KAFKA
PHENOMENOLOGY AND
POST-STRUCTURALISM

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to identify a coalition of philosophy and literature in the work of Franz Kafka, and begins with a grounding of his output in the philosophical context from which it emerged. This relatively under-researched philosophical backdrop consists in Kafka's study, at university and in a discussion group, of philosophical positions derived from the "descriptive psychology" of Franz Brentano. Kafka was hence conversant with several philosophical agendas, notably those of logic, Gestalt psychology, and a nascent form of phenomenology, which all derived their impetus from Brentano's work.

The initial issue, therefore, is that of assessing the extent of a purported influence of such theories on Kafka's texts. What emerges as a "strategy" of Kafka's work is the aesthetic exploitation of such positions; a tactic which constitutes an almost parodistic subversion of these early forms of phenomenological thought. Thus on the one hand it is implied that the narrative technique of Kafka's work, and in particular the representation of consciousness and its "world", is derived from Brentanian thought, and on the other that this influence is modulated in a specific direction, which renders these texts so singularly amenable to post-structuralist thought.

My project consequently proceeds to examine the post-structuralist response to Kafka while juxtaposing this analysis with the grounding of his work in proto-phenomenology. Central to this stage of the study are Blanchot, Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari, and the scrutiny of their perspectives will be organized by the themes of authorship, interpretation, power, and desire.

The exploration of the "deconstructive" standpoint, represented primarily through Blanchot and Derrida, will be guided by an account of why such a stance seems to be accommodated so readily by Kafka's work, and also of the extent to which his texts could be said, on the basis of the influence of Brentanian thought, to resist such appropriation.

The invocation of the work of Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari serves to articulate a resistance to interpretations of Kafka's work as allegorically or transcendentally orientated, a tendency with which deconstructive positions could be said to be complicit. In this respect, the "principles" of reading expounded in Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* coincide with those which seem to arise from the reading of Kafka's literary endeavour with reference to the work of Brentano and his followers. This coalescence is hence exploited as a means of producing a philosophically grounded yet non-reductive reading of Kafka's works; this response will focus in particular upon works such as *Der Verschollene* which have suffered a certain neglect at the hands of Kafka's philosophically motivated interpreters.

Kafka's work thus emerges as a site in which to explore an intimacy of philosophy and literature, implicitly to reassess the relationship between phenomenology and post-structuralism, and above all to affirm philosophically the irreducible enigmas of Kafka's work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.

I find the letter K offensive, almost disgusting, and yet I use it; it must be very characteristic of me (D269;KK7,274)

The tension between the revulsion provoked by the letter "K" and the compulsion to use it is indeed characteristic, not only of Kafka's often self-defeating conduct but also - in a wider sense - of the paradoxes attending the attempt to articulate the philosophical enigmas of his work. His texts have a perhaps unique ability to unsettle the reader's philosophical presuppositions, and hence to invite philosophically-inclined responses, and yet they simultaneously resist philosophical capture, retaining their irreducibly enigmatic nature even – and especially – when they are being claimed for one position or another.

This situation lies at the root both of the proliferation of interpretations of Kafka which are philosophical in scope and inclination, and of their frustration, for they are condemned never to resolve the conundrums around which they revolve. Quite often an interpretative proposal seems plausible enough, but then so does its negation, and this paradox lies at the heart of any reading of Kafka, forming both its motivation and its destiny, that of incompletion, this dilemma mirroring the paradoxical qualities infusing nearly all of Kafka's texts.

The aim here, therefore, is not to offer a new interpretation, one which pretends to build upon and remove the difficulties of its predecessors. Rather, it is to exploit the paradoxes which emerge in the philosophical encounter with Kafka, for they reveal much about the philosophical positions at stake, and, more importantly, the nature of Kafka's writing itself. The paradox at issue here – over and above the paradoxes in which any single, given philosophical stance

finds itself caught when applied to Kafka's work – is that of his texts' ability to accommodate seemingly disparate philosophical agendas.

The agendas at issue here are those of phenomenology and post-structuralism. More specifically, the study begins with a consideration of very early forms of phenomenological thought, those which began with the work of Franz Brentano, and with which Kafka was conversant during his time at university, and for a number years after his graduation. The readings of Kafka's work which emerge from this analysis is then juxtaposed with those offered by the generation of thinkers who came to be known, not unproblematically, as "post-structuralists" (notably Blanchot, Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze), most of whom had roots in phenomenological thought, against which they reacted to a greater or lesser degree. Although the term "post-structuralism" obviously indicates that these thinkers offer critical perspectives on structuralism, it is perhaps their reaction to phenomenological thought that is more pertinent here: as Hugh Silverman has put it, 'post-structuralism is also implicitly post-phenomenology'[1].

Phenomenological thought – which arguably began with Brentano's reinvention of the concept of "intentionality" – sought to elucidate conscious experience of the world, to which end the "world" came to be the world in so far as it appears in consciousness, as organized by the structures of conscious experience, and the "self" came to be reduced to the most fundamental elements

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[1] *Inscriptions*, p.4. "Post-structuralist" thinkers are often also classified as "postmodernists"; it is arguably easier to give a clear account of the move from phenomenology to post-structuralism than to furnish an exposition of the relationship between Modernism and postmodernism, since the issues with which the account is concerned are more clearly identifiable, there being a greater consensus regarding the points of contention. The fact that literary Modernism (of which Kafka is generally considered an example) can often be seen to embody many of the characteristics of what is taken to be philosophical postmodernism (incredulity towards metanarratives, fragmentation and dissolution of subjectivity, foregrounding of language, its aporias and its play, and so on) also tends to confuse matters further.

of subjective experience. This double reduction meant that the emphasis was upon the relation of this pared-down subject to a similarly skeletal "world", the relation being that of "intentionality". It is clear that there is a commitment to the primacy of subjective experience, and Silverman notes that,

> Phenomenology [...] offers a full-scale attempt to understand the self-world relation. To the extent that language is inserted within this self-world relation, it is almost as an afterthought. The fundamental relation is epistemological: how the world can be experienced, known, understood – intentionality, consciousness, interpretation, and perception are the principal modes according to which the self-world relation is elaborated[2]

However, these priorities were to be questioned with the advent of structuralism, with its elevation of the question of language to a new prominence. The structuralist linguistics of Saussure and Jakobson displaced the role of subjectivity with their focus upon the systematicity of language, the subject being a position issuing from a system which is not merely a transparent vehicle of consciousness but rather, possessing a (chrono)logical priority over consciousness, is that which dictates the forms which consciousness will adopt. Although structuralism came to inform a number of other disciplines, these applications were to "systems" such as the unconscious (through the work of Lacan) and myth (Lévi-Strauss) which could be considered to be analogous to language, or as similarly partaking in a significatory order; the sign assumes the sort of primacy which had been ascribed to subjectivity in phenomenological thought. Silverman's exposition resumes:

> That language comes to be inserted within the activity of these differing modes [the phenomenological modes enumerated above] is both significant and important. Structuralism – as inaugurated by de Saussure and as carried on by Lévi-Strauss, Piaget, Lacan, and Barthes – begins with language. Whatever can be said of a self or world would depend upon the construction of the sign (signifier-signified relation). To the extent that the signified invokes a world, it does so only through the concept that assigns itself to a world[3]

"Modernism" and "postmodernism" are more widespread, more intangible, and thus less definable phenomena than phenomenology and post-structuralism.

[2] Ibid., p.7
[3] Ibid., p.7

The thinkers known as "post-structuralists" typically heighten the structuralist antipathy to subject-centred philosophy (including phenomenology), while seeking at the same time to destabilize structuralism, unsettling the structures (such as the signifier/signified correspondence) which were said to underpin the equilibrium of a significatory system. The vision of the subject as emergent from such systems is retained, but an essential instability is now ascribed to the systems, inevitably afflicting the production of the subject, and its purchase in the significatory nexus in which it is enveloped:

> A strong case could be made that poststructuralism itself could only have been born at this crossover [between phenomenological and structuralist trends], in the form of a movement which wishes to push the structuralist renewal of language toward the eventual dissolution of both the notions of subjectivity and those of universal structural categories [...] For should it be that all thought proceeds necessarily by way and by virtue of language, then the absence of the subject from language translates into the absence of the subject or consciousness from knowledge. If knowledge itself [...] is entirely intradiscursive, and if, as it is claimed, the subject has no anchorage within discourse, then man as the subject of knowledge is thoroughly displaced and dislodged. Cognition and consciousness arise as intralinguistic effects or metaphors, by-products, as it were, of a linguistic order that has evolved for thousands of years before any subject comes to speak[4]

What is clear is that - in terms of the account sketched above - , post-structuralist thought can be defined in part through its critical relation to phenomenology, the advent of structuralism being a harbinger of a decisive transition, in which phenomenological priorities were substantially overthrown, even if – in the case of Derrida, for instance – there remains an engagement with the phenomenological tradition. Silverman offers the thought of Merleau-Ponty as an example of a certain welding of phenomenological and structuralist elements, simultaneously foreshadowing post-structuralist thought[5]. Here, however, the focus is not upon a putative median point, but rather upon the two "poles" of these philosophical developments, namely an early form of

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[4] Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, p.14-15

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phenomenology (most of the texts in question belonging to the first few years of the twentieth century) and a fully-fledged post-structuralism (beginning in the 1960s), which are quite clearly "antipodean" modes of thought.

