirm, rather than excoriate, Hegel's logic about the Chinese and the Emperor. If, as I suggested in the last paragraph, the penal colony does not actually undergo real change in administrative practice with a transition in administrative control, then Kafka suggests as Hegel claims that the Emperor's all-encompassing oversight has prohibited the officer from actualizing self-judgement. Kafka's ability to parallel "In the Penal Colony" with the collapse of Imperial China makes "In the Penal Colony" a plausible mockery of Hegel's representation of the Chinese because the collapse of Imperial China, under Hegel's logic, would simply bring about another super-hierarchical structure with some kind of tyrant, dictator, and/or emperor-like person at the top⁵¹⁴. Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" suggests that the prediction of Hegel's logic comes to fruition since the new Commandant allows the same sadistic practices permitted under the previous administration and any possibility that the new Commandant would be more lenient is all in the officer's head. However, when we look again at the crime committed by the condemned: he enacted physical violence against his captain and threatened to devour him. Such insubordination is inconsistent with Hegel's line of logic, in which the condemned would have

⁵¹⁴ Hegel claims, "Die Dynastien haben in China oft gewechselt, und die jetzt herrschende wird in der Regel als die 22. bezeichnet" (160-1)/ "The dynasties in China have often been changed, and the one now dominating is generally marked as the twenty-second" (119).

behaved with unquestioned obedience to the command of a man who stands in logically (under Hegelian logic) for the Emperor. In a way, we see the inverse image of the jackals' subordination by the Arabs in "Jackals and Arabs" in chapter three, when the Arabs ply the jackals with a camel's carcass and then whip them as they eat the rotting flesh. The way this information is imparted onto the European observer in each text is also different: the European in "Jackals and Arabs" witnesses the whipping first hand, while the subordination of the condemned is received as second-hand testimony from the officer. By putting the testimony in second-hand, reported speech, Kafka's work echoes Hegel's *Lectures on Philosophy of History*, which is predicated on an interpretation of other peoples' accounts of China and not Hegel's own experience. Kafka's work manages to simultaneously undermine Hegelian's logic and the French, colonial logic by drawing a parallel between "In the Penal Colony" and "Jackals and Arabs," but situating the subversive actions of a subordinate into reported speech, suggesting that, but not quite confirming the subversive actions, on which the Hegelian and French, colonial logics are predicated, are something exaggerated to justify viewing people of the Global East in a terrible light.

China's an Old, Fat Woman: Towards a Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I turn now towards a passage from an unlikely, yet very likely source for Kafka's attack on race theory and in particular Orientalist race theory. I say unlikely as it is not one of Kafka's Orientalist works, but quite likely since it picks up on a number of themes carried out in those Orientalist works. In an unpublished chapter titled "Staatsanwalt" from *Der Prozeß (The Trial)*, Kafka's posthumously published novel in which the main character, Josef K., endeavors to find out what crime he has been charged with and how to

resolve his criminal proceedings, only to fail, Josef K. visits a prosecuting attorney. During his visit, he encounters the prosecuting attorney's maid, a parallel scene in which Josef K. encounters his defense attorney's maid during a visit with his defense attorney. In contrast to the defense attorney's maid, Leni, who Josef K. finds unusually attractive, the prosecutor's maid is anything but "Es war eine dicke, ältliche Frau mit gelblicher Haut und schwarzen Locken, die sich um ihre Stirn ringelten. K. sah sie zunächst nur im Bett, sie lag dort gewöhnlich recht schamlos, pflegte einen Lieferungsroman zu lesen und kümmerte sich nicht um das Gespräch der Herren"⁵¹⁵/ "She was a thickset older woman with a yellowish complexion and black curls ringing her forehead. At first K. saw her only in bed; she usually lay there shamelessly, reading a serial novel and paying no attention to the gentlemen's conversation"⁵¹⁶. Schaffer uses this as a jumping point to discuss Kafka's gynophobia/ misogynistic depictions of women in his works. I want to argue here that the housekeeper here actually represents China. Her yellow skin and black hair suggest she is either Jewish or East Asian, as we know from Boa and Doran; her obesity and age suggest she represents China, described as a vast and ancient Empire, as we learned from Lemon. If she is indeed "a monstrous hybrid between an old witch and a whore," as Schaffer suggests, she is so because race theory had, by Kafka's time, ingrained into the German imagination that yellow skin and black hair were not beautiful. Likewise, if oldness and fatness express ugliness, this too can be attributed to European race theories' description of lands outside their own. Her iteration as an Oriental character is amplified by her depiction in repose on a bed, much the way Kafka's Emperor in "The Great Wall of China," the German history enthusiast in

⁵¹⁵ Kafka, Franz. "Staatsanwalt." *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008. P. 418. Referred to from here on out as "*Sämtliche Werke*."

