University of South-Eastern Norway
Faculty of the humanities, sports, and educational sciences
Institute for culture, religion, and social studies

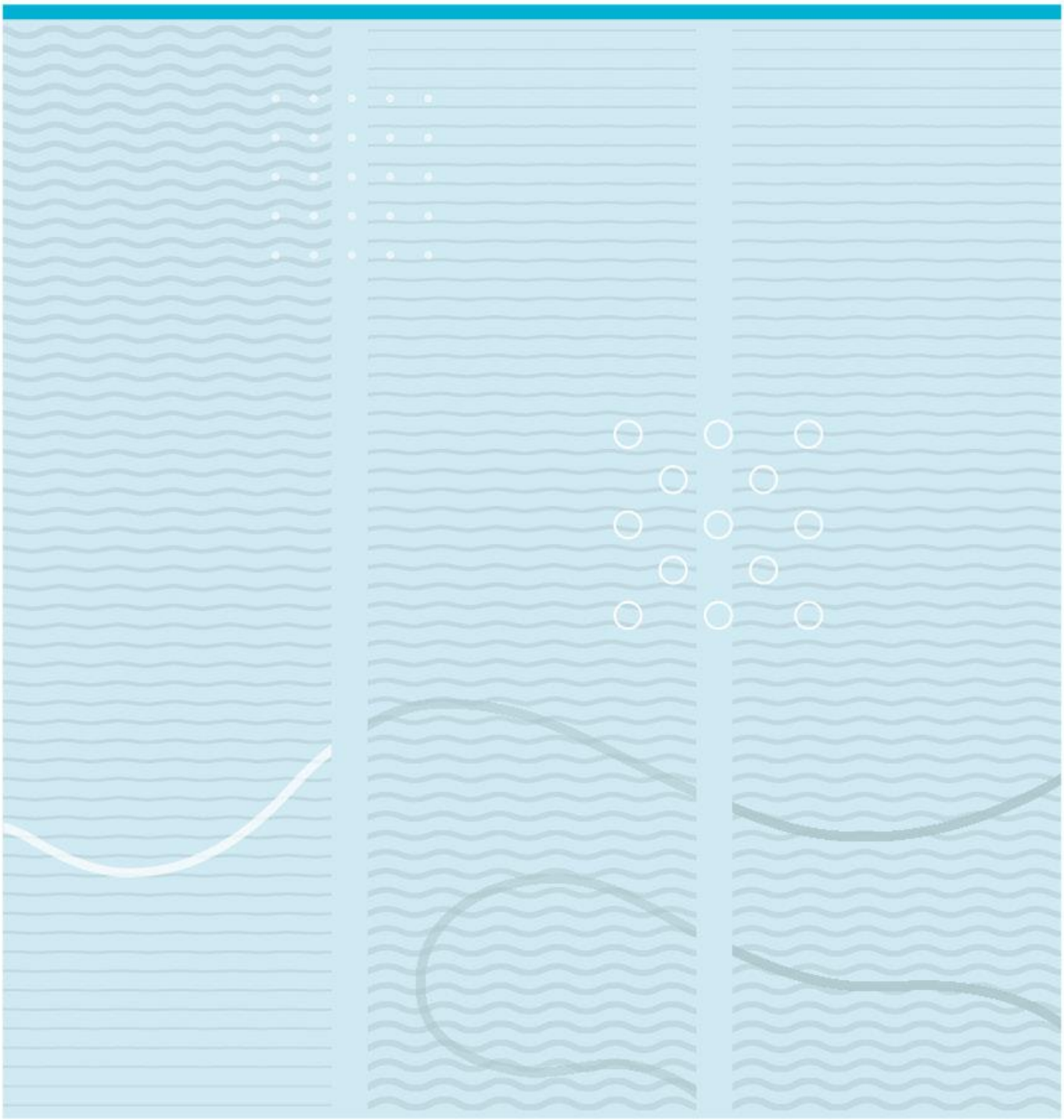
–

Master's thesis
Culture studies
Spring 2024

Christian Wærnes Wickstrøm

Desiring-attraction: affirming cultural dynamics via fiction

A philosophical analysis of two novels and six shorter stories by Franz Kafka



University of South-Eastern Norway
Faculty of the humanities, social, and educational sciences
Institute of culture, religion, and social studies
Post office box 235
3603 Kongsberg

http://www.usn.no

This thesis represents 60 course credits

ABSTRACT

I employ a philosophical framework in examining the intersection of culture and desire among the protagonists in Franz Kafka's fiction to offer a new perspective on its portrayal. Integrating formalist literary analysis with the ideas of philosopher Gilles Deleuze, my methodology combines experimental, experiential, and analytical reading strategies. Additional poststructuralist concepts on cultural dynamics anchor fictional desire in cultural reality by highlighting its fluid nature.

While I elaborate on prevailing interpretations of Kafka as a critic of modernity, I attempt to destabilize traditional associations tethering desire to lack, entrapment or desperation. I introduce the philosophical concept of *desiring-attraction* as a dynamic force shaping cultural life and self-expression, situated at the nexus of material interactions, and embedded within the tangible aspects of culture and human experience, influencing, and being influenced by them. I explore how norms and identities are regulated and transgressed, maintaining that the protagonists experiment with expressions of communal be/longing and identity performance. I conclude that this affirms marginalized, posthuman, and other diverse identities by protagonists' transgressive self-expressions.

Affirming messages are plentiful, embedded in the protagonists' pursuits. The symbiotic interplay of desiring-attraction illuminates both minor forces, which differentiate via the improvised experimentation of nature, and major forces, which homogenize via the ritualized repetition of culture. However, the need for such a dichotomy arises from inherent human traits, such as the tendency to entrench into habitual and binary thinking. By transcending these limitations in a post/transhuman future, we might affirm the non-existence of dichotomy altogether.

These positive messages hold significance not only for Kafka studies but also for literary and culture studies at large; I argue that desire and suffering in Kafka's narratives is excessively perceived as negative in popular culture framings and established critical frameworks, due to the rigidity and persuasiveness of mythologized narratives and extant scholarship. It's not the bureaucracy or technology itself that is eroticized in Kafka, but rather the organic processes that

lead to their breakdown and decay. This encompasses the deterioration of legal affairs, means of communication, organs, bodies, machines, and more. In Kafka, we encounter not only critiques, but also vital affirmations of the course of nature, culture, and time.

PREFACE

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Hans-Jacob Ohldieck—Associate Professor at USN—whose clear guidance and attention to detail have been crucial throughout this journey. His insightful feedback and encouragement challenged me beyond the boundaries of my thought. Similarly, I will still thank my supervisor during my bachelor's studies in history, Gry Cecilie Lund—Assistant Professor at USN. She illuminated my path with her radiant intellect, broadening my sense of the history of ideas and deepening my passion for philosophy.

I am also deeply indebted to the scholars whose pioneering work laid the foundation for my research. Their insights and contributions have shaped my understanding of Kafka's literature and inspired me to explore new epistemic avenues. I am grateful to the academic community for providing a rich intellectual environment in which to thrive. Dialogue with fellow scholars has enriched my research and broadened my perspective on Kafka's work. To my family and friends—whose unwavering belief in my abilities has been a constant source of strength and motivation—I offer my sincerest thanks. Your encouragement and support have sustained me through this academic endeavor.

Finally, I extend my deepest appreciation to Kafka himself, whose art continues to captivate and inspire readers around the world. It is a privilege to engage with his literature and to contribute—in my own small way—to the ongoing dialogue surrounding his legacy. I hope that this thesis serves as a catalyst for further inquiry and inspires new perspectives on his enduring relevance in contemporary culture.

May 2024

Christian Wærnes Wickstrøm

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THESIS AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Upon the death of Czech writer Franz Kafka in 1924, the diffusion of his stories was limited to a few hundred copies each. The ongoing proliferation of secondary literature attests to the enduring relevance of his fiction. Contemporary publications continue to emerge, including recent editions in Nynorsk by Jon Fosse,[1] the recipient of the 2023 Nobel Prize in Literature. However, distinctions between the fiction and the persona appear blurred within the ever-expanding body of research.

Crucially, I find an overemphasis on the Kafkaesque[2] that seems to overshadow alternative themes, prompting a critical examination of conventional readings entrenched in notions of critique and satire of modernity, religion, capitalism, and bureaucracy. The rigidity of prevailing myth and established truth within both popular culture and extant scholarly discourse may significantly bias readers' perceptions, steering them toward a view of Kafka's work as impenetrable, negative, suffering-oriented or lacking in meaning. My critique of this cultural reductionism resonates with similar views of scholars (e.g., Foster 2013: 178; Ozick 2014: 37; Ward 2004: 65; Winkel Holm 2016: 294). Thus, I perform a literary analysis to uncover complexities that reveal more affirming philosophical and political messages in Kafka's fiction, while still complementing extant

[1] Fosse's translation of *The Metamorphosis and Other Works* was released in 2016, and his translation of *The Trial* in 2022.
[2] *Kafkaesque* is an adjective describing something reminiscent of Kafka's fictional settings, specifically those elements perceived as oppressive or nightmarish.

perspectives. My thesis presents a novel approach to understanding the desires inherent in culture and the cultural manifestations of desire in Kafka's works. I consider this intersection to be particularly fruitful and aim to explore and uncover significant insights within it.

Building upon prevailing readings associating desire with protagonists' entanglements in judicial and bureaucratic culture (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 49; Škop 2011: 112; Žižek 2006: 115), my examination expands the thematic diversity with my philosophical concept *desiring-attraction*.[3] My overarching claim is that this conceptual lens grasps complex dynamics between desires and cultures in Kafka's fiction. The relevance of my thesis for culture studies lies in the capacity of this concept to illuminate cultural themes. In my experimental methodological approach, I employ this concept alongside other post-structuralist ones, to unveil affirmative messages regarding cultural r/evolution,[4] be/longing, identity, expression, performance, and practice. By analyzing protagonists' desires and attractions, I reveal affirmations of broad academic discourses on culture.

While other scholars offer affirming readings of desire (Deleuze & Guattari 2003; Pehar 2017), they often tether it to the dismal notion of captivity or entrapment. I elaborate on earlier perspectives by identifying instances in the fiction where the cultural repression of desire is less prominent, or where the protagonists' desires appear more complex, generative, and positive than hitherto documented by other scholars. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari underscore the affectivity and intricacy of *becoming*;[5] however they still regard the Kafkian protagonist—in the short stories—as a confined entity who experiences mere temporary liberation, never reaching a definitive exit, and ending up decaying in a repressed state (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 36–38). According to them, gatherings of minorities performing identity and expressing desire productively—in relation to each other, to cultural artifacts, environments, and forces—finds its most apt expression in the novels (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 37–38). They assert that only the novels are truly capable of realizing

[3] I explain the theoretical underpinnings of *desiring-attraction* in section 3.6. of the thesis.
[4] In words like *r/evolution*, the "/" indicates a blending of two separate words or concepts, a hybrid perspective. In this specific use I imply a nuanced understanding of social change that incorporates elements of both rapid transformation and gradual development. The "/" thus serves as a shorthand to denote a synthesis or intersection of ideas.
[5] *Becoming* might simply be thought of as a process of continuous change and transformation that goes beyond fixed categories and established identities.

such effects of desire, because their protagonists are supplemented by a wealth of other characters in a totality of interconnected machinic desire (*desiring-machines*)[6] (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 39).

I argue that their affirming perspective nonetheless downplays the affirming nature of desire and retains traces of negatively biased interpretations of Kafka, despite the authors' extensive efforts to critique such viewpoints (e.g. Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 68). Moreover, their focus on power, persecution, oppression, and political ideology (e.g. Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 12, 41, 58–59) might overshadow the affirming contents of the texts, their potential for emancipatory transformations and the disruptive capacity of desire to challenge entrenched norms, despite their advocacy for it. I am therefore deviating from their coupling of desire and justice in the novels (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 49), as well as from their limited vision of individual agency in some of the short stories, to uncover more affirming messages concerning desire and culture. My aim is to illustrate how desires and attractions unfold organically and affirmatively by viewing desires and attractions not as deficiencies, constraints, or oppressions, but as expressions of cultural transgressions and regulations which, in turn, express affirming messages. I thus raise the question:

- What are the transgressive desires and regulated attractions of Kafka's protagonists?

My hypothesis posits that affirmation emerges at the nexus of desire and culture; that by examining the objects of protagonists' desires, their culturally transgressive nature, the cultural elements they become attracted to, and how regulations and cultural mechanisms themselves also become attractions, I can uncover instances of affirmation within Kafka's narratives.

In the shorter works, I posit that significant inclusive, diverse, feminist and posthuman messages deserve attention. I also diverge from previous scholarship on the novels by asserting that desires and attractions manifest most prominently within cultural domains that extend beyond judicial or bureaucratic systems in *The Trial* and *The Castle*. I argue that the judicial and administrative realms depicted in these works are not mere embodiments of bureaucratic culture; instead, they serve as facades concealing deeper layers of erotic and transgressive subcultures. The same holds true for

[6] I hereafter use the term *desiring-machines* for desire interconnected as a potentially revolutionary and liberating force (Deleuze & Guattari 2000: 120).

several of the shorter stories. However—more importantly—these shorter works go even further than the novels in affirming marginality, inclusivity, diversity, femininity, and posthumanity through transgressive performances and cultural experimentation.

To desire, in Kafka's world, is to defy regulation and normativity, transcending the confines of mundane existence and expressing an attraction to something beyond the status quo. At the outset of each narrative, the protagonists are driven out of their daily routines by the force of desiring-attraction, embarking on transformative journeys where desires and attractions intertwine, leading them into realms of uncertainty and transgression where nonetheless affirmative messages are unveiled. Juxtaposed with struggles against unfamiliar cultural practices, and further nuanced by attraction to all-too-familiar ones, the protagonists express cultural be/longing in experimental and groundbreaking ways. Rather than stemming from a sense of lack, desire could be regarded as a dynamic force driving individuals towards self-realization, expression, and integration within their cultural environment via the constant processual creation of new expressions.

1.2. DISPOSITION

Embarking on an exploration of the interplay between culture and desire within Kafka's literary landscape, my thesis unfolds across six distinct sections. Commencing with the introduction chapter, an examination of the current state of the art literature follows. Subsequently, two chapters delve into the theoretical underpinnings and methodological foundations of the study, respectively. The fifth chapter consists of the analyses which pave the way for the conclusion in the sixth chapter, offering synthesis and reflections on the insights.

1. Introduction

I present my thesis statement, and the central themes of culture and desire in Kafka's fiction, establishing the context, significance, and scope of the thesis. I formulate my problem statement as well as the main hypotheses and arguments in contrast to other scholar's views on desire and ground it in my concept of desiring-attraction.

2. State of the art literature review

A condensed state of the art literature review follows this section, situating the thesis within the broader scholarly discourse and highlighting the need for nuanced analyses. Research literature is categorized into four overarching paradigms, namely religion, critique, psychoanalysis, and existentialism. These paradigms serve as an entry point into the realm of Kafka scholarship, recognizing that the actual landscape of this literature is inherently more multifaceted and nuanced.

3. Theory

I discuss the *ontology*[7] of culture, to build the foundation for my analysis of culture and desire in Kafka's fiction. Concepts of temporality, spatiality and liminality are presented, followed by a discussion of ritualism as a mechanism of cultural regulation—and of transgression of such regulation—to later elucidate the occurrences of such expression of desire and attraction in Kafka's fiction. Lastly, to introduce the thesis' central contribution, I discuss contrasting philosophical discourse on the dynamics of desire, attempting to bridge the differences with desiring-attraction.

4. Methodology

Defining the approach taken in the analysis, I present the ground of my methodology, consisting of Deleuzian principles of pure and direct perception, rejection of fixed interpretations, experimentation with concepts, and the dynamic synthesis of perception and thinking. These are contrasted with psychoanalysis and hermeneutics and integrated with literary formalism. To bolster my analyses, methodological challenges are discussed, before accounting for the literature selection and the ethics of my project, ensuring transparency and rigor.

5. Analysis

The selected works are presented chronologically as I delve into the prevalent thematic appearances of desiring-attraction throughout. I discuss the protagonists' desires and attractions, examining how these dynamics interact with cultural elements, spaces, and regulatory mechanisms. This analytical

[7] *Ontology* is the study of how something exists and is comprehended.

exploration serves as the empirical underpinning for substantiating the thesis statement, thereby providing the necessary groundwork to articulate my findings in the ensuing conclusion.

6. Conclusion

I discuss my findings by summarizing and contrasting the analyses. Theoretical implications are discussed, promoting a deeper understanding of their significance before I take account of the limitations of my project. I end the thesis offering potential avenues for future research, reinforcing the contribution to Kafka scholarship and the study of culture and desire in fiction.

2. STATE OF THE ART LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. REVIEW OVERVIEW

This chapter establishes four paradigms—religion, social critique, psychoanalysis, and existentialism—as frameworks for interpreting Kafka's fiction. The religious paradigm—deeply ingrained in Kafka studies due to Max Brod's interventions in Kafka's authorship after his death—emphasizes allusions to religious texts, especially Jewish mysticism, and ironic biblical references. On the other hand, the social critique paradigm positions Kafka as a critic of modernity, targeting rationalism, scientism, capitalism, and bureaucracy. It also explores Kafka's examination of imperialist ideology and orientalism from a post-colonial perspective. The psychoanalytic paradigm creatively interprets, often linking Kafka's fiction with his private life or with psychoanalytic allegory, while the existentialist paradigm accentuates ambiguity, rejecting claims of definite meanings. Together, these four paradigms provide a point of departure for my own findings, serving both as insightful lenses and as contrasts to my affirmative stance on desiring-attraction.

2.1. THE PARADIGM OF RELIGION

The religious paradigm has traditionally served as the foundational framework for interpreting Kafka's fiction. It underscores the presence of allusions to religious texts, myths, allegories, and moral messages within the stories. Notably, textual messages often draw upon ironic biblical allusions (e.g., Kartiganer 1962: 31–32; Lasine 1990) and Jewish mythology and mysticism (e.g.,

Alter 2000; Ward 2004: 81–84). Concurrently, the narratives are also examined with parallel Eastern perspectives on existence, exploring themes of rebirth, transformation, and other existential transgressions (e.g., Bloom 2007: 62–63; Camus 2005: 127; De la Durantaye 2007: 328; Kohzadi & Azizmohammadi 2013; Ryan 1999).

The early emergence of this paradigm is attributed in part to Max Brod, a close friend of Kafka. Upon Kafka's death in 1924, Brod—despite Kafka's request for him to burn the literary collection—chose to disperse it and took it upon himself to organize and redact the fragmentary and chaotic manuscripts (Kafka 2009a: ix). While Brod's role is generally understood as sequencing text fragments and determining the choice of wording in certain places, his interventions may have allowed him to significantly shape the dominant narrative and thematic elements in each story (Corngold 2002: 160–161; Koelb 2002: 29). It is specifically suggested that Brod accentuated parallels to religion and mysticism in Kafka's fiction (Fickert 1985: 18). Regardless of the extent of these interventions, Brod's influence continues to shape the reading of Kafka's works. The religious paradigm nevertheless assumes significance for my project, considering how it illuminates desires directed towards transcendental values and metaphysical forces operative in Kafka's texts. However, my analysis diverges from traditional religious associations, engaging with these themes in their fictional cultural contexts.

2.2. THE PARADIGM OF SOCIAL CRITIQUE

It is customary to approach Kafka's works with a social critique, with a prevalence of sociological and historical perspectives over philosophical and cultural ones. The criticism often revolves around rationalism, scientism, capitalism, and bureaucracy in modernity, along with the associated dystopian social conditions (e.g., Avanessian 2014: 210; Baxandall 1970; Bennett 1991; Berman 2002: 98; Burwell 1979; Conti 2015: 102; Corngold 2004: 162; Emrich et al. 1977; Löwy 2016: 65).

From a post-colonialist standpoint, Kafka's alleged expression of self-criticism on behalf of the West comes to the forefront. Several stories delve into imperialist ideology and orientalism—not as Edward Said conceived of it in *Orientalism* (1978), but rather as deconstructionist self-orientalism,

where protagonists themselves highlight the otherness of their cultures (e.g., Goebel 2002: 187; Kafka 2009a: xxvi–xxvii; Lemon 2011: 75, 145, 151–152).

In a literary and aesthetic context, Kafka is interpreted as a critic of all art that deviates from the pure and sober, challenging language and the tools of literature (e.g., Bloom 2007: 49; Corngold 1988: 49–51, 54–56; Foster 2013: 176; Kafka 2009a: xxi; Kavalovski 2014: 105–106). Despite writing in German, Kafka's style defied tradition; his intricate written language is understood in the context of his cultural exteriority as a German-speaking Czech Jew (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 23). Consequently, the works can be approached as minority literature, where the social construction and performativity of identity and humanity is challenged (e.g., Corngold 2002: 154–157; Deleuze 2002: 95; Deleuze & Guattari 2003: xiv; Geller 1994; Harel 2020; Kavalovski 2014; Skorgen 2020: 211–214).

The paradigm of social critique becomes essential in my analyses, as many common themes in culture studies are thoroughly explored by it. It also facilitates a nuanced exploration, allowing for a comparative analysis between conventional interpretations of desire and my divergent readings that emphasize its affirmative nature.

2.3. THE PARADIGM OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

The psychoanalytic paradigm underscores the fiction's creative interpretive potential, for instance conceiving of the plot of *The Castle* as a dream, or of characters and places as expressions of psychic structures, defense mechanisms, or repressed traumas (e.g., Gunvaldsen 1964; Guth 1965; Kopper 1983; Leiter 1958; Snyder 1981; Stockholder 1978; Stringfellow 1995: 202).

While marked by creativity and inspiration, these readings often intertwine the fiction with Kafka's private life, particularly focusing on his alleged problematic relationship with the body, food, and sexuality (e.g., Boos 2021; Dnes 2020: 430–431; Fichter 1987: 367; Fickert 1974). There is also a significant consensus regarding Kafka utilizing writing for sublimation and escapism (Corngold 2007: 82; Fichter 1987: 375; Kafka 2009b: xv; Neumann 2010: 100–101; Sjöholm 2020: 115–116).

Nevertheless, the creative interpretations offered within psychoanalytic discourse contribute to the rich tapestry of readings. This paradigm also serves as a source of inspiration for me, as I draw on psychoanalytic frameworks in my own analyses. However, I adhere to the literary framework and refrain from delving into Kafka's private life.[8]

2.4. THE PARADIGM OF EXISTENTIALISM

The existentialist perspective accentuates the inherent inaccessibility of Kafka's fiction, rejecting almost any claim to unveil a definite meaning in it, other than drawing parallels to an ambiguous or meaningless existence (e.g., Brooks 2020: 2; Corngold 1988; De la Durantaye 2007: 329; Huber 2019: 1823–1824; Kavalovski 2014: 118–119; Kavanagh 1972: 252–253). The paradigm's approach is succinctly encapsulated in Adorno's statement: "Every sentence says 'interpret me', but none of them allows it" (Adorno 1997: 245). Adorno's quote suggests that the texts lack inherently meaningful content or that Kafka deliberately crafted ambiguous messages, yet this complexity still holds significance; the fiction can thus be construed as an expression of existence at its core, where everything that exists is fundamentally mysterious.

For instance, the narrative voices in the texts may appear ambiguous, anonymous, and distant, while simultaneously providing profound insight into the consciousness of the protagonists (Blanchot 1993: 383–386; Sokel 2002: 38–39, 50–51; Trüstedt 2015: 137–139; Ward 2004: 66). Similarly, Gregor Samsa's ontological status in "The Metamorphosis" is subject to dispute. Is he human or animal, and in what sense does he exist? (e.g., Bermejo-Rubio 2013; Bloom 2007: 33, 52, 60; De La Durantaye 2007; Dnes 2020; Dolar 2006: 175; Elsby 2019: 36–37; Žižek 2006: 22). In my own reading of *The Trial,* the understanding of Josef's innocence is complicated by the narrator's voice and the otherwise ambiguous minority language (Kafka's peculiar style of writing). For me questions arise regarding the reliability of the narrator asserting Josef's innocence, the origin and

[8] For biographical insights, Neumann (2010) serves as a comprehensive biography exploring potential sources of inspiration for Kafka's fiction. Neumann emphasizes that many assertions about his private life remain unconfirmed, and instead directs attention to the contextual backdrop of his upbringing: the German-Yiddish world of myth and the culture of Prague.

true nature of this innocence, and the nuanced meanings and sexual overtones of terms like "arrest" and "innocence" in German.[9]

The existential paradigm approaches the texts with a philosophical lens, akin to the paradigm of religion, highlighting themes of desire. However—akin to the paradigm of critique—it tends to associate desire with notions of lack and negativity. This dual nature positions existentialism as both an insightful perspective for me, and as a potential contrast to the affirmative stance on desiring-attraction presented in my thesis.

2.5. KEY TAKEAWAY FROM THE REVIEW

Overall, these paradigms collectively underscore the complexity inherent in Kafka's works and the multifaceted nature of desire within cultural contexts. The paradigms emphasize the importance of approaching analysis with sensitivity to cultural, societal, and existential dimensions, enriching the understanding of Kafka's literature. However, most scholars exhibit a tendency to associate desire with lack and negativity, though often implicitly. As highlighted in section 1.1, I argue that even scholars who embrace perspectives like those of Deleuze & Guattari tend to overly emphasize themes of repression, power, and concepts of escape and confinement. This observation underscores the opportunity for fresh analyses of cultural and transgressive themes present in Kafka's fiction, providing a point of departure for my attempt to contribute to a radically affirming exploration of desiring-attraction dynamics.

3. THEORY

3.0. THEORY OVERVIEW

In this chapter, I establish the philosophical foundation for my analyses. First, I delve into the ontological, temporal, and spatial dimensions of culture, incorporating Jacques Derrida's concept of *hauntology* and Michel Foucault's concept of *heterotopia* to address the existence of liminal spaces in

[9] Kafka frequently utilizes terms with deliberate ambiguity, as acknowledged in his diary (e.g., Kafka 1988: September 23, 1912) and as documented by scholars (e.g., Corngold 2007: 79; Grimes 1974: 221–222; Sokel 2011: 71).

Kafka's narrative. The way Kafka portrays the becoming of identity and difference in time and space is deeply connected to desire and attraction because it unveils the intricate interplay between individual subjectivities and the cultural contexts in which they unfold. Second, I interweave the themes of desire, ritualism, and cultural regulation, drawing on concepts by René Girard and Georges Bataille. My discussion further extends to the transgressive nature of Kafka's works—which ties back to all the aforementioned themes—highlighting a concept of extreme transgression: the *body without organs* as originally envisioned by Antonin Artaud. Last, I discuss my concept of desiring-attraction as a bridge between the understandings of desire held by Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari, emphasizing positive aspects of desire and its entwinement with cultural dimensions.

3.1. HAUNTOLOGY, HETEROTOPIA AND LIMINALITY

Within the realm of cultural ontology, our perception of reality is intricately woven with the social constructs and practices embedded within it (Carrithers et al. 2010). The interpretation of a literary work—such as one by Kafka—is then intimately tied to the linguistic and written discourse surrounding it. The prevailing scholarly discourse has long since characterized Kafka's literature as a critique of modernity, embedding it within a historical continuum of interpretation.

Jaques Derrida introduced the concept of *hauntology* to illustrate how the present is influenced by its intrinsic past (Derrida 2006: 3). The past is not contemporaneous, he reminds us—yet simultaneously, it is embedded within the present, haunting us with the remembrance of what was and of what could have been (Derrida 2006: 10). Hauntology then not only addresses the nature of the present scholarly situation—questioning how Kafka could be interpreted today if historical circumstances were different—but also forms the basis for my examination of the temporality of culture in his fiction; it affords my exploration of how cultural elements from the past continue to shape the cultural landscape depicted in the stories. In the aftermath of Gregor Samsa's transformation in "The Metamorphosis" for instance, his former role in the family and his previous way of life persists as a haunting shadow in the familial consciousness.

Still, an emphasis on hauntology might overshadow the agency and creativity of the present, potentially portraying it as a passive recipient of historical influences. The cultural forms in Kafka's fiction are certainly not static. Moreover, his storytelling challenges static interpretations, inviting readers to engage with the evolving nature of cultural forms within his fiction. As the narratives progress, Kafka introduces shifts and mutations in cultural dynamics, revealing deeper webs of meaning in domestic and judicial cultures, highlighting the malleability and complexity inherent in culture. Therefore, my focus on hauntology is accompanied by an acknowledgment of the dynamic agency and creativity inherent to time, ensuring a holistic understanding of how historical forces interact with the active, creative forces shaping the cultures of the present.