The philosophical singularity of Kafka's work can be glimpsed through the light that his work casts upon the relationship between these two "poles", and thus indirectly upon the "genealogy" of post-structuralism sketched above. The next section will suggest that Kafka's work can be said to be informed to a significant degree by early phenomenological thought, and yet his writing seems also to be particularly amenable to post-structuralist appropriations. This paradoxical situation is indicative of an ability of Kafka's work to create enigmatic intersections between apparently quite different – or even opposed – philosophical stances. This is a philosophically specific facet of a feature identified by Borges with characteristic lucidity and wit in "Kafka and His Precursors": having considered a set of disparate texts (Zeno's paradox of time, and pieces by Han Yu, Kierkegaard, Browning, Léon Bloy, and Lord Dunsany), all of which seem to possess something of the peculiar logic of Kafka's work, Borges concludes:

> If I am not mistaken, the heterogeneous pieces I have listed resemble Kafka; if I am not mistaken, not all of them resemble each other. This last fact is what is most significant. Kafka's idiosyncrasy is present in each of these writings, to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had not written, we would not perceive it; that is to say, it would not exist[6]

The fact that Kafka's work seems similarly to accommodate both the philosophical "poles" at issue here both expresses the philosophical idiosyncrasy of his work and also reflects upon the philosophical positions

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[5] *Inscriptions*, chapter 8 (p.123-151). Silverman himself offers a "hermeneutic semiology" as a phenomenology/structuralism hybrid.
[6] *The Total Library*, p.365

themselves by instituting a complicity between them which might not otherwise have been discernible.

The philosophical stances at stake, and the philosophical narrative concerning the relationship between phenomenological and post-structuralist strains of thought, generate the focus of this study. The theorists discussed in the course of this study embody in various ways the narrative delineated above, and this focus leads also to the exclusion of material which is tangential or unrelated to these philosophical movements. Given the sheer volume of material concerning Kafka, such acts of exclusion are inevitable if an analysis is to avoid paying inadvertent tribute to the architecture of Kafka's novels by finding itself condemned to incompletion, caught in a process which can be prolonged indefinitely. There is, therefore, no scope here for a substantial consideration of factors such as Kafka's literary sources, the significance of Jewish history and identity, or of thinkers (such as Adorno) who have written important essays on Kafka, but who nonetheless stand apart from the philosophical movements at stake; these exclusions in no way testify to a denigration of such endeavours, but rather to the need for focus and economy.

The philosophical exposition perhaps gives the impression that Kafka is being exploited as a means of reflecting upon a philosophical transition, which is only one side of the equation. The "counter-intuitive" nature of the philosophical pairings facilitated by Kafka's work testifies to the philosophical idiosyncrasy of Kafka's work, and a central aim is to articulate and affirm this idiosyncrasy in philosophical terms, a task which is to be distinguished from an attempt to "explain" it philosophically, to assimilate it into this or that philosophical framework. This latter undertaking would be misleading in so far as what is

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striking is not so much the ability of a philosophical position to find some purchase on Kafka's work as his texts' ability to accommodate such a position alongside another, heterogeneous perspective. This emphasis also yields a criterion which will guide the analysis: what is sought is a philosophically grounded yet non-reductive reading of Kafka, and this goal furnishes a critical relation to philosophically-inflected interpretations which could be said to run counter to such a project, in so far as they have potentially or actually reductive effects, seeking implicitly or explicitly to accommodate Kafka within a preconstituted theoretical apparatus. The axiomatic goal of the study thus furnishes something like an "ethics of reading", albeit one that emerges solely in relation to this project.

The structure of the study is as follows:

2. KAFKA AND THE BRENTANO SCHOOL.

This section offers an account of Kafka's encounters with early phenomenological thought, an exposition of the work of the thinkers who made up this school of thought, and a consideration of the ways in which Kafka might be read in the light of such theories.

3. AUTHORSHIP/GENRE.

The concerns raised here are to a certain extent methodological; this section begins by offering a critique of aspects of the preceding chapter, via a more thorough consideration of such notions as "influence", which depend upon certain determinate but not necessarily stated conceptions of authorship, work, and genre. The investigation of these features, and the theoretical challenges

offered by Kafka's work in this context, also involves an account of the emergence of post-structuralist thought from a phenomenological climate. The analysis moves on to a consideration of Deleuze and Guattari's reformulation of notions of authorship and genre, which leads in turn to an account of Kafka's use of, and attitude toward, language. This analysis seeks to expand upon some of the lines of enquiry touched upon by Deleuze and Guattari in the course of their interrogation of conceptions of authorship and genre.

4. INTERPRETATION.

Whereas the preceding section dealt with those features which attend and underpin the encounter with Kafka's texts, here it is that interpretative encounter itself that is at issue. The analysis again charts the emergence of post-structuralist literary theory from its roots in phenomenological concerns (prominent here is the existentialist strain of phenomenological enquiry) and structuralism. Running parallel to this concern is the identification and critique of a certain interpretative logic which, it is claimed, is at the root of the reductive tendencies which afflict some approaches to Kafka's work. A "programme" of reading inspired by the work of Deleuze and Guattari is envisaged as offering an alternative to this interpretative logic, and is formulated with reference to motifs and commitments drawn from early phenomenological thought.

5. POWER/DESIRE.

This section aims to embody the "programme" of reading suggested by the preceding chapter, using the work of Michel Foucault to produce an exploration

of the nature of power as it appears in Kafka's texts which falls into line with the "principles" of such a reading. The details of Foucault's analysis of regimes of discipline are juxtaposed with the legal debates (sometimes informed by early phenomenological theories) with which Kafka engaged, with the irreducible idiosyncrasy of Kafka's writing being manifest in relation to both sets of material. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the emphasis laid by Deleuze and Guattari (their work being considered compatible with that of Foucault) upon the continuity of power and desire in Kafka's work.

6. READING KAFKA.

It is at this point that the paradoxical coupling of early phenomenological thought, on the one hand, and the work of Deleuze and Guattari, on the other, is more systematically explored, having been latent throughout. Building upon previously broached avenues of enquiry, the analysis considers a number of the motifs and "structures" of Kafka's world - among them subjectivity, the nature of animal life, time and space, and the logic of paradox - , with reference to both philosophical "poles". The aim here is to produce a rather more sustained reading of Kafka (albeit one which remains, to a certain extent, a sketch), exploring and exploiting the paradoxes of his work as a means of reflecting simultaneously upon the paradoxical philosophical juxtapositions which infuse the reading.

When quoting from Kafka's work, I have used what I consider to be the most reliable and accurate translations, even if their accuracy leads sometimes to stylistic infelicities in English. This policy works at the cost of a degree of

unfamiliarity, the translations of Edwin and Willa Muir having dominated the Anglophone reception of Kafka to the extent that the use of "The Transformation" for *Die Verwandlung*, while undoubtedly more accurate than "The Metamorphosis", can strike an odd chord. In a similar vein, I have avoided the title *America* (or *Amerika*), using instead Kafka's references to *Der Verschollene*; unfortunately, the latter title is difficult to render into English (*The Man Who Disappeared* being a rather clumsy and less ambiguous formulation), and for this reason the German title is left untranslated.

The following abbreviations are used for the books to which numerous references are made:

MWD – *The Man Who Disappeared (Amerika)*, translated by Michael Hofmann (Penguin, 1996).

T – *The Trial*, translated by Breon Mitchell (Schocken, 1998).

C – *The Castle*, translated by J. A. Underwood (Penguin, 1997).

TOS – *The Transformation ('Metamorphosis') and other Stories*, translated and edited by Malcolm Pasley (Penguin, 1992).

GWC – *The Great Wall of China and Other Short Works*, translated and edited by Malcolm Pasley (Penguin, 1991).

BON – *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, edited by Max Brod, translated by Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (Exact Change, 1991).

D – *Diaries 1910-1923*, edited by Max Brod, translated by Joseph Kresh (1910-1913), and Martin Greenberg with the assistance of Hannah Arendt (1914-1923) (Penguin, 1964).

CSS – *The Complete Short Stories*, edited by Nahum Glatzer, various translators (Minerva, 1992), used for references to "Description of a Struggle" and

"Wedding Preparations in the Country", omitted from the volumes edited by Pasley.

Abbreviations are also employed for references to important secondary texts:

IC – Arnold Heidsieck, *The Intellectual Contexts of Kafka's Fiction: Philosophy, Law, Religion* (Camden House, 1994).

K – Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, translation by Dana Polan, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

MCT – David Lodge, editor, *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (Longman, 1988).