⁵¹⁶ Kafka, Franz. "Public Prosecutor" Breon Mitchell, trans. *The Trial: A New Translation Based on the Restored Text*. New York: Schocken, 1998. P. 248. Referred to from here on out as "*Trial*"

The Blue Octave Notebooks and the Officer in “In the Penal Colony” are depicted. She is also reminiscent of the Fat Man on his litter in “Description of a Struggle,” an obese being making little effort to move. Yet she is oddly European, decadently reading a serial novel. Her oscillation between European and vaguely Asian echo the oscillation between the Habsburg and China represented in Kafka’s oeuvre.

Her decadent appearance is reinforced by her attire:

Sie erwartete nur immer die Herren vollständig angekleidet, und zwar gewöhnlich in einem Kleid, das sie wahrscheinlich für sehr kostbar und kleidsam hielt, das aber in Wirklichkeit ein altes, überlangenes Ballkleid war und besonders unangenehm durch einige Reihen langer Fransen auffiel, mit denen es zum Schmuck behängt war. Das genaue Aussehen dieses Kleides kannte K. gar nicht, er weigerte sich gewissermaßen, sie anzusehen, und saß stundenlang mit halbgeschlossenen Augen.⁵¹⁷

Now she always awaited the men fully clothed, and usually in a dress she no doubt considered expensive and becoming, but which was in reality an old, overly ornate ball gown with several embarrassing rows of long fringe dangling from it for decoration. K. was unaware of the precise appearance of this dress, since he more or less refused to look at it, sitting for hours with eyes lowered while she swayed through the room or sat somewhere nearby⁵¹⁸.

Her gown screams dilapidated decadence, suggesting she is an emblem of the collapsing Habsburg Empire and/or the crumbling Imperial China, which on the one hand is supposed to communicate wealth in its decoration with jewelry and ornamentation, but on the other hand embarrasses her with rows of long fringe. Equally as interesting as the way she appears is the way she is looked at: K averts his eyes, suggesting his unreliability for knowing what she looks like, despite the narrator’s attention to detail. K. and Prosecutor Hasterer are otherwise engaged in deep conversation when she is around, leading the reader to see them as the intellectuals that

⁵¹⁷ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 418-9.

⁵¹⁸ *Trial*. P. 248-9.

do not look directly upon China with their own eyes, but as Brandt and Purdy put it, “less guided by direct experience than by a secondary one” (Brandt and Purdy 1), causing us to find K. unreliable. K. himself, although the European, intellectual observer, also connotes vague Orientalness with his half-closed eyes, moving between Eastern and Western racial codes in one line. The fluctuation between Oriental and Occidental characterizations underscores Kafka’s critique of nineteenth century race theory, pointing out the ways in which peoples of the East and the West can and are similar, despite seeming strange and unusual. We cannot forget that K. himself, in the context of *The Trial*, is the victim of an overreaching court system that has enslaved him and prevents him from thinking of anything but his case and how that court system works. He embodies Hegel’s notion of the Chinese and Jewish subject, who are enslaved intellectually by an omnipresent Emperor and jealous God respectively.

The parallel between “Prosecuting Attorney” and “Description of a Struggle”/ “In the Penal Colony,” which complements Kafka’s gynophobic representation of the vaguely Oriental woman is the characterization of K. and his relationship with a man in the system that oppresses him. From getting to know one another professionally, we learn, “Im Laufe der Zeit aber fanden sie sich derartig zusammen, daß alle Unterschiede der Bildung, des Berufs, des Alters sich verwischten”⁵¹⁹/ “In course of time, however, they grew so intimate that all distinctions of education, profession, and age were gradually effaced”⁵²⁰. Their relationship parallels the homoerotic relationship between the primary narrator and his acquaintance and the Fat Man and the Supplicant, especially as K. himself is coded as Oriental in this context. The homoerotic tension between vaguely Oriental men and European counterparts undermines the Orientalist

⁵¹⁹ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 416.