To further reflect on the complexities of time and space, I employ Foucault's concept of *heterotopia*, which designates a space where several types of space and/or time are juxtaposed (Foucault 1986: 24–27). A heterotopia is characterized precisely by its resistance to rigid definition, attracting a diversity of cultural elements towards its inside, and residing in the interstices of multiple cultural spheres. As such, these heterotopic spaces are liminal, given that liminality characterizes existence in interspace, which fundamentally signifies constituting a threshold or transition (Lyngstad 2018: 19). While sounding abstract, the concepts of heterotopia and liminality are especially relevant as boundaries of fictional reality and fictional imagination blur in Kafka's fiction. Such instances are generally labeled surrealism, yet I contend that specifying the transgressive nature of heterotopias in liminality and interspace—as spaces capable of transformation—makes for a more valuable framework for understanding dynamic interplay in Kafka's literary landscape.

Kafka's spaces possess a liminal quality; for example, the tea house in "The Penal Colony" doubles as a cemetery, the punishment site transforms into a theater, Gregor's room in "The Metamorphosis" serves as both a bedroom and an animal habitat, and the living spaces in *The Trial* also function as courtrooms. These heterotopic spaces serve as loci for significant shifts, both in the narrative structure and in the protagonists' desires, attractions, and cultural situations. The transformative nature of heterotopias allows Kafka to explore and challenge conventional cultural

and spatial norms. Recognizing these spaces as sites of transgression and change enriches our understanding of Kafka's narratives and their thematic content.

3.2. RITUALISM, CULTURAL REGULATION AND SACRIFICE

Hauntology is in the aftermath of significant cultural shifts, and heterotopias are places of cultural hybridization. However, equally prominent in Kafka's fiction is the presence of ritualism, which serves as the antithesis by maintaining cultural norms and practices. Kafka's literary tapestry intricately weaves themes of desire within the backdrop of such cultural rituals and regulations. His narratives unfold a nuanced exploration of how individuals navigate the interplay between personal desires and the dynamic, ever-shifting landscape of societal practices. The protagonists engage in a dance of improvisation and expression, seeking affirmation within the fluidity of cultural frameworks. This exploration illuminates the perpetual cultural endeavor for identity and agency, emphasizing the transformative potential found in the interstices of cultural rituals and regulations.

In contrast to liminal heterotopias—which serve as ritualistic and regulatory interstices—the delineation of borders between spheres and spaces inherently incorporates concrete limits and thresholds. These are integral to ritualism in maintaining the distinctions between the interiority and exteriority of cultural elements—that is, regulating the culture. All manifestations of ritualism thus exhibit a dual nature, acting concurrently as stabilizing structures and as transgressions of cultural norms (Schechner 2003: 641). This duality within ritualism is mirrored in Kafka's fiction through the depictions of ritualized desires and attractions in domestic life and judicial culture.

The foremost instance of ritualism is the sacrificial rite. In fact, one may regard most rituals as sacrifices of some kind, serving to extend the life of a given cause while consuming a valuable resource in the pursuit. As interventions in culture, however, sacrificial rites play a crucial role in preserving the harmony and balance of societal order. Girard posits that the essence of these rites lies in maintaining the separation between *the sacred and the profane*[10] realms. He contends that this is

[10] *The sacred and the profane* is a useful dichotomy and a basic characteristic of religion, distinguishing between spheres of culture and society that are considered special or forbidden and commonplace or mundane, respectively.

achieved by ritualizing violence, taming its destructive potential via symbolic enactments (Girard 2005: 10, 32, 37–38). For instance, the selection of a *scapegoat* as sacrificial object—preferably one perceived as precious and sharing characteristics with the actual object of violent desire—becomes integral to quelling a cycle of vengeful violence (Girard 2005: 12, 18–19, 32).

Moreover, according to Bataille ritualism serves to bind individuals together, encompassing both participants and spectators in a shared experience (Bataille 1986: 17, 22). The sacrificial rite provides *a temporary transgression of reality*, extending the life of spectators by the collective witnessing of death by sacred violence in a life-affirming manner, akin to the potential of (great) literature (Bataille 1986: 11–13, 17, 22–25). The sacrifices of "The Penal Colony" precisely serve this function for the spectators, while also operating as a cultural defense mechanism for colonial practices. In this way, the sacrificial rite—as an aspect of ritualism—functions both as a cultural regulation mechanism—in temporarily transgressing reality and its norms, as Bataille contends—and at the same time reinforcing or preserving them, as Girard contends.

However, the sacrifice also operates on smaller scales. For instance, when Georg's father in "The Judgment" sacrifices his son, he effectively transgresses any semblance of regulated reality while concurrently reaffirming the hierarchy of patriarchal domestic culture. This dual function is shared by certain cultural techniques. Some may be conceptualized as materialized ritualism; for instance—as Bernhard Siegert contends—a gate may be considered a cultural technique that demarcates the distinction between interior and exterior—or indeed between human and animal—mirroring the historical transformation of the hunter into the shepherd by the creation of animal enclosures (Siegert 2015: xv, 8–9, 203). The meaning of both the gate and of the sacrifice thus encapsulates notions of *closure and openness concurrently*, becoming materialized instances of liminality and transgression. Ritual practices and cultural techniques à la the door, the gate or the window are thus expressions of the *mechanisms of cultural regulation* at display in all of Kafka's fiction.

3.3. TRANSGRESSION AND THE BODY WITHOUT ORGANS

The transgressive nature of Kafka's works lies in their ability to unravel the oppressive structures of normative thinking, providing glimpses into the liminal spaces where desire, identity, and cultural norms collide. Kafka's exploration of the absurd and the grotesque serves as a compelling lens through which the transgression of these norms becomes a recurring motif.

According to Bataille, transgression is distinguished by its inherent *excess* (Bataille 1986: 41). Any *surplus desire must be consumed* to avert conflict and self-destruction, channeling violent energy via ritual, he contends (Bataille 1991: 14, 21, 24). Highlighting the importance of managing one's surplus desire, Bataille thus asserts that the fundamental issue of any economical concern lies not in necessity and demand, but in luxurious excess (Bataille 1991: 12). For instance, capitalist profit may turn into destructive luxury if not appropriately consumed or redirected. The pivotal consideration then lies in the targeted direction of transgressions—specifically, to where the surplus desire is being channeled. Properly directed transgressions could potentially be productive or even revolutionary, as displayed in the fruitfulness of immediate energy consumption through free play in "Children on a Country Road". On the other hand, the destructive force of unconsumed surplus desire is expressed in the burrow-animal's failure to break free from his isolation in "The Burrow".

The potency inherent of the act of transgressing a particular threshold or limit can be understood in terms of a *body without organs*, a concept originally inspired by Antonin Artaud, which takes on diverse meanings in the works of Deleuze & Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari 2000: 8; Guattari 2006: 416). Crucially, however, Artaud himself envisioned the body without organs as a liberation from the body's involuntary anatomy, allowing it to become subject to external vitalities rather than an oppressor of them (Artaud & Corti 1965: 76). Through this actualization the conceptual body sheds its predetermined and rigid structures, opening itself to a fluid and transformative engagement with external influences. This is the way in which I use the concept, linking it to the liberation of marginalized expressivity, signifying the boundary where shape-shifting and norm-breaking desire materializes. The body without organs is expressed in "The Penal Colony" where the colonial officer becomes subject to his own machine; it acts upon Gregor Samsa in "The

Metamorphosis" through his transformation; it converts the burrow-animal's dwelling from a source of pride into tormenting hauntology in "The Burrow".

3.4. DESIRE AND *ANTI-OEDIPUS*

Desire emerges as a driving force in Kafka. It steers characters through surreal landscapes and existential dilemmas, offering a lens through which to examine the human condition. Radically—at its root—these desires are productive and life-affirming, I contend. The transgressive nature of desire is a force that connects desiring-machines together, unfolding outwards to suffuse the world with culture since time immemorial. Desire itself attracts characters as vessels of it. It is not unavailable for the subject, not unfolding in on itself, and not found in mere echoing of the desire of the Other or the external environment. Contrarily, its tangibility manifests upon desire departing its nexus, interacting with other materialities at the crossroads with attraction and resulting in experimental expressions.

At first glance, this positive view of desire might appear untrue in the case of Josef K. in *The Trial* and the Land Surveyor in *The Castle*. Upon closer examination, however, we observe that their desire—though initially appearing self-focused—is intricately interwoven with the broader cultural contexts, making them attracted and attractive to others in diverse ways, which in turn transform their characters. In Kafka, the transgression of cultural norms becomes not a way to impede on a forbidden territory, but a way to share the garden of one's own unique individuality with the breadth of other cultural expressions inside it.

According to Lacan, however, desire is characterized by an inherent *lack* (e.g., Lacan 1992: 53, 67, 125; Lacan 2004: 292, 294). This lack constitutes a desire or a want in the subject, yet this foundational void cannot be filled, he contends—in line with psychoanalytic axioms—as the psyche continuously redirects from the satisfaction of desire with the emergence of new desires and adherence to laws, taboos, and prohibitions (Lacan 1992: 58, 63, 119). This proposed redirection allegedly serves a protective function in the psyche, as the fulfillment of the object of desire would give rise to *jouissance*, a state of extreme suffering and malevolence, paradoxically intertwined with

intense pleasure and goodness (Lacan 1992: 73, 179). The idea of jouissance upon the satisfaction of desire appears linked to the concepts of luxurious excess and the body without organs. Interestingly, Lacan emphasizes its dual nature. However, he still constrains the transgression inherent in desire fulfillment to psychic functioning, obstructing its unfolding in material reality.

Freud and Lacan's conceptualizations of the dynamics of desire is contested by Deleuze & Guattari, who appeal against rigid and representational thinking, proposing that desire is material energy and not a mere psychological phenomenon (e.g., Deleuze & Guattari 2000: 3–5, 18–19, 25–28, 183; Guattari 2009: 54). They assert that the psychoanalytic tradition represses the free unfolding of desire and diversity, while legitimizing traditional structures and gender roles (Deleuze & Guattari 2000: 7, 45, 54). They contend, for instance, that social repression is manifested by conceiving of a child's play with toys through the lens of psychological complexes and theories of sexual development—such as the *Oedipus complex*[11]—rather than conceiving of the toys as the child's desiring-machines (Deleuze & Guattari 2000: 7, 45, 54).

On one hand, I align with Deleuze & Guattari: promoting the Lacanian conception of desire may lead to misconceptions of it as solely a psychic phenomenon. Instead, the unfolding of desire may be thought of simply as free improvisation, not necessarily linked to the sexual or the pathological (Sauvagnargues 2006: xx, 27, 29–30). On the other hand, I contend that both conceptions can coexist, as some desires may lead down pathological roads or even be unactualizable in the first place, while not excluding the possibility that some desires (perhaps most) are not representative of the psychological or indicative of the pathological.

Nevertheless, in a Deleuzian view, pure conceptions of law and agency become undermined by the psychoanalytic tradition through such mechanisms, as in post-enlightenment thinking in general. Following the "death of God,"[12] navigating the realms of desire presents a complex challenge: how

[11] The *Oedipus complex* finds its roots in Freud's theoretical framework, exploring children's unconscious desire for maternal love and the ensuing conflict that surfaces in relation to their fathers. Freud drew a parallel to the Greek tragedy of King Oedipus, who, according to the myth, inadvertently killed his father and married his mother (Freud 1977: 149–150; Freud 2015: 199–202).
[12] The *death of God* is a philosophical idea that suggests that traditional religious beliefs and values have diminished in modern society due to advancements in science, changes in cultural values, and shifts in worldview. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche declared "God is dead," illustrating this changing perspective on religion and morality (Nietzsche 2010a: 135–137).

is one to abstain without attributing it to Freudian complexes or Kantian deontology (duty-based ethics), when such ideas dominate in modernity, obscuring the notions of absolute Good in pre-modern consciousness? (Deleuze 1991: 81–83). The quality of being good then becomes chained to whether one is lawful, instead of the other way around (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 43).

À la the notion of an Oedipus complex, one is thus led by the Kantian categorical imperative[13] into the suffering of impossibility; becoming simultaneously the metaphorical guard and prisoner of one's own conscience, both repressing one's desire dutifully and being unfaithful to the free unfolding of it (Žižek 2000: 268; Žižek 2006: 90–91). Thus, Kantian deontology is *regulated attraction*, becoming attracted to self-regulation, finding enjoyment in the role of both master and slave, repressing one's desire in favor of a moral code. It plays out excessively in Kafka. For instance, in the colonial officer's absurd rationale leading him to suicide in "The Penal Colony", and in the personal motivations of the Servant leading her to isolate herself from others—despite displaying fervent curiosity—in "The Test".

Nevertheless, the Oedipus complex (or the Oedipal situation) occupies a central position in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory precisely regarding these dynamics of desire and is similarly critiqued by Deleuze & Guattari. It originally marks the mirror stage in child development where symbolic identification occurs—that is, the child learning to distinguish itself from its image in the mirror and to understand others as external objects (Lacan 1993: 199). As the head of the family, the father expresses the power that maintains familial cohesion, signified by the *phallus* symbol (Lacan 1991: 208–209, 227; Lacan 2006: 7, 455). The acknowledgement of this power demarcates the formation of the child's *superego* (Lacan 1991: 415)—that is, its ethical component or conscience. The notion of Oedipus complex formation also thereby denotes the taming of the alleged rivalry with the father for the affection of the mother, as the child comes to acknowledge the phallic supremacy of the father and submit to it on a psychological level. This phallic power can express itself as one of the three Borromean rings. In my analysis of "The Judgment" in section

[13] The *categorical imperative* requires that individuals act according to maxims that could be universally applied without contradiction, for instance, to treat all other subjects in the way oneself wants to be treated.

5.2., the integrity of each ring is thought of as necessary for the integrity of a familial culture—that is, mother, father, and child.

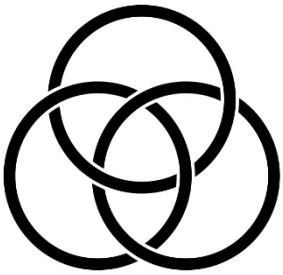


Illustration 1: The three Borromean rings in a chain or a knot, expressing the mutual dependence of three distinct parts. They are all intertwined, yet each ring is only directly chained to one other, leading to the dissolution of the entire structure if one ring is broken.

With the preceding discussion of the key concepts and my perspective on desire, I have laid the foundation for the final element of the theoretical framework: my experimental development of the dynamics of desire. Positioned at the heart of this endeavor is my concept of desiring-attraction, which serves as the focal point within my philosophical space.

3.5. DESIRING-ATTRACTION

Desiring-attraction serves as a philosophical concept that reconciles Lacanian and Deleuzo-Guattarian perspectives on desire. It acknowledges desire's affirmative and vital aspects—contrary to Lacan's emphasis on lack—while concurrently affirming the emphasis on the contextual and cultural or symbolic forces shaping its trajectory. Rooted primarily in Deleuze's thought, however, desiring-attraction highlights desire's role in motivating human actions and cultural dynamics, emphasizing its positive and generative aspects (rather than emphasizing cultural dynamics as forces of libidinal[14] repression). Theoretically, desiring-attraction offers a nuanced understanding that moves beyond the dichotomy of lack versus abundance, providing a more comprehensive view of the multifaceted nature of desire in human experience.

Desiring-attraction functions as a bridge between various viewpoints, and is situated at the nexus of material interactions, where it serves as a collective concept that encapsulates the tendencies displayed by cultural artifacts, including individuals, towards one another. Conceptually, desiring-

[14] *Libidinal* refers to any strong emotional or psychological drive or desire and is not limited to sexual impulses.

attraction operates on desiring-machines and generates *schizzes*[15] on a *plane of immanence*.[16] It unfolds on this plane as a *vitality*,[17] as the generative principle driving cultural meetings, where forces of regulation and transgression, and repression and liberation, collide.

Desiring-attraction acts as a transgressive force, shattering established cultural boundaries and norms, leading to cultural r/evolutions. The dialectical movement manifests in the attraction of majoritarian culture towards minoritarian desires, and in the minoritarian desires for attraction by majoritarian culture. As Kafka's stories illustrate, this relationship can be symbiotic: desiring-attraction generates a space where transgression can flourish, despite the prevalence of cultural regulation. Marginalized groups—embodied by Kafka's protagonists—perform transgressive gestures to gain expression and enter the consciousness of the dominant culture. Desires and attractions clash on the plane, leading to dynamic disruptions of its geometry and changes in identities and beliefs. The distinction between concealment and exposure blurs, leading narratives to reach a crescendo where a plateau or a body without organs is attained, leaving the intensity of desiring-machines unspent but lingering in infinite excess. Desiring-attraction generates this impossible edge, a liminal state that shapes the dynamic interplay between interiority and exteriority.

[15] *Schizzes* are dynamic disruptions in desire's flow, occurring at intersections where content and expression break away from their original territories (Deleuze & Guattari 2000: 241). For instance, the predicament of Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* is marked by schizzes on the boundary between human and animal, which also hint at deeper tensions between the physical and the spiritual (between the eroticism of the image and the sublime aesthetics of sound).

[16] A *plane of immanence* is a conceptual space where all things coexist and interact without any transcendent principles or external forces; everything is immanently interconnected and emergent from within the system itself (Deleuze & Guattari 2005: 254–255). On this plane, there are no hierarchical structures or fixed identities; instead, there's a continuous flux of becoming and transformation where new assemblages of cultural forms continually emerge (Deleuze & Guattari 2005: 266–267).

[17] *Vitality* refers to inherent drive and dynamic life force or energy.

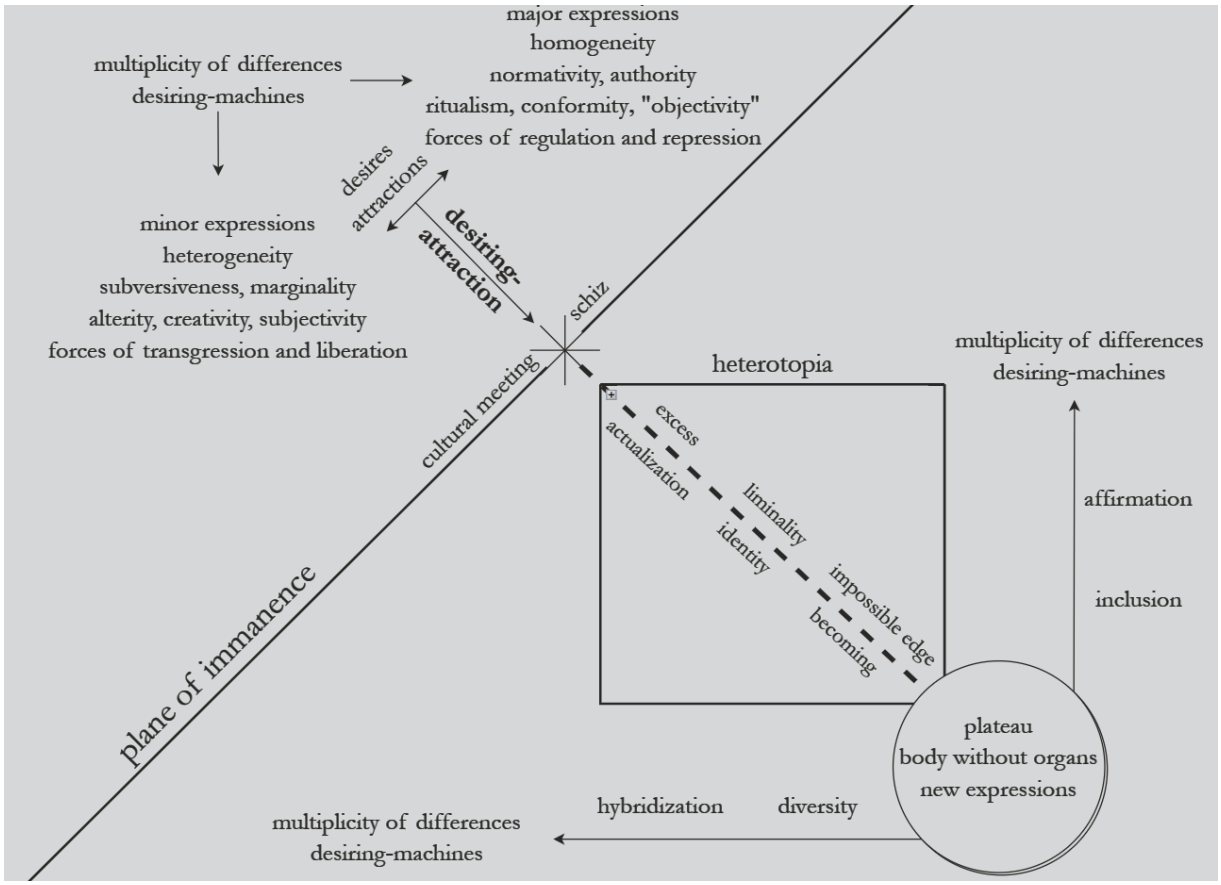


Illustration 2: My experimental development of the dynamics of desire, illustrating the workings of desiring-attraction. From the upper left corner to the bottom right: desiring-machines express their desires and attractions as multiplicities of differences. The minor expressions are heterogenous forces of transgression and liberation, embodying subversiveness, marginality, alterity, creativity, and subjectivity. The major expressions are homogeneous forces of regulation and repression, embodying normativity, authority, ritualism, conformity, and "objectivity". Desiring-attraction brings expressions into symbiosis on the plane of immanence via cultural meetings. This engenders schizzes, allowing desire to seep through the fissures in the plane of immanence. Heterotopias and impossible edges emerge through new becomings of the liminal plane, actualized with excess and identity. The fusion of minor and major forces intensifies, reaching a plateau or a body of organs, where the transmogrified flow of desire engenders new expressions. The sphere refracts into instances of cultural hybridization, diversity, inclusion, and affirmation, reinforcing the diffusion of differences once again.

I will exemplify the concept through an instance of its occurrence in Kafka's works. In "The Test," we witness how the dominant culture is drawn to the marginal protagonist, affording her the

freedom to express herself authentically. However, the narrative underscores how this interaction—facilitated by desiring-attraction—generates schizzes between the desiring-machines of the two characters (the test-giver and the protagonist). Furthermore, the narrative highlights that this interaction does not culminate in resolution but rather in a liminal state. Here, the protagonist occupies a paradoxical position, simultaneously extant as an insider and an outsider of the dominant culture. This liminality epitomizes the perpetual status of the outcast or the exiled foreigner, akin to a refugee without a fixed place of belonging. In this way, Kafka concludes the story with an impossible edge or a stalemate: the stable and predictable progression of the fictional reality within the text is disrupted, and the story abruptly ends.

Such strokes of artistry cause the literary work itself to become an attraction, leaving a lasting impression and compelling readers to revisit it. An abrupt conclusion is thus also a plateau or a body without organs as it generates a diversity of new expressions, not when the stream of desire is cut in the space of literature, but when the text affects the reader outside of it. Encountering these paradoxes within Kafka's oeuvre is to stand on the precipice of the impossible. The genius lies in crafting narratives that baffle yet simultaneously convey affirming, conscious messages, when the lens of desiring-attraction is applied; the outsider protagonist in "The Test" does not simply end in a liminal state: she is also rewarded by the Other for her transgression (failing to answer the test questions means passing the test). The story's message becomes an affirmation of outsiderness.

Elsewhere in Kafka's fiction, the fostering of liminal and heterotopic spaces becomes crucial for the purpose of delivering similar affirming messages. These spaces challenge rigid cultural normativity, inviting exploration and transgression, ultimately affirming the vitality and diversity of cultural expressions. Such spaces are displayed, for instance, in the fusion of regulatory judicial cultures and transgressive erotic cultures in the heterotopias of *The Trial* and *The Castle.* À la the interaction between minor and major culture in "The Test," these spaces also become liminal and impossible edges, attractions that draw desire from diverse desiring-machines, leading to cuts, clashes, schizzes, r/evolutions and becomings of new cultural expressions.

Furthermore, the dual nature of desiring-attraction implies that protagonists yearn for something beyond what initially attracts them, something more substantial and authentic. The dynamics of desire in Kafka thus come to appear more complex than hitherto described by scholars. For instance, while many scholars interpret the animal in "The Burrow" as solely desiring the perfection of its underground abode—and for selfish reasons at that—I challenge this interpretation. Despite the apparent attraction to the burrow, the narrative hints at a subconscious desire for the freedom and openness of forest life. The message becomes a warning against monoculture, echo chambers, and repression of desire, and an affirmation of the collective, diverse, sustainable, and flourishing culture produced by forest animals. The sick animal—the human—has a fundamental fear of emptiness and requires a goal, an ideal (Nietzsche 2010b: 98). The animal only manages because it has a *why* in life; then it can reconcile itself with almost any *how* (Nietzsche 2008: 11).

I will refrain from exploring additional manifestations of desiring-attraction here, as it would engender further repetitions of content in the analyses, section 5. of the thesis. My overarching claim is that the force that I conceptualize as desiring-attraction serves as a lens to grasp the complex dynamic between desires and cultures in Kafka's fiction. Desiring-attraction functions as the central force, pulling cultural elements towards each other on the libidinal plane of immanence, encompassing the myriad Kafka-machines—which include the stories, characters, and textual minutiae collectively shaping the intertextual object of study in my thesis. My concept arises from an experiential reading and an experimental synthesis of the aforementioned concepts and frameworks, reflecting the essence of my methodology—an approach grounded in free experimentation and innovative analysis strategies.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.0. METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

In this chapter, I present my Deleuzian philosophical foundation, inspired by his rejection of representationalism. I also discuss my process of literature selection, as well as the ethics of my project. In line with Deleuze's thinking, I emphasize immanent perception and creative

experimentation with concepts, prioritizing exploration of a text's effects over predetermined interpretations. Balancing Deleuzian complexity with elements of literary formalism, my analyses face challenges in merging methodologies and navigating potential conflicts. I strive to address these methodological challenges by simplifying complexity, translating abstract concepts into tangible manifestations, and offering comprehensive and nuanced insights through a synthesis of multiple primary and secondary sources. As the well-known paraphrase of Einstein suggests, "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler."

4.1. DELEUZIAN LITERARY ANALYSIS

My research design and general approach to methodology is fundamentally based on Deleuzian philosophy before any consideration of literary analysis. Being opposed to the complexes and representations of desire in psychoanalysis, Deleuze similarly rejected all forms of representationalism—that is, any unnecessary duplication of immanent objects of perception (Deleuze 2001: 176–177, 187; Deleuze 2006: 385–388). Such representationalism reduces the inherent creativity in the immanent perception of sensory impressions to mere evaluation and judgment (Deleuze 1990: 102; Deleuze 2001: xx–xxi). For instance, by representing desire as constituted by lack, it solidifies desire into a dogmatic image of thought (Deleuze 2001: 147–148). In other words, constructing a mental model of desire by appealing to anything else than the direct experience of it invites *doxa,* distorting the idea into another abstracted "truth" taken for granted.

Deleuze launches the same accusations against hermeneutics, as he perceives it to distort texts in a specific way. As he writes with Guattari: "We believe only in a Kafka experimentation that is without interpretation or significance and rests only on tests of experience" (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 7). Rather than engaging in representation and interpretation as declared hermeneuticians do, one might strive for pure perception of the object at hand, in a process of creation, revision, and nuancing of concepts in direct interaction with one's environment (Deleuze 2001: 147–148). We are always situated in something by perceiving it, whether it be a landscape, a story, or history itself (Berger & Blomberg 1972: 11), and there is little value in introducing external objects into this situation. Attempts at objectivity is likewise a futile effort, and Deleuze's perspective

(transcendental empiricism, which I will not discuss here) seeks instead to unite the pure perception with pure thinking, refraining from merely duplicating the sensory image and the image of thought, but uniting them in copresence.

The cornerstone of my methodology is thus the creative experimentation with concepts, as explicitly prescribed by Deleuze (Deleuze 2001: 263). As he and Guattari highlight: Kafka's works contain multiple entrances for the reader, preventing interpretation of fixed meaning and instead allowing for experimentation (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 3). In avoiding interrogation of the text in search of meaning hidden by the author, and excessive representationalism in my use of concepts, I instead examine how the text functions, and which effects it produces (Deleuze 1990: 146; Deleuze 1995: 8). Rather than analyzing the logic of the text from a rationalist perspective, I study the outputs of its systems and their philosophical implications.