References to translations of works by Kafka are accompanied by references to the original German texts, composed of 'KK', for *Die Kafka Kassette: Gesammelte Werke in acht Bänden* (edited by Max Brod), followed by a volume number, and then a page number; for instance, 'KK2,7' denotes volume 2 (*Der Prozess*), page 7: '*Jemand musste Josef K. verleumdet haben...*'. Where there is a significant ambiguity of translation, or attention is to be drawn to a particular nuance of German vocabulary or phrasing, the German text is included in square brackets. The volumes are ordered as follows:

1: *Amerika*

2: *Der Prozess*

3: *Das Schloss*

4: *Erzählungen*

5: *Beschreibung eines Kampfes*

6: *Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande*

7: *Tagebücher 1910-1923*

8: *Briefe 1902-1924*

A final note concerns the use of the work of Foucault, which might appear anomalous, given the fact that – unlike the other post-phenomenological theorists whose texts are the objects of sustained consideration – he devoted no more than a few passing allusions to Kafka. However, it seemed necessary to include his work, and thus to construct a Foucauldian reading of Kafka. In chapter 3 ("Authorship/Genre"), he is introduced on the basis of his importance to any account of the nature and genesis of post-structuralist thought, and also because his essay "What is an author?" forms a perfect companion to Derrida's exploration of "Before the Law", continuing, in a certain sense, the latter's analysis. In chapter 5 ("Power/Desire"), the use of his thought is rather different: here the "principles" of a DeleuzoGuattarian reading are operative, and, paradoxically, Foucault's work furnishes a more detailed analysis of the machinations of power in Kafka than is offered by Deleuze and Guattari themselves, although it functions as a prelude to the introduction of their remarks; there is an assumption (supported by both parties) of a certain continuity between the respective analyses of power.

These theorists belong (at least chronologically) to one end of the philosophical upheavals sketched previously, but the immediate concern is the introduction of the other philosophical "pole", beginning at the first few years of the twentieth century which witnessed Kafka's period as a university student.

2. KAFKA AND THE BRENTANO SCHOOL.

It is rather difficult to envisage twentieth-century literature shorn of the works of
Kafka. Certainly such a loss would seem to render it somewhat impoverished; as
Borges[1] suggests, we would be deprived of the chance of recognizing in disparate
contexts the traits of his idiosyncratic logic. We hence owe a debt of gratitude to
Max Brod, his actions and advocacy having ensured that his friend's unpublished
creations were able to enrich our cultural landscape.

It has, however, been recognized that Brod's role as the "guardian" of Kafka's
legacy - performed by way of his editorial interventions and personal accounts -
implies also an interpretative function. Brod (to whose judgment one often has no
choice but to defer) exercises a certain "protective" authority over the reception of
the literary estate which fell into his hands. Whilst hardly being a Plato to Kafka's
Socrates, it is felt that Brod's political, theological and personal concerns infiltrated
not only his representation of Kafka's life (as Walter Benjamin, for one, argued[2])
but also his editorial actions.

The fact that such (understandable, and perhaps inevitable) "biases" are
discernible implies the possibility of separating Kafka from the palimpsestial effect
of Brod. In the present context, this "effect" is constituted by the apparent attempt
to downplay any suggestion that the thought of Franz Brentano and the figures who
responded to his theories is of any significance for Kafka's work. Brod's biography

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[1] "Kafka and his Precursors" in *The Total Library*, p.363-365.
[2] See "Max Brod's book on Kafka, and some of my own observations" in *Illuminations*, p.136-143.

of Kafka makes no mention of their encounter with Brentanian thought during their time at university - perhaps he did not think it significant - but he did however raise the issue in his autobiography, *Streitbares Leben*, precisely in order to disclaim its importance.

Brod seeks to refute Klaus Wagenbach's claim that Brentanian thought influenced Kafka[3], offering by way of preamble his account of the discussion group which - in part at least - provokes such assertions. This group is generally referred to as the "Louvre-circle", named after the "Café Louvre"[4] in which it convened, and consisted of a number of students and university staff members dedicated to the exploration of the work of Brentano and associated thinkers. Kafka - it is assumed - was introduced to the group by his schoolfriend Oskar Pollak in 1902, before Brod began to attend the meetings. In 1905, however, Brod penned a fictional satire of a Brentano scholar which led to his expulsion from the group. He recalls this event as having been almost a trial, with only Kafka being sympathetic and whispering, 'that it would be best if we both left, and quit the Brentano circle for ever. And this we did'[5]. This humiliating experience may account for Brod's vituperative attitude to Brentanian thought, and allegations of its influence on Kafka; it is, moreover, an inaccurate account of his friend's actions. Two months later, Kafka - along with other members of the Louvre-circle - signed a dedication in a book given to Hugo Bergmann as a birthday present. It seems clear that Kafka did not split decisively from the group as Brod claims, although the extent of his

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[3] See, in particular, Wagenbach's *Franz Kafka*, p.99-109.
[4] On Ferdinandstrasse: see Klaus Wagenbach, *Franz Kafka's Prague: A Travel Reader*, p.74.

subsequent involvement is rather difficult to assess given the partial and indirect nature of the available evidence[6].

The "reconstruction" of the Louvre-circle's activities and those of its members, and hence the extent of Kafka's involvement, relies upon a small number of texts. The main sources are Brod's aforementioned *Streitbares Leben*, Klaus Wagenbach's *Franz Kafka: Eine Biographie seiner Jugend* (the edition referred to here is a French translation: *Franz Kafka: Années de Jeunesse (1883-1912)*), and Emil Utitz's "Errinnerungen an Brentano". Subsequent studies are Peter Neesen's *Vom Louvrezirkel zum Prozess: Franz Kafka und die Psychologie Franz Brentanos*, Barry Smith's "Kafka and Brentano", and Arnold Heidsieck's *The Intellectual Contexts of Kafka's Fiction: Philosophy, Law, Religion*. What follows is an account of this philosophical situation based upon these accounts, which, helpfully, and with the significant exception of *Streitbares Leben*, accord substantially with each other. The "methodology" of the reading of Kafka which ensues will be examined critically in the next chapter, but suffice it to say that the data of Kafka's involvement with Brentanian thought provoke a response to his work in the light of such philosophical stances. It is perhaps impossible - given the lack of any substantial declarations on Kafka's part - definitively to establish a claim of direct, unmediated, influence. The ultimate "justification" of this reading will therefore be "pragmatic", that is, the criterion for its evaluation will be that of whether or not it suffices to articulate what is at work philosophically in Kafka's texts.

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[5] *Streitbares Leben*, p.175; Barry Smith's translation ("Kafka and Brentano"; *Structure and Gestalt*, p.118).

The philosophical atmosphere pervading Kafka's years at university is of

considerable interest in itself, particularly in respect of its reflection upon the

division between so-called "analytic" or "Anglo-American" (in this context, a

rather misleading designation) and "continental" or "European" philosophy. Above

all, it was dominated by the figure of Brentano, whose thought, as Barry Smith has

put it, had 'acquired the status of a semi-official philosophy of the [Austro-

Hungarian] Empire'[7]. What is most striking is the diversity of uses to which

Brentano's theories were put, for while the kernel of his thought is composed of a

philosophical elaboration of the possibilities of ("descriptive") psychology as a

science, his analyses suggest a plethora of lines of enquiry. His ~~resucitation~~ resuscitation of the

concept of "intentionality" decisively informs the work of Husserl, whose thought

subsequently influences French existentialism, Heidegger, and, in a more

complicated fashion, the work of figures such as Derrida: this trajectory

encompasses much of what is envisaged as recent continental philosophy. Other

responses to Brentano revolve around issues in logic (in this context, the case of

Meinong is the most significant) and contribute to or anticipate the work of figures

such as Russell, hence a prominent current of "analytic" philosophy. Brentano's

impetus also animates other endeavours such as Gestalt psychology (through the

work of ~~Christain~~ Christian von Ehrenfels), other zones of philosophical enquiry such as

ethics, aesthetics and the philosophy of language, and other disciplines such as

economics and law.

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[6] Brod is also mistaken when he states that the Louvre-circle ended in 1906: letters from Emil Utitz to Brentano indicate that it continued until at least late 1907; see Heidsieck, *The Intellectual Contexts of Kafka's Fiction*, p.8.

This array of inter-disciplinary communications means that Kafka was exposed to Brentanian themes even in his law courses, where he encountered Oskar Kraus, for example - a member of the law department who was also an editor of Brentano's philosophical texts. Kafka's immediately philosophical engagement at university with Brentano's thought derives from courses run by Anton Marty and Christian von Ehrenfels. The former was a seemingly dogmatic adherent to Brentano's project, using it to formulate a theory of language, while the latter was a notable polymath: an early theorist of "Gestalt psychology", an aesthetician, playwright, theorist of value (ethical and economic), and advocate of a revolution of sexual morality on the basis of social Darwinism[8]. Kafka seems to have maintained an interest in Ehrenfels' work over the years, seeing his play in 1912, attending a seminar in 1913, and asking Brod for a book by him in a letter from April 1918[9]. At university, Kafka enrolled for two courses taught by Ehrenfels ("Practical Philosophy" and "The Aesthetics of Musical Drama", Wagner being a central topic of Ehrenfels' aesthetic concerns), and Marty's course, "*Grundfragen der deskriptiven Psychologie*"[10].