⁵²⁰ *Trial*. P. 246.

logic of Adolf Brand's *Wandervogel* movement, which imposed Greek beauty onto the image of the Aryan German, portraying the Jew in contrast as sickly and effeminate. Kafka queers the homoerotic imagery-divide of Brand by pairing men coded as Oriental with other men, undoing a major part of the Orientalist project against the Jews. Indeed, K.'s relationship with Hasterer resembles the pederastic model of same-sex, male relationships in Classical era Greece: "K. erkannte seine Schwäche; vielleicht hatte sie ihren Grund darin, daß in dieser Hinsicht wirklich noch etwas Kindisches in ihm war"⁵²¹/ "K. recognized his weakness; perhaps it was based on the fact that in this respect there was still something childlike about him"⁵²². Childishness has also emerged thematically in Kafka's Orientalist works as a parallel to the child-like historical state of Oriental cultures, ascribed to them by Hegel and Herder, as we saw in chapters one and two with "The Great Wall of China" and "Abraham." This queering is amplified by the fact that the vaguely Oriental woman, which stands in contrast to K. and Hasterer's friendship is named Helene, alluding to Homer's *Illiad*, the story of a war started because a prince from Asia Minor (read: the East) abducted a princess from Greece in the West. Referring to the Epic poem is not only a jab at Brand's racial divide between Europeans and Jews, but also stems in part from the Greeks themselves existing as a kind of missing link between Orientals and Europeans, particularly the Germans in Orientalist discourse, fostered by Hegel's Lectures.

Unlike the texts covered in the previous three chapters, "Description of a Struggle" and "In the Penal Colony" bring Kafka's fascination with masochism and sadism to the fore. There are traces of sexually charged bondage in the works from the previous three chapters, which have been analyzed in tandem with Hegel's position on "Oriental races," especially where his master-

⁵²¹ *Sämtliche Werke*. P. 420.

⁵²² *Trial*. P. 250.

slave dialectic crop up in his *Philosophy of History*. However, the two texts treated in this chapter raise the ante with sexually charged violence.

“Description of a Struggle,” in its two separate drafts, serves as an important precursor for much of the themes and ideas around Orientalisms that emerge in Kafka’s later texts. Between the two drafts of Kafka’s early work we see ambiguous racial coding through description of skin color, East Asian religious iconography alluding to Buddhism and Christianity simultaneously, homoerotic tension expressed linguistically through repetitious language that forces the mouth to pucker, parallel story-lines that include characters desiring pain inflicted upon them tied together with allusions to *The Odyssey* and *Venus in Furs*. What seems like a fantasy story with four layers of narration, between the narrator and his acquaintance, the narrator and a fat man, the fat man and a supplicant, and a supplicant and drunkard is actually a very carefully thought out engagement between homoerotic masochism and German Orientalisms, designed to experimentally engage with questions of race and sexuality emergent in the early twentieth century.

Although many of the traces Kafka’s “Description of a Struggle,” such as the use of whips and allusions to Ancient Greek mythology and Tower of Babel can be found in the texts I mentioned from the previous three chapters, nowhere is the sexual violence and homoerotic tension more prevalent than in “In the Penal Colony.” Adopting the gynophobic tension and acceptance of being killed (as expressed by the officer when he decides to kill himself with his machine), “In the Penal Colony” comes into dialogue with two lines of Orientalisms: Hegel’s position on China and French colonialism in the Pacific. This story’s engagement with Hegel’s position on China should come as no surprise to us since Kafka was also writing “The Great Wall of China and “An Old Manuscript” around this time and both texts come discursively close

to Hegel's position on China, especially in terms of its relation to the collapse of Imperial China and the almost concurrent Habsburg *Fin de Siècle*. But Kafka's allusions to France in "In the Penal Colony," which a trace from his work "Description of a Struggle," confront the issues of French Anti-Semitism and Colonialism, both of which are a byproduct of trying to use fictionalized representations of "Oriental races" as fact, instead of fiction.