Basing my methodology on anti-representationalism, however, creates a tension between Deleuzianism and the conventional use of representational tools (such as the concepts I presented in the theory section). I acknowledge the pragmatic utility of these concepts as conventional tools, considering their historical significance and widespread acceptance within academic discourse. However, this is not to be understood as an absolute endorsement of representationalism. Instead, the use of these tools is a strategic and pragmatic choice made within the constraints of extant academic paradigms. Moreover, a Deleuzian view might posit that concepts do not merely serve as representations of phenomena but are integral to the constitution of those phenomena themselves. In other words, the concepts are not passive mirrors reflecting reality but actively participate in the construction and constitution of the realities they might be interpreted to represent. Nevertheless, a commitment to critical reflexivity plays a pivotal role in my analytical approach, as I affirm the tension entailed in employing representational tools while aligning with a philosophy critical of representationalism. I aim to contribute a nuanced and balanced perspective to academic discourse, navigating the intricacies of the prevailing scholarly landscape, while fostering a sense of self-awareness that enhances the exploration of both Kafkian and Deleuzian ideas.

In summary, my analytical approach is framed within the overarching Deleuzian philosophical framework and its anti-representationalism. Within this framework, the analysis is a perceptual engagement with the text, prioritizing an exploration of its effects over the imposition of predetermined interpretations. The core tenets of pure perception, the rejection of fixed interpretations, and the dynamic synthesis of perception and thinking constitute the guiding principles. This approach underscores an openness to the multiplicity of meanings inherent in the text and aligns with Deleuze's emphasis on becoming and transformation. The analysis, then, becomes a dynamic interaction with the text, recognizing its fluid and evolving nature.

4.2. INCORPORATING LITERARY FORMALISM

Deleuze's anti-essentialism (rejection of fixed categories) and emphasis on difference, multiplicity, and dynamism, is another aspect deeply intertwined with his affirmation of complexity as an inherent and vital aspect of the world, encouraging a more nuanced and open-ended understanding of reality. While inspired by Deleuzian complexity, my practical execution of literary analysis also incorporates elements of formalism, a critical literary approach focused on the intrinsic structural elements within a given text. This methodology involves scrutinizing a text in isolation, prioritizing the critical significance of its form—encompassing construction and visual components—over its narrative substance or connection to empirical reality. Crucially, in my departure from the author's biography and historical context, the analytical focus thus shifts towards elucidating the texts, considering the effects of their structure, plot, narrative, and literary devices. This intentional alignment with Deleuzianism leans Deleuze's thinking towards formalism, aiming to enhance conceptual clarity, and to prioritize coherence and readability over excessive complexity.

However, challenges may arise in amalgamating Deleuzian methodology with formalism, particularly at the intersection of Deleuze's emphasis on experimentation and formalism's commitment to objective analysis, along with a skepticism of subjective readings. Nevertheless, for me it is crucial to acknowledge the fallibility of the notion of objectivity, recognizing the inevitable subjective element in readings. A related point of contention stems from formalism's rejection of moral or social messages within literature. Nevertheless, I contend that a nuanced distinction exists

between asserting the inherent presence of such messages and acknowledging the potential for experiencing them, with my stance aligning with the latter.

Despite these potential conflicts, I perceive no actual discord in the fusion of creative experimentation and rigorous analysis. I view this synthesis as a poststructuralist exploration of literary forms—that is, a structural analysis of ostensibly unstructured texts. In other words, my approach involves identifying different strands of meaning that acquire a structure when assembled while inherently retaining their multiplicity. Ultimately, I question the actuality of aforementioned challenges and the validity of any prehension of authorial interpretation at all, echoing the philosopher Roland Barthes' assertion that questioning the interpreter is unjustified; interpretation is a form of the will-to-power as process, becoming, and passion (Barthes 1998: 62).

4.3. METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

The initial readings were conducted chronologically, with a specific focus on examining the treatment of desire within the texts. Subsequent readings delved into exploring textual parallels, as well as discerning contrasts in terms of time, space, and discourse. Due to my comprehensive reading of the research literature in preparation of the analyses, I kept the paradigmatic understandings in mind while reading the texts, leading to the dialectic unfolding of my own literary perceptions. Each reading experience is distinctive, and to reinforce the initial impressions documented during the first reading, I revisited the texts iteratively, contemplating how further details surface and evoke new thoughts and affects.

I opt for a formalist Deleuzian methodological approach, as it aligns effectively with the fulfillment of my research purpose—to uncover affirming messages via the construction of a novel way of approaching the desires of culture and the cultures of desire in Kafka. My methodology arises from the understanding that hermeneutic or other conventional forms of literary analysis would not serve this purpose to the same extent. Like Deleuze I hold a critical stance toward the dualist nature of hermeneutics and challenge the notions of hermeneutics of generosity, hermeneutics of suspicion and the unveiling of latent meaning. These ideas can cause bias, unnecessarily complicate

the analytical process, and create artificial divisions between the subjects and objects of research and knowledge production (Foucault 1999: 56–57). I refrain from elaborating on the common strategies inherent in hermeneutics, as practitioners intuitively apply these.

Nonetheless, my formalist Deleuzian literary analysis poses several additional methodological challenges. While it embraces openness and creativity, a potential critique centers on its lack of clarity. Deleuzian philosophy—characterized by dynamism and becoming—aligns with the complex ontology of culture. Deleuze attempts daringly to grasp it, yet readers find their understanding of this endeavor hindered by his many neologisms. As part of research methodology Deleuzianism may thus offer unnecessary complexity. I therefore attempt to mitigate potential issues by clarifying concepts and frameworks for the reader. In addressing the complexity identified in my analyses, I furthermore aim to present it straightforwardly, as an aspect of formalism. I minimize the use of jargon to the elements essential for communicating my thesis.

Additionally, a methodological challenge associated with the Concept must also be considered, given my intention to generate new textual effects via experimentation. Recognizing that concepts are experimental tools with fluid content—especially in the works of Deleuze & Guattari—I acknowledge the evolving nature and varied applications of them—over time and in different contexts—by authors themselves. To address this, I emphasize that concepts can be interpreted and utilized in various ways, accommodating diverse perspectives and applications. My commitment is to provide holistic and nuanced understandings of them, while nevertheless affirming the inevitability of a degree of conceptual deficiency and sampling bias.

I also recognize the tension inherent in the juxtaposition of Lacan, Guattari, and Deleuze's divergent philosophical frameworks. Nevertheless, I argue that these conceptual disparities only become problematic when attempting to extrapolate broad conclusions from their individual perspectives on themes such as desire and repression, a pitfall I actively avoid. Instead, I engage in experimental exploration of their ideas and concepts, exploring diverse combinations and fostering an environment of openness. Through this approach, I aim to cultivate new and fruitful syntheses by dialectically engaging with the notions of desire and attraction alongside related concepts.

4.4. LITERATURE SEARCH AND SELECTION

The selection of primary literature was driven by an examination of Kafka's entire authorship. The decision to include the following pieces emerged from a careful curation, where the objective was to identify works that resonate most profoundly with the conceptual framework of desiring-attraction. The selection process was further informed by personal interest and constrained by the thesis' defined scope, leading me to exclude other relevant works such as "A Country Doctor" (1917), "The Great Wall of China" (1917), "The Hunter Gracchus" (1917), "A Hunger Artist" (1922) and "Investigations of a Dog" (1922), to name a few that resonate deeply. Moreover, As I organically developed desiring-attraction through my initial readings, I iteratively refined my focus by eliminating analyses in progress but did not align with culture studies as much as others.

To achieve a level of generalization for Kafka's fiction, it is imperative for me to review multiple works, although this approach inherently restricts the depth of individual analyses. Striking a balance between depth and the potential for generalization, the chosen works are intended to provide a comprehensive overview. Each chosen piece contributes uniquely to the overarching analysis, reflecting Kafka's ability to articulate the complexities of human desire within the intricacies of culture, as portrayed via desiring-attraction.

Title in German	Title in English	Genre	Date
• "Kinder auf der Landstraße"	"Children on a Country Road"	short story	1912
• "Das Urteil"	"The Judgment"	–.	–.
• "In der Strafkolonie"	"The Penal Colony"	–.	1914
• "Die Verwandlung"	"The Metamorphosis"	novella	1915
• *Der Prozeß*	*The Trial*	novel	–.
• "Die Prüfung"	"The Test"	short story	1920
• *Das Schloß*	*The Castle*	novel	1922
• "Der Bau"	"The Burrow"	short story	1923

After the literature selection, and the establishment of methodological and theoretical frameworks, I initiated my exploration of research literature. Through this endeavor I aimed to avoid duplicating earlier findings, adopting keywords such as "Kafka," "culture," "ontology," "liminality," "ritual," "desire," "attraction," "transgression," "cultural regulation," "Deleuze," and "Lacan," among others. The searches were primarily conducted with Oria, but also supplemented with Google Search for additional inquiries on diverse themes. Moreover, separate searches were conducted for each of the selected works. Given the extensive nature of my research, the resulting literature review appears in condensed form in section 2 of the thesis.

4.5. ETHICAL DISCUSSION

Bringing the methodological section to a close, the ethical implications of engaging with Kafka's works must be questioned, especially given Kafka's expressed desire for his works to be burned. Despite the preservation of his fiction—becoming cultural heritage—it is crucial to acknowledge the role of Max Brod in saving these works. While Brod's actions ensured the survival of Kafka's fiction, it is nevertheless my stance that Kafka's privacy should be maintained, preferably by focusing on the literary works and refraining from delving into conjecture about the person.

Determining what Kafka might appreciate in retrospect, or which readings he would find favorable, is inherently speculative. Herein lies my qualms with the notions of hermeneutics of generosity and authorial latent meaning. Given the inaccessibility of the person and any literary objectivity, one might instead draw inspiration from fiction to explore new and innovative themes, in my opinion. The tendency to mythologize Kafka and adhere to established readings, I contend, reflects more sharply our own social and cultural constructions than Kafka's person and fiction.

I refrain from conjecture about his person and emphasize the diversity of forces at play in ways of reading. I contemplate how readers would perceive the stories if they were attributed to a different individual. This prompts a reconsideration of the influence of authorial identity on reading of texts and encourages a shift away from a fixation on Kafka's persona towards a broader examination of

the stories' inherent qualities and their potential resonance with varied perspectives. Illustrating how deeply the cultural ontology of Kafkian myths affects us, Bataille writes:

> "Those imaginary flames contribute to the understanding of his books. They are books doomed to the flames: they are there, but they are there to disappear, as though they have already been annihilated" (Bataille 2012: 'Should Kafka Be Burnt?", paragraph 3).

5. ANALYSIS

In this central part of the thesis, leading to the conclusion in section 6, I explore cultural themes in Kafka. The analyses are organized into eight distinct subchapters—organized chronologically—with each one dedicated to exploring thematic motifs that appear crucial to the stories when examined through the lens of desiring-attraction.

5.1. "CHILDREN ON A COUNTRY ROAD" (1912)

"Kinder auf der Landstraße" (Kafka 2000a: 11–14; Kafka 2009a: 3–5)[18] becomes Kafka's first instance of published literature, found within the collection "Betrachtung" ("Contemplation"). This short story serves as a contemplative exploration of childhood, unfolding via the lens of a child narrator depicting daily life within a rural setting. The story is cohesive and seamless, with desires and attractions aligning harmoniously. Kafka's narrative choices in this story—and the children within it—express themselves freely, showing spontaneity and cultural curiosity without contradiction. This clear and positive message contrasts with the typical Kafkaesque themes.

[18] References to primary literature are confined to an initial display of page ranges in the editions employed. This practice is motivated by the frequent formulation of overarching statements concerning recurring themes or motifs that manifest across various sections of each text. Such thematic elements defy reduction to specific parts within respective texts. Exceptions to the rule occur with direct quotes from the texts. Since many of these texts are short and lack chapters, references to specific chapters are only made in the case of novels.

5.1.1. A CHILDHOOD IDYLL

Examining childhood culture, the narrative portrays life as uncomplicated and inclusive, with individuals of all ages traversing the scene, as social activities flourish on the far side of a picket fence. The child narrator is perceiving the events on the country road from a garden swing:

> "Beyond the fence there was no end to it: children trotted past and vanished in a moment; wagons carrying corn with men and women sitting on the sheaves […] a man with a walking-stick taking a leisurely stroll, and some girls, coming towards him arm in arm […]" (Kafka 2009a: 3).

Metaphorically, the picket fence is a cultural mechanism. However, while framing the property and maintaining the sanctity of the domestic garden, it does not rigidly separate these cultural spheres; it constantly allows temporary crossings. Childhood in this rural setting becomes characterized by a fundamental liminality, with its subjects constantly bordering the unknown, poised on the brink of the next event, where time seems to fly by during entire days spent on the garden swing. The garden unfolds as a fluid and deterritorialized[19] space where distinctions between individual and collective, and subject and object, dissolve into a continuous flux of becoming-childlike.

This fluidity enables various children to freely transgress the boundaries of the fence—normally a mechanism of cultural regulation designating the limit of domestic culture—and invite the child narrator to engage in play. However, before venturing onto the country road to play with other children in the late evening, the child enjoys solitude on the garden swing. The child synchronizes its perceptions vertically with time: initially observing passersby on the road, then shifting attention to birds in the air towards dusk, and eventually gazing at the emergence of the starry sky.

Fluid temporality facilitates not confusion, but extroversion and a sense of happiness and innocence, rendering the surroundings abundant and harmonious. The child navigates via embodied desiring-attraction as the world's fullness unfolds and inscribes itself onto its

[19] *Deterritorialization* in Kafka is thought of as a mutation of content, forcing enunciations and expressions to disconnect, and thereby breaking free from established forms and structures within collective conditions, leading to the transformation of expressions, contents, and desires (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 86).

consciousness. Contrasting the expressionist portrayal of inner mental states in later works, the phenomenology of childhood becomes marked by instantaneousness, producing vibrant sensations for the reader, reminiscent of impressionist aesthetics with clear, vivid details:

> "There was no daytime and no night-time. One moment the buttons of our waistcoats were rattling close together like teeth, the next we were each running at the same distance from one another, our mouths breathing fire, like beasts in the tropics" (Kafka 2009a: 4).

The children express ecstasy through playful and exploratory identity performances. These manifestations of ecstatic human behavior, as described by Berger (1991: 143), involve transcending societal norms and conventions. They do so by engaging in activities like adopting Native American identities, playful fighting, and imitating certain aspects of adulthood within the cultural boundaries of childhood. However, the influence of parental culture and the everyday rituals of rural life, though invisible, remains ever-present in the background. It is subtly implied rather than overtly presented, maintaining the equilibrium of their existence and exerting control over their ongoing processes of becoming. Unlike the later works where readers might experience background vitalities as Kafkaesque, here, it does not induce angst or uncanniness.

5.1.2. DESIRING-MACHINES

Within the contextual framework provided by parental culture, the play exhibited by the children in the short story appears inherently life-affirming. There is a noticeable absence of indications of malignant symbolic integration or psychological complexes; Oedipus is nowhere to be seen, so to speak: a passing train observed by the children standing on a bridge does not assume an erotized role; the appropriation of Native American culture is characterized by the curious attraction towards it. During this play-fighting and simulated warfare, the children willingly and creatively tumble into ditches along the country road.

While engaging in insider-culture conversations about city dwellers, indicating a considerable degree of socialization, the children firmly embrace their country culture identity. The city folk appear

dismissed by them—viewed as fools—yet not in a derogatory sense, but rather in a childlike and playful manner, as they are construed to inhabit an entirely different reality, lacking relative understanding. The children's activities thus appear as innocent yet potent play of desiring-machines. While potential trajectories of future developments remain uncertain, no discernible signs of pathology are evident in the narrative.

As evening progresses, new lines of desire unfold for the protagonist, leading toward the forest, towards the "city of fools," and eventually towards bed, given the child's evident fatigue. As a recurring theme in Kafka's fiction, fatigue is typically interpreted as conveying hopeless exhaustion resulting from situational entrapment. In "Children on a Country Road" however, fatigue becomes imbued with satisfaction, the fulfillment derived from a day spent productively, immediately channeling excess energies of childhood life, and eagerly anticipating the comfort of falling asleep.

In conclusion, cultural assimilation—as portrayed in "Children on a Country Road"—unfolds organically, mirroring the natural progression into the role play of adulthood for children; a naturally idyllic childhood—both excluded from and inclusive of adult culture via playful mimesis—involves free experimentation with desiring-machines. Desiring-attraction manifests itself immediately and comprehensively, rendering every sensory impression attractive and significant in this story. Activities seamlessly unfold—long-lasting if desired—and near all gestures express inherent enjoyment. The children's attraction is evident in their discourse on city dwellers and their imitation of Native Americans in play, highlighting their inherent motivation for cultural exploration and appreciation. The children become drawn to diverse cultures, endorsing alterity, diversity, and uncensored self-expression.

5.2. "THE JUDGMENT" (1912)

In contrast to the overtly affirming tone of "Children on a Country Road," Kafka's subsequent work is notably more intricate in its message, with a plot that unfolds towards a considerably darker conclusion. The story nevertheless carries a positive message as it emphasizes the significance of the female figure, particularly as desiring-attraction becomes central to the family drama depicted.

The short story is titled "Das Urteil" (Kafka 2000a: 41–52; Kafka 2009a: 19–28) and marks Kafka's literary breakthrough. The narrative unfolds from the perspective of Georg Bendemann, a successful young merchant, who, after completing a letter to "an old friend now in foreign parts," sits dreamily by the windowsill. The letter to a friend who emigrated to—and now resides in—Russia, reveals Georg's engagement to Frieda Brandenfeld, a young woman of a prosperous family.

The friend in Russia serves a perspectival role, gaining definition through the narrator contrasting him with Georg before the main plot events unfold. Unlike Georg, the friend is portrayed as a bachelor facing financial struggles and social isolation. When contemplating how to assist the friend, Georg's perspective reflects a cultural insider discourse, viewing the friend as an outsider without understanding his predicament—a projection of cultural hierarchy:

> "So, remote as he was, he was wearing himself out, working to no avail; the beard of foreign cut was an ineffective cover for the face Georg had known since they were children" (Kafka 2009a: 19).

Georg perceives his own successful, hardworking urban lifestyle as a truer way of life, contrasting it with the friend's perceived failure in a remote location, despite the friend's strenuous but seemingly futile efforts. This reveals a social construction of remoteness as relaxation rather than hard work, and a lack of comprehension for the value of work not yielding financial success. In this regard, Georg is not a child on the country road, so to speak; he is one among many in the "city of fools".

We can read the assertions of cultural superiority as a form of self-reflexive othering; Georg's viewpoints are a way of marginalizing an alternative way of life. Analogous to Kafka's portrayal of the United States in *Amerika* and his exploration of oriental settings, the outsider is depicted in a transparent manner, relying on simplistic tropes like skin color and blatant contrasts in cultural hierarchies. The Russian friend may in fact have embraced Orthodox Christianity or a similar religious asceticism. Despite apparent failures, his life may hold profound meaning.

Contrasting Georg's end in this short story with that of the outsider raises a reader's dilemma; the "natural" insider culture of Georg, seen from a heroic perspective, ends tragically, while the unknown outsider culture of the Russian friend remains unfamiliar yet perhaps more attractive in the face of this internal tragedy. The friend is thus an expression of transgressing culture, leaving his home for a distant country, implying an affirmation of cultural diversity.

5.2.2. THE LOST MOTHER

Before posting the letter to his Russian friend, Georg decides to share the disclosure with his father. Despite living together, Georg has not visited his father's room for several months; they usually interact regularly through their business affairs. The death of Georg's mother two years prior seems to have weighed particularly heavily on the father; he has become more withdrawn.

Upon Georg entering his room, a trial or test ensues, characterized by a rhetorical duel where the father levies irrational accusations devoid of grounding; he blames his son for the mother's death—calling him a devil—while contending that his fiancée is reprehensible and promiscuous. Georg has allegedly dishonored his mother's memory. These statements are performative speech acts of the perlocutionary kind—that is, ones intended to influence the recipient emotionally.

Drawing parallels to the Lacanian meaning behind the Borromean rings, the absence of one of three rings (the maternal one) in the familial culture becomes emphasized, as the father repeatedly invokes the mother during the affair, transforming her into an object of speech constructed against Georg. The mother becomes the master signifier[20] of the father's discourse, forming an assemblage of speech functioning as a paranoid and despotic regime of signs.[21]

Georg finds himself unable to effectively defend against the verbal attacks. Attempting to redirect attention to the father's health and living condition as a gesture of care seems to inadvertently offend the father by highlighting his vulnerabilities. This presages a recurring theme in Kafka's

[20] *Master signifier* refers to a key linguistic or other expressive element which assumes a central and organizing role in discourse.
[21] *Regime of signs* refers to the structured system of meaning and communication established by the assemblage of speech. In this context, the father's system operates in a manner characterized by elements of paranoia and despotism—that is, an oppressive linguistic framework—centered around the memory of the mother, by which meaning is constructed and communicated within the family unit.

fiction: speech and discourse are the domain of the fathers, officials, judges, and bureaucrats—cultural leaders and powerful elite—while the protagonists' speech remains clumsy and awkward. Georg's words—à la the ones by Karl Roßmann in *Amerika,* Josef K. in *The Trial,* and the Land Surveyor in *The Castle*—appear to create more problems than they solve.

5.2.3. THE PHALLIC FATHER

Brandishing the authority inherent in paternal and phallic symbolism, the father strategically deploys the mother as a discursive means to invoke the legitimacy of his own power, effectively making the son submit to his authority. The paternal culture embodied by the father assumes a role reminiscent of justice, embodying a phallic function akin to the legal system, also characteristic of the old colonial commandant in "The Penal Colony", the judges in *The Trial* and the servant Other in "The Test". The paranoid and tyrannical nature of the father's discourse seems to reveal a dominance rooted in authority, by which he ends the interaction by performatively proclaiming: "I condemn you now to death by drowning!" (Kafka 2009a: 28). Considering the father's accusations of guilt, the specification of death by water in this verdict might signify a desire for purification and regeneration; Mircea Eliade contends that water symbolizes cleansing of perceived sins (Eliade 1994: 79–81). Furthermore, Steinberg asserts that the father represents the God of the Jewish Day of Atonement, seeing as on this day, God judges "*who shall live and who shall die*; who shall perish by fire and who *by water"* (Steinberg 1962: 24).

The motive behind the father's actions invites further inquiry; it seems improbable that any father would genuinely condemn his son to drowning. One might speculate that the libidinal dynamics of phallic power play a role, necessitating the father's affirmation of his identity, with the son becoming the unintended target as the only conceivable feminine connection is via his fiancée. Factors such as jealousy toward the son's economic and imminent marital success, and the father's own aging and illness, also offer plausible explanations on their own. These factors may be specifically potent, as Kafka implies that Georg's business only truly flourished when his father relinquished control over it through his withdrawal after the mother's death.

Elizabeth Boa proposes a reversal of roles within the father, suggesting the copresence of both the pre-Oedipal child and the Oedipal father simultaneously (Boa 1996: 117). This perspective sheds light on the father's behavior, emphasizing his infantility, rendering him "untrammeled by education, social conditioning, a sense of justice or proportion, or logic" (Boa 1996: 117). However, as Georg addresses his father in a child-like manner, ending the infantilism through a gesture of care, I argue that the dominance shifts toward the Oedipal father, albeit temporarily. Boa's insight, nevertheless, provides a glimpse into the child-like nature permeating this story as well. The discourse and actions of both characters do indeed resemble a childish conflict, characterized by dramatization. Sokel adds depth by noting how Georg's child-like self triumphs over his adult ego; Georg's ego challenges his father on matters of engagement and friendship in Russia, yet despite this assertion, Georg's child-like self is still seeking affirmation from his father (Sokel 2011: 70).

As Sokel points out, Georg's displays of power—such as his successful engagement and friendship—represent a transgression within the paternal domestic culture, especially considering the father's lack of similar sources of affection. A further transgression in Georg's gestures lies—more precisely however—in the disruption of established roles and expectations within the father-son relationship. Georg's assertion of his child-like self challenges the conventional power dynamics, momentarily unsettling the authority of the Oedipal father. This shift creates a complex interplay of dependence and rebellion, as Georg seeks approval while simultaneously challenging the norms set by his father. The clash between Georg's child-like innocence and the authoritative stance of his father introduces a nuanced layer to the story, illustrating the intricacies of familial dynamics and the multifaceted nature of transgression within the broader context of the story.

It is conceivable that the father anticipated the son's assertiveness, expecting him to stand up for himself. This also appears as a challenge of masculinity then, questioning whether the son has matured into a man capable of self-defense. However, Georg succumbs to obedience and senses a coercive flood (continuing the water theme) driving him out of the room. After delivering the verdict—sentencing Georg to drowning—the father collapses back into bed. In response, Georg

rushes down the stairs and onto the street, hurling himself over the balustrade of the nearest bridge, into the river below.

5.2.4. THE PARADOX OF GEORG'S FATE

What significance can be attributed to the father and Georg's final gestures? Deleuze and Guattari propose that the authoritative father figure may stem from Kafka's own experiences of childhood and the Oedipal complex (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 4). However, I contend that this might overshadow the presence of affirming content within the fiction by emphasizing the negative facets of desire and its repression. Instead of concentrating on the father's suppression of the son, I emphasize the positive aspects of desire, particularly their shared longing for the mother.

By shifting the focus towards the fiction and drawing upon Girard's concepts, I interpret their final gestures as scapegoating, and sacrifice undertaken to mitigate the father's violence and uphold familial stability. The scapegoat mechanism may work as a cultural defense mechanism (Girard 2005: 335), and in the brutal reality of a sacrificial context, one's own child might be deemed the most precious object, and thus become the most effective sacrificial object for appeasing violent desires (Girard 2005: 12, 18-19, 32).

This sheds light on why the father condemns his son: by casting him as a scapegoat, the father seeks to uphold cultural stability, prompting Georg to undergo a sacrificial ritual. In making this choice, the father reinforces his patriarchal authority, utilizing the scapegoat mechanism to defend the norms of patriarchal culture. Despite only the father remaining alive, familial stability is thus maintained in accordance with the conventional patriarchal family structure, which positions the father as the leader. Therefore, the sacrifice serves as a cultural defense mechanism from the patriarchal perspective, preserving the stability of the patriarchal family system.

Why does Georg succumb to patriarchal authority? Despite his mother being alive within the family's cultural imaginary, Georg fails to overcome the father's discursive hegemony. Heightening the sense of Oedipal rivalry, the father's characterization of the mother as "our mother" suggests a fraternal struggle rather than a conventional father-son conflict. If we lean towards a psychoanalytic

view his desire to reach his lost mother becomes palpable, which might contribute to his suicide. If the struggle revolves around winning the love of the maternal object, Georg achieves this by forsaking his father while reuniting with his mother in death.

However, Steinberg draws attention to this pivotal moment when Georg carries out the sentence upon himself, simultaneously affirming his love for the father (Steinberg 1962: 28). The gesture is thus not simply a negation of self to affirm the mother, but also an affirmation of the father. Additionally, Georg not only affirms his father's authority by complying with his judgment but also negates it in the process, as the father loses his son to command or judge. In fact, Georg's gesture sublates (simultaneously affirms, negates, and transcends) his father's power, effectively completing or destroying the paternal law, as his obedience—in this final instance of it—removes the final residue of the father's patriarchal power. Georg's gesture thus appears to triumph over the tyrannical father. Effectively becoming the executor, I read his final gesture as an unuttered response: "I am no longer your son!" I imagine this exclamation unfolding as Georg gracefully vaults over the bridge balustrade, resembling the skillful gymnast he was a child.

Let us add to the perspective outlined above by shifting the focus away from power and towards desire. Adding to the complexity of Georg's fate, the dynamics of desire appear to perform a role opposite to that of the dynamics of power. If we consider the mother as the primal object of desire, —common in psychoanalytic theory—Georg's action takes on another layer of affirmation: he reaffirms his love for his mother and his innate desire to return to the womb, metaphorically speaking. However, if we view Georg as a matured individual who has shifted his desires from the mother to other women, his act could be seen as a betrayal of his current desire, directed towards his fiancée whom he plans to marry, evidenced by his abandonment of her upon his death. This dual perspective reflects *jouissance*: Georg experiences extreme pleasure and pain regardless of which path he chooses for desire fulfillment, affirming one love while negating the other.

If we unite the dynamics of desire that Georg expresses both towards the male and the female, then his simultaneous desiring-attraction toward masculine and feminine love objects seems to be a causal factor; his actual final words are: "Dear parents, I did always love you" (Kafka 2009a: 28).