Kafka - as has been mentioned - joined the Brentanian discussion group known as the "Louvre-circle" in 1902. Members of the group corresponded with and visited Brentano, and complementary meetings were held at the house of one of the group's members, Berta Fanta. The gatherings at Fanta's house outlived the

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[7] "Kafka and Brentano", in *Structure and Gestalt*; p.116.

[8] 'Amusing scene when Prof. Ehrenfels [...] declares himself in favour of mixed races"(D177;KK7,180).

[9] See diary entries for 24th. March 1912(D199;KK7,199) and 21st. October 1913(D234;KK7,237); *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors*, p.205 (April 1918;KK8,241)).

Louvre-circle itself, increasingly moving away from the influence of Brentano's thought, and witnessing an exposition of the special theory of relativity by Einstein, who was, along with Kafka, a friend of Hugo Bergmann[11].

The Louvre-circle was attended by both lecturers and students. The former group comprised Alfred Kastil and Oskar Kraus, both editors of Brentano's work, and Josef Eisenmeier. Apart from Kafka, Brod, and Pollak, student members were Hugo Bergmann (the author of a study of the psychologist Bernard Bolzano), Max Lederer, Emil Utitz (a notable aesthetician), Ida Freund and Berta Fanta. Felix Weltsch, the mutual friend of Kafka and Brod, attended the gatherings at Fanta's house but not the Louvre-circle itself. The group of course discussed Brentano's work (as Utitz later put it, 'his powerful shadow fell upon every utterance'[12]) and members' own papers. Also the objects of analysis were texts by Marty, Hermann Helmholtz, Ewald Hering, Wilhelm Wundt, Carl Stumpf, Alexius Meinong and Edmund Husserl. Some - such as Wundt - were writers with whom Brentano had engaged critically, while others - notably Meinong and Husserl - were creating new dimensions of Brentanian thought, often in directions of which Brentano himself did not approve.

Kafka was thus fully conversant with these varieties of "descriptive psychology" or "proto-phenomenology" and related enquiries from 1902 until at least 1905. As

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[10] This information is given in Peter Neesen's *Vom Louvrezirkel zum Prozess*, p.24.

[11] On Einstein's paper at Fanta's house, see *Austrian Philosophy*, p.23. It is perhaps symptomatic of the intellectual climate sketched above that there should exist a web of indirect connections between major twentieth century intellectual figures: apart from the vicarious relationship between Kafka and Einstein, Kafka's tutor Marty had a certain influence on the Prague School of Linguistics, from which emerged the work of Roman Jakobson, and while the influence of Brentano on Husserl is obvious, it is less well known that he was also a tutor of Sigmund Freud (See "Kafka and Brentano"; *Structure and Gestalt*, p.116).

has been seen, his involvement seems to have persisted after Brod's expulsion, and

the club lasted - contrary to Brod's account - until late 1907. Heidsieck argues that

if Kafka's depiction of pleasure and pain in "The Transformation" is understood as

expressing an allusion to a debate involving Carl Stumpf (which will be addressed

later), then it suggests a familiarity on Kafka's part with the group's 1907 meetings,

since it was in this year that the debate in question took place. It also seems

reasonable to assume that Kafka had an indirect acquaintance with Marty's work

until 1910, since Brod and Felix Weltsch took his seminar course in that year as

"preparation" for their book *Anschauung und Begriff*, with which Kafka was

evidently familiar. Apart from the evidence of a sustained interest in the work of

Ehrenfels, it seems also that Kafka continued to attend the gatherings at Berta

Fanta's house[13] (at which, Neesen suggests, he may have met Rudolf Steiner for

the first time[14]); although these meetings were no longer devoted to Brentanian

thought, he may still have met former members of the Louvre-circle. Neesen claims

that "[it] would be inexplicable if Kafka had, over a long period, attended meetings

of a circle of philosophers whose subject-matter was of no interest to him"[15], a

claim which, however, does not yet indicate exactly how Kafka's presumed interest

in Brentanian "subject-matter" is to be articulated in relation to his work. This

investigation must however be prefaced by an account of Brentano's thought.

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[12] Quoted in "Kafka and Brentano"; *Structure and Gestalt*, p.117.
[13] Kafka states in letter (6th. February 1914; *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors*, p.106(KK8,126)) that he is going to Fanta's house with some reluctance, but the accompanying note suggests that he had been attending regularly until that point. In 1917, he has a dream set in Fanta's house: *Diaries*, 21st. September 1917(D285;KK7,388).
[14] *Vom Louvrezirkel zum Prozess*, p.31.
[15] Ibid., p.34.

The crucial text for the period of Kafka's encounter with Brentano's thought and its derivatives was *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, which was published in 1874. Brentano's thought was later to undergo significant changes, particularly with his move to "reism", and the posthumously published *Descriptive Psychology* was to shed further light upon his investigations, but suffice it to say that it is *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* that is of decisive importance for the thinkers with whose work Kafka came into contact.

Brentano's thesis contained the famous axiom that 'The true method of philosophy is none other than that of the natural sciences'[16]: thus his "descriptive psychology" was to have an *a priori* status which could bear comparison with, for example, that of physics. To this end, he discriminated between "descriptive psychology" (although this term is not prominent in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, it became accepted as a designation of his thought) and "genetic psychology"[17]. The latter is defined as concerning the origin of mental states, and is associated with psycho-physical and physiological investigations; its claims are dependent upon empirical data and research. Brentano's "descriptive psychology" (influenced by Aristotle and British empiricism), by contrast, seeks to identify the most fundamental elements of mental states, this process amounting to the identification of *a priori* "laws" of mental phenomena.

Brentano's method for this analysis he terms the "inner perception" of mental phenomena, which he distinguishes from "introspection" or "inner observation":

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[16] Quoted in *Austrian Philosophy*, p.31, and in most other accounts of Brentano's thought.
[17] See *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, p.29, footnote.

> In observation, we direct our full attention to a phenomenon in order to apprehend it accurately. But with objects of inner preception this is absolutely impossible. This is especially clear with regard to certain mental phenomena such as anger. If someone is in a state in which he wants to observe his own anger raging within him, the anger must already be somewhat diminished, and so his original object of observation would have disappeared. The same impossibility is also present in all other cases[18].

"Inner perception" focuses, not upon the objects of mental states, but rather upon their modes of manifestation in consciousness. Brentano's project will therefore not lead to knowledge of the objects of mental states; his approach can be regarded as involving a "methodological solipsism" in that the sole zone of enquiry is the relationship between consciousness and its objects in so far as they appear in consciousness. Brentano's discussion of this relationship includes the celebrated resurrection of the Scholastic term "intentional", in the sense which would become familiar with the development of a fully-fledged phenomenology:

> Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as an object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. This intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We can, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves.[19]

The insight is essentially that of an articulation of "semantic content", namely that a thought is about something in a way in which a tree cannot be "about" anything. Moreover, this is not to be conceived as an intentional attitude directed towards an external object, for objects acquire "reality" only in so far as they

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[18] Ibid., p.30.
[19] Ibid., p.88-89.

appear in the mental phenomenon, or are *immanent to consciousness*. The existence of a transcendent world (one lying beyond consciousness) is an issue which this theory is neither willing nor able to address. The claim that no physical phenomenon exhibits anything like intentionality is not to be taken as a reference to "things" external to consciousness, but only as an indication that an object of outer perception figures only as a component in the relation between the "real" act of perception and the "non-real" (and unintentional) object included *within* that act itself. Here one can perceive a clear anticipation of Husserl's *epochē* in that the objects of analysis are exclusively intentional states with their immanent objects, and the fact that objects appear in the mode of "outer perception" does not imply reference to an "outer" world as such; such an issue is suspended.

As the "intentionality passage" suggests, intentional states involve three modes. Firstly, there is the presentation of an object as an object inhering in the structure of an intentional state; this is consequently the "primary" component of such a phenomenon, although it is (almost?) always accompanied by a judgment, which is essentially reducible to belief or disbelief, the affirmation or denial of the existence of the object, the basis of which is necessarily subjective. The third mode is described as "Phenomena of Love and Hate": Brentano suggests that all "complex" attitudes which emerge in the phenomena of willing, desiring, ethics and emotion are essentially reducible to the "simple" diptych of positive (loving) and negative (hating) attitudes.

Concomitant with the rejection of the question of the independent existence of an external world is Brentano's denial of a substantial basis of subjectivity: there is no

additional entity, existing independently of intentional phenomena, in which "the self" could inhere. The "unity of the soul" is therefore established by the claim that, on the one hand, several distinct intentional attitudes can be directed towards a single in-existent object (an object can be simultaneously presented, believed in, and valued positively), and on the other hand, that two objects can be presented simultaneously: a seeing and a hearing can occur at the same time, and these two objects can be associated by a single consciousness[20]. However, as Barry Smith notes[21], the unity thereby established is "synchronic", unity at a given time. In the absence of a substantial basis for the continuity of a self, memory can presumably show only a succession of collocations of intentional phenomena, from which a continuity may be inferred but not demonstrated. As Brentano suggests with a Heraclitean turn of phrase, 'The unity of the self in its past and present states, therefore, would then be no different from that of a flowing stream in which one wave follows another and imitates its movement'[22].