Conclusion

In the course of this dissertation, I have demonstrated how Franz Kafka's literary works demonstrate the constructedness of race defined by nineteenth century race theory and how his works criticize that constructedness through characters and settings. Kafka's works anticipate Bertolt Brecht's notion of Epic Theater, *Verfremdungseffekt*, and Gestus in their ability to bring the reader's attention to the constructedness of race theory, particularly those synthesized into G.F.W. Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte (Lectures on the Philosophy of History)*, dismantling the seemingly natural or logical conclusions nineteenth century theorists reached about racial otherness, with particular attention to the Chinese and the Jews as key points of racial otherness, within and outside of Europe. Hegel's lectures depict the Chinese and the Jews, whom Hegel situates as originally of the Persian Orient, as two sides of the same coin in regards to their relationship to *Geist (Spirit)*, in as much as Hegel defines it in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes (Phenomenology of Spirit)*: both of them lack the ability to make individual judgements and decisions and are trapped in the letter of the law, defined for the Chinese by their Emperor, and for the Jews by their Old Testament God.

Chapter one focused on representations of the Chinese, focusing on two texts conventionally thought to take place in China: "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer" ("The Great Wall of China") and "Ein altes Blatt" ("An Old Manuscript"), as well as an excerpt from *Die Acht Octavhefte (The Blue Octavo Notebooks)* and a short story, "Die Abweisung" ("The Rejection"), which fits with the other two stories as a possible prequel. The first story presents the reader with a first-person, somewhat unreliable, Chinese mason/ amateur scholar narrating the history of the construction of the Great Wall of China. Within this narrator's story, we learn of how he perceives his relationship with the Emperor of China and his lack of accessibility, yet

seemingly large grasp over the minds of his peoples. “An Old Manuscript” complements this text as an intended sequel to “The Great Wall of China,” in that it depicts another narrator, a cobbler at the gates of the imperial palace struggling to remove a group of barbaric nomads that squat outside in the marketplace and plunder/pillage the good and wears of the common people, while the imperial palace make no attempt to drive the nomads away, nor even acknowledge the nomads are there. The third story is a first-person’s account of a former military colonel turned governor and the anxiety the villagers, over whom the colonel governs, when they mob together to request something of the colonel. These three works mobilize a set of literary tropes (the omnipresent, yet also absent authoritarian; the bed that represents dreams and fantasy). In each instance, Kafka’s works undermines the notion of the Chinese Emperor as this omnipresent force guiding the Chinese people, denying them freedom to make decisions on their own, by extension denying the claim that the Emperor’s omnipresence has made the Chinese culture and history flat-line. Kafka’s works also assail the practice of comparative histories by characterizing his Chinese narrator and one of the characters from his excerpt of *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* as interested in history, but unreliable about knowledge concerning China.

Because the Jews were regarded as similar to the Chinese in their deference to the letter of the law and their subsequent, cultural stagnation, and they were situated geographically in “Persia” as “Orientals” and uses the Old Testament to justify his reading/ interpretation, chapter two examines how Kafka’s representations of characters and stories from the Old Testament look alongside nineteenth century interpretations of the Jews. I examine Kafka’s “Das Stadtwappen” (“The City Coat of Arms”), “Abraham,” and “Das Paradies” (“Paradise”) and compare these works with the ways in which nineteenth century race theory situates the Jews in the Middle East as part of a “Persian” race. My analysis of “The City Coat of Arms” shows how

Kafka's references to the Tower of Babel, which also appear in "The Great Wall of China", respond to how nineteenth century race theory confines the Jews to the Middle East. Kafka's work does this by reflecting the ethnic fragmentation of different linguistic groups within the Habsburg Empire and showing how that fragmentation lines up with race theory/ how Kafka's work exposes the race theory behind that fragmentation. The second section on Kafka's "Abraham" evaluates how race theory's construction of the Jews as 1. Situates them in the Middle East and 2. Renders them unable to achieve free thought. Kafka's short aphorisms observe how unusual Abraham's blind faith seems and imagine alternative Abrahams who are unable to fulfill God's request for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac for different reasons. The performance of the multiple Abrahams reveals how unnatural representations of race within race theory seem in the face of alternative representations of the same founding father of the three western faiths. Finally, I conclude this chapter by examining Kafka's representations of the biblical paradise and examine the ways in which, as a space within the Bible that situated between two existing rivers on earth and two rivers that only exist in the Bible, Paradise embodies the Orient as a fantastical place and its people, name Adam and Eve, equally inclined towards the race theories applied to the Jews.