The desire to share news of his engagement with his Russian friend and his father, while perhaps partially motivated by the aim of pleasing his fiancée, becomes a proximate cause in this regard. I argue that the underlying cause lies in the breakdown of familial bonds, specifically the absence of the maternal Borromean ring—the essential third component. Consequently, the family disintegrates entirely without this stabilizing element.

In conclusion, Georg paradoxically affirms both maternal and paternal cultural influences via desiring-attraction. The narrative unfolds tragically as he is propelled towards suicide, triggered by the performative verbal gestures of his father. Yet beneath the surface of repression the story subtly affirms exteriority, alterity, and femininity, exemplified by the poignant and devastating absence of the maternal figure. The narrative inherently implies the centrality of the feminine figure, underscoring the significance of the real mother and the repercussions when she is lost: the father's identity lacks a counterpart to differentiate and constitute itself from. Illustrating interdependence, the Borromean rings reveal that the phallus alone does not suffice as the ordering principle of familial culture. Implicitly, the short story conveys a positive and feminist message, emphasizing the pivotal role of the mother as the lack of her stabilizing function is evident in the irrational acts of both the father and the son. The story also carries a feminist message via the confrontation of a patriarchal figure representing his fragmented family culture.

It is evident that childhood and desire manifest in contrasting forms within Kafka's narratives. In "Children on a Country Road", childhood is depicted in a predominantly positive light, characterized by its innocence and simplicity. The portrayal there is one of regularity and relaxation, where the youthful protagonists engage in carefree exploration of their cultural surroundings. In stark contrast, "The Judgment" presents a more complex examination of desire, with childhood fantasies taking on a dramatic and psychoanalytical tone. Here, the narrative delves into the fragmentation of childhood desire, exploring the consequences of this disintegration on the protagonist's psyche. Through these divergent portrayals, Kafka offers insight into the multifaceted nature of desire, illustrating its capacity to evoke both joy and turmoil within the human experience.

In "Children on a Country Road," the child becomes an active being as events and desires unfold. Contrarily, Georg transforms into a reactive being, influenced by his father's condition to the point of committing suicide. Themes of affection and connection emerge in both works as protagonists are drawn to elements external to their interior selves—a cultural form of play, ritual, identity performance, and archetypal figures in the form of the lost mother and the tyrannical father.

5.3. "THE PENAL COLONY" (1914)

In contrast to the rural and familial settings depicted in the previous stories, "In der Strafkolonie" (Kafka 2000a: 145–173; Kafka 2009a: 75–99) revolves around a travelling researcher or ethnographer visiting a tropical colony, receiving a tour of the colonial punishment procedures by an officer. The cultural contrasts are stark, and the presence of a central protagonist vague, allowing the reader to identify with either character. They are both strangers either way; the ethnographer is obviously, but the officer is as well: he is not a native to the land, but a colonialist. I examine the officer's transformation driven by desiring-attraction, as he becomes one with the malfunctioning machine. This mirrors Georg's dynamic with his parents in "The Judgment," where the European ethnographer resembles the tyrannical father, and the defunct colonial machine the lost mother. Alternatively: the machine moves from a major to a minor expression or from paternal to maternal.

5.3.1. A MEETING OF CULTURES

Unlike the cozy rural setting in "Children on a Country Road", or the initial calmness of the spring Sunday in "The Judgment", the tropical desert landscape proves unforgiving from the outset. Intense heat and bright sunshine lay bare the brutality of colonial practices, as the oppressive warmth and blinding sun explicitly hinder the ethnographer's ability to think clearly, contributing to severe sensory discomfort. According to Eliade, the excess of enlightenment, power, and autonomy embodied by the sun's excessive brilliance aligns with its significance (Eliade 1994: 95–96, 107).

Despite the uncomfortable heat, the colonial officer steadfastly retains his uniform, a tangible manifestation of the cultural allegiance to his fatherland. The ethnographer is similarly burdened by cultural affiliations, perceiving the foreign culture as savagery and brutalism. Perhaps motivated to

either appease or impress him, the officer finds profound meaning in the ritualized violence of the punishment, while it nonetheless remains incomprehensible to the ethnographer unfamiliar with the practice. Centrally, the punishment machine serves as the linchpin of the officer's reality and identity. While his hands may not be clean enough to touch it, he is paradoxically tasked with operating and maintaining this intricate apparatus, adding complexity to his role.

5.3.2. EXCESSIVE PERFORMANCE

The blueprints of the machine present themselves to the ethnographer as an abstract work of art, resembling an incomprehensible chaos of lines. Originating from an old colonial commandant—deceased and now mythologized—these blueprints hold a sacrosanct status for the officer, treated akin to a revered text. The first half of the short story primarily comprises technical descriptions delineating the components of the machine and its execution process, in a similar way to the descriptions of architecture in "The Great Wall of China" and "The Burrow," respectively.

Initially, the condemned individual is required to disrobe and lie prone on his stomach, secured onto the "Bed," which is the lower section of the machine, and one of its three primary components. This highlights the potency of nudity as a tool for coerced public humiliation and the compelled exposure of the naked body, a motif recurring in the "thrashing scene" in chapter five of *The Trial*. Subsequently, the transgressions of the law are inscribed onto the body by the "Inscriber" in a grotesque needling procedure of the component called the "Harrow," spanning twelve hours. Finally, the condemned is tasked with reading his own sentence on his body before succumbing to death, after which the lifeless body is discarded into a ditch. This grim detail creates a stark contrast with the portrayal of children playfully tumbling into ditches in "Children on a Country Road".

While the machine is meticulously detailed in theory, in practice the process encounters complications immediately. The machine malfunctions, breaking down, and instead of delicately inscribing the sentence on the body, the Harrow forcefully pierces it, leaving no discernible text. Steinberg contends that Kafka's portrayal of this malfunction might reflect a negative attitude toward seemingly meaningless rituals (Steinberg 1976: 502). However, I contend that the machinic

ritual—and its spectacular breakdown—is in fact deeply meaningful. This unforeseen outcome may suggest an alternative reading of the performativity of the machine; it could be designed intentionally for sensationalism, aiming to unite spectators in cultural practice by witnessing the ritual demise of the condemned. As such it is a mechanism concurrently regulating and transgressing the cultural reality yet marked by a deeply un/ethical desiring-attraction. However, the theatrical transgression of everyday life may instill a sense of continuity for the colony's inhabitants, fostering a stronger bond among them and deepening their loyalty to the colonial regime.

Lyotard & Fynsk write: "The machine of 'The Penal Colony' is the theater of cruelty—the [a]esthetics of spilled blood demanded by the ethical law when it is executed." (Lyotard & Fynsk 1991: 19). The act of execution—with its dramatic and aesthetic elements—is thus a visual enactment of the ethical principles governing the colony. It was once a desiring-machine connected to other desiring-machines, but the officer regales the ethnographer with the absence of onlookers during executions in recent years. When the machine falters once again, a pivotal moment ensues.

5.3.3. MACHINIC SACRIFICE

The officer's profound reverence of the blueprints and his idealization of the old colonial commandant suggest a desiring-attraction perhaps extending even more fervently towards the machine. His appreciation for its decaying aesthetics may stem from acclimatization to malfunctions over time, with jouissance derived not so much from the actual punitive process as from the maintenance. Electing to subject himself to the machine—committing suicide—the officer first undergoes a metaphorical metamorphosis via the removal of his uniform, exposing his nakedness. This exposure carries dual meaning. On the one hand, it expresses his embrace of humanity, emphasizing the corporeal and mortal aspects that define him. On the other hand, it expresses a deliberate rejection of the trappings of colonial culture, stripping away the layers of societal constructs to reveal an essence closer to nature. Furthermore, it reaffirms his connection to the machine as a cultural artifact. The desiring-attraction of the machine culminates in a body without organs, and the officer's death becomes a posthuman veneration for its materiality. The

becoming-machine—as a fusion between the organic and the artificial—juxtaposes the organic human form with the mechanical apparatus, underscoring their symbiotic relationship.

While this self-negation via machinic suicide appears grim on the surface of the text, one might consider the implications of the officer's becoming-machine in the context of the human-machine relationship. As the machine experiences a breakdown, the officer expresses a desire to break down alongside it. Thus, this symbiosis becomes an act of liberation, challenging conventional notions of human agency, embodiment, and autonomy. Voluntary suicide becomes an intentional submission to machinic vitality, reflecting a radical affirmation of transformation and a will to copresence in material non-existence with the machine, although undoubtedly prevailing hauntologically in the colony ever after as a cultural myth.

While his moral conscience and loss of identity *might* contribute to his decision—triggered by the exteriority of the ethnographer, leading the officer to end his own life as an act of personal atonement or existential despair—the unwavering nature of his deepest cultural logics emphasize the strength of his sense of honor and duty; in opting for ritual suicide, the officer perceives himself as guilty of failing to uphold his cultural heritage, a sentiment exacerbated by the presence of the ethnographer. Before the suicide he confides to him: "I have been appointed judge here in the penal colony. […] The fundamental principle of my decision is: 'Guilt is always beyond question'" (Kafka 2009a: 80).

Via the lens of Kantian deontology, the officer's final gesture thus also appears as a testament to the categorical imperative and the moral compass guiding him; it becomes his duty to treat himself as he wants everyone else to be treated. He *must* be just, not necessarily comprehending the law yet tasked with sentencing the guilty and overseeing their execution. He not only subjects himself to colonial laws but ultimately becomes their object. Succumbing to sociocultural pressure to judge himself, he adheres to the law until the end, transforming into the sacrificial victim and internalizing the burden of social guilt and responsibility. In this manner, the text demonstrates the operation of the scapegoat mechanism, mirroring Georg's fate.

5.3.4. A TEA HOUSE HETEROTOPIA

After the gruesome act of self-execution—the graphic details of which I'll omit recounting here—a narrative shift occurs in the last three paragraphs of the story. The ethnographer has now departed from the execution site and is making his way to the harbor alongside the soldier in charge of the execution and the formerly condemned man, who has now been liberated.

Webster asserts that the story encompasses all the recognizable actions of a nightmare (Webster 1956: 399). He interprets this sequence as a flashback, suggesting that the final events precede the harrowing execution (Webster 1956: 405). While I concur with the nightmarish quality of the narrative and its abundance of symbolism, I diverge on this point; the text explicitly states that the ethnographer is accompanied by the soldier and the condemned man; given the way these characters are introduced in the opening sequence, there is no plausible scenario where he could have met or known them before the unfolding events; a clear trajectory links the beginning of this sequence to the ethnographer's departure from the colony, demarcating a clear end of the narrative.

While walking towards the harbor, the soldier points out one of the houses as a tea house. The ethnographer's ensuing curiosity about the historical memory associated with the tea house reflects a desire to uncover the past and understand the cultural significance of the place. The soldier and the condemned—eager to share the story—exhibit a form of attraction to the mysterious and potentially scandalous history surrounding the burial of the old commandant. The old commandant was prohibited to lie in the cemetery by the priest, reflecting a form of cultural regulation and moral judgment. However, this cultural regulation spawns a transgressive act of burying the old man at an unconventional location, challenging established norms. The colonial officer obviously neglected to share this because he reveres the machine and its old commandant. The commandant's gravestone is located underneath a table inside the tea house. It reads:

> "Here rests the old commandant; his followers, who may not be named today, have dug him this grave and raised this stone. There is a prophecy that after a certain number of years the commandant will rise again and lead his followers from this house to reconquer the colony. Believe, and await the day!" (Kafka 2009a: 99).

The place becomes a heterotopia, juxtaposing two types of spaces: a cemetery, and a tea house. The grave's inscription further underscores the liminality, suggesting a belief in the commandant's resurrection and a future re-conquest of the colony by his followers. The boundary between life and death, and reality and prophecy, becomes blurred in this liminal space. The idea of the commandant's potential resurrection and return to lead his followers creates a hauntological aspect; the past—embodied by the old commandant—continues to exert influence on the present, haunting the tea house with the promise of a future event. The inscription on the gravestone serves as a haunting memory of this presence and the uncertainty surrounding the colony's destiny.

The ethnographer's reaction upon reading the inscription—distributing coins and leaving—reflects a mix of skepticism and perhaps discomfort with the cultural practices and beliefs he encounters. The surrounding men's smiles and attempts to share their opinion suggest a shared recognition of the absurdity inherent in the inscription, emphasizing the complex interplay between cultural norms and individual perceptions. The ethnographer seems suddenly in a hurry to leave, and the soldier and the condemned's pursuit of the ethnographer adds an element of potential conflict or coercion, emphasizing the ongoing tension between conformity and dissent in the narrative. As the ethnographer reaches his boat in the harbor, the sailor casts off at once. However, the soldier and the condemned are still on his tail. Kafka writes:

> "They might still have been able to leap into the boat, but the traveller raised a heavily knotted rope from the floor and, threatening them with it, prevented them from making the leap" (Kafka 2009a: 99).

Boa suggests that the image of a white man driving back others with a knotted rope is a sign for our post-colonial times (Boa 1996: 147). Indeed, the desire for agency and self-determination clashes with the ongoing struggle against oppression as the soldier and the condemned want to escape their predicament. Desiring-attraction comes into play as the marginalized individuals are repelled by the forceful actions of the white man yet simultaneously drawn towards the aspiration for autonomy and liberation. However, mirroring Georg in "The Judgment," the water is also the ethnographer's salvation from a tyrannical phallic power embodied by colonialists.

In conclusion, the story carries positive messages despite its dark themes. Firstly, while the cultural frames of the ethnographer and the colonial officer in "The Penal Colony" are starkly contrasting, these protagonists also become subjects of desiring-attraction as they mutually seek to understand each Other, reflecting the performative dynamics of the country road children playing with cultural identities. The officer's becoming-machine not only affirms the Other's positionality by acknowledging the perceived brutality of colonial practices but also paradoxically affirms his own cultural heritage by its destruction, akin to Georg's sublation of his father's power.

Secondly, the ethnographer narrowly escapes the harsh realities of colonial culture, finding refuge back in his privileged European environment. By interweaving desiring-attraction with hauntology, there's the potential for this memory to persist as a haunting presence, even as he escapes from the colony. This underscores the importance of understanding and confronting historical injustices, even from a position of privilege, to ensure a more equitable future.

Finally, the narrative emphasizes the importance of cultural understanding and the pitfalls of colonialism and—by association—imperialism. It highlights the transformative power of desiring-attraction, as seen in the officer's journey towards posthuman self-realization and selfless sacrifice. The same posthuman resonance is found in Kafka's following work—"The Metamorphosis"—where Gregor Samsa transcends his humanity. Additionally, Kafka returns to the domestic setting that marked his earlier stories.

5.4. "THE METAMORPHOSIS" (1915)

"Die Verwandlung" (Kafka 2000a: 85–142; Kafka 2009a: 29–74) is a novella depicting the transformation of Gregor Samsa, a young man, into an animal, some kind of insect. The narrative emphasizes the genuine nature of this metamorphosis, explicitly stating in the opening sequence that "it was not a dream," (Kafka 2009a: 29) and unequivocally confirming Gregor's animal identity. Kafka, however, emphasized the avoidance of any visual representation of the animal (Bloom 2007: 26; De la Durantaye 2007: 323; Kafka 2012: xvii).

Kafka's anti-representational stance is pivotal for establishing a connection between the reader and Gregor's humanity. It enables Gregor's desiring-attraction to afford insight into the experience of a human being confined to the existential perspective of an animal, compelling a confrontation with the absurdities of human culture from an external standpoint. Traditional notions of identity are challenged, prompting a reevaluation of social constructions of humanity, and enabling the exploration of the nature of cultural expectations. Gregor becomes liminal due to the conflicting desiring-attraction between the human and the animal, and between the physical representationalist eroticism of the image and the metaphysical non-representational sublimity of music.

5.4.1. GREGOR'S HAUNTOLOGY

On the morning of Gregor's awakening, his struggle with the limitations of his transformed body becomes palpable. Initially immobilized in bed, he encounters further hindrance when attempting to open his bedroom door. The chief clerk from his workplace visits the household this morning, to inquire about his absence from work. Gregor, upon finally succeeding in opening the door, causes the chief clerk to flee the scene in terror, à la the ethnographer's departure from the colony.

Upon venturing outside his room, Gregor shocks his parents and faces a forceful expulsion back into his confined space, propelled by his father wielding the chief clerk's walking stick. This walking stick had obviously finished serving its main purpose—within the confines of the novella—as the chief clerk literally ran away from the scene. Gregor's father wielding the stick echoes the power dynamics between fathers and sons, mirroring the tension observed in "The Judgment". Despite Gregor's contributions to the family's financial well-being—akin to Georg's role as a successful merchant compared to his father—the father retains a dominant position as the patriarch and phallic authority figure within the family. The parallel between these father-son dynamics underscore the enduring influence of traditional gender roles and familial power structures.

Gregor's family understandably reacts with shock, grappling with the memory of Gregor and questioning whether the insect or animal somehow retains elements of his former self. Gregor now coexists with his past, enduring constant reminders not only from his family, but also of the

challenges faced in his existence in a world designed for humans. His lack of control over his new body necessitates new techniques of movement, leading to tension in the power relations between Gregor, his body, and its obstacles. After some time, however, this technical feat is achieved:

> "He was particularly fond of hanging high up under the ceiling. This was something different from lying on the floor; one breathed more freely; an easy swinging motion passed through the body; […] (Kafka 2009a: 52).

To facilitate Gregor's movement further, his sister removes the furniture from his room, inadvertently contributing to the gradual erasure of Georg's human identity. Thus, Gregor's room undergoes a transformation as well, evolving into a liminal space serving as a crossroads between the human and the animal. While Boa characterizes this spatial transformation as Gregor's prison (Boa 1996: 122), I also perceive it as a space brimming with profound potential and liberation; the room is not simply a prison, it becomes an existential interspace. In this liminal state, Gregor's room becomes a realm where the boundaries between the human and the animal blur, offering a unique vantage point to explore the complexities of identity and existence. The liminal space opens avenues for Gregor to explore the untapped aspects of his transgressive becoming.

5.4.2. GREGOR'S LIMINALITY

I will explore the human-animal-dichotomy further, considering the trope of the double. While going back to ancient origins, this literary device is also present in modern literature. "The Nose" (1836) by Nikolai Gogol, *The Double* (1846) by Fyodor Dostoevsky, and "The Metamorphosis" all employ it (Bloom 2007: 66–68). Each of the three narratives commences with the protagonist awakening one day and experiencing a profound transformation. In Gogol's portrayal, Major Kovalyov wakes up without his nose, and in Dostoevsky's version, Councilor Golyadkin wakes up unaware that there is a person entirely identical to him out and about in the city.

Shared between both depictions is the protagonists' eventual encounter with their antagonistic doubles as the narrative unfolds. The doubles are more cultured and socially sophisticated than their originals, becoming rivals as the stories unfold. Gogol's rendition was satirical, portraying the

nose as an excessively adorned councilor, while Dostoevsky approached the motif earnestly, escalating the dynamics until the protagonist descends into psychosis, perceiving doubles at every turn (Bloom 2007: 66–68). The use of the trope is a literary device causing a sense of duality and conflict for the protagonists, forcing them to confront uncomfortable truths about their identity.

In "The Metamorphosis," however, Gregor Samsa wakes up *with* his double; it is literally a part of him, and they exist together, Gregor's consciousness and the insect's body. Mladen Dolar contends that Gregor transforms into an insect as an escape because he is treated like one at work, and thus the metaphor is literalized (Dolar 2006: 175). Furthermore, the ambiguity surrounding Gregor's identity serves as a poignant reminder of the precedence of difference: our uncertainty about his identity is not merely a consequence of the metamorphosis but also a reflection of the inherent fluidity and contingency of identity. From the moment of his birth, Gregor's humanity was always a complex interplay of diverse biological and existential factors. Moreover, before his birth, there existed only a multiplicity of differences in biological cells and substances, without the cohesive construct of identity.

Other scholars resonate with the liminal duality embodied by Gregor, asserting that Kafka's fiction resides in an ontological oscillation between various meanings, navigating the boundary between fiction and reality (e.g. Hansen 2001: 35–36; Zeng 2022: 117–118). These oscillations, according to Camus, contribute to the incomprehensible meaning that Kafka is lauded for within the existentialist paradigm, rendering any fixed interpretation impossible (Camus 2005: 120, 122). While these interpretations hold merit, from my perspective the meaning is not in constant flux, but Gregor's ontology is. The meaning literally appears quite evident—he embodies both interspecies and intersex attributes simultaneously; he incarnates the middle—or the impossible edge.

First, he becomes interspecies both literally and figuratively, as the animalistic nature unleashed within his room becomes a liberation from the shackles of conventional human existence. As he navigates this newfound territory, the narrative unfolds as a poignant exploration of the interplay between humanity and animality. Rather than viewing it solely as a prison, this interspace offers

Gregor an opportunity for emancipation from the rigid confines of his previous life. The room becomes a canvas for him to redefine his identity and embrace the untamed aspects of his nature.

Second, he is liberated from gendered existence. Becoming an insect, effectively intersex, losing his human sexual organs and transcending the confines of gender as well. Certain insect species are exclusively composed of females, demonstrating the capacity for asexual reproduction; given this biological context, it appears plausible to understand Gregor as belonging to such species. However, he safeguards a picture on the wall in his room, signifying lingering male libidinal desires and investments. The image depicts a woman adorned only with a fur cap and stole, extending a large fur muff towards the observer, concealing her entire forearm within its voluminous confines. The image alludes to Sacher-Masoch's "Venus in Furs,"[22] leading scholars to speculate about its meaning (e.g., Anderson 1988: 125; Meyers 2012: 743).

5.4.3. IMAGE-ATTRACTION VERSUS SOUND-ATTRACTION

Schaffner posits that the image expresses Gregor's inclination toward submission, asserting a causal role in his transformation, where his monstrous exterior reflects his inner erotic nature (Schaffner 2012: 218–219). However, I find it crucial to challenge this interpretation. First, the assumption that Gregor must necessarily have a monstrous exterior oversimplifies the narrative possibilities and marginalizes certain identities and sexual orientations. Second, I perceive the image as a red herring, a literary device implying that its impact is primarily expressive rather than causative. Furthermore—as the transformation unfolds—Gregor's diminishing interest in the image supports the idea that it serves as hauntology—a marker of his past that exerts an influence in the present.

Contrary to Webster's claim that the framed picture holds a deeper allure than his sister Grete's violin playing (Webster 1959: 353), I contend that the latter becomes Gregor's primary object of desire. It signifies a profound connection and hope in her musical future, which contrasts his strained relationships with his father and mother. The violin playing is a regulated attraction, but

[22] *Venus in Furs* (1870) is a novella by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, whose title now refers to erotized power dynamics. In the novella, the character Wanda is a dominatrix realizing the character Severin's fantasies of being mistreated and humiliated (Sacher-Masoch 1991).

Gregor transgresses family law by sneaking into the living room to witness it. It is her music that lures him out of his room for the final time, perhaps aware that this act of transgression will ultimately seal his fate. While Webster emphasizes Gregor's involvement with the image, I posit that the attraction of Grete's music and Gregor's hopes for her future takes precedence, eclipsing mere representations.

A more compelling view than image-attraction—Corngold suggests it's the music that catalyzes Gregor's true transformation, evident in his loss of bodily appetite and heightened consciousness (Corngold 1988: 76–77). His attraction to the musical presentation—rather than graphic re/presentations—underscores the depth of his metamorphosis. In this light, the pleasure derived from music becomes the desiring-attraction of Gregor's transformation, challenging Schaffner's emphasis on the causal role of the image. Gregor contemplates: "Was he a beast, that music should move him like this? He felt as if the way to the unknown nourishment he longed for was being revealed" (Kafka 2009a: 66). Indeed, he was. Experiencing a becoming-animal which unveils the attractiveness of minor expressions, Gregor's transformation signifies a revolutionary event, akin to the signaling sound of impending revolution in "The Burrow". As Deleuze & Guattari writes, "Expression must break forms, encourage ruptures and new sproutings. When a form is broken, one must reconstruct the content that will necessarily be part of a rupture in the order of things" (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 28). Gregor's new form is a body of chaotic sound.

Musical improvisations represent spontaneous performances and transgressive expressions of freedom from structured discourse. Throughout the novella, the family's dominant cultural activity revolves around discourse about Gregor, an activity from which he is excluded and which casts him in a negative light. However, when Grete's expressive and affirming music attracts Gregor, it resonates deeply with his own existence. Yet, it is not musical qualities of harmony and beauty that besiege him, but rather the spontaneous outpouring of asignifying desire that mirrors Gregor's own struggles with expression; he is the isolated instrument, the monotonous outcry. Previously feeling meaningless, the violin's sound awakens a sense of purpose within him. Consequently, Gregor becomes enamored with Grete's music above all else, viewing it as his primary source of

nourishment while viewing everything else as mere distractions. Childlike ecstasy displayed while dancing to Grete's violin defies conventional interpretation; it lacks explicit meaning but requires experiential comprehension of the phenomenological depth beneath its surface. It reflects and validates the subversive nature of music's unstructured discourse, as Deleuze & Guattari explain:

> "What interests Kafka is a pure and intense sonorous material that is always connected to its own abolition—a deterritorialized musical sound, a cry that escapes signification, composition, song, words—a sonority that ruptures in order to break away from a chain that is still all too signifying. In sound, intensity alone matters, and such sound is generally monotone and always nonsignifying" (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 6).

Much like "Children on a Country Road"—the grandeur of cultural expressions provides Gregor with ecstasy, positioning him outside the societal and familial domestic spheres. Music—as asignifying signs—holds a dual nature: it is both deeply affective and affirming, stirring desire without adhering to explicit meanings. Animals may display enjoyment of music as well, and as such the desiring-attraction of it transcends species. The alignment between the animal and music becomes via desiring-attraction, replacing Gregor's erotic fixation on the image.

5.4.4. GREGOR'S BODY WITHOUT ORGANS

As the sound of his sister playing the violin attracts Gregor out of his room, he inadvertently startles his family. His father's anger escalates, prompting him to hurl apples, one of which strikes Gregor forcefully, causing significant damage to his exoskeleton. Despite the impact, no one takes the initiative to remove the lodged apple. It remains wedged in place as Gregor gradually succumbs to his solitary demise in bed, enduring periods of mal/nourishment from this musical séance. The unmoved apple serves as a poignant trace of the unaddressed wounds and isolation that contribute to Gregor's demise. However, Gregor's fate transcends a mere tragedy, as the music seems to finally provide him with the nourishment he desired. Furthermore, while he becomes denuded—embodying a state of both literal, existential and cultural nudity deprived of clothing, meaning and

signs—his fate also assumes an auditory performance of post- and transhuman identity and an aesthetic of disappearance:

> "[…] [Gregor's voice] was unmistakably his previous voice, but merging into it as though from low down came an uncontrollable, painful squealing which allowed his words to remain articulate literally for only a moment, then stifled them so much as they died away […]" (Kafka 2009a: 31).

While losing his ability to speak early in the story, his voice transforms into the inhuman, squeaking manifestation of the neglected Other, as the voice disintegrates during each utterance, undergoing distortion and folding back upon itself. Dolar marks this aesthetic as a manifestation of becoming-animal (Dolar 2006: 174). For Deleuze & Guattari, the concept of becoming-animal expresses the protagonist's responses to oppression and their liberation through metamorphosis (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 12–13). Equally, however, Gregor's transformation is an unbecoming of the human in which the aesthetics of decay approaches the threshold of both voice and language, navigating the corporeal landscape of organs involved in speech. In Gregor's asignifying vocal gestures, akin to the performance of glossolalia (speaking in tongues), words shed their conventional meanings, and the speech organ becomes subject to language—in lieu of the normal configuration—acquiring pure tonal and musical value. The musical dimension thus surfaces prominently in Gregor's voice, as well as in his sister's violin playing, a context where Gregor exhibits a degree of control over his bodily movement via dance. Asignifying signs come into play with the voice serving as a manifestation of affect and thought without the representation of a concrete message. There is no need for interpretation; affects and percepts unfold as desire finds pure expression.