The question which now arises is that of the nature and extent of Kafka's literary response to Brentano's thought. In a sense, this can only be addressed in terms of a preliminary sketch, since the specific debates through which Kafka's encounter with Brentano was refracted have yet to be described. However, it can perhaps already be guessed that in this context "Description of a Struggle" has a crucial value as its composition in 1904/5 renders it the most substantial text to be written

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[20] ibid., p.158.

[21] *Austrian Philosophy*, p.51. Temporality became an increasingly important issue for Brentano; at this stage it seems to be derived from the "duration" of objects of intentional states.

[22] *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, p.169.

while Kafka was directly conversant with debates surrounding Brentano's thought. This text, when read in this light, seems to enact an explosion of Brentano's thought, in that the alleged methodological solipsism is driven to its logical extremity, at which point consciousness (and the world co-ordinated around it) undergoes a bewildering fragmentation.

In Brentano's theory reference to an objective, external world is suspended, since the sole region of enquiry is to be consciousness and the objects inhering in it; Kafka pushes such a position to its extreme, as his protagonist becomes able to constitute the landscape subjectively: 'I caused to rise an enormously high mountain...This sight, ordinary as it may be, made me so happy that I, as a small bird on a twig of those distant scrubby bushes, forgot to let the moon come up'(CSS22;KK5,20). This process is resumed later as the narrator's body expands to cover the countryside: 'But my legs, my impossible legs lay over the wooded mountains and gave shade to the village-studded valleys. They grew and grew! [...] for some time their length had gone beyond my field of vision'(CSS46;KK5,45).

Concurrent with this convulsion of the world is the fracturing of the self: just as Brentano eliminated a subsistent ground of selfhood and thus conceived of subjectivity as a succession of temporal unities (the analogy of the stream), so the attitude of Kafka's narrator undergoes a perplexing series of shifts. At the inception of his walk with his acquaintance[23], the protagonist declares, 'Hardly were we outside when I evidently began to feel very gay. I raised my legs, let my joints crack, I shouted a name down the street'(CSS11; KK5,9). He then imagines his

companion's admiration of him, concluding that, 'this man [...] might be capable of bestowing on me in the eyes of the world a value without my having to work for it'(CSS13;KK5,11). However, shortly after, he becomes convinced that his interlocutor's real aim is to kill him: 'Obviously, this is the time for the murder. I'll stay with him and slowly he'll draw the dagger [...] and then plunge it into me'(CSS17;KK5,15). The subjectively determined flux of the world is accompanied by a configuration of subjectivity as dissolved into a succession of discontinuous states, with no logic linking them, and with no unifying centre.

Kafka's procedure in this text can be economically summarized as pushing Brentano's strategies and commitments to the point of madness. This undertaking is however implicitly disqualified by Brentano:

> The phenomena of imbecility and insanity...give us extremely valuable information regarding the connections between mental phenomena and our corporeal being [...] It would be a mistake, however, to want to see greater or even equal attention paid to these diseased states than to those of normal mental life. First of all, we must establish the relations of coexistence and succession which are connected with normal physiological states. Only when these relations in themselves have been sufficiently observed and generalized [...] will it prove useful to introduce anomalies[24].

This declaration of the priorities of the investigation can perhaps be subverted by Louis Sass' identification of a complicity between solipsism (methodological or otherwise) and schizophrenia. His hypothesis, essentially, is that they have a structural affinity since in both cases the criterion of "truth" becomes irrevocably subjectivized, and thus both the solipsist and the schizophrenic adhere to world-views which are both self-sustaining since self-produced and self-annihilating in

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[23] the text is atypical in its explicit geographical references; the walk begins with a turn into Ferdinandstrasse, home of the Café Louvre(CSS11;KK5,9).
[24] Ibid., p.41.

that in the absence of any independent or intersubjective substantiation, "truth" will

inevitably collapse. In his reading, "Description of a Struggle" enacts an extreme

form of this situation, in which 'it is not only the world and its objects that may be

ontologically dubious [...] the self too can come to seem ephemeral and unreal'[25].

Kafka's story describes 'virtually every aspect of schizophrenia [...] from relatively

mild psychosis to the most extreme forms of solipsistic experience'[26]. The crucial

point is that a "schizophrenic" text in this sense does not represent a break with

Brentano's methodological solipsism but rather its hyperbolic extrapolation beyond

the limits of Brentano's frame of rational reference: descriptive psychology is

driven to the point of a catastrophe of self and world.

Two main criticisms may be directed against this reading: firstly, that (given

Sass' claims) the text is symptomatic of a schizoid personality rather than being a

wilfully perverse extrapolation of the solipsistic tendencies inherent in Brentano's

approach. Secondly, it could be emphasized that "Description of a Struggle" is

wholly untypical of Kafka's "mature" style, techniques, and concerns[27].

"Description of a Struggle" *may* be read in the light of Brentano's thought, but even

if it is, there are no grounds for supposing that it will carry us any further, given its

atypical nature: it would be illegitimate to draw claims from a reading of an

isolated text and attempt to expand them to cover the whole, implicitly concealing

the manifest divergences between part and whole.

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[25] *Madness and Modernism*, p.304.
[26] Ibid., p.318.

A response to the first criticism consists in pointing to the extent to which there seems to be a set of allusions (some more explicit and specific than others) to ideas circulating within the field of Brentanian thought. This evidence seems to suggest that there is a sense in which such theories are "at work" in the philosophical architecture of Kafka's fictional world, or at least that there are features which are most effectively understood as allusions, a claim which by itself could suffice to "justify" responding to Kafka in these terms. The second response depends to a certain degree on the first in that the fact that the putative allusions are scattered throughout Kafka's work (and not merely the early, "atypical" pieces) seems to imply that there is some philosophical continuity which bridges or underwrites the stylistic discontinuities. Even if, in the later texts, there is no longer a delirious explosion of the fabric of reality and shattering of selfhood as in "Description of a Struggle", this need not mean that there has been a revolution of philosophical scheme, but only that there is a greater degree of restraint. The disconcerting nature of the worlds of the later works remains susceptible to a Brentanian reading.

An elaboration of this latter assertion will have to be withheld pending an investigation of the former claim, that there are moments in Kafka's fiction which can be understood as responses to Brentano's philosophical legacy. This analysis will begin with a consideration of Heidsieck's microscopic investigation of the scattered references in Kafka's texts (some of them more clear-cut then others) before proceeding to an examination of two major philosophical positions

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[27] It seems reasonable to invoke the conventional configuration of "The Judgment" as a decisive turning-point in Kafka's aesthetic development, an account which is also encouraged by Kafka's recollection of its composition as a revelatory moment (D212-213;KK7,214).

emerging from the Brentano "school" which can be said to resonate with thematic concerns running throughout Kafka's literary production.

One of the more explicit allusions to a theory conceived as a response to Brentanian thought is contained in Kafka's travel diaries: 'The station loomed up before us like a composite of several stations recently seen – Max took possession of it for A + x'(D435;KK7,441). As Brod points out (D501;KK7,531), this is an allusion to the theory developed in *Anschauung und Begriff*, which he wrote in collaboration with Felix Weltsch, and which was informed by Marty's theory of language[28]. Brod and Weltsch address the question of the origin and nature of the concepts communicated by language; "A + x" describes the tendency for a particular perception to be mingled with memories of previous, similar perceptions, hence a "blurring" of the present station and previous stations; "A" would denote the general conceptual content of "station", "x" the features of particular stations which do not fall under the general concept (IC 43). Heidsieck considers two other arguable allusions to the theory, firstly from *Der Verschollene*, where Karl Rossmann's first view of the harbour ('Great ships kept crossing paths [...] If you narrowed your eyes, the ships seemed to be staggering under their own weight'(MWD9;KK1,16)) seeps into his second ('in the harbour, [...] peace had returned, and only sporadically did one have the impression, probably influenced by earlier, closer views, that one could see a ship sliding forward a little. But it was impossible to trace, because it eluded one's eyes and couldn't be found

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[28] *The Intellectual Contexts of Kafka's Fiction*, p.41; *Streitbares Leben*, p.168. Kafka refers to the book twice in his correspondence with Felice (*Letters to Felice* p.240 (March 1913), 232 (January 1913)). Marty's theory of language will be considered later.

again'(MWD74;KK1,93), and secondly from "Homecoming": 'since I am listening

from a distance, I can catch nothing; all I hear, or perhaps just imagine I hear, is the

faint chiming of a clock that floats across to me from my

childhood'(GWC136;KK5,107).