Chapter three considers nineteenth century's representations of the Chinese and Persian Jews in the context of Kafka's animal stories. Since nineteenth century race theory holds that Oriental cultures practice varying degrees of zoolatry, with particular attention to the Ancient Egyptians as Persian Orientals and claims prevents Orientals from actualizing *Geist*. Kafka's animal stories, particularly those with direct or indirect connections to representations of the Orient, critically expose the trope of equating non-European others to animals within race theory as part of its demonstration of how race theory constructs notions of race. Kafka's "Schakale und

Araber” (“Jackals and Arabs”) shows us how race theory prompts us to see the Jew as a stand in for the Jackals, who ask a European explorer to kill his Arab hosts with a pair of rusty sewing shears, by attributing to them characteristics that suggest they represent Jews, yet their behavior/request is out of line with the behavior of animals in fairy tales and fables. I delve into debates in which the jackals, Arabs, and European are thought to represent the clash between the crumbling Habsburg Empire and the rise of Nationalism in the former Empire, but observe that even thinking of the characters as analogues for abstract concepts like nationalism and the crumbling empire are only possible because of race theory. I then return to Kafka’s “An Old Manuscript,” and look specifically at how the nomads, with their jackdaw-language and carnivorous horses, connote Jews, Mongolians, and German Nationalism encroaching on the dying Habsburg Empire. I contend that Kafka’s more barbaric characters, with specific, animalistic characteristics attributed to them, resist allegorical interpretation in an effort to expose the logic built by nineteenth century race theory that goes into such allegorical interpretations. Finally, I look at “Die Verwandlung” (“The Metamorphosis”) and specifically, connections drawn between scarabs in Middle Eastern zoolatry and Gregor Samsa’s position as former human transformed into a large insect. Kafka employs a number of literary cues to suggest that Samsa should be read as evoking an Oriental dung beetle and these devices uncover how nineteenth century race theory compels us to read Samsa as a Jew because of the constructedness behind that race theory.

In the final chapter of this project, I look at two of Kafka’s longer works that have been linked in previous scholarship to his texts on China and the Chinese: “Beschreibung eines Kampfes” (“Description of a Struggle”) and “In der Strafkolonie” (“In the Penal Colony”). Written in two separate drafts in the first decade of the twentieth century, I demonstrate how one of Kafka’s earliest works engages early on with questions of race and race theory by creating

characters with yellow skin, which at that time could have meant they were Jewish or Chinese, depending on the discourse, and their homoerotic/ violence experiences of these characters within the text. Kafka uses alliteration, consonance, dissonance, and allusions to the Dreyfus Affair as a way of engaging the race and race theory just as he was out of university. I then analyze how Kafka transposes these literary devices and representations onto his much later work “In the Penal Colony,” as a way of showing how nineteenth century race theory had a role not only in European Anti-Semitism, but also European (particularly French) colonialism in the Pacific, both of which collide with the Dreyfus Affair. By way of conclusion, I briefly look at the depiction of a woman from a short piece written by Kafka as a possible chapter to *Der Prozeß* (*The Trial*), titled “Staatsanwalt” (“Public Prosecutor”), depicted as fat and yellow and explain how Kafka’s early set engagement with race theory within “Description of a Struggle” is one that is part of his overall oeuvre.

In the course of this project, I have shown how Kafka’s literary representations undermine assumptions about “Oriental” races within European social thought fostered by Hegel’s lectures, which reified racial hierarchies found in many philosophical and scientific traditions of the 19th century. These findings have important impact on future consideration of other themes formulated within Kafka’s work. One such theme is the impersonality of the law, and how it attracts but needs no further outreach to subjects of the law, as a larger theme spanning Kafka’s literary career. This is the main argument of ‘Before the Law’ in *Der Prozess* (*The Trial*). Kafka labored over the issue of how we know and what we know. However, with its uncanny parallels in “The Great Wall of China” and “In the Penal Colony,” I found it necessary, with so much already said about China in German philosophy and literature, to eliminate the possibility that Kafka makes a firm statement against law in China, before I could say he makes a

more damning statement about the law in the Austro-Hungarian Empire or Europe at large. This project also challenges reading representations of racial “others” in literature against the problematic paradigm of “authentic” experiences by bringing in a newly developing line of comparative scholarship that examines representations of racial otherness against/alongside of theories about racial others/ otherness.

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