Gregor's ecstatic bodily devotion to music is desiring-attraction reaching a plateau and becoming a life-affirming body without organs, a new expression highlighting his unadulterated animal nature. Stripped of culture and reduced to bare nature—as he ceases to speak and engage in the cultivating of social reality via discursive signs—Gregor is metaphorically castrated. While this becoming-animal expresses liberation, Deleuze & Guattari contend that "he re-Oedipalizes himself through the apple that is thrown at him and has nothing to do but die, the apple buried in his back"

(Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 15). Nevertheless, the reader is enriched by the animal perspective as Gregor transcends human nature with its gender, species, and cultural and anatomical confines, embodying a body without organs. For all these reasons, I view his demise as an affirming triumph and not as a return to repression. As the body and voice cease to perform their normal functions, Gregor reaches the threshold of the transhuman, with his anatomy deconstructed. Moreover, upon his death, this minority status becomes affirmed and immortalized.

In conclusion, similar shifts of perspective to the colonial officer's role reversal become evident in "The Metamorphosis," showcasing Gregor's transformation in diverse ways—not as a becoming-machine, but as a becoming-animal via desiring-attraction toward music. For Boa (1996: 116–117), Gregor's downfall conceals a triumph of the transformed male body. Additionally, however, I sense a universal gender-neutral and species-neutral message underneath; breaking free from the human and gendered condition, Gregor actualizes a body without organs that embodies the becoming-animal and unveils perspectives of alterity. His transformation provides readers with an understanding of the Other's attractiveness as his journey transcends the animal-human divide, paradoxically rendering him more human despite his exclusion from the domestic familial culture.

In the same manner as the protagonists of "Children on a Country Road" and "The Judgment" are pulled towards elements external to their interior selves, Gregor is attracted to the cultural form of expression in music, which satiates his desiring thirst for nourishment. As in "The Penal Colony," a display of transgressive aesthetics plays a central role in the narrative; the unimaginable appearances and sounds of Gregor and Grete's violin echo those of the punishment machine. These expressions are starkly different, however, as Gregor and Grete's voices express the outcries of isolated minor identities, while the punishment machine embodies the oppressive force of colonial apparatus. Moving on to Kafka's first published novel, we similarly find themes of punishment intertwined with pleasure.

5.5. *THE TRIAL* (1915)

5.5.1. HETEROCHRONISM

Der Prozeß (Kafka 1991: 5–198; Kafka 2009b: 5–186) stands as one of Kafka's most renowned literary works. Focused on the persecution of Josef K. by an enigmatic judicial power, the novel remains incomplete, abandoned by the author after six months of intensive writing in 1914. Notably, the first and final chapters were completed, however, where Kafka elaborates on Josef's mysterious arrest and dramatic death, respectively. The opening sentence reads: "Someone must have been telling tales about Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything wrong, he was arrested" (Kafka 2009b: 5).

Any temporal cohesion between the different chapters is conspicuously absent—except for the arrest and execution, both meticulously scheduled at 9 o'clock exactly a year apart. While the narrative structure is inherently fragmentary, it maintains a relatively straightforward progression. Nonetheless, the intervening chapters exhibit a certain flexibility, akin to standalone episodes or, as Deleuze & Guattari put it regarding their own book chapters, "plateaus" characterized by an accumulation of intensity without culminating in a conventional climax (Deleuze & Guattari 2005: x, xx). Consequently, the intermediate chapters assume a liminal character.

5.5.2. HETEROTOPIAS OF DESIRE

The reader embarks on a journey between spaces with Josef, navigating narrative hallways and encountering various characters while he's ostensibly attempting to decipher his case. Despite apparent disconnection between the chapters, there exists a perpetual edge of discovery; these episodes consistently conclude with Josef's exhaustion and limited progress, as his desiring-machines continually break down amidst intersecting and overlapping spaces, portraying this work as potentially Kafka's most heterotopic and spatially liminal creation. The desiring-attraction becomes fragmented, but there is still a clear distinction between Josef's attraction towards resolving his judicial affairs with the Court and the allusions to underlying ambisexual desires for participating in its eroticism as an aspect of cultural be/longing.

Josef's place of arrest and residence is a boarding house owned by the proprietress Frau Grubach. Comprising Josef's quarters and two additional rooms occupied by other tenants—namely Fraulein Bürstner and Captain Lanz—the house undergoes a transformation into a heterotopic space as the events of the novel unfold. Upon Josef's arrest in the first chapter, his arrestors appropriate various rooms in the boarding house, transforming his living space into extensions of the legal domain. The onlookers—including Josef's neighbors—suggest a voyeuristic jouissance in witnessing the unfolding spectacle (Corngold 2002: 154), and the rooms of the boarding house acquire an overt erotic dimension as well, as Josef intrudes upon Bürstner's room that evening, anticipating her return and seeking her assistance in his trial case. However, he ends up pursuing her erotically. Kartiganer portrays this as a clumsy attempt: "The imagery is that of a dog licking from a stream; and it is as a dog, not a lover, that he has approached her" (Kartiganer 1962: 37). Kafka also accentuates the significance of Lanz's room through the narration, alluding to its erotic connotations, including phallic associations with the name "Lanz" (meaning lance (a long spear) in German). Josef anticipates that Lanz may attempt to engage in a similar affair with Bürstner.

Expanding the heterotopia of the boarding house to other locations in the narrative, Josef's summons to his initial court session in chapter two—held in an apartment building—prompts him to use "Carpenter Lanz" as a cover-up for his destination during the search for the location of it. This court session unfolds in an attic, once again juxtaposing living space with judicial space while also incorporating elements of eroticism; upon Josef's return for his second court session, he finds the courtroom empty and peruses law-books, revealing pornographic content within their pages. This interplay of spaces underscores the intricate connections between the legal, domestic, and sensual dimensions in Kafka's narrative. Furthermore, contributing to the erotic theme, Kartiganer asserts that Josef elects to use "Lanz" as a cover because he is desperately trying to attain the power expressed by the phallus (Kartiganer 1962: 36).

The law books, carriers of material heritage and cultural artifacts of the judiciary, echo the reverence bestowed upon blueprints by the colonial officer. Eroticizing the physical procedures of ritual cultural regulation, a similar culture of sadomasochistic desire is seen in Kafka's *Amerika,*

where the characters derive pleasure from physical violence and the threatening of their romantic partners. Josef's revelation, however, unveils the obscene underpinnings of this culture as he traverses the dim reflection of the courtroom, devoid of the judges themselves, exposing the Other face of the culture beneath its surface. This unveils a coexistence of *the sacred and the profane*, wherein the profane excess infiltrates the sacred realm without undergoing ritualistic consumption, thus rendering the execution of any humane judicial process an impossible task.

5.5.3. THE HAUNTOLOGY OF JUDICIAL CULTURE

Josef—unsummoned to additional court sessions—is still attracted towards new ones inadvertently, stumbling upon a previously undiscovered lumber-room at his workplace in chapter five. In this setting, he inadvertently overhears agonizing sounds, realizing that the two warders—who played a pivotal role in his initial arrest recounted in the first chapter—are undergoing a severe thrashing administered by an ominous figure known as the Whipper. Their punishment stems from Josef's prior complaint about them pilfering his linen shirts and undergarments during the arrest. Ironically, Josef becomes implicated in their punishment as he unwittingly becomes the catalyst for their reprisal, despite being the victim of the theft. Notably, one of the warders explicitly attributes their ordeal to Josef's accusation. Attempting to mitigate the situation, Josef endeavors to offer a bribe to the Whipper; however, the Whipper declines, fearing potential repercussions for himself.

Boa (1996: 140) draws attention towards the structural parallel to "The Penal Colony," where in both cases there are four persons involved in the punishment—four ritualistic figures. The episode with the warders being beaten is ritual humiliation, she contends (Boa 1996: 116). Indeed, it embodies a haunting aspect of judicial practices, harkening back to old penal culture and punitive laws, akin to the verdicts in "The Judgment" and "The Penal Colony". Such traditionalism may seem out of place in the context of modernity, yet a culture that normalizes ritual humiliation can lead individuals to internalize these practices as acceptable or even desirable.

The inclination towards humiliation may be a consequence of cultural conditioning and participation in cultural rituals. While these actions may serve to unite the culture, it raises the

question of how they are perceived as attractive by those undergoing the humiliation. The case of the colonial officer—who willingly embraced humiliation, also illustrates this dynamic, mirroring the beating of the warders by the Whipper. The dynamics of insider-outsider relationships become evident—with *physical humiliation reserved for insiders*—yet the act of being subjected to punishment inherently involves one in the cultural fabric, blurring the boundaries between those within and outside the cultural realm. Josef's discovery exposes yet another judicial coexistence of the sacred and the profane, with the juxtaposition of justice and violence. Subsequent chapters adopt a similar trajectory, unveiling various locations as amalgamations of attics, offices, living spaces, and ateliers, by which Josef unveils further machinations of this obscene judicial culture.

5.5.4. WEBS OF MEANING

In chapter six, Josef experiences a significant turn of events when his uncle Karl intervenes in his case. Together, they seek the assistance of a lawyer named Huld, through which Josef is introduced to Leni, Huld's nurse. She diverts his attention from the conversation with the lawyer by forcefully hurling a plate against the wall in the entrance hall, generating a resonant sound that attracts Josef toward her, and away from the lawyer's office. During this brief affair, the duality of desiring-attraction takes center stage.

Leni stands in stark contrast to Bürstner, possessing qualities absent from Josef's previous relationships. She willingly reveals her vulnerability to Josef, creating an atmosphere of intimacy. With her distinctive amphibious hands—a physical anomaly with webbed fingers—Leni becomes a captivating presence, drawing Josef deeper into the intricate labyrinth of his own circumstances. Her hands signify a departure from the norm and an entry into a heterotopic space. She introduces an element of transgression, beyond conventional notions of attractiveness. Interestingly, she takes the initiative in their interactions and responds positively to Josef's advances, exemplified by his kissing her (Maché 1992: 25). Leni's role in Josef's life embodies desiring-attraction that transcends a relationship; it is intertwined in a complex web, as Leni's attraction extends beyond Josef as an individual; it is directed toward all guilty men, deriving its power from their shared sense of guilt. It

adds a hauntological dimension to their relationship by implicating the presence of numerous men from the past inside it.

Furthermore, the intricacies of this web are heightened by association with the lawyer connected to Josef, ostensibly supportive of his cause. Paradoxically, she appears to subvert this support by encouraging Josef to confess. While Leni's attraction to guilt aligns with her desire for his confession, this introduces a nuanced dynamic, questioning Leni's motives and the blurred boundaries between her personal desires and professional obligations within the legal framework. The convergence of attraction, desire, and professional roles weaves a tapestry of ambiguity and contradiction in their relationship.

Nevertheless, Josef's romantic entanglement indicates a shift towards maturity, as suggested by Kartiganer: previous connections were characterized by a childlike desire for maternal support, whereas Leni's involvement reflects a more grown-up dimension in Josef's emotional development (Kartiganer 1962: 37). His interactions with women suggest a shift towards more meaningful engagements, demonstrating a newfound seriousness in contrast to his previous transgressions such as the erotic advance on Bürstner and his association with a presumed prostitute Elsa, mentioned by Kafka in the second chapter. However, the influence of his uncle and lawyer, along with Leni's captivating charm, might contribute to this apparent change in behavior. The context surrounding these interactions adds complexity, raising questions about the authenticity of the shift and whether it is influenced by external factors or a genuine transformation in Josef's approach to relationships.

The intricate dynamics of attraction and desire weave an even more complex web in the subsequent chapters as Josef grapples with the intricacies of the judicial system. In chapter seven, Josef's lawyer Huld introduces him to the dysfunctional legal landscape and recommends seeking guidance from the portrait painter Titorelli. Ironically, an artist stands diametrically opposed to a bureaucrat. Residing on the opposite side of the city, he specializes in depicting judges but hesitates to risk involvement in Josef's case. Much like Huld, Titorelli further complicates matters by elucidating the workings of the legal system: three potential case outcomes that effectively amount to the same, the limited authority of lower judges to acquit, and the omnipresent possibility of higher judges

reviving the case, leading to an eternal oscillation between lower and higher courts. This convoluted explanation adds another layer of complexity to Josef's journey through the bureaucratic labyrinth.

Desiring fresh air, Josef resolves to open a window within the atelier. It becomes another expression of cultural regulation, à la the picket fence in "Children on a Country Road" which delineates the border between cultural spheres. However, unlike the fence, this cultural defense mechanism is not easily traversable. Josef's inability to open the window metaphorically confines him within the intricacies of his case, marking the judicial culture as one that is thoroughly regulated, with the painter offering little assistance. Josef purchases three identical paintings from him, a gesture signifying the three identical possible outcomes of his case. When Josef inquires about the cost of these paintings, Titorelli cryptically defers the discussion to a later time, implying the incurring of debt and emphasizing the principles of power. This delay serves to increase ambiguity by strategically keeping numerous doors open within the judicial maze.

Titorelli's artworks depicting male judges nevertheless figure justice as a goddess, as observed by Boa (1996: 116), evoking parallels with the Statue of Liberty in Kafka's *Amerika*, as that statue wields a sword instead of a torch—a phallic symbol with a feminist message (Kafka 2012b: xxv, 5). This linkage of freedom to violence permeates Kafka's exploration in *Amerika*, where women are portrayed as mighty torchbearers and worshipped (e.g., Kafka 2012b: 108, 139, 159). Echoes of this motif are present all through his authorship, particularly in the novels.

As the séance draws to a close, Titorelli finds himself unable to depart, encircled by a chorus of giggling little girls as Josef exits the room. Could it be that Titorelli has fallen under the spell of the muses? In the annals of classical mythology, the muses reign supreme as goddesses of the arts and sciences, wielding the power to ignite the flames of creativity in mortal souls. Perhaps Titorelli, ensnared by the irresistible allure of artistic inspiration, now finds himself trapped within its enchanting embrace, consumed by his role as a painter. The giggling little girls surrounding him serve as a poignant allegory, hinting at the capricious and unpredictable nature of creativity itself. Like mischievous sprites, they beckon Titorelli into a realm where boundaries blur and imagination reigns supreme. In this transgressive domain, he is both captivated and confined, unable to escape

the intoxicating pull of artistic fervor. Yet, in this enchanting dance between artist and muse, parallels emerge with the alluring sirens of Greek mythology. Just as Grete, Leni, and the sirens of old entice the protagonists with beguiling melodies, these giggling nymphs wield their own form of seduction — not through song, but through the irresistible call of creativity itself.

5.5.5. THE QUESTION OF GUILT

In the eighth chapter, Josef encounters Block, a corn-merchant and another of Huld's clients. This meeting serves to underscore the depth of humiliation experienced by others, juxtaposed against Josef's own circumstances. Block—having all but abandoned his business—devotes himself to the relentless battle of his case with the assistance of an entire cadre of lawyers. His ordeal unfolds under the watchful eye of Huld and Leni as he endures their abuse, constantly berated for arriving at the wrong time, even when summoned, and subjected to the degrading act of kneeling before the advocate. This portrayal of Block serves as a stark warning to Josef, illustrating the profound sacrifices and dehumanizing experiences endured by those entangled in the labyrinth of the legal system: "Such a person was no longer a client; he was the lawyer's dog. If the lawyer had ordered him to crawl under the bed, as if going into a kennel, and bark, he would have done so with pleasure" (Kafka 2009b: 139).

Block actively engages in his trial, expressing his submission to the court's authority and his immersion in the rituals of the judicial culture. He becomes a cultural insider, embracing the role and participating in the intricate proceedings with multiple lawyers. In essence, Block has assimilated into the system, having become a native within the judicial culture. On the contrary, Josef occupies the position of transgressor. Rather than harmonizing with the process, he introspects and harbors resentment toward the court. His focus is on figuring out how to escape his predicament, illustrating a contrasting approach to the other guilty men who navigate the legal intricacies with a more cooperative mindset. Unfortunately, Josef's dismissal of his lawyer, influenced by the humiliation experienced by Block, may contribute to his eventual downfall.

Josef's attempt to escape into eroticism may inadvertently exacerbate his sense of guilt, becoming a deviation from the expected behavior in the judicial context. Block even perceives Josef's guilt based on the expression of his lips, possibly alluding to the latter's intimate liaisons with Bürstner and Leni (Maché 1992: 25). This suggests that Josef's promiscuity becomes a marker of guilt. In transgressing both formal cultural rituals of the judiciary and engaging in acts of eroticism, Josef demonstrates a dual deviation. Paradoxically, his pursuit of erotic satisfaction also characterizes the judicial culture he is exterior to, potentially intensifying his culpability. Notably, while eroticism is inherent in the judiciary, Josef's appropriation of this aspect of their culture seems to be met with disapproval from the court, emphasizing the duality of the cultural transgression.

Maché reads the guilt as pangs of conscience—manifested in the two warders' appearance on the morning of the arrest—connected to a lack of ability to love, human concern and compassion, and connected to Bürstner as both she and Josef are promiscuous people (Maché 1992: 19–21). Hence, guilt transcends Josef's actions; it resides in his emotions, conscience, and projections. Josef's character undergoes a test of endurance as he grapples with the mounting pressure. The trial is not confined to the courtroom but unfolds within him (Kafka 2009b: xi), echoing through the chambers of his mind. Within this resonating echo chamber, guilt burgeons when not shared, transforming into a cancerous body without organs. In contrast, the judicial rites instill boundaries and serve as a channel for this excess. Despite resisting institutionalized ritualism, Josef's guilt evolves into a structured procedure where his experience aligns with a process of "guiltification" (Avanessian 2014: 205). Despite Josef's rationality, the more he embraces reason, the deeper the guilt penetrates, a consequence of the recursive nature of enlightenment thought, mirroring the Kantian logic behind the colonial officer's final gesture.

The crux of this novel—I believe—lies in interpreting it not merely as a manifestation of judicial power but rather as a reflection of broader cultural dynamics; Josef's transgressions are not against laws but against deeply ingrained norms. These "laws"—so antiquated that they have faded into oblivion—are now tacitly accepted, internalized, and woven into the fabric of societal expectations. Accusation equates to guilt. There is no room for error. À la the colonial officer, guilt in this

context is unquestionable. Josef asks the priest: "How can a person be guilty anyway? We're all human, every single one of us," and the priest responds: "That is correct, but that's the way guilty people talk" (Kafka 2009b: 152).

The narrative provides a glimpse into the life of a character on the fringes of society, experiencing anomie, and resembling a misanthrope, perpetually out of sync. Josef's acceptance and endurance of humiliation serve as a form of atonement for deviations from cultural norms. However, this exclusion is peculiar, given that the culture itself is inherently obscene. Josef remains barred from understanding its judicial history, misled by pornographic drawings, sirens, and muses. Kafka's portrayal of the Promethean myth[23] in "Prometheus" (1920) is a witty and ironic short piece which aligns with this ruthless "guiltification" of Josef. In that short text, Kafka directs the reader straight to the consequences of Prometheus' actions, presenting various dreadful fates without delving into the question of guilt. This deliberate omission underscores the ruthless and senseless nature of the punishment, mirroring Josef and Georg's predicaments in *The Trial* and "The Judgment".

5.5.6. "BEFORE THE LAW"

The ninth and penultimate chapter features Josef's visit to a cathedral, where the priest imparts a parable to him. Designated "Before the Law," this brief chapter narrates the story of a man from the country seeking access to the law within an urban setting. Hindered from entering the law's gate by a gatekeeper, the man faces a paradox, as the gate is open, yet the gatekeeper—while acknowledging the man's potential entry—refrains him from doing so. The gatekeeper contends that the gate is one of many, each guarded by progressively stronger gatekeepers. The man waits for approval to enter, but never proceeds. His last question before death pertains to the absence of others attempting entry, prompting the gatekeeper to claim that the gate was meant exclusively for him, and as he is dying, it will now be closed.

[23] *Prometheus Bound*, an ancient Greek tragedy by Aeschylus, recounts the tale of the god who stole fire—a symbol of technological achievement and creativity—from the other gods and bestowed it upon humanity. This act not only signifies power, subversion, and endurance but also serves as a potent metaphor for the resistance against established authority and the relentless pursuit of innovation (Aeschylus 2012: vii).

The liminal state of a gate, simultaneously open yet closed to the man, mirrors the intricate workings of the law. Although the gate was always accessible, it was also effectively closed via the gatekeeper's verbal gestures. This paradoxical dynamic reflects the gate's role as a cultural mechanism, as Siegert emphasizes, originally regulating societal boundaries by segregating humans from animals in an enclosure. Dolar highlights the paradox as well: the law does not prohibit any specific action or behavior; instead, it operates based on a prohibition of prohibiting—there is a prohibition on restricting certain actions, and this prohibition itself is also restricted or prohibited (Dolar 2006: 165). In a strict sense, this explains the gatekeeper not explicitly prohibiting the man from entering the law; the prohibition is left unspoken and insinuated by the gatekeeper and intuited by the man. Paralleling the unspoken verdict on the condemned in "The Penal Colony," Josef is not to know his guilt: he is to feel it on his body. As the man from the country's inclination is to keep the gate open throughout his lifetime—signifying hauntology as the space becomes the temporal site of his lingering desires—it elucidates Josef's behavior throughout the novel.

À la the man from the country, he finds himself paradoxically included in the law through exclusion: while forbidden by it, the law applies to him precisely because it does not apply to him alone. Consequently, the gatekeeper argues that the gate was intended solely for him. This paradox reveals that the universality of laws encompasses every individual case while also excluding it. Giorgio Agamben explores this paradox with his concept of *inclusive exclusion*, describing a universal law where individual cases are both excluded and included under the generalization (Agamben 1998: 17). In parallel to the machine in "The Penal Colony," Josef's executioners thus embody the law and must violate it themselves, committing murder to create a *state of exception* for Josef. As Agamben notes, in a state of exception, sacrifice can occur without transgressing either the sacred or the profane law, as it operates within the sphere of sovereignty (Agamben 1998: 81–83). This is inherent in the universalized concept of law, which Deleuze & Guattari argue is inseparable from an abstract, self-destructive machine that cannot manifest itself concretely (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 48), instead staging states of exception for each individual case within its universal concept.

However, as highlighted by other scholars, Josef's narrative is not strictly Oedipal; beneath the gestures lies an unreserved affirmation (Benjamin 2007: 129; Deleuze & Guattari 2003: xiii). Josef's actions affirm without guilt or submissiveness, emphasizing his quest to resolve his case. However, despite open gates of opportunity, Josef hesitates, metaphorically exposed to the law yet unaware of his agency. The unseen cracks in his cultural reality—the impossible edges—where norm-defying events occur, elude his perception. Sandbank captures the gestural quality of every choice Josef makes: "[it is] action which mirrors, or points to, itself" (Sandbank 1971: 21). Rather than recognizing these openings, Josef affirms reason, striving to unravel the logic and comprehend the law. Paradoxically, this fixation becomes his downfall, blinding him to the impossibilities unfolding around him while he is attracted to pursuing the possible. Dolar writes concerning Josef's arrest:

> "He was caught off guard in a reckless moment. He should have reasonably ignored the crack into which the two guards had slipped. Something wanted to come into being, and it could have been stifled if he reacted in good time, but he didn't. It was a momentary deficiency that enabled the impossible edge to invade everything else" (Dolar 2011: 126).

This resonates with Hélène Cixous' reading of the Kafkian gestures: they are gestures of morbidity (Cixous 1991: 2), which links to the always already stagnating death of each moment, in my view. When an impossible edge appears with his arrest, it marks the death of Josef's present and future, rendering his existence hauntological; it keeps him perpetually present in his past, with the haunting memory of the arrest. It also ensnares him in the very same moment, a perpetual state of exception, immobilizing him to endlessly contemplate the same matter. He becomes obsessed with this singular instance of impossibility, obscuring his view of all the other ones that are constantly becoming around him. Ignoring the edge becomes a metaphor for neglecting the subtle signs and fissures in the fabric of cultural reality which reveal possibilities for actualization of new expressions. The intrusion of an impossible edge suggests an irrevocable shift, where the ordinary transforms into the extraordinary, challenging the boundaries of the conceivable. The edge—once overlooked—widens into a portal through which the absurd and the uncanny infiltrate Josef's existence and haunt him for a year.

Josef's executioners arrive precisely one year after his arrest, in the concluding chapter of the novel. Despite opportunities to defy the law, Josef appears to anticipate this arrival. Like Georg and the colonial officer, his sacrifice serves as a manifestation of the scapegoat mechanism, essential for maintaining the boundary between the sacred and profane realms of society. The Court cannot tolerate Josef's continual defiance of cultural norms, necessitating his removal from the fringes of society. This liminal state, characterized by both transgressive deviance and obedience to societal regulations, comes into expression via Josef's perception of a woman resembling Bürstner while obediently following the two men who take his life—a final gesture reflecting the dual attraction towards the feminine and masculine, akin to Georg in "The Judgment". However, this final gesture is not a defeat but a triumph. Josef manages to exhaust judicial culture, closing the perpetually open/closed door once and for all, à la the parabolic man from the country (Dolar 2006: 168–169). This transgressive act involves Kafka portraying an impossible edge by maintaining Josef's desiring-attraction until death, where the élan vital (life force) of both the culture and the protagonist is sublated. Josef succeeds in closing his impossible edge, but it comes at the cost of his life.

As Boa contends, the novel echoes Dostoevsky in its ambiguity about which side is rightful, prompting readers to judge Josef, the judges, and ultimately lose faith in all bases of judgment (Boa 1996: 181). In contrast to Dostoevsky's works, however—where victims transform morally from within—Josef does not admit guilt, contesting it at every turn, intensifying his persecutors' belief in his guilt, showing no signs of remorse or repentance. His final moments become marked by a haunting thought: "I was always trying to interfere in the world with ten pairs of hands—and for an unacceptable goal at that" (Kafka 2009b: 162).

Nevertheless, the heterotopias of *The Trial* offer valuable insights and opportunities for transformative change. These narrative spaces—such as the boarding house and the court attics—serve as transgressions of reality where Josef *could* gain valuable insight into his own conscience. Josef's potential liberation from his trial is not hindered by external constraints, but by the internal vitality of his own erotic desires and guilt-denial. However, his futile pursuit of judicial culture prolongs the transformation process, intertwined with a desiring-attraction guiding his primary

pursuit of eroticism. Intriguingly, his own carnal activity also underscores judicial culture, revealing fundamental aspects of nudity and nature in human endeavors. It underscores the dual nature of Josef's cultural transgression, wherein he refrains from engaging in the purifying rituals of the judiciary while simultaneously mimicking elements of their provocative and obscene culture.

Josef's fate mirrors the colonial officer's, navigating identities within a legal culture eluding full comprehension. Also—in a paradoxical culmination akin to Georg, the colonial officer, and the parabolic man from the country—Josef simultaneously affirms and transgresses the law in his final gesture, integrating into a culture he remains exterior to. The radical exclusion via death paradoxically eternalizes him in the judicial tapestry, affirming his alterity to the end. Like Georg and the colonial officer, his fate is self-sacrifice, serving a stabilizing cultural function, as Girard highlights regarding the sacrificial rite.

In conclusion, by embracing death, he paradoxically affirms his own exclusion, cementing his position within the complex web of legal structures. This dual act of affirmation and exclusion epitomizes the central theme of the novel—his simultaneous ability and inability to assimilate into the Court's judicial culture. Through his embrace of death, he challenges the norms and boundaries of the legal system, yet ultimately finds himself bound by its constraints. His journey reflects the intricate dynamics of cultural assimilation and resistance, illustrating the complexities inherent in navigating societal norms and expectations. While this theme pervades all of Kafka's novels, it also takes center stage in one of his shorter works—"The Test"—where the tensions between cultural regulation and transgression are paramount.

5.6. "THE TEST" (1920)

5.6.1. AN UNEMPLOYED SERVANT

"Die Prüfung" (Kafka 2000b: 128–129; Kafka 2015: 54–55) is a concise short story narrative delineating the experiences of an unemployed servant who nevertheless resides at her assumed workplace, a manor house. Primarily solitary, she inhabits a living space of their own, unique in being the sole occupant of this specific servant quarter. In her leisure time, she frequents a tavern,

observing the activities of her fellow servants at work within the manor house. Her contemplations revolve around the mysterious aspects of the life of the servant Other and the interiors of their inaccessible rooms.

The initial two paragraphs depict a solitary and secluded servant who appears to choose this lifestyle willingly yet demonstrates a keen interest in the other servants. Despite this, she seems to suppress her own desires by adhering steadfastly to her chosen path of isolation, akin to the profound dedication of the colonial officer in "The Penal Colony". Desiring-attraction comes into play as she grapples with an intense attraction to the other servants alongside a conflicting desire for solitude, all while harboring a genuine longing to integrate into their culture (which I contend is the real desire). However, this desire of hers is complicated by a lack of comprehension of their cultural norms and practices, exemplified by the difficulties she faces upon a spontaneous interaction with one of the employed servants.