Both Marty and Eisenmeier made use of the theory of colour advanced by Ewald

Hering; his work was also discussed by the Louvre-circle (of which Eisenmeier was

a member). Amongst his claims was the idea (alluded to by Marty in his lectures

(IC 24)) that black becomes more palpable when it immediately surrounds white or

a light source; in *The Trial*, we find, 'K. happened to turn around and saw [...] a

tall, thick candle affixed to a column, burning as well. Lovely as it was, it was an

entirely inadequate illumination for the altarpieces, most of which were hanging in

the darkness of the side chapels; it actually increased the darkness'(T206-

207;KK2,175), and in "Wedding Preparations in the Country", 'He lit a stub of

candle that he had taken out of his waistcoat pocket'✶(CSS69;KK6,23). Darkness

was also viewed as a material or three-dimensional "entity" [29], and again in *The*

Trial, we discover that 'the profound darkness between and behind the leaves

[decorating the pulpit in the cathedral] seemed captured and held

fast'(T208;KK2,176), and in "Description of a Struggle", '"at a certain distance

from us stand houses with roofs and with fortunately angular chimneys down which

the darkness flows through garrets into various rooms"'(CSS43;KK5,42).

Heidsieck argues that "The Transformation" can be viewed as being partly a

response to a debate, conducted in 1907, involving Brentano, Marty, Stumpf, and

✶..and set it on the seat opposite. It was bright enough, the darkness outside made it appear as though the omnibus had black distempered walls and no glass in the windows'.

the Louvre-circle. At stake was Brentano's configuration of the nature of pleasure

and pain: according to his theory, pain is predominantly a mental event, which is

usually accompanied by the suggestion of a location in the body:

> in cases where a feeling of pain or pleasure is aroused in us by a cut, a burn or a tickle,
> we must distinguish between a physical phenomenon, which appears as the object of
> external perception, and the mental phenomenon of feeling, which accompanies its
> appearance, even though in this case the superficial observer is rather inclined to
> confuse them[30].

At this juncture, Brentano implies, everyday language does not accommodate his

conceptual clarity; the bodily reference is elided metonymically with the pain itself,

a mental event:

> The physical phenomenon which appears along with the feeling of pain is also called
> pain. Indeed, we do not say that we sense this or that phenomenon in the foot with
> pain; we say that we feel pain in the foot. This is an equivocation, such as, indeed, we
> often find when different things are closely related to one another. We call the body
> healthy, and in reference to it we say the air, the food, the colour of the face, etc., are
> healthy[31].

Brentano twice calls upon the example of a person who feels a pain which he/she

imagines to be "in" a limb that has in fact been amputated in order to enforce his

claim that pain is a mental feeling rather than one which is "in" the limb itself.

Throughout "The Transformation", Kafka seems to side with Stumpf's criticism of

Brentano, which suggested that feelings of pleasure and pain 'are themselves sense-

perceptible qualities that can be localized experimentally in specific pleasure- or

pain-sensing receptors and nerve fibres'(IC 30). Thus Gregor 'felt a slight itching

up on his belly; [...] found the itching place, which was covered with a mass of

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[29] Aspects of this account are to be found also in the work of Wundt: see *Outlines of Psychology*, p.69.
[30] *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, p.83.
[31] Ibid., p.84.

little white spots [...] and then tried to examine the place with one of his legs, but at once drew it back, for the first touch sent cold shivers through him'(TOS77;KK4,58). Similarly, when he tried to get up, he 'bumped hard against the bottom end of the bed; and the searing pain he felt informed him that it was precisely this lower part of his body that was perhaps the most sensitive at present'(TOS80;KK4,61).

In 1903, Kafka tells Pollak that he is reading (Gustav) Fechner, a thinker who was often cited by Oskar Kraus (IC28, note). An "incidental" text by Kafka which was discovered by Brod makes use of Fechner in order to argue that tolerance towards aesthetic novelty has a physiological basis in so far as aesthetic receptivity requires a degree of (psychological and physiological) freshness (IC 28). This point is congruent with Brentano's treatment of the physiological grounds for the "noticing" of inner perception to take place. Inner perception consists in attending to the manner in which objects are manifested in consciousness, but this attention can be obfuscated by the intrusion of a focus upon the content of the mental phenomenon: hence there is a lapse into "inner observation". As Barry Smith puts it, 'we are conscious "on the side" of the acts involved [...] [we] simply [...] do not *notice* the relevant acts'[32]. Similarly, Chisholm suggests that, for Brentano, 'noticing is not easy [...] passion, anxiety, and anger may be distracting [...] they may prevent the psychognostician from noticing what is there to be noticed, and the result will be that "noticing is suspended"'[33]. For this reason, Brentano seems to

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[32] *Austrian Philosophy*, p.56.
[33] *The Philosophy of Brentano*, p.95.

believe that memory affords a more amenable environment for descriptive psychology in that one can, for instance, recall a previous state of anger without this being a current affectivity which could encroach upon the analysis: 'We can then contemplate the result of the experiment calmly and attentively in our memory'[34] . Another of Brentano's suggestions is that "'If you want someone to notice something that is difficult to notice, you have to place him in circumstances which incline him to notice by habit: walking up and down in his study, opening his eyes wide, lifting his head, pricking up his ears, sensing his muscles in his accustomed environment at an accustomed hour"'[35]; as Heidsieck notes, there is a comparable description in "Resolutions": 'To raise oneself out of the depths of misery must be easy, even with a studied display of energy. I will wrench myself out of my chair, trot round the table, loosen up my head and neck, inject a gleam into my eyes, tauten the muscles surrounding them'(TOS18;KK4,26).

Sleep represents another obvious challenge to the possibility of "noticing". Brentano's theory does not allow scope for an "unconscious" ('The question, "Is there unconscious consciousness?" in the sense in which we have formulated it, is, therefore, to be answered with a firm, "No"'[36]), and consigns the difference between sleeping and waking consciousness to a question of degree. In a sense, the difference can be disregarded, since the fact that the objects presented in dreams are "fantastic" is irrelevant in so far as it is their modes of manifestation which is of concern: 'In our case [...] we are dealing with mental activities. These activities

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[34] *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, p.35.
[35] *Descriptive Psychology*, quoted in *The Intellectual Contexts of Kafka's Fiction*, p.34.

appear to us to be inner activities both in dreams and in waking life; and with

regard to them there is no deception even in dreams'[37]. Heidsieck points out that

Marty, in his lecture course, supplemented this point by highlighting the capacity

for information to be implanted in the mind of a sleeping person through

suggestion (IC 34, note), and juxtaposes two passages from Kafka: 'Although I did

not dream, my sleep was not free from a continuous slight disturbance. All night

long I heard someone talking beside me'(CSS22;KK5,22), and 'K. was asleep, not

properly of course, he could hear Bürgel's words if anything better than before,

when he had been awake but dead-tired'(C235;KK3,249). Beyond Heidsieck's

examples, there is a more widespread sense in which Kafka's treatment of dormant

states is consonant with the fluidity of the relationship between sleeping and being

awake as articulated by Brentano and Marty: 'There are moments in the office

while talking or dictating when my sleep is more real than when I am asleep'[38].

The simultaneous ability to be asleep and to receive information leads, in Kafka's

hands, almost to a doubling of selfhood: 'I sleep alongside myself, so to speak,

while I myself must struggle with dreams'(D60;KK7,56), and, even more radically,

'I don't even need to go to the country myself, it isn't necessary. I'll send my clothed

body [...] For I myself am meanwhile lying in my bed [...] I am still

dreaming'(CSS55;KK6,10).

It is perhaps tempting to interpret this "schism" of selfhood in psychoanalytic

terms, as being that which lies between conscious and unconscious mental realms

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[36]*Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, p.137.
[37]Ibid., p.175.

(hence a convenient "explanation" of the "phantasmagoric" quality of Kafka's writing, 'My talent for portraying my dreamlike inner life'(D302, KK7,306)), but reading these phenomena through Brentano arguably serves to articulate the peculiarly literal, even mundane, handling of the blurring of sleeping and waking lives. If, for the descriptive psychologist, the distinction between the two is but a matter of degree, and the "objectivity" of the analysis of inner perception is unaffected by this situation, then it is perhaps not surprising that Gregor Samsa is able to oscillate between the recognition that 'It was no dream'(TOS76;KK4,57) and the wish to see 'this morning's fancies [*Vorstellungen*] [...] gradually dissolve'(TOS79;KK4,60). The prosaic nature of Gregor's concerns (the difficulty of getting up, opening the door, getting to work) overrides the significance of the disjunction of sleeping and waking in a manner akin to descriptive psychology's indifference.

"The Transformation" also seems to describe the travails attending "noticing": although Gregor credits himself initially with being 'the only one to have retained his composure'(TOS88;KK4,69), such a state requires 'the coolest of cool deliberation [...] At such moments he fixed his eyes as firmly as possible on the window, though unfortunately there was little by way of [...] encouragement to be gained from the sight of the morning fog'(TOS80;KK4,61). Thus although the passage of time affords a clearer perception of his bodily capacities, for example, Gregor's concentration is still frequently frustrated by the intrusion of the practical difficulties of co-ordinating his movements. Indeed, the equilibrium of his mental

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[38]Letter to Grete Bloch, 11th. Feb., 1914; *Letters to Felice*, p.390.

states with their intentionally inexistent objects sometimes collapses: thus he

'hoped for impressive and startling achievements from both the doctor and the

locksmith, without making any precise distinction between them'(TOS86;KK4,67).

Similarly, when he is first presented with nourishment, he finds that the association

between the feeling (that he desires food) and the object given in presentation

(milk) has broken down, even though he is hungry and "milk had always been his

favourite drink'(TOS92;KK4,73-74).

The struggle for clarity of perception is a recurring theme in Kafka's work, from

the asceticism of the canine narrator's anorexic project in "Investigations of a Dog"

through the situation of K. in *The Castle* (particularly when, overcome by tiredness

in Bürgel's room, he seems to miss the point of the protracted bureaucratic

exposition), to perhaps its apotheosis in *The Trial*, where all those implicated in the

machinations of the law are sapped of their vitality, the accused becoming

automata, the lawyer confined to bed, Josef K. being overwhelmed by the stifling

atmosphere of the law's labyrinthine corridors.

This emphasis does not have to be construed as a deliberate allusion to Brentano

in order for the parallel to be recognized or be exploited as an avenue of enquiry.

Nor does the foregrounding of *The Trial* and *The Castle* imply that *Der*

Verschollene be considered - as, at least implicitly, it often is - atypical in its

concerns. It is the case both that exhaustion features in the novel and that, again

according to Heidsieck, it contains other "echoes" of Brentanian thought, for

example Wundt's analogy (cited by Marty (IC 35)) between visual focusing and the

focusing of one's attention: 'While Mr. Pollunder's eyes followed Karl to the door

with a friendly look, Mr. Green, though as a rule one's eyes involuntarily follow those of the man one is talking to, did not once glance round at Karl' (MWD45;KK1,58). Heidsieck notes that such passages almost have the tone of an 'experimental observation'(IC 35), citing as another example (from "Wedding Preparations in the Country"), '[The elderly gentleman from time to time] glanced toward Raban, even though to do so he had to twist his neck sharply. Yet he did this only out of the natural desire [...] to observe everything exactly, at least in his vicinity. The result of this aimless glancing [...] was that there was a great deal he did not notice'(CSS73;KK6,26). This voice which resembles that of empirical, psychological observation is often mingled with the note of pathos[39] which attaches to the protagonist's frustrated and frustrating efforts to comprehend and be comprehended; this point will shortly be considered at greater length in the context of Marty's treatment of gesture and language.

Observations such as these seem to belong to the more "psychological" aspects of "descriptive psychology" rather than to its more "philosophical" orientation. The latter facet, as has been suggested, encapsulates a crucial foreshadowing of "phenomenology" as developed in the work of Edmund Husserl. Husserl's early work was discussed by the Louvre-circle, a fact that lends weight to Heidsieck's suggestion of a parallel between a case envisaged by Husserl – 'certain figures or

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[39]An analogous case of this interplay of tones is to be found in "Resolutions". As has already been noted, the story resembles Brentano's comment regarding "noticing". It oscillates ambiguously between first and third persons ("*man*" in German), and the increasingly tormented tone, expressive of the struggle, is jarringly undercut by the concluding observation, "neutral" in tone, that "A characteristic movement in such a condition is to run your little finger along your eyebrows"(TOS 18). The remark is less personal in German, which obviates the need for the "your": "*Eine charakeristische Bewegung eines solchen Zustandes ist das Hinfahren des kleinen Fingers über die Augenbrauen*" (KK4, 26).

arabesques'(IC69) being apprehended aesthetically prior to a recognition that they

in fact constitute writing - and that of the explorer's perplexity in "In the Penal

Colony": 'all he could see was a maze of criss-cross lines [...] "It's very artistic [*Es*

ist sehr kunstwoll]," said the explorer evasively, "But I can't decipher

it"'(TOS135;KK4,159). Heidsieck also points to an analogy between Husserl's

notion that perceptions of an object are "perspectival", the "thing" itself being

constituted by the totality of possible perspectives on it, given perceptions thus

being "*objectual parts* and *moments*'(IC71), and the manner in which K. gradually

accumulates clearer views of the castle (beginning from its nocturnal obscurity), in

this way acquiring a composite perception. Also invoked is Gregor's gradual

acquisition of data regarding his new body, its sensitivities and capacities. One

might suggest that Josef K. is exposed to a series of "moments" of the law, through

the various accounts given, without these "moments" ever amounting to a "total"

conception of it; it is constituted "perspectivally", the parts never seeming to add up

to the whole.

Heidsieck's account - as can perhaps be gathered from the above exposition - is

notable for its attention to detail. This microscopic focus can prove frustrating,

however, in that it militates against the introduction of more general claims

regarding the alleged Brentanian nature of the philosophical structures of Kafka's

world: there is a reluctance to pursue the analysis beyond the instances which can

plausibly be represented as specific allusions. The depth of Heidsieck's research

makes his account of Kafka's interaction with descriptive psychology in many ways

the most valuable, but many of his comments suggest that he assumes a deliberate

(philosophical) response on Kafka's part to specific theories and arguments; hence the counterpoint to his reluctance to pursue his arguments on a broader canvas is a tendency to regard the philosophical points of reference in Kafka's texts as explicit even when the evidence is ambiguous. In some instances the evidence does indeed tip the balance in favour of such a strong claim, but it is surely also legitimate on other occasions, where the evidence that a specific allusion is being made is not decisive, to suggest that Kafka's narratives seem to respond to Brentanian concerns without relying upon the notion that the "response" must be considered deliberate or explicit. In effect, it would seem to be sufficient to assume that Kafka "unconsciously" shared in the outlook of descriptive psychology (this claim still invoking his study of Brentanian theories, but no longer assuming that this material was wilfully injected into his work by way of a response to this school of thought), provided that a reading animated by this perspective could articulate the philosophical forces at work in his literary output. One could furthermore point to the practice of reading Kafka through the work of philosophers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger and Wittgenstein[40]; cases in which the interpretation obviously does not depend upon any claim of influence. In this context, a sufficient condition for the tenability of a Brentanian exploration of Kafka might lie in its ability effectively to express the philosophical tendencies of Kafka's work: this capacity alone might constitute sufficient "justification". This is by no means to diminish the significance of claims of influence - since they motivate the reading in the first

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[40]See *Dostoyevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Kafka*; Wilhelm Emrich's Heideggerian reading in *Franz Kafka*; and Gabriele von Natzmer Cooper's *Kafka and Language* for a Wittgensteinian interpretation.

place -, but rather to suggest that more licence may be permitted, that the analysis need not encumber itself with the demand that only those passages which can be considered directly conversant with descriptive psychology be legitimate objects of study.

The employment of the most restrictive set of criteria (that which leads to the view of Kafka as responding more or less directly to specific aspects of Brentanian theory), however, has already broached "themes", such as those of exhaustion, the nature of perception and the struggle to understand and be understood, which run throughout Kafka's literary "career". The ideas of Anton Marty and Alexius Meinong now offer the opportunity to develop broader analyses. Again there is substantiating evidence of Kafka's familiarity with their work, but the analysis is perhaps more exploratory than Heidsieck's concentration upon minutiae would allow. Again there is an emphasis upon a philosophical continuity to Kafka's work which traverses stylistic discrepencies and chronological distances.

Anton Marty - as has already been mentioned - taught a course on descriptive psychology attended by Kafka; his course on language was attended by Brod and Weltsch during the gestation of their theories, with which Kafka was familiar; Marty's work was also discussed by the Louvre-circle, in which Marty himself took an interest, writing to Brentano about its actvities (IC7). In many respects, Marty was a strict, even dogmatic, advocate of Brentano's thought, distrustful of deviations from its "orthodox" form, even those perpetrated by Brentano himself[41]. Marty's originality consisted, therefore, not in the theoretical apparatus he adopted

but in his application of it, and above all, in his theory of language. Given the

fertile nature of the intellectual climate in Prague - and, in particular, the

prevalence of inter-disciplinary correspondences - it is perhaps not surprising that

Marty's work on language had some influence on the celebrated Prague School of

Linguistics, the most influential representative of which was Roman Jakobson[42].

Certainly Marty's concern for issues such as those of aphasia[43] and

onomatopoeia[44] foreshadows the agenda of structuralist linguistics, and attempts

have been made to depict him as a clear precursor[45].

Marty dubbed his theory a "general semasiology", and divided the enterprise into

"genetic" and "descriptive" semasiology. This distinction obviously echoes

Brentano's separation of genetic and descriptive psychology, but also bears

comparison with Saussure's distinction between the "diachronic" and "synchronic"

axes of enquiry into language, which will be encountered in the next chapter. In his

discussion of the "genetic" level of semasiology (that which concerns itself with the

origins and genesis of language), Marty opposed "nativism", and in particular the

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[41]See *The School of Franz Brentano*, p. 95.

[42]Albertazzi, "Anton Marty" (*The School of Franz Brentano*, p.84): "Mathesius, who founded the Prague School of Linguistics in 1926, was one of Marty's disciples"; see also Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, p.94, note 21: "..in 1920, Jakobson came to Prague where there was already [ie. prior to the founding of the "school" as such] a Czech movement directed by Mathesius and connected with Anton Marty..."; Marty is also cited by Jakobson himself: see *The School of Franz Brentano*, p.847.

[43]See "Sprache und Abstraktion"; *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol.2, part 2, p.104.

[44]See "Über Sprachreflex, Nativismus und absichtliche Sprachbildung"; *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol.1, part 2, p.301.

[45]See, in particular, Savina Reynaud, *Anton Marty, filosofo del linguaggio: uno strutturalismo presaussuriano*, which perhaps overstates the case in entertaining the idea that Marty's theory forms a "prototype" of Chomsky's theory; see p.204-206.

work of Wilhelm Wundt[46]. Wundt proposed an account of language based upon its

purported emergence from phsiological, instinctive gestures: 'The primitive

development of *articulate* language can hardly be thought of except after the

analogy of this natural gesture-language'[47]. Language arises from onomatopoeia

(there is an 'originally necessary relation between sound and meaning'[48], although

this relation obviously becomes increasingly distant), and there remains an

isomorphism of word and gesture[49]. Marty's counter-emphasis, as Albertazzi puts

it, consists in 'the contrary idea that linguistic phenomena are voluntary in nature

and therefore based upon intentional [...] linguistic constructs'[50]. He insists that

thought can attain abstraction prior to the intervention of language[51] and implies,

therefore, that language can be seen as originally figurative: in particular, he points

to the role of proper names as signs that "denominate" individuals but which have

no conceptual dimension and derive meaning only from their contexts[52]. This

point could be said to amount to an admission of a certain level of "arbitrariness",

the feature which dominates the work of Saussure and which emerges in a

perplexing manner in "Description of a Struggle": '"The poplar in the fields, which

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[46]See in particular "Über Begriff und Methode der allgemeinen Grammatik und Sprachphilosophie": *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol.2, part 2, p.165-166.
[47]*Outlines of Psychology*, p.299.
[48]ibid., p.301.
[49]Wundt considers, as evidence, the gesture-language of deaf and dumb children, in a discussion which is perhaps analogous to Kafka's observations of "Miss K" (although he insists upon the "controlled" [*diszipliniert*] nature of her gesticulations): 'Her conversation contains a minimum of words and ideas [...] is chiefly produced by turns of her head, gesticulations, various pauses, lively glances'(D374;KK7,379).
[50]*The School of Franz Brentano*, p.88.
[51]"The most primitive acts of abstraction are independent of all language": "Sprache und Abstraktion"; *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol.2, part 2, p.105.
[52]See *The School of Franz Brentano*, p.91.

you've called the 'Tower of Babel' because you didn't want to know it was a poplar,

sways again without a name, so you have to call it 'Noah in his

cups'"(CSS33;KK5,32). Heidsieck claims (IC36-37) that Kafka's use of the term

"swaying" (*schwanken*) recalls Marty's use of the word as an example of the

emergence of figurative meanings. "Swaying" can apply both to the movement of

an inanimate object and indecisiveness: in Kafka's story, we find, '"The landscape

disturbs my thought [...] It makes my reflections sway like suspension

bridges'"(CSS25;KK5,24).

Heidsieck also quotes Wundt's invocation (by way of exemplification of his

claims regarding gesture) of Naples as the '"homeland of plastic

gesticulation"'(IC38), and juxtaposes this with the passage from *The Trial* in which

Josef K. is unable to interpret the expansive gestures of the businessman from

southern Italy: 'for the most part the words literally poured from his lips [...] lifting

his arms and fluttering his hands, he tried to describe something K. couldn't quite

follow, even though he leaned forward and stared at his hands'(T202-

203;KK2,171). There is perhaps also a parallel to be drawn between Marty's vision

of proper names as in themselves non-significatory and features of Kafka's practice

in naming his protagonists. Consider *The Castle* (which constitutes the most

extreme form of this practice, the characters' "names" shorn of local association,

"Count Westwest" belonging almost to a fairy tale): "K." is a pared down

designation, less a name than an 'offensive, almost disgusting'(D 269;KK7,274)

letter contingently standing for the character's consciousness which, in so far as it

resembles that of Kafka's other protagonists, could be called by any of the other

"names" he employs. "Sordini" and "Sortini" are confused; nobody is quite sure which person the name "Klamm" belongs to: 'a man so often aspired to and so seldom attained as Klamm easily takes on different forms in people's imaginations [...] [Momus] probably looks nothing like Klamm. Yet you can find people in the village who would swear on oath that Momus is Klamm and none other'(C163;KK3,174). The word "Klamm" has acquired a cumulative significance ('"Don't use Klamm's name. Refer to him as "him" or whatever, but not by name"'(C77;KK3,84)), but its referent is nebulous.

Marty's account of "descriptive semasiology" takes place across three fundamental levels. The first level to be analysed is that of "notifying" (or "denominating"), which concerns the nature of the mental event which is to realize linguistic expression, while the second is that of "internal form", which essentially amounts to the linking of the word to the presentation or concept in the minds of the addressor and addressee. Finally, Marty investigates the plane of signification, portrayed as the capacity of a word to arouse psychic phenomena. A concentration upon the first two levels of analysis would lead to the belief - in terms of an "orthodox" history of the philosophy of language - that Marty remains close to the commitments of Locke's theory of language, in that "meaning" consists in the link between a word and a mental event, and the possibility of communication is grounded in the possibility of this connection being the same for both speaker and listener. However, Marty insists that the "notification" of mental events represents neither the original nature of language nor its central feature. What is important for him is language's significatory function.

The focus of the analysis is therefore the ability of a word to engender

signification, a process which can be conceived in behavioural terms: the word can

arouse psychic phenomena in a listener; its "essence" can be understood as its

affectivity. A central component of Marty's approach is a conception of meaning as

dynamic rather than static, a feature he terms "constructive internal (linguistic-)

form" ("*konstruktive innere Sprachform*"[53]). This approach entails a focus upon

dialogue, with its attendant strategies, imprecisions, and elements of

indeterminacy[54], and furthermore upon the roles of social convention and

collective consciousness[55]. In this respect, Marty described his theories as a

"practical philosophy of language", or a form of pragmatism[56]. Albertazzi

summarizes these tendencies as follows:

> speakers use rhetorical and syntactic devices: they suggest and anticipate in their
> speech a series of imaginative contents which only make complete sense at the end of
> the utterance. Accordingly, we cannot speak of meaning as a logical form, but rather as
> a whole comprising a series of meaningful anticipations which in dialogue evoke a
> sequence of expectations which are resolved only on its completion [...] [Marty
> stresses] the importance of the functional character of dialogue and of the instrumental
> nature of language[57]

Heidsieck claims (IC 36) that the tale of "Shamefaced Lanky" contained in Kafka's

letter to Pollak of 20th. December 1902 can be seen as a playful fictional response

to Marty's theory of language, a view which perhaps gains credibility from the fact

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[53]See "Über Begriff und Methode der allgemeinen Grammatik und Sprchphilosophie"; *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol.2, part 2, p.143.
[54]Ibid., p.141: Marty notes that features such as confusion and equivocation are neglected by many accounts of langauge ('...*in der grammatischen Literatur einen breiten Raum einnehmen*').
[55]Ibid., p.166; Marty addresses the possibility '..*einer menschlichen Sprache und Sprachgemeinschaft*'.
[56]Ibid., p.144.
[57]"Anton Marty" in *The School of Franz Brentano*, p.93.

that - according to Brod[58] - the figure of "Impure in Heart" amounts to a sketch of

Emil Utitz, a leading member of the Louvre-circle:

> Impure in Heart turned his eyelids toward the ceiling, and the words emerged from his mouth. These words were fine gentlemen with patent-leather shoes and English cravats [...] And as soon as those little gentlemen were out of the mouth, they stood on tiptoe and were tall; they then skipped over to Lanky, climbed up on him, tweaking and biting, and worked their way into his ears[59].

The focus here is not upon communication as the transferral of "mental events",

but rather upon the process itself, the words issuing from the speaker and affecting

the listener while seeming to have their own "life", rendered by Kafka, typically, in

a perversely concrete form. Albertazzi points to the "resolution" of meaning at the

end of a conversation, but it is worth noting how fragile this possibility is if

dialogue is characterized as essentially involving infelicities of expression, and

relying for support upon such frangible factors as (voluntary and involuntary)

gestures and social conventions. A more or less comprehensive breakdown of these

features would lead to the sort of situation encountered by many of Kafka's

protagonists. Conversation, for them, is a constant struggle to understand and be

understood: it involves a frustrating attempt to realize clarity of expression, to

enumerate all the possible senses of a given statement, and is often supplemented

by efforts to modulate body language (Gregor, for example, 'meekly [...] twisted

his head'(TOS90;KK4,71-72), although to no avail) and understand the gestures of

others.

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[58]*Letters to Friends, Family and Editors*, p.426.
[59]Ibid., p.6.

In one of the more extreme cases, the "great swimmer" returns from the Olympics to face a reception committee. His sash is written in 'some foreign language'[60], he cannot make out the slogan that is chanted; he is startled by the word "minister", and 'gazed at him wildly'[61]; he 'had not caught the name'[62] of a silent guest, cannot make out the faces of any of the other guests. When he tries to draw attention to the fact that some people have their backs to the table, the girls 'said nothing, but only smiled at me, gazing at me for a long time'[63]; the fat man gives a speech which inexplicably causes him