This climax occurs in the third and final paragraph of the text, when a pivotal moment transpires in the tavern, disrupting her usual routine: "A guest was sitting at my observation post. I did not dare look at him closely and was about to turn around in the door and leave" (Kafka 2015: 54). As the representative of the Other, another servant unexpectedly occupies her customary seat in the tavern, challenging her sense of identity and societal be/longing. Faced with this disturbance, she briefly contemplates leaving the tavern, but is gestured to remain by the Other. An attempt to establish communication follows, involving the purchase of a drink and the initiation of questioning by the Other. Paradoxically, her inability to comprehend the questions becomes her method of successfully passing the test, as the servant Other reveals: "He who does not answer the questions has passed the test" (Kafka 2015: 54).

5.6.2. EPISTEMIC HUMILITY

Is it a test of honesty—or more precisely—a test of servitude? Echoing the stance toward guilt seen in the colonial officer in "The Penal Colony" and Josef's arrestors in *The Trial*, this absolutist assertion that passing the test involves not answering questions raises intriguing inquiries. It implies

that the test centers around her ability to keep her mouth closed, to a certain extent. Unfortunately, a concrete analysis proves challenging, as Kafka does not write of the questions posed to her.

However, the examination appears geared towards assessing the authenticity of her identity as a servant, a role inherently characterized by servility. Demonstrating servility by acquiescing to the gestures and questions posed by the Other—responding with humility and simplicity and offering no resistance—serves as a confirmation of this, as Frey (2011: 379) highlights. This contrasts with her prior performance, which lacked a visible display of servility as she chose to avoid interactions with others. In this current scenario, she manifests servitude via overt affirmation, publicly displaying subservience. Simultaneously, the Other may be challenging her cultural identity and her place within the subcultures of servanthood, questioning her affiliation with the culture of the employed versus that of the unemployed. This interaction prompts considerations about her be/longings and desires, raising questions about the object of her desire and the nature of her attraction. Nevertheless, the test functionally affirms her marginal identity.

The cultural dynamics of exteriority and interiority remain a prevalent theme, with her lack of knowledge about the employed culture preventing her from transgressing its laws. This contrasts sharply with Josef, who erroneously believes he possesses superior knowledge of the laws. She remains beyond the reach of the Other's cultural impositions because she admits her lack of understanding, unlike Josef, who by claiming inside knowledge of legitimate law and the capability of discerning it from what he is subjected to by the Court, succumbs to the influence of judicial culture. Sovereignty only reigns over what it can internalize, Deleuze & Guattari writes (2005: 360). As such, the Other cannot push their laws on the exterior servant, yet the judicial culture can do so on Josef, him being an outsider claiming inside knowledge.

5.6.3. THE LIMINALITY OF MARGINALITY

Despite the convivial nature of the servant Other's gesture, their desiring-attraction towards the protagonist contains a display of power by the appropriation of her customary seat, as well as in the gesturing, treating her to a drink, questioning, and by declaring a successful completion of the test.

However, the exercise of power in this context is not inherently negative, nor does it manifest as a blatant attempt at overt domination. The expression of power comes to the forefront, yet the ensuing dialogue appears to leave the protagonist with improved prospects compared to before. This portrayal suggests that the wielding of power, in this instance, carries nuanced implications, challenging a simplistic and negative interpretation of its effects.

She exists in a perpetual state of flux, neither fully assimilated into the societal norm nor completely excluded from it. This was evident even before the dialogue, as Kafka reveals that she sleeps alone in a separate room and does not work à la the other servants. Nevertheless, she is still described as a servant. Moreover, the outcome of the dialogue further accentuates her liminal existence, as she has now garnered some validation from one of the other servants, potentially bringing her closer to integration with their culture. However, the aftermath remains uncertain; will her identity change radically after passing the test? The experience may instill confidence and understanding, particularly via affirmation of their marginality. The central message may be an endorsement of exteriority, an affirmation of the desiring-attraction of marginality, as her attraction to the culture of the employed garners attention. Despite inability to comprehend the Other's cultural logics even after passing the test, her curiosity may persist or even have peaked.

In conclusion, the narrative of "The Test" does not culminate in a tragedy or an entrapment. She retains the freedom to exist with a marginal identity, also having been given the choice to leave the test or to perform differently. The story does not explicitly convey her emotional state as negative, and despite its enigmatic nature, the work lacks expressions of malevolence or inherent fear. Instead, it presents an existence characterized by absurdity, isolation, and incomprehensibility, yet one leading the protagonist to companionship, acceptance, and some social success, however limited this may become. Thus, the narrative implies an empowerment of marginality via the becoming-visible of an unemployed and marginalized figure, emphasizing alterity in ways akin to the previous works.

In contrast to the narratives of *The Trial*, *The Castle*, and "The Burrow," this story diverges in its unusual trajectory, culminating explicitly in a positive resolution and an affirming message. This

protagonist is not an antihero or a cautionary exemplar; instead, she embodies the marginalized subject, assuming the role of a minoritarian hero. Analogous to "Children on a Country Road," she becomes akin to a child navigating the complexities of the adult world, evoking a sense of vulnerability and uncertainty reminiscent of youthful experiences. This deviation from the customary narrative paradigm challenges established literary conventions, introducing a refreshing perspective that champions the resilience and triumph of the marginalized figure.

5.7. *THE CASTLE* (1921)

In contrast to the straightforward answer the Servant receives in "The Test," the protagonist in *Das Schloß* (Kafka 1992: 3–378) struggles to ever receive a conclusive message from the Castle. This work is arguably Kafka's most obscure and unresolved work as well as his final novel. The narrative revolves around a man[24] who departs from his family, embarking on a journey to a distant castle with the ostensible intention of working as a land surveyor. However, while desiring-attraction is depicted in the attraction towards integrating into this culture as an employed person, it also features in the Land Surveyor's desire for the peculiar erotic aspects of this unknown culture. The Castle—situated in a remote village and enveloped in winter's fog and darkness—remains elusive to him as he stands on the wooden bridge leading to the village in the opening sequence: "K. stood for a long time gazing into the illusory emptiness above him" (Kafka 1992: 3).

5.7.1. BRIDGES TO CULTURE

Upon leaving the bridge, the Land Surveyor traverses another metaphorical threshold—namely the Bridge Inn—becoming a regulatory mechanism and a filtration stage before one may partake in the culture of the Castle. This becomes yet another bridge to culture, one of numerous cultural defense mechanisms inherent within the village fabric. The Land Surveyor's initial challenge involves securing accommodation for the night, leading him to settle for a corner on the tavern floor.

[24] Kafka consistently identifies the protagonist in his narrative as "K." Nevertheless—to mitigate any potential confusion with Josef K. in *The Trial*—I opt to designate him as "the Land Surveyor."

However, his restful sleep is short-lived as he is abruptly awakened and instructed to leave, by a young man claiming to be the son of the castellan.

Nevertheless, the Land Surveyor achieves a fleeting acknowledgment of his proclaimed position through a telephone conversation with an under-castellan, securing a momentary affirmation of his role. However—akin to the experiences of Gregor and Josef—this momentary reprieve merely postpones the inevitable. While he gains verbal acknowledgment, the Land Surveyor is continually thwarted in his actual pursuit of land surveying. Conversely, Josef receives news of his arrest but continues to function in the bank while having been "arrested". Similarly, Gregor postpones his demise by secluding himself in his room, only to be lured out by his sister's violin playing, ultimately leading to the actualization of a body without organs. These instances underscore the transient nature of verbal affirmations and the ironic twists in the protagonists' narratives.

Also, like Kafka's other works—particularly *The Trial*—the narrative perspective heavily relies on the protagonist's stream of consciousness, conveyed through the narrator's free indirect speech. The psychological projections, reflections on other individuals, and readings of their emotions are conveyed by this perspective and are mostly of a narcissistic nature. In the protagonist's internal narrative, the telephone call proves the Castle's acknowledgment of him as a worthy adversary, suggesting that he perceives his mission as a struggle and that he envisions the Castle as a future conquest. However, if the Castle exists to have any sentiments toward him, they remain uncertain; the Castle may be indifferent or even deem him unworthy, leaving the reader in suspense when the Land Surveyor leaves the Bridge Inn.

5.7.2. THE SCHIZOPHRENIA OF HISTORY

After failing to gain entry to the Castle the next day the Land Surveyor decides to try his luck via another telephone call, in chapter two. He experiences a peculiar humming sound, leaving him transfixed and disoriented, losing a sense of temporal continuity:

> "The receiver gave out a buzz of a kind that K. had never before heard on a telephone. It was like the hum of countless children's voices—but yet not a hum, the echo rather of

> voices singing at an infinite distance—blended by sheer impossibility into one high but resonant sound which vibrated on the ear as if it were trying to penetrate beyond mere hearing" (Kafka 1992: 21–22).

He eventually recovers, receiving shortly after a letter from a castle official named Klamm, requesting him to speak to the village mayor. This séance takes place in the fifth chapter, where the mayor clarifies that a bureaucratic error has occurred, and that it turns out that the Castle does not require the services of a land surveyor after all. Additionally, further information is disclosed regarding the telephones: the village mayor informs the Land Surveyor that the phones are fully operational; however, they ring incessantly, and there is no available time to answer them. À la the performative nature of the punishment machine in "The Penal Colony," these phones serve performative functions, persistently ringing and emitting noise and hum when attended to.

Furthermore, the village mayor discloses the profound disorder within the organizational framework of the Castle. The intricacies of bureaucratic chaos are laid bare, as communications between departments A, B, C, and D undergo incessant rerouting, contributing to a labyrinthine web of inefficiency. Rooms are filled with documents remaining untouched, creating a poignant sign of bureaucratic excess where information stagnates, and the intended dissemination of knowledge becomes an exercise in futility.

Now—returning to the Land Surveyor's initial phone call to the Castle in the first chapter—a realization comes to the forefront; the acknowledgment of his professional title during that conversation lacks substantial credibility. It becomes evident that anyone could have relayed that confirmation, devoid of genuine authority. Moreover, it is highly probable that the individual delivering the acknowledgment has already forgotten about the Land Surveyor, and that the broader community remains entirely unaware of this recognition.

Winkelman (1972: 119) asserts the deceptive nature of the initial confirmation the Land Surveyor receives—and of his assertion of being a land surveyor in the first place—contending that "the thinking of the castle is more subtle than […] mockery and a challenge". However, in my view attributing the agency to the Castle seems misguided; interpreting the text as if the Castle possesses

cognitive abilities and intentional actions might lead to a misunderstanding. The performative nature of the unconventional telephones underscores the surreal and illusory aspects of the narrative. Moreover, the organizational chaos and bureaucratic disorder within the Castle paint a vivid picture where oversight and control are conspicuously absent. The Castle operates in a realm of perplexing complexity, where its purported "thinking" is better understood as a reflection of systemic confusion rather than deliberate agency.

The phones allude to lack of communication—an overt cliché—akin to the swarm of crows observed by the Land Surveyor encircling the Castle in the first chapter. Such literary devices are, however, interwoven with a majority of obscure and ambiguous symbols in Kafka's fiction. This complicates the identification of the more overt and clichéd content in the works, I contend, contributing to the diffusion of surface-readings of satire and critique of bureaucracy. According to Siegert, the mysterious sounds may be analogous to a dream Kafka once conveyed in a personal letter, where the ambient noise of the phones Kafka dreamt of listening to signifies the seduction that binds the receiver to the caller (Siegert 2015: 28, 30). Telephones thus emerge as another regulating attraction, another defense mechanism, constituting an auditory vessel of desiring-attraction and another bridge to culture—beyond the literal one the Land Surveyor stands on in the opening sequence, and the nominal one (the Bridge Inn). The telephones serve as attractions, and by utilizing them, the subjects are as if under a spell by their sound, akin to Grete's violin playing for Gregor, the sound-attraction of Leni's plate-hurling, Titorelli's giggling girls, and the haunting sound for the burrow-animal in "The Burrow".

Moreover, the issue of the telephones unveils the heterotopia of the Castle, wherein different historical epochs coexist within the same spatial domain. While the Castle itself exudes a medieval aura—juxtaposed with the antiquated state of the village—the presence of telephones introduces a hauntological layer, expressing a prevailing image of the past within the present—an assemblage of disparate epochs resulting in convoluted temporality. That which is linked to the Castle exists in a timeless state, where chaos prevails, and history takes on a schizophrenic quality. As Church (1956:

66) writes, "Kafka avoids measuring time. Evoked by a chance experience, the past becomes the present", with the state of the Castle mirroring Josef's eternal state of arrest.

5.7.3. ATTRACTION AND MEDIA

The disorientation of the Castle and its phones extends to the Land Surveyor's quest for cultural assimilation. Although having received some affirmation of his identity from the Castle, it continues to elude him. His first day navigating the streets of the village in chapter one—attempting to reach the Castle—seems to take him nowhere nearer it: "The main street of the village […] did not lead away from the Castle, [but] it got no nearer to it either. […] He was also amazed at the length of the village, which seemed to have no end […]" (Kafka 1992: 12). According to Deleuze & Guattari (2003: 8), this serves as a manifestation of the dynamism inherent in desire; there is no clear distinction between the village and the castle, and this lack of differentiation is evident in the intricate network of roads that connect them. These roads express the fluidity and multiplicity of desire, as they meander and intersect without strict adherence to predetermined paths; they reflect the unpredictable and ever-changing nature of desire, which transcends conventional boundaries and structures (Deleuze & Guattari 2003: 8).

This fluidity of desire permeates the entire narrative, evident in the myriad spontaneous and peculiar actions, utterances, and events that unfold throughout the work. For instance, after being assigned two assistants with no knowledge of land surveying (also in chapter two), the Land Surveyor finds himself entangled in an erotic liaison with a barmaid named Frieda, Klamm's mistress (in chapter three)—on the floor beside a door in the tavern, with Klamm in the room beyond that very door—prompting a spontaneous desire in the Land Surveyor for marriage. This experience prompts a profound shift in his aspirations, leading him to redirect his life's ambitions towards her. Although his aim for a career as a land surveyor is thwarted, he secures a position as a janitor at the village school, a compromise relayed to him by a teacher in chapter seven. In chapter eleven, the classrooms become heterotopias, reflecting diversity in their equipment and furniture tailored for various school subjects. As living spaces, the Land Surveyor, along with Frieda and the assistants, inhabits them, necessitating constant movement based on the availability of rooms.

Despite compromising his desire by accepting the janitor job, the Land Surveyor's fixation on the Castle persists. The conventional interpretation of the novel suggests that the janitorial role is a calculated maneuver, ostensibly employed to prolong his stay in the village. This tactical approach may imply a gradual assimilation into the local culture, all while harboring the elusive aspiration of ultimately reaching the enigmatic Castle. The impossibility of this endeavor is exacerbated by the medley of chaotic systems, temporal distortions, elusive architecture, and technological intricacies.

Goebel (2011: 153) points out how Kafka's spaces mirror the functions of media technologies, surpassing individual will and desires, becoming autonomous, self-referential entities communicating independently, posing a challenge to human users. While acknowledging the challenges posed by these transformations, I recognize the positive aspects as well; Kafka's narratives illustrate that in the face of communication barriers mediated by technology, his characters often gravitate towards human interactions; the Land Surveyor eventually resorts to a messenger named Barnabas to establish contact with the Castle due to the inefficiency of telephones. Furthermore, the novel portrays numerous interactions with various characters, emphasizing the importance of direct human engagement.

Similarly, in *The Trial*—when Josef finds himself unable to communicate with the elusive Court—he embarks on a Ulyssean journey, attracting a myriad of interesting characters along the way. While the novels imply a critique of the dehumanizing aspects of technology, Kafka also presents a diversity of intimate human relations, showing that his characters—when confronted with the limitations of media—seek connections in the tangible world. However, they also emphasize the potential disconnect between individuals and their surroundings that new media provides. In liquid modernity,[25] deliberately turning away from media and embracing genuine human connections becomes an act of transgression, echoing the struggles of Kafka's protagonists as they navigate the complexities introduced by technology and bureaucracy. Reflection on the past invites us to

[25] *Liquid modernity* is a term coined by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2000) to describe the contemporary era characterized by rapid changes, uncertainty, and the fluidity of social structures and consumer culture. He wrote a series of books elaborating on this title, delving into his moral sociology, exploring the fragmentation and commodification of social bonds and its detrimental effects on interpersonal relationships, love, and connection (e.g. Bauman 2003; 2005; 2007; 2011).

consider an era of local and physical interactions, preceding the advent of telephones, media, and the widespread influence of organizational structures and bureaucracy. By examining what has been relinquished in this shift—and of what remains as hauntology in the present moment—we confront the transformative impact of modernization on the nature of human connections and the potential consequences of prioritizing mediated experiences over direct, interpersonal relationships.

5.7.4. THE MASK OF NARCISSISM

It may seem peculiar that I posit an affirming perspective—emphasizing what attracts people towards each other in the novels—given that both Josef and the Land Surveyor exhibit objectionable behavior—acting rudely, appearing inconsiderate, and displaying narcissism. Caldwell (1986: 46) regards the Land Surveyor as resented by townspeople and Winkelman (1972: 115) interprets him as being ostracized. In my view, the Land Surveyor emerges as a transgressive figure, openly discussing cultural taboos and challenging societal norms, yet his endeavor is to assimilate with the Castle socially and culturally. Regardless, Winkelman (1972: 117–118) acknowledges the learnt compassion and humility of the Land Surveyor towards the end of the novel, suggesting that "the action of the plot has a goal, namely the education of K. to the twin virtues of humility and compassion". I concur with Winkelman's viewpoint, yet I diverge from the main thread of his creative analysis.[26]

As Josef, the Land Surveyor is arrogant, but eventually grows to connect deeper with others. I posit that—like Josef—he bears the imprint of anxiety, leading to a tendency to project onto others and exhibit an arrogant demeanor. This masks the fundamentally affirmative nature of their desires. From the outset, their motivation is fueled by desiring-attraction towards the Court and the Castle—respectively—yet this vitality eventually extends to include other characters as well. In Josef we reach but a glimpse of Dostoyevskian humility towards the end—a momentary shift of

[26] Winkelman asserts that the objective of *The Castle* is to guide a sinner towards salvation; that the Land Surveyor—allegedly a sinner and a suicide in his past life—posthumously journeyed to the Castle—purportedly the realm of the dead—from which he is barred entry due to the sin of suicide (Winkelman 1972: 124–125).

moral perspective—when his consciousness takes in a short perception of himself as an object to scrutiny by cultural norms, instead of perceiving himself as a subject to unrightful persecution.

The Land Surveyor's path towards a little humility follows a series of humiliations, for instance, being compelled to sleep on the floor in classrooms, subjected to ridicule and rejection—a parallel to the mistreatment of warders and the prostration displayed by Block in *The Trial*. Such ordeals serve to temper his arrogance. His humility deepens as he initially resists the janitor job but gradually begins to prioritize Frieda's well-being and their living conditions. However, the Land Surveyor's humiliation is not an isolated experience; it extends to the village girls who, too, endure abuse from Castle officials, entwined in intricate, often disturbing, erotic relationships. Surprisingly, even in these moments of mistreatment, an inexplicable force draws people together—a force transcending conventional notions of good and evil. Here desiring-attraction blurs the boundaries between intimacy and violence, akin to the ritualized punishment in "The Penal Colony". Within this complex interplay, a dialectic unfolds—a dance of attraction and repulsion, and humility and humiliation, involving the culture, its members, and the visitors.

5.7.5. DESIRE IN CULINARY CULTURE

Despite acquiring humility, a persistent ambiguity surrounds the Land Surveyor's true motives, prompting speculation on whether his objective genuinely revolves around reaching the Castle or if he harbors alternative desires. This unresolved tension adds layers of complexity, compelling readers to reflect on the authenticity of the protagonist's emotions. While his actions might suggest a trajectory towards the Castle, a pivotal moment occurs in chapter eight when he visits the Herrenhof Inn with the ostensible purpose of locating Klamm.

Discovering that Klamm is preparing to depart—with a sled awaiting him in the yard—the Land Surveyor makes an impromptu decision to approach the sled. Tasked by the coachman to retrieve a flask of brandy (or cognac, depending on the novel's translators), he abstains from fulfilling the request and drinks all the brandy by himself, showcasing his amorality. Klamm never shows up, prompting the coachman to return the horses to their stable and the Land Surveyor to flee the

scene. We witness the Land Surveyor's determination to present himself as attractive to the Castle, demonstrating his willingness to employ any means necessary, regardless of their moral or deceptive nature. Arneson (1979: 106) captures it: "As spilled brandy drips down the sideboard, signalling K.'s guilt, K. forms the mean intention to implicate the carriage-driver in his misconduct, should an embarrassing interrogation commence".

In contrast to Gregor's basic need for food for sustenance, here desire intertwines with notions of greed, indulgence, opulence, and a yearning to penetrate the exclusive realm of the Castle's privilege. The Land Surveyor's consumption of Klamm's exclusive brandy is a gesture, attempting to align himself with the authoritative and enigmatic culture embodied by the Castle's officials. Mirroring Josef's carnal desires, the Land Surveyor's interaction with the official's brandy becomes an expression of his attraction towards unfamiliar cultural elements. This transcends a craving for sensory pleasure, delving into an attraction to the judicial culture embodied by the officials.

A common thread among Gregor, Josef, and the Land Surveyor is the inherently transgressive nature of their actions. Whether it be appropriating brandy, indulging in eroticism, or finding ecstasy in music, they collectively defy the cultural mechanisms that aim to confine them to the periphery of societal norms. While music isn't a talent of Gregor's own, he still derives immense satisfaction from it through his sister's playing. Similarly, Josef's involvement in eroticism mirrors the distinctive characteristics of the Court's judicial culture. Likewise, the Castle brandy is exclusively reserved for officials, highlighting the Land Surveyor's cultural appropriation. Thus, the role of food or nourishment in Kafka's fiction may act as a metaphorical lens through which the characters' attractions are explored. Literal and figurative foods and dining situations may become sites of desire, regulated attractions, reflecting the characters' internal struggles or external conflicts, or their attempts to conform to or resist cultural expectations, providing insight into the intricate dynamics of desire and attraction within the narrative context.

Dnes, however, posits that Kafka's fiction lacks a sense of human reality, emphasizing the absence of depictions of people eating and engaging in ordinary activities (Dnes 2020: 426). While Kafka may not emphasize these aspects as much as other authors, numerous examples exist in his works.

My perspective on the significance of food diverges markedly from the focus on prevalent themes of hunger, as evidenced in works like "The Metamorphosis" and "A Hunger Artist". There is a notable distinction to make regarding these works, as Gregor is initially given the choice of whether to eat or not. His sister serves him a variety of foods, including sweet milk, white bread, vegetables, cheese, raisins, and almonds. Similarly, even the hunger artist—while engaging in prolonged fasting—breaks his fast every fortieth day to sustain his artistic pursuit. This nuanced portrayal challenges the simplistic notion of deprivation and hunger in Kafka's literary universe.

Furthermore, culinary rituals serve as recurrent motifs across Kafka's works, weaving through the fabric of his stories. Numerous references to diverse foods and beverages, as well as the act of consumption, pervade the narrative landscape. These instances create a subtle yet pervasive connection between the characters and their cultural contexts. To cite off a few additional instances: Whether it's the child on the country road eating the evening meal, the condemned in the penal colony being served candy by women prior to receiving porridge as a part of his execution ritual (or the colonial inhabitants' culinary consumption at the tea house)—the act of consuming meals becomes a cultural experience, a communal thread that underscores the characters' cultural be/longing. In Kafka's taverns and family homes, the collective consumption of food becomes a way that a culture attracts its members through desire.

This ritualistic practice goes beyond the mere fulfillment of physiological needs, becoming an expression of shared identity and communal be/longing. The act of eating together fosters a sense of unity, creating a space where individuals come together to partake in a cultural communion. It is in these shared meals that the boundaries between individuals blur, and a collective identity is reinforced. This cultural attraction through the desire for food establishes a nuanced and integral link between the mundane act of eating and the deeper layers of cultural affiliation.

5.7.6. THE REAL OBJECT OF DESIRE

Neither food nor the role of a land surveyor are the primary objectives in Kafka's narrative, however. Instead, the prevalence of erotic gestures adds a distinctly human dimension to his novels

as the intimate nature of these liaisons underscores a fundamental aspect of human experience. In *The Castle*, such interactions are commonplace between officials and village girls, with the Land Surveyor himself engaging in a sexual relationship with Frieda.

It becomes evident from the outset of the novel that the concept of land surveying serves a performative function for him, acting as a transient identity rather than a central goal. The performative nature of the Land Surveyor is accentuated by the absence of surveying equipment, a detail compounded by the introduction of assistants who also lack the necessary tools and expertise. Throughout the novel, the Land Surveyor engages in the fabrication of explanations, dynamically altering them to account for the absence of equipment and various other aspects, further emphasizing the performative aspect of his role in the narrative. Furthermore, the marginal identity[27] assumed by a land surveyor, typically a solitary figure, rarely involves swift activity in the first place, due to the infrequent need to measure the area surrounding a castle. His presence is not focused on the actual surveying of land; rather, he becomes the subject of scrutiny himself.

Informed by my prior readings—particularly of works such as "The Judgment," *Amerika*, "The Metamorphosis," *The Trial*, and "A Country Doctor"—I could not help but discern pervasive erotic overtones in this novel as well. Phallic imagery and sexual connotations are interwoven with, for instance, the imagery of tool use and land measurement. These effects are not merely implicit; explicit elements are present as well; in an excluded text fragment, Kafka mentions the Land Surveyor's numerous affairs with women, and even suggesting that his has a connection to his goal (Kafka 1992: 331). Of crucial importance I contend—within the main text, the novel repeatedly portrays the culture of the Castle as licentious, with young women engaging in sexual relations with the Castle's officials. As Arneson (1979: 103) points out: "In his romantic hankerings K. participates in the culture of the village. Other villagers behave similarly".

Throughout chapters fifteen to twenty he becomes more familiar with the family of Barnabas—his messenger—a family which has been brought into ill repute by a judgment from the Castle. This

[27] I recommend consulting Steinberg (1965) for a comprehensive exploration of the land-surveyor identity in *The Castle*.

depiction signifies the Land Surveyor's journey towards humility and personal growth. Nevertheless, the presence of the disgraced Amalia in the family—involved with castle officials and the family's tarnished reputation—adds complexity to the Land Surveyor's attraction. It appears as an attraction towards the unsightly and deteriorated aspects of life, raising questions about potential erotic intentions within the Land Surveyor's motivations. The intricate dynamics of attraction in this context invite exploration into the Land Surveyor's evolving character and the nuances of his connections with the characters in the narrative.

On the one hand, one might contend that the sexual aspects of his character are merely a means to an end to the Land Surveyor's quest for power. However, more contradictory evidence surfaces, indicating that eroticism is his actual objective; he frequently focuses on descriptions of body parts, overlooking servants and bartenders for their lack of power or fulfillment of duty, yet admiring them for attributes such as animal-like teeth or hunchbacks, which are aesthetically pleasing to him. The complexity of time thus intertwines with notions of attractiveness and aesthetics. The Land Surveyor appears indifferent to conventional attractiveness, finding allure in features typically considered animal-like. This raises intriguing questions about the implications of his attraction to what might be perceived as ugly. Could this be an aesthetic of decay, akin to the colonial officer's appreciation of the machine's breakdown, mirroring Gregor's decaying body and voice?

The most prominent desire inherent to the culture of the Castle manifests itself as erotic. Mirroring the judicial culture in *The Trial,* the cultural framework subverts conventional logic by governing solely the regulation of desire and repressing only the repression of it. This inversion of norms allows for the unbridled expression of free desires within its enigmatic confines. Even Klamm—the most prominent male official of the Castle—is not depicted as a formidable adversary but rather as an object of desire. Village rumors describe him as shy, constantly eluding visibility—a characterization more reminiscent of an innocent virgin than a powerful castle official. He purportedly looks different upon arriving and departing from the village, as well as during sleep and wakefulness. The Land Surveyor catches a glimpse of Klamm only through a peephole in the door to his office at the Herrenhof in chapter three; the self-reinforcing effect of cultural ideas and the

social construction of reality among the townspeople come to affect him as well; "reality in the village is what the people make it" (Church 1956: 66).

In this milieu, the Land Surveyor grapples with the elusive nature of his quest, emphasizing the Castle's role as both the object and obstacle in the perpetual cycle of desire and aspiration. However, the protagonist's pursuit within this culture remains futile. As Sandbank points out, the Castle—as cultural myth—encapsulates an ontological paradox wherein ceaseless striving becomes its own rationale—a perplexing, cyclical endeavor perpetuated by the gravitational force of attraction to attraction itself (Sandbank 1971: 23). The entities of this novel seem to have a strange tendency to attract and repel at the same time. While people dislike the Land Surveyor, he manages to get into situations and obtain forbidden knowledge via desiring-attraction.

In chapter eighteen, the Land Surveyor finds himself in a peculiar situation, sharing a bed with Bürgel, the secretary of a castle official named Friedrich. During their brief connection, Bürgel discloses insights into castle interrogations, launching into a protracted diatribe about the proper approach to the castle and the necessary actions one should take. Despite effectively providing the Land Surveyor with a solution, the protagonist ironically fails to grasp it as he succumbs to sleep. Paradoxically, the solution revolves around the applicant arriving unannounced in the middle of the night to the room of a non-competent secretary—the very action the Land Surveyor unwittingly undertakes on this occasion.

Thus—like Josef—the Land Surveyor finds himself surrounded by opportunities, where impossible edges reveal themselves at every turn, yet both protagonists struggle to seize them. These chances seem to slip away at the final moment, leaving only gestures behind. Both grapple with cultural practices that elude comprehension through reason. Josef experiences a sense of displacement within legal culture, showcasing a solid grasp of the process and system. Nevertheless, both K.s lack practical understanding—marking them as outsiders who refrain from actively participating in the institutionalized ritualism—instead engaging in searches, inquiries, measurements, and excavations without discerning a purpose for their discoveries.

However, unlike Josef's regretful awakening in bed, the Land Surveyor's obliviousness to the unfolding of the impossible edge is precisely encapsulated by his act of falling asleep. This slumber becomes a metaphor for the Land Surveyor's incapacity to fully engage with the presented opportunities. New expressions of opportunity continue to present themselves as impossible edges. They re/present themselves, so to speak, but in parallel with Josef, the Land Surveyor's encounters remain cryptic, slipping away into the realm of dreams. Yet, in contrast to Josef and Gregor—who awaken to nightmares—the Land Surveyor's slumber suggests a different dimension to his encounters. There are thus deeper layers to explore within these interactions, particularly in the scene involving Bürgel. It's evident that the Land Surveyor's attractions extend beyond the feminine, the animalistic, and the aesthetics of decay: his fascination with Klamm, his intimacy with Bürgel, and other instances of homoeroticism scattered throughout the narrative suggest a more complex spectrum of desire at play, which Deleuze & Guattari (2003: 68) also consider. Early in the novel, the Land Surveyor finds himself admiring the muscular physique of Barnabas, emphasizing his attraction to the raw, unadulterated aspects of human anatomy rather than the cultural trappings that surround it. This multifaceted portrayal hints at a deeper longing—an inherent desire for authenticity and connection, which transcends conventional boundaries.

Ultimately, we are left without any additional clues, as Kafka left the novel unfinished, abruptly ending mid-sentence, with speculations suggesting a potential conclusion involving the Land Surveyor lying on his deathbed, finally receiving a permanent warrant to stay and work as a land surveyor. Nevertheless, I will discuss four noteworthy points emerging from this analysis.

First, regarding the intermediation of people and machines: The juxtaposition of various media forms fosters an attraction to individuals, facilitating the process of making friends and gaining insights into the local culture. However, these media elements are not functional tools but rather performative abstractions, primarily for appearance rather than practical utility. This interplay between attraction, social interaction, and the superficial nature of media highlights the complex dynamics at play in forging connections within the depicted cultural context. Nevertheless—contrary to prior readings of *The Castle*—I read it as affirmation of the inherent natural and cultural

elements, emphasizing the essence of humanity and authentic relationships. Desiring-attraction intricately weaves itself into the narrative as metaphorical thresholds—à la the wooden bridge to the village, the subsequent Bridge Inn, and the telephones—function as regulatory mechanisms, complicating the Land Surveyor's entry, yet at the same time alluding to the mutual interests at play.

Second, the Land Surveyor's relationships with women defy conventional power dynamics. His attractions suggest appreciation of aesthetics over power dynamics, and the agency of female characters—challenging traditional structures—also convey an equality perspective. The women—autonomous and independent—exhibit strategic agency, possess upward mobility within the village job market, and make decisions over men in certain instances. Frieda—the character with whom the Land Surveyor shares the most significant connection—appears to instrumentalize him, charm his assistants, and ends up leaving the Land Surveyor of her own accord. Hence, an implicit feminist message resonates in this narrative as well, mirroring the power of the feminine through the lost mother observed in *The Judgment*, the sister in *The Metamorphosis,* and the judicial goddesses of *The Trial.* Conversely, the novel also conveys affirming homoerotic motifs, underscoring a broader spectrum of human experiences and identities.

Third, Kafka provides a guide on how not to act, presenting an affirmative message through exclusion, mirroring Josef's lack of humility with that of the Land Surveyor. Instead of an incessant quest for unraveling every mystery or accumulating knowledge, individuals may find contentment in acknowledging the inherent mystery and allowing cultural nuances to unfold organically. Contentment is depicted as an embrace of the unique and unfamiliar facets of a heterotopia. This entails a realization that not everything demands deciphering or possession, fostering a harmonious coexistence with the elements of cultural spaces. Reframing desire in terms of hope, attraction, contentment, and connection—rather than lack—within a mysterious cultural milieu, advocates for a more nuanced and appreciative approach. It prompts individuals to discover fulfillment in the journey itself and to cultivate meaningful connections transcending initial allures of the unknown.

In conclusion, the Land Surveyor's true desire seems to revolve around cultural identity and a sense of be/longing. Just as Josef grapples with understanding judicial culture and his place within it, the

Land Surveyor similarly strives for clarity in *The Castle*. His aspirations include settling into a new life, seeking marriage, and embracing village living, conveying deeper thematic messages. On the surface of the texts this finds expression via eroticism, a desiring-attraction towards the culture's aesthetics of decay, and towards a certain natural attractiveness—displayed most prominently in varieties of human and animal anatomical features. The eroticization of bureaucracy and technology—while often critiqued in the context of modernity—is thus understood as a function of the desiring-attraction towards this diversity of desire. It's not the bureaucracy or technology itself that is eroticized, but rather the organic processes that lead to their breakdown and decay. This includes the deterioration of telephones, legal affairs, communications, bodies, and machines. Repeatedly implied and elucidated throughout the novel, the desiring-attraction towards the Castle and its villagers as erotic entities serves as the closest approximation to a unitary theme, in my view. In conjunction with the Land Surveyor's verbal statements and expressed intentions of work and marriage, this points to an underlying affirmation of performative identity, communal be/longing, and transgressive and diverse sexuality. Kafka's complex narrative style—characterized by sections of confusing, abstract, and obscure reflections pointing in different directions—may lead readers to overlook this possibility, underscoring the rich potential of his fiction.

5.8. "THE BURROW" (1923)

À la *The Castle*, Kafka's final work also ends abruptly mid-sentence, leaving the narrative unresolved and incomplete. "Der Bau" (Kafka 2000b: 185–220; Kafka 2012: 153–182) revolves around an anxious creature, formerly a forest-dwelling animal, having meticulously constructed a burrow for itself. Akin to the colonial officer's explanation of the machine in "The Penal Colony," a sizable portion of the narrative is dedicated to describing the construction of this burrow. In this sense, the burrow-animal is of an interspecies existence like Gregor, as the story is in the first person, marking the animal as the anthropomorphic narrator describing the construction of the burrow. While the burrow-animal is focused and dedicated to the burrow—desiring-perfection—desiring-attraction operates in the simultaneous attraction towards life in the forest. This attraction appears even stronger due to the suffering the animal experiences on account of its burrow.

The primary source of terror lies in the fear of external intrusion. Residing underground, it perceives space as not entirely its own, susceptible to potential invasion from other creatures at any conceivable moment, either intruding from the surface, or tunnelling into it from below. Because of these heterotopic fantasies, the creature engages in various safety experiments, tirelessly ensuring the security of an extensive network of tunnels, even resorting to the sabotage of its own secret exits to ascertain their safety. Thus, yet another attraction to decay.

5.8.1. EXCESSIVE SOUND

The ongoing expansion and intricate development of the burrow pose challenges in its maintenance. Having reached a point of culmination—a body without organs—the burrow signifies a final stage of maturation. It stands on the brink of bursting, as the creature finds itself unable to suppress its desires any longer, mirroring Josef's erotic advance on Bürstner. This desire becomes the escalating humming sound within the burrow. The intensity of the hum increases, driving the creature to near madness as it attempts to trace its origin. In my reading, the persistent expansion of the burrow implies a proportional escalation in volume. Literally—as the burrow grows in space—it transforms into an echo chamber where the resonance and reverberation of sound is magnified. Mirroring the telephones in *The Castle,* the sound is perhaps serving as a regulating attraction, a defense mechanism excluding the animal from authentic underground culture. Furthermore, the bureaucratic excess of *The Castle* echoes in the vast redundant space of the animal's burrow.

Weigand's analysis, however, adopts a rationalistic perspective, raising concerns about the nonsensical nature of the sound; he scrutinizes the animal's sound-attraction, questioning how it remains at a consistent amplitude regardless of the animal's location within the burrow, interpreting it as a trap deliberately set by Kafka for the reader (Weigand 1972: 162). In my perspective, questioning the absence of realism in fiction is what truly appears nonsensical in this context; fiction is not necessarily—and should certainly not be reduced to—a mere representation of reality. As Dolar (2011: 133) writes: "The impossibility of finding a univocal location of the sound in reality opens up a crack where fantasy comes flooding in".

A representationalist stance—rather than fostering inspiration or sparking new ideas when engaging with Kafka's work—undermines the transformative potential of the text. One then becomes fixated on the logic of the Kafka-machine, dissecting its mechanisms rather than exploring the effects it generates. Labelling creative elements as traps diminishes the potential of fiction, it's a reductionistic approach that overlooks nuance and affirmation in literary creativity, with its cracks and edges. Although I hesitate to involve the persona, Kafka himself was anti-essentialist, as we recall from his message to the illustrator of "The Metamorphosis," emphasizing the insignificance of physical appearances (cf. section 3.4., paragraph 1).

Gellen, however, acknowledges that the sound exists solely within the realm of fiction (Gellen 2016: 111). "The sound is an 'interference' from the outside—not just outside the burrow, but outside the burrower's world" (Gellen 2016: 111). Building on her analysis, the sound-attraction becomes a message for the animal, originating from its external environment, specifically: the forest. The animal cannot dismiss it; the forest infiltrates its awareness, expressing major desire and attempting to attract the minor animal. Despite seeking refuge deep within its burrow, the animal remains intrinsically linked to the forest. This highlights the inescapable nature of culture; even within personal niches, individuals remain integral parts of the broader cultural context. It reflects the profound influence culture wields over the subject's phenomenology, shaping every perception and experience through a relative lens.

5.8.2. ARROGANCE VIA DESIRING-CONNECTION

The burrow—initially constructed as a protective measure—evolves into an intricate way of life for the animal. Instead of examining forest life, one might perceive the burrow life as the tangible manifestation of the culture under scrutiny in the narrative. However—within this context—it assumes the character of a monoculture since only the animal inhabits this cultural space. The values ingrained in its cultural milieu are notably constrained, centering exclusively on the themes of security and labor, which become self-preserving rituals. The burrow-animal's profound identification with its home leads it to dedicate all its time to maintaining the border with the outside world, embodying a cultural defense mechanism through its very existence. As Dolar (2011:

113) expresses it: "The burrow is a retreat, the secret hideaway most carefully protected against all outer threats. It is the inside that should be clearly separated from the outside".

What other purpose might underlie the construction of the burrow? Weigand (1972: 152) contends that the burrow is constructed for self-glorification, attributing this motive to the animal's arrogant and self-aggrandizing behavior. While this interpretation is plausible, I find it doesn't resonate with my impression of the text. Certainly, the animal exhibits pride in its construction and fixates on its technical prowess. However, associating this pride with spitefulness à la the Dostoevskian underground man[28] seems somewhat misplaced. Contrarily, I argue that both the burrow-animal and the underground man desire a cultural connection, as they are deprived of external impulses and fresh impressions. Their pride and arrogance—entwined with anxiety—manifest as reactions urging them to change and are responses to ever-present sociocultural pressures. Importantly, their traits are the inverse effects of their actions; their arrogance stems from being out of touch with the world, projecting onto others due to a lack of understanding, and judging them for what is feared or denied within themselves. The protagonists' arrogance serves to mask desiring-attraction, while their negativity reveals a profound fear of inadequacy or vulnerability. Their obsession with self-aggrandizement lays bare the hollowness of their constructed identities.

This motif recurs in *The Trial* and *The Castle* as well, where the protagonists—though marginally—socialize and grow in character, unlike the complete isolation of the burrow-animal. While the animal appears like Gregor in "The Metamorphosis"—bunkering down in his private space—the crucial distinction from Gregor lies in the burrow-animal's possibility to live with other animals in the forest, highlighting the sense of hovering between two exclusive states of being. Gregor embodies this sense of liminality—a state of in-betweenness—much like other protagonists. This underscores the necessity for a nuanced analysis that considers both facets of their existence. Expanding beyond critique of self-glorification—linking Kafkian gestures to broader themes of

[28] The *underground man* is the resentful protagonist of *Notes from Underground* (1864), a novella by Fyodor Dostoevsky.

self-deception and sociocultural pressures—it underscores the need for affirmation, and the weight of unconscious desiring-attraction.

In alignment with Del Caro's perspective (1989: 42), I contend that Kafka—despite the scarcity of sunlight in tales like "The Burrow"—is an author emphasizing the need for it. The Kafkaesque—in revealing what one should avoid—implicitly advocates for the opposite. Much like Josef and the Land Surveyor, the burrow-animal is ceaselessly digging, delving into uncharted territories, obsessing over minutiae, but ultimately leaving their hollowed-out spaces devoid of collective meaning, however intricately crafted. Highlighting the inherent potential of established environments, fostering a deeper connection with the surroundings, they might discover pre-existing spaces, attractions, heterotopias, and fill them with the diversity of their desires.

5.8.3. DREAMS OF FOREST LIFE

The primary object of the animal's neglect is the forest. In contrast to the picket fence in "Children on a Country Road," the burrow entrance operates as the most regulated attraction in Kafka, a rigid cultural defense mechanism, simultaneously excluding the animal from forest life, while incorporating it into solitary burrow existence. The entrance fluctuates between openness and closure, with the animal assuming responsibility for its comings and goings, resulting in inherent suffering. The prospect of abandoning the project and returning to life in the forest—devoid of concerns about security and potential intruders—may seem attractive. As Weigand (1972: 158) points out: "Once he is outside, the web of anxieties is dissipated for a moment. He feels a resurgence of the vital energies".

The animal grapples with the desire to rid itself of the burdensome *excess* that begets anxiety, a stark departure from its previous existence of freedom in the forest. However, the forest poses its own dangers as a living space, as the animal would lack protective measures there. The current predicament forces the animal to obsessively reinforce and perfect an invisible facade, cognizant of the inherent meaninglessness of this endeavor. However, this desire should not be perceived as driven by a *lack*; I interpret the underlying message as one of abundance rather than scarcity.

The animal lacks nothing, except the communal be/longing engendered by culture; it possesses a burrow and the freedom to exit at will. The preference for above-ground food and air suggests a challenge of excess—not of scarcity. Firstly, anxiety should be regarded as a symptom, prompting the animal to confront its fears generally. Secondly, the specific alleviation of anxiety above ground suggests a crucial insight that the burrow is detrimental to the animal, and it would be more beneficial for it to leave and inhabit the forest instead. Even if not explicitly expressing desire for forest life now, the animal would at least prefer to stay outside of the burrow and used to desire forest life explicitly. "[...] I sometimes had the childish wish never to return to the burrow at all […]" (Kafka 2012: 161).

Schuster points out that "its goal is not the calm and peacefulness granted by a sense of safety, but the surplus enjoyment generated by the security apparatus itself" (Schuster 2020: 5). Though the animal finds extreme pleasure—jouissance—in its self-constructed burrow, is that where its desires truly lie? Perhaps this satisfaction is instead a sign of a deeper yearning, an attraction towards the untamed life of the forest, the animal's desire to *transgress* its own laws, to destroy the regulatory framework of its own monoculture. Could this jouissance not be a mark of desiring-attraction, signifying the animal's true object of desire as forest life—a realm characterized by unrestricted development, diversity, openness, play, and exploration?

The attraction is mutual: the forest forces itself upon the animal's consciousness while it is inside its burrow, and the animal intermittently forces itself out in the forest from the seductive safety of his burrow. Both spaces are interwoven by the animal's desiring-attraction, which serves as the nexus between interiority and exteriority. The ongoing interplay of attraction and desire continuously molds and redefines the dynamics between what lies within and beyond, transcending distinct opposition or dissolution. Perhaps even the mysterious sound is the allure of the vibrant forest life, yet appearing distorted in the burrow-animal's monocultural perspective?

We observe starkly different desiring-attractions when comparing the burrow-animal to the forest-animal. The former displays a pathological fixation on its habitat, neglecting to engage in rituals that cleanse and release excess desires. In contrast, the forest-animal exhibits a diverse range of activities

such as running, hunting, playing, and socializing, aiming their desires towards various attractions. Their dynamic engagement with the forest milieu and climate enriches their lives with diversity and fulfillment. The cultural practices of the forest -animal diverge significantly from the monotonous pattern of the burrow, offering a broader spectrum of experiences and interactions, mirroring the themes of free play, culinary and eroticism found in "Children on a Country Road," *The Trial* and *The Castle*, highlighting how desiring subjects are drawn together in communal be/longing.

In conclusion, the short story imparts a lesson on cultural life, emphasizing the significance of unhindered unfolding. I contend that the animal would flourish with unbridled freedom within the forest. Nonetheless, it finds itself ensnared by the tyrannical image of thought embodied by the burrow, akin to the image of the gate for Josef and the man from the country in their seeking entrance into the law. Despite the inherent knowledge that the gate to freedom is open, the subconscious inhibitions prevent decisive action, conveying surface-level repressions of desire while concurrently championing the free expression of it. À la the Land Surveyor, the burrow-animal covertly yearns for a specific natural allure, all the while denying this truth to itself, outwardly fixating on another objective. The reclusive animal illuminates the perils of cultural homogeneity while implicitly advocating for its opposite, suggesting the creature's imperative to liquidate its accumulated investments of desire, consuming the neurotic excess, and returning to its previous life in the forest, empowering alterity and diversity.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

I will return to the problem statement I formulated initially, in section 1.1., to discuss my hypothesis in a new light. My problem statement was: "What are the transgressive desires and regulated attractions of Kafka's protagonists?". In the following discussion, I unveil a response to this question while summarizing the insights gleaned from the analyses, illustrating how they converge to convey affirming messages. I will concurrently describe how desiring-attraction operates by drawing protagonists and cultures into mutual attraction.

The Kafka-machines ignite their engines the moment the reader cracks open the book, ushering the protagonists into existence. As minor expressions of desiring-machines, both the books and the characters in them contain transgressive desires of individuals and collectives alike. They are drawn into the plane of immanence via desiring-attraction, a vital force fueled by their desires and attractions intricately linked to the major expressions—the regulated attractions of cultures, systems, abstractions, and representations. Through this intertwinement of major and minor desires and attractions, regulated attractions come to embody opposing qualities simultaneously. They exist in a state of flux, and their entrance gates oscillate between open and closed, embodying both constriction and liberation, as defense mechanisms of culture.

These gates may lead nowhere, but in Kafka there is a plethora of liminal and heterotopic spaces where—despite challenges seeming insurmountable and entrances impenetrable—the gates are accessible to minor forces. On the other hand, the major expressions of culture remain rigid and fixed in place until stirred by collisions initiated by minor forces. This highlights how minor individuals—though often sidelined and marginalized in the broader cultural context—serve as pivotal agents for substantial disruptions and encounters. The heterotopic gates are thresholds where an impossible edge appears, giving rise to a line of becoming. This is where reality is transgressed, where schizzes appear on the plane of immanence via the cultural meetings facilitated by desiring-attraction. It's within this liberating space that new expressions and transformations of culture can emerge.

Let's revisit the genesis of minor expressions, preceding their encounters with major expressions. What triggers these shifts isn't solely the absence-induced desires or oppressive superegos, repressions, and rigid self-destructive attractions. It's also the transgressive desires directed towards alternative regulated attractions. These transgressive desires often manifest through aesthetic experiences. There's voyeurism through windows and keyholes, explicit imagery in books and bedrooms, eerie voices and violin melodies, intricate machinery schematics, and glimpses of both human and animal anatomy. These are affirmations of cultural expressions that resonate with the protagonists, and not expressions of lack.

In Kafka these attractions become unbridled. All is laid bare in an unveiling of the inner sanctums of private realms, identities, and spaces. Characters observe each other in the most private of moments. There exists no barrier to penetrating the sacred spheres of society or delving into the deepest chambers of culture. The traditional distinction between self and Other dissolves. Here, both the minor and major elements of society are equally attracted, blurring the lines between cultural ingroup and outgroup. This invites us to contemplate modern society, where social interactions often lack intimacy and closeness. Many of us remain distant from others in social settings, preoccupied with appearances and adhering to social norms. Consequently, we've become more sensitive to perceived judgments and less inclined to form deep connections. In contrast, indigenous communities offer a valuable example of profound intimacy, both among community members and with the natural world.

Furthermore, transgressive desires become expressions of communal life and identity in Kafka. The theme of cultural assimilation thus stands out as a central motif. Despite their deviations, the burrow-animal still feels connected to the forest, the Land Surveyor to the village, the servant to the culture of employed servants, Josef to the judicial culture he proclaims to abide by, Gregor to a higher metaphysical realm through the music that justifies his existence, Georg to familial culture as an obedient son, and the children to rural culture over urban culture. To underscore, these expressions aren't born from a feeling of lack. The protagonists are firmly rooted in their cultural contexts; their desires express a deep sense of be/longing. They exhibit this attraction by inviting others into their minor cultural domains and by engaging in negotiations with the major culture they're also drawn to. Both individuals of minor and major cultures express their desires and attract others. Whether desiring what they already identify with or being drawn to it in the same way they attract others, their actions reaffirm their be/longing in their cultural milieu.

While readers often grapple with the inherent obscurity and uncertainty in Kafka's narratives, one certainty remains: the protagonists are actively engaged, propelling themselves forward and navigating culture through desiring-attraction. In this sense, they can be seen as cultural revolutionaries, de/constructing and reconstructing the regulated attractions they encounter. They

often find themselves as minor figures within larger cultural systems, subject to norms and practices beyond their control. Despite this, they are drawn by desiring-attraction to regulated attractions even as they concurrently strive to maintain their marginal identities. Within the seeming impossibility lies the potential for liberation and empowerment if one confronts the inherent contradictions and absurdities with a sense of curiosity and inquiry. The reader is immersed in a world where conventional ideas of time, space, and identity are distorted, yet within this labyrinth lies a discernible center. Though the reliability of each narrator's voice may be questionable, their collective voice speaks volumes as they navigate us towards new plateaus.

Kafka not only expresses critique of oppressive, capitalist, colonialist, and patriarchal structures but also affirmations of the resilience and agency inherent within marginalized voices, in ongoing struggles for cultural identity and gender equality. Similarly, amidst the grip of colonial and despotic machines, people persist in their fight for liberation from oppressive regimes. In this light, the protagonists emerge as minoritarian heroes. This challenges conventional notions that link desire solely to entrapment or desperation within Kafka's narratives, reframing them through the concept of desiring-attraction.

Contrary to prevalent notions, quite a bit of suffering may thus not inherently be tied to desire, but instead perceived via the mythologized narratives and critical frameworks of modern analysis. It's not the bureaucracy or technology itself that is eroticized, but rather the organic processes that lead to their breakdown and decay. This encompasses the deterioration of telephones, legal affairs, communications, bodies, and machines. In Kafka's work, we encounter not only a critique but also an affirmation of organic decay. While surface-level repressions of desire are apparent, there is also a simultaneous championing of the free expression of it. Affirming messages are plentiful, embedded in the protagonists' struggles and pursuits, and they are expressed through the interplay of transgressive desires and regulated attractions.

6.2. IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY

As desire unfolds freely within Kafka's narratives, the symbiotic interplay of desiring-attraction illuminates the significance of both minor forces, which differentiate via the improvised experimentation of nature, and major forces, which homogenize via the ritualized repetition of culture. However, the need for such a dichotomy only arises from inherent human traits, such as our tendency to become entrenched in old habits and binary thinking. By transcending these limitations in a post/transhuman future, we might affirm the non-existence of dichotomy altogether. When new expressions emerge from a body or a plateau, they embody elements of both nature and culture, machine and organism, animal and human, female and male. It is our longstanding tradition of dualistic thinking that compels us to perceive minor and major forces and expressions as separate entities. Yet, even when conceived as distinct, they remain integral parts of a larger unified whole, toward which desiring-attraction endeavors to guide our understanding.

My central argument posits desiring-attraction as a ubiquitous vitality operative in every narrative, drawing protagonists and cultures into mutual attraction. The unfolding of desire is thus not merely compensation for lack, but also an effect of cultural curiosity and expressions of be/longing. Consequently, the ensuing expressions of desire become cultural negotiations which unfold with intricate complexity, yielding effects that affirm diversity and inclusion All forces are desiring-machines, and each can exhibit affirming qualities, expressing themselves in manners that may appear contradictory to prevailing research paradigms. Despite surface appearances, these forces often affirm the Other, challenging conventional understandings and inviting deeper exploration. Desiring-attraction—manifested via cultural collision, transgressive performance, and the self-expression of marginal identities, leading to the creation of new expressions—thus serves as a lens with which to analyze a myriad of other topics in literature and culture studies.

First, the implications of my findings challenge conventional readings that primarily link Kafka to messages and themes of entrapment or desperation. By disentangling desire from notions of suffering, my perspective also prompts a reevaluation of the prevailing associations with desire in literary analysis in general. This also highlights that perceived suffering may be exacerbated when

desire is examined with traditional frameworks. The findings thus suggest a shift in focus from traditional interpretations of suffering to a nuanced understanding of the positive messages embedded in the struggles and pursuits of the protagonists.

Second, the complexity of desiring-attraction suggests a diversity at the intersection of culture and desire. It challenges the Lacanian notion that the unfolding of desire is a consequence of lack, emphasizing instead its connection to cultural curiosity. This implies that it cannot be reduced to a singular or straightforward explanation. Instead, it involves various layers of meaning, emotions, and interactions, also acknowledging the dynamic interplay between individual desires and the cultural context in which these desires unfold. This intersectionality introduces a diversity of elements that contribute to the complexity of desiring-attraction.

Third, my findings provide insights into the constructional intersection of desire, gender, and species by exploring the agency of gendered human, animal, and machine characters. These elements are not isolated but intricately woven together, influencing, and shaping each other in the construction of characters and their experiences. As such, my findings also resonate with feminist, post-anthropocentric and posthuman discourses via the protagonists' becoming-woman, becoming-animal, and becoming-machine, respectively.

Fourth, desiring-attraction emerges as a lens for analyzing performativity, marginality, cultural diversity, feminism, and posthumanism in literature in general, expressed in transgressive performance and self-expression of marginal identities. Characters assert their unique and often marginalized aspects within the narratives, which become manifestations of desiring-attraction, as diverse cultural perspectives and identities are portrayed and negotiated in literature. This exploration may contribute to our understanding of how literature both reflects and challenges societal norms and power structures.

Overall, the implications underscore the need for a reevaluation of traditional interpretations of desire in literature—perhaps especially in Kafka, and perhaps generally in all of life—offering a more nuanced understanding that emphasizes positivity, cultural curiosity, and the affirmation of diversity.

6.3. LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

My research findings are deeply indebted to extant literature, without which the exploration Kafka's fiction would not have yielded these findings. The identification of bureaucratic eroticization as a mechanism for desire is particularly attributable to insights provided by scholars such as Škop (2011) and Žižek (2006). Furthermore, concepts such as becoming-animal, becoming-machine, major and minor forces, and desiring-attraction and related concepts, all draw inspiration from the works of Deleuze & Guattari (2000; 2003; 2005). These concepts have previously been integrated into a broader scholarly paradigm that critically analyzes various aspects of Kafka's works. I thus sought to apply them in new ways.

Throughout the course of this project, I consistently engaged in the process of delimitation and reduction of complexity, progressively refining my focus on the concept of desiring-attraction. This conceptual framework gradually unfolded, emerging as a key tool for elucidating the intricate cultural navigation dynamics inherent in the protagonists of Kafka's works. This iterative nature of my approach involved significant modifications, albeit becoming less radical as I approached the project's end. I made comprehensive exclusions, encompassing entire analyses of Kafka's works and substantial portions of philosophical theory. The objective became to streamline and distill the remaining content down to its essential components. While restricting the depth and nuanced exploration within the confines of the thesis, the excluded work remained contributory, offering me insights instrumental to the analysis of the included literary works. The omitted analyses functioned as a guide, informing the identification of pertinent themes, and facilitating the discernment of patterns and parallels across the texts.

The conceptual framework also underwent a deliberate reduction to its fundamental elements, necessitated by the imperative to articulate phenomena spanning temporality, spatiality, potentiality, actuality, and the extremities of these spectra. While the utilization of the retained concepts proved fruitful as I found application for them across various works within the corpus, the deliberate reduction of the conceptual framework entails a large degree of simplification. Complex

phenomena like temporality, spatiality, potentiality, and actuality lose their richness and intricacy when distilled down to a few selected concepts.

Another afterthought regarding the use of concepts pertains to the emphasis on the extremities of temporality, spatiality, potentiality, and actuality. This leads to a disproportionate focus on certain aspects, potentially neglecting the subtleties and nuances that exist within the middle ground of these spectra. However, as my research purpose was to construct a new way of approaching the desires of culture and cultures of desire in Kafka, the choice may be justified by virtue of the increased likelihood of uncovering radical insights in comparison to extant literature.

The primary challenge I encountered in my study was its ambition. In hindsight, I recognize that I could have achieved greater depth and nuance by focusing on one or two of Kafka's works, allowing for more detailed elaboration and the discovery of additional innovative insights in my analyses. However, it's important to note that my research had broader aims beyond the examination of individual texts. Instead, I sought to redefine our perception of Kafka as a whole, presenting an affirmative vision that transcended the boundaries of any single work. While this approach inevitably led to some limitations in the depth of analysis, I believe it was justified by the overarching goal of reshaping our understanding of Kafka's literary legacy.

The project's ambitious scope may also become evident in the literature section, where the challenge of my review lay in incorporating a vast body of scholarship utilizing similar concepts to mine under their respective paradigms. Although I have extensively reviewed literature emphasizing themes of desire, species, gender, performativity, and minority in Kafka—to ensure avoidance of reproducing these themes in my analyses—the sheer volume of scholarship not reviewed poses a limitation. In retrospect, completing the literature review before embarking on the analyses offers both benefits and potential weaknesses. On the positive side, it facilitated a nuanced understanding of extant insights; however, it also raises the possibility of unintentional appropriation of certain ideas during the span of project. To mitigate this concern, I could have undertaken a re-review of the original literature collection. However, the sheer volume of documents rendered this procedure impractical within the constraints of the project timeline.

Despite these challenges, I maintain confidence in my contributions, supported by a thorough and conscientious reading, writing, and citation methodology throughout the project. Retaining a comprehensive document of theoretical reflections, notes, citations, and written analyses left unused, totaling around four hundred pages, reflects my commitment to detail. In retrospect, while it may seem that this endeavor was excessive, it was an expression of desiring-attraction, and I believe it played a crucial role in upholding a high standard of quality in my work at this juncture.

I've initiated the development of an experimental framework and explored its application in various contexts, avoiding confinement to a specific topic. Undoubtedly, further development and elaboration of the framework is necessary to enhance it. However, in my Deleuzian perspective, the purpose of experimentation lies in generating novel effects and opportunities. The more radical the experimentation, the greater the potential for intriguing and groundbreaking outcomes. I largely attribute the result of my endeavor to the fusion of Deleuzian and formalist methodology, as the resulting intersection of experimentation, complexity and simplicity fostered my creativity.

6.4. PROJECTING FORWARD

My research findings extend an invitation towards further explorative analyses of Kafka's fiction, as well as of works by other stereotyped authors or artists. Potential areas for deeper investigation include the themes and concepts introduced in this study, such as the connection between eroticism, the aesthetic of organic decay and desiring-attraction—that is, the desire for and attraction to unconventional appearances, ranging from animalistic human traits to the of decaying objects and sounds. Alternatively: the distinction between image-attraction and sound-attraction.

Liberated from dominant cultural narratives of modernity, my exploration encompasses themes like becoming-animal, alterity perspectives, and the posthuman becoming-machine. These elements serve as a necessary counterpoint to the prevailing anthropocentrism, aspiring towards an elevated stage of human existence. Desiring-attraction becomes a defining feature of a cultural landscape in which it is imperative not to confine oneself to a singular place and method, but rather to engage in

experimentation across diverse locations, roles, and temporal dimensions—embracing the heterotopic and hauntological.

While contemplating life in the Anthropocene and the already hauntological technological present, projecting forward may appear grim. However, dynamics of the animal-human and machine-human relationship, and the signs of suffering can be viewed as initial stages of change. The machines of technological and capitalist development do not necessarily need to equate to a decline in humanity, diversity, biological life, or sustainability. Despite the profound challenges, the vitality of philosophical and literary potentials—such as Kafka's—can be actualized for new political purposes in the present, and thus contribute to a future worth fighting for. Machinic liberation is thus in a state of continuous becoming via scholarly exploration. These Kafka-machines evolve temporally—dynamically becoming-different as constructed perspectives on them evolve—as the construction of Franz Kafka and his works unfolds into the future.

LITERATURE

Adorno, T.W. (1997). *Prisms* (9th printing). Weber, S. & Weber, S. (red.). MIT Press.

Aeschylus. (2012). *Prometheus Bound.* Roberts, D.H. (red.). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.

Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Heller-Roazen, D. (red.). Stanford University Press.

Alter, R. (2000). Franz Kafka: Wrenching Scripture. *New England Review, 21*(3): 7–19. Middlebury College Publications. http://www.jstor.com/stable/40244605

Anderson, M.M. (1988). "Kafka and Sacher-Masoch". In *Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis.* 117–133. Bloom, H. & Corngold, S. (red.). New York: Chelsea House Pub.

Arneson, R.J. (1979). Power and Authority in "The Castle". *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal, 12*(4): 99–113. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24777532

Artaud, A. & Corti, V. (1965). To End God's Judgement. *The Tulane Drama Review, 9*(3): 56–98. The MIT Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1125049

Avanessian, A. (2015). *Irony and the Logic of Modernity*. De Gruyter, Inc.

Barthes, R. (1998). *The Pleasure of the Text.* Miller, R. & Howard, R. (red.). (23rd printing). New York: Hill and Wang.

Bataille, G. (1986). *Erotism: Death & Sensuality.* Dalwood, M. (red.). San Francisco: City Lights Books.

–. (1991). *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy.* Hurley, R. (red.). New York: Zone Books.

–. (2012). *Literature and Evil.* Hamilton, A. (red.). London: Penguin Books.

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. (2006 edition, 7th printing). Cambridge: Polity Press.

–. (2003). *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. (2008 edition, 6th printing. Cambridge: Polity Press.

–. (2005). *Liquid Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

–. (2007). *Consuming Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

–. (2011). *Culture in a Liquid Modern World.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Baxandall, L. (1970). Kafka and Radical Perspective. *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal, 3*: 73-79. University of Manitoba. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24776233

Benjamin, W. (2007). *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Zohn, H.; Arendt, H. & Wieseltier, L. (red.). New York: Schocken Books.

Bennett, J. (1991). Deceptive Comfort: The Power of Kafka's Stories. *Political Theory, 19*(1): 73–95. Sage. https://www.jstor.org/stable/191734

Berger, P. L. (1991). *Invitasjon til sosiologi: et humanistisk perspektiv*. Pax. https://www.nb.no/items/URN:NBN:no-nb_digibok_2007100404035

Berman, R.A. (2002). Tradition and Betrayal in "Das Urteil". In *A Companion to the Works of Franz Kafka*. Rolleston, J. (red.). 85–100. Rochester: Camden House.

Bermejo-Rubio, F. (2013). Does Gregor Samsa Crawl over the Ceiling and Walls? Intra-narrative Fiction in Kafka's "Die Verwandlung". *Monatshefte, 105*(2): 278–314. University of Wisconsin Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24549566

Blanchot, M. (1993). *The Infinite Conversation*. Hanson, S. (red.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bloom, H. (2007). *Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis*. New York: Infobase Publishing.

Boa, E. (1996). *Kafka: Gender, Class and Race in the Letters and Fictions*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. https://archive.org/details/kafkagenderclass0000boae

Boos, S. (2021). Reading Gestures: Body Schema Disorder and Schizophrenia in Franz Kafka's Prose. In *The Emergence of Neuroscience and the German Novel*. 183–211. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-82816-5_8

Brooks, L. (2020). Kafka's Seinfeldian Humor. *Comparative Literature: East & West, 4*(1): 1–14. https://doi.org/ktdm

Burwell, M.L. (1979). Kafka's "Amerika" as a Novel of Social Criticism. *German Studies Review, 2*(2): 193–209. The Johns Hopkins University Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1429807

Caldwell, R.C. (1986). The Interplay of Fiction and Interpretation in Kafka's "Castle". *South Central Review, 3*(4): 43–53. https://doi-org/10.2307/3189683

Camus, A. (2005). *The Myth of Sisyphus*. London: Penguin Books.

Carrithers, M., Candea, M., Sykes, K., Holbraad, M. & Venkatesan, S. (2010). Ontology Is Just Another Word for Culture. *Critique of Anthropology, 30*(2): 152–200. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X09364070

Church, M. (1956). Time and Reality in Kafka's The Trial and The Castle. *Twentieth Century Literature, 2*(2): 62–69. https://doi-org.ezproxy2.usn.no/10.2307/440948

Cixous, H. (1991). *Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, Kleist, Lispector, and Tsvetayeva*. Conley, V.A. (red.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Conti, C. (2015). Justice for Josef K.: Bringing Myth to an End in Kafka's "Trial". *New German Critique, 124*: 99–128. Duke University Press.

Corngold, S. (1988). The Metamorphosis: Metamorphosis of the Metaphor. *Franz Kafka: The Necessity of Form.* Cornell University Press.

–. (2002). Medial Allusions at the Outset of Der Process; or, res in media. In *A Companion to the Works of Franz Kafka.* Rolleston, J. (red.). 149–170. Rochester: Camden House.

–. (2004). *Lambent Traces: Franz Kafka*. Princeton University Press.

–. (2007). Kafka & Sex. *Daedalus, 136*(2): 79–87. The MIT Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20028112

De la Durantaye, L. (2007). Kafka's Reality and Nabokov's Fantasy. On Dwarves, Saints, Beetles, Symbolism, and Genius. *Comparative Literature, 59*(4): 315–331. Duke University Press.

Del Caro, A. (1989). Denial versus Affirmation: Kafka's "Ein Hungerkünstler" as a Paradigm of Freedom. *Modern Austrian Literature, 22*(1): 35–55. Association of Austrian Studies. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24647679

Deleuze, G. (1990). *The Logic of Sense*. Lester, M. (red.). New York: Columbia University Press.

–. (1991). Coldness and Cruelty. In *Masochism* (7th printing). Deleuze, G. & von Sader-Masoch, L. 15–123. New York: Zone Books.

–. (1995). *Negotiations, 1972—1990*. Joughin, M. (red.). New York: Colombia University Press.

–. (2001). *Difference and Repetition* (3rd printing). Patton, P. (red.). London: Continuum.

–. (2002). *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life* (2nd printing). Rajchman, J. & Boyman, A. (red.). Cambridge: The MIT Press.

–. (2006). *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*. Lapoujade, D., Hodges, A. & Taormina, M. (red.). New York: semiotext(e).

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (2000). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (10th printing). Foucault, M. (red.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

–. (2003). *Kafka: Toward a Minor Litterature* (7th printing). Polan, D. & Bensmaïa, R. (red.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

–. (2005). *A Thousand Plateus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (11th printing). Massumi, B. (red.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Derrida, J. (2006). *Specters of Marx*. Kamuf, P., Magnus, B. & Cullenberg, S. (red.). New York & London: Routledge.

Dnes, A.W. (2020). The Autopoietic World of Franz Kafka. *The Independent Review, 25*(3): 425–438. Independent Institute.

Dolar, M. (2006). *A Voice and Nothing More*. Žižek, S. (red.). Cambridge: MIT Press.

–. (2011). The Burrow of Sound. *differences, 22*(2-3): 112–139. https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-1428861

Dostoevsky, F. (1864). *Notes from Underground*. Project Gutenberg, July 1, 1996. https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/600/pg600-images.html

Eliade, M. (1994). *Det hellige og det profane*. Gyldendal. https://www.nb.no/items/a006df63e454af2970ce210f3fe9441b

Elsby, C. (2019). Gregor Samsa's Spots of Indeterminacy: Kafka as Phenomenologist. *The Polish Journal of Aesthethics, 53*(2): 33–49. https://doi.org/10.19205/53.19.2

Emrich, W., Langebartel, W.W. & Zuk, I. (1977). Franz Kafka and Literary Nihilism. *Journal of Modern Literature, 6*(3): 366–379. Indiana University Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831181

Fichter, M.M. (1987). The anorexia nervosa of Franz Kafka. *The International Jornal of Eating Disorders, 6*(3): 367–377. New York: Wiley Subscription Services, Inc.

Fickert, K.J. (1974). Fatal Knowledge: Kafka's "Ein Landarzt". *Monatshefte, 66*(4): 381–386. University of Wisconsin Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/30154859

–. (1985). Kafka's Death Fantasy in "America". *The International Fiction Review, 12*(1): 18–22. University of New Brunswick.

Foster, R. (2013). Adorno on Kafka: Interpretating the Grimace on the Face of Truth. *New German Critique, 118*: 175–198. Duke University Press.

Foucault, M. (1986). Texts/Contexts: Of Other Spaces. *diacritics, 16*(1): 22–27. Miskowiec, J. (red.). https://monoskop.org/File:Foucault_Michel_1984_1986_Of_Other_Spaces.pdf

–. (1999). *Diskursens orden: tiltredelsesforelesning holdt ved Collège de France 2. desember 1970*. Schaanning, E. (red.). Oslo: Spartacus. http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-nb_digibok_2009021004056

Freud, S. (1977). *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*. Strachey, J. & Richards, A. (red.). Middlesex: Penguin.

–. (2015). *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Brill, A.A. (red.). New York: Dover.

Frey, C. (2011). Kafka's Test. *Monatshefte, 103*(3): 372–384. University of Wisconsin Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41330008

Gellen, K. (2016). Noises Off: Cinematic Sound in Kafka's 'The Burrow'. In *Mediamorphosis: Kafka and the Moving Image*. Biderman, S. & Lewit, I. (red.). 111–129. London/New York: Wallflower Press. https://doi.org/10.7312/bide17644-009

Geller, J. (1994). Of Mice and Mensa: Anti-semitism and the Jewish Genius. *The Centennial Review, 38*(2): 361–385.

Girard, R. (2005). *Violence and the Sacred*. Gregory, P. (red.). London: Continuum.

Godwin, J. (2007). *The Golden Thread*. Wheaton: Quest Books.

Goebel, R.J. (2002). Kafka and Postcolonial Critique: Der Verschollne, "In Der Strafkolonie," "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer". In *A Companion to the Works of Franz Kafka*. Rolleston, J. (red.). 187–212. Rochester: Camden House.

–. (2011). Kafka in Virilio's Teletopical City. In *Kafka for the Twenty-First Century*. Corngold, S. & Gross, R.V. (red.). 165–178. Rochester, New York: Camden House.

Grimes, M. (1974). Kafka's Use of Cue-Names: Its Importance for an Interpretation of "The Castle". *The Centennial Review, 18*(3): 221–230. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23738092

Guattari, F. (2006). *The Anti-Ædipus Papers*. Nadaud, S. & Gotman, K. (red.). New York: semiotext(e).

–. (2009). *Chaosophy: Texts and Interviews 1972–1977*. Lotringer, S., Dosse, F., Sweet, D.L., Becker, J. & Adkins, T. (red.). New York: semiotext(e).

Gunvaldsen, K. (1964). The Plot of Kafka's "Trial". *Monatshefte, 56*(1): 1–14. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20764067

Guth, H.P. (1965). Symbol and Contextual Restraint: Kafka's "Country Doctor". *PMLA, 80*(4): 427–431. Modern Language Association. https://www.jstor.org/stable/460935

Hansen, T. (2001). En fantastisk allegori: Franz Kafkas Forvandlingen og Paul Austers Mr. Vertigo. *K&K, 29*(91): 29–48. https://doi.org/10.7146/kok.v29i91.21096

Harel, N. (2020). *Kafka's Zoopoetics: Beyond the Human-Animal Barrier*. University of Michigan Press. https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.11325807

Huber, C. (2019). Kafka's "Before the Law": The Participation of the Subject in its Subjectification. *Organization Studies, 40*(12): 1823–1840. Sage. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840619874460

Kafka, F. (1988). *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910-1923*. Brod, M. (red.). New York: Shocken Books Inc.

–. (1991). *Prosessen* (1st printing). Gjesdahl, P. (red.). Den norske Bokklubben.

–. (1992). *The Castle*. Muir, W., Muir, E. & Howe, I. (red.). New York: Everyman's Library/London: Penguin Random House UK.

–. (2000a). *Fortellinger og annen prosa* (2nd edition). Winje, T. (red.). Gyldendal. http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-nb_digibok_2009022504114

–. (2000b). *Efterlatte fortellinger og skisser* (2nd edition). Winje, T. (red.). Gyldendal. http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-nb_digibok_2009021204093

–. (2009a). *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*. Crick, J., & Robertson, R. (red.). New York: Oxford University Press.

–. (2009b). *The Trial*. Mitchell, M. (red.). New York: Oxford University Press.

–. (2012). *A Hunger Artist and Other Stories*. Crick J., & Robertson, R. (red.). New York: Oxford University Press.

–. (2015). *Fortellinger* (2nd edition). Aarnes, A. (red.). Solum, bokvennen.

Kartiganer, D.M. (1962). Job and Joseph K.: Myth in Kafka's The Trial. *Modern Fiction Studies, 8*(1): 31–43. The Johns Hopkins University Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26277307

Kavalovski, J. (2014). Aesthetic Performativity in Franz Kafka's Das Schloss. In *High Modernism: Aestheticism and Performativity in Literature of the 1920s*. 105–122. Boydell & Brewer; Camden House.

Kavanagh, T.M. (1972). Kafka's "The Trial": The Semiotics of the Absurd. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction, 5*(3): 242–253. https://doi-org.ezproxy2.usn.no/10.2307/1345282

Koelb, C. (2002). Will the Real Franz Kafka Please Stand Up? In *A Companion to the Works of Franz Kafka*. Rolleston, J. (red.). 27–32. Rochester: Camden House.

Kohzadi, H. & Azizmohammadi, F. (2013). Identity, alienation, and theology in Franz Kafka's The Castle. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 70*: 715–718. Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.01.114

Kopper, J.M. (1983). Building Walls and Jumping over Them: Constructions in Franz Kafka's "Beim Bau der chinesichen Mauer". *MLN, 98*(3): 351–365. The Johns Hopkins University Press. https://doi-org.ezproxy2.usn.no/10.2307/2906014

Lacan, J. (1991). *Le Séminaire. Livre IV. La relation d'objet. 1956-1957*. Miller, J.-A., (red.). Paris: Seuil.

–. (1992). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959–1960*. Miller, J.-A. & Porter, D. (red.). London: Routledge.

–. (1993). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III: The Psychoses 1955–1956*. Miller, J.-A. & Grigg, R. (red.). New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company.

–. (2004). *Le séminaire. Livre X. L'angoisse*. Miller, J.-A. (red.). Paris: Seuil.

–. (2006). *Écrits*. Fink, B., Fink, H. & Grigg, R. (red.). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Lasine, S. (1990). The Trials of Job and Kafka's Josef K. *The German Quarterly, 63*(2): 187–198. Wiley. https://www.jstor.org/stable/406344

Leiter, L.H. (1958). A Problem in Analysis: Franz Kafka's "A Country Doctor". *The Journal of Aesthethics and Art Criticism, 16*(3): 337–347. Wiley. https://www.jstor.org/stable/427381

Lemon, R. (2011). *Imperial Messages: Orientalism as Self-Critique in the Habsburg Fin de Siècle*. Boydell & Brewer: Camden House. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7722/j.ctt81hwx

Löwy, M. (2016). The Religion of Liberty and the Parable "Before the Law". *Franz Kafka: Subversive Dreamer*. University of Michigan Press. https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.8858335

Lyngstad, A.B. (2018). Litterær selvfremstilling som handling og terskelfenomen: Performance, performativitet og liminalitet hos Jonny Halberg, Kjersti Annesdatter Skomsvold og Karl Ove Knausgård [Doctoral thesis]. NTNU. https://ntnuopen.ntnu.no/ntnu-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2582850/Anne%20Berit%20Lyngstad_PhD.pdf?sequence=1

Lyotard, J.-F. & Fynsk, C. (1991). Prescription. *L'Esprit Créateur, 31*(1): 15–32. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26286635?read-now=1&seq=17#page_scan_tab_contents

Maché, B. (1992). The Bürstner Affair and Its Significance for the Courtroom Scenes and the End of Kafka's Prozeß. *The German Quarterly, 65*(1): 18–34. https://doi-org/10.2307/406802

McAvan, E. (2023). The other vow: affirmative Denial in Kafka, Shakespeare and Kol Nidrei. *Textual Practice*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2023.2243890

Meyers, J. (2012). Kafka's Dark Laughter. *The Antioch Review, 70*(4): 768–768. https://doi.org/10.7723/antiochreview.70.4.0760

Neumann, B. (2010). *Franz Kafkas 'Prosessen': Praha som kulturelt og politisk kraftfelt i det 20. århundres roman*. Solem, G. (red.). Tapir akademisk forlag.

Nietzsche, F. (2008). *Avgudenes ragnarok*. Wiik, E.L. (red.). Oslo: Spartacus.

–. (2010a). *Den muntre vitenskapen*. Skar, Ø. & Schaanning, E. (red.). Oslo: Spartacus.

–. (2010b). *Moralens genealogi*. Skar, Ø. & Owesen, I. (red.). Oslo: Spartacus.

Ozick, C. (2014). The Particularity of Genius. [Book review]. *The New Republic, 245*(7): 36. Washington: New Republic.

Pehar, L. (2017). *Kafka: A Blueprint of Desire*. [Doctoral thesis]. University of Toronto.

Reuß, R. (2011). Running Texts, Stunning Drafts. In *Kafka for the Twenty-First Century*. Corngold, S. & Gross, R.V. (red.). 24–27. Rochester, New York: Camden House.

Robertson, R. (2011). Kafka, Goffman, and the Total Institution. In *Kafka for the Twenty-First Century*. Corngold, S. & Gross, R.V. (red.). 136–150. Rochester, New York: Camden House.

Ryan, M.P. (1999). Samsa and Samsara: Suffering, Death and Rebirth in "The Metamorphosis". *The German Quarterly, 72*(2): 133–152. https://doi-org.ezproxy1.usn.no/10.2307/408369

Sacher-Masoch, L. von (1991). Venus in Furs. In *Masochism* (7th printing). Deleuze, G. & von Sader-Masoch, L. 143–293. New York: Zone Books.

Said, E.W. (1978). *Orientalism.* London: Penguin Books.

Sandbank, S. (1971). Action as Self-Mirror: On Kafka's Plots. *Modern Fiction Studies, 17*(1): 21–29. The Johns Hopkins University Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26278892

Sauvagnargues, A. (2016). *Artmachines: Deleuze, Guattari, Simondon.* Vwerderber, S. & Holland, E.W. (red.). Edinburgh University Press.

Schaffner, A.K. (2012). Masochism: Franz Kafka and the Eroticization of Suffering. In *Modernism and Perversion: Sexual Deviance in Sexology and Literature, 1850-1930.* 218–235. Palgrave Macmillan.

Schechner, R. (2003). Ritual and Performance. In *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology: Humanity, Culture and Social Life.* Ingold, T. (red.). 613–647. Routledge/Taylor & Francis e-Library.

Schuster, A. (2020). Enjoy Your Security: On Kafka's "The Burrow". *e-flux Journal #113*(11/20): 1–9.

Siegert, B. (2015). *Cultural Techniques - Grids, Filters, Doors and Other Articulations of the Real.* New York: Fordham University Press.

Sjöholm, C. (2020). Burning Books: Sovereignty and the Fire of Literature. In *The Aesthethics of Violence*. Ohldieck, H.J. & Selnes, G. (red.). 107–126. Oslo: Spartacus/Scandinavian Academic Press.

Škop, M. (2011). Milan Kundera and Franz Kafka - How Not to Forget Everydayness. *Creative and Knowledge Society, Sciendo, 1*(2): 110–119. https://doi.org/10.2478/v10212-011-0012-6

Skorgen, T. (2020). Kafka's Human Zoo: Colonialism, Resentment, and Violence in Kafka's "A Report to an Academy" and "In the Penal Colony". In *The Aesthethics of Violence*. Ohldieck, H.J. & Selnes, G. (red.). 211–244. Oslo: Spartacus/Scandinavian Academic Press.

Snyder, V.P. (1981). Kafka's "Burrow": A Speculative Analysis. *Twentieth Century Literature, 27*(2): 113–126. Duke University Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/441134

Sokel, W.H. (2002). Beyond Self-Assertion: A Life of Reading Kafka. In *A Companion to the Works of Franz Kafka*. Rolleston, J. (red.). 33–30. Rochester: Camden House.

–. (2011). Nietzsche and Kafka: The Dionysian Connection. Running Texts, Stunning Drafts. In *Kafka for the Twenty-First Century*. Corngold, S. & Gross, R.V. (red.). 64–74. Rochester, New York: Camden House.

Steinberg, E.R. (1962). The Judgment in Kafka's "The Judgment". *Modern Fiction Studies, 8*(1): 23–30. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26277306

–. (1965). K. of the Castle: Ostensible Land-Surveyor. *College English, 27*(3): 185–189. National Council of Teachers of English. https://doi.org/10.2307/373105

–. (1976). The Judgment in Kafka's "In the Penal Colony". *Journal of Modern Literature, 5*(3): 492–514. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831080?read-now=1&seq=23#page_scan_tab_contents

Stockholder, K. (1978). "A Country Doctor": The Narrator as Dreamer. *American Imago, 35*(4): 331–346. The Johns Hopkins University Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26303345

Stringfellow, F. (1995). Kafka's "Trial": Between "The Republic" and Psychoanalysis. *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature, 7*(2)*:* 173–205. Taylor & Francis, Ltd. https://www.jstor.org/stable/743520

Trüstedt, K. (2015). Execution Without Verdict: Kafka's (Non-)Person. *Law Critique, 26*: 135-154. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10978-015-9160-1

Ward, B.K. (2004). Giving Voice to Isaac: The Sacrificial Victim in Kafka's "Trial". *Shofar, 22*(2): 64–84. Purdue University Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/42943636

Webster, P.D. (1956). Franz Kafka's "In the Penal Colony": A Psychoanalytic Interpretation. *American Imago, 13*(4): 399–407. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26301588?read-now=1&seq=2#page_scan_tab_contents

–. (1959). Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis" as Death and Resurrection Fantasy. *American Imago, 16*(4): 349–365. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26301687

Weigand, H.J. (1972). Franz Kafka's "The Burrow" ("Der Bau"): An Analytical Essay. *PMLA, 87*(2): 152–166. Modern Language Association.

Winkel Holm, I. (2016). Litteraturens kritik: Franz Kafka og den kritiske sensibilitet. *Kultur & Klasse 44*(122): 293–329. https://tidsskrift.dk/kok/issue/view/3548

Winkelman, J. (1972). An Interpretation of Kafka's "Das Schloss." *Monatshefte, 64*(2): 115–131. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30154992

Zeng, Y. (2022). *Franz Kafka and Chinese Culture*. Yuan Li (red.). Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.

Žižek, S. (2000). *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London & New York: Verso.

–. (2006). *The Parallax View*. Cambridge: MIT Press. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy1.usn.no/lib/ucsn-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3338580

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. *«Borromean-rings-BW»*. (2009). Public domain. AnonMoos/Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Borromean-rings-BW.svg
2. *«Desiring-attration»*. (2024). Personal work. draw.io/free online diagram software. https://app.diagrams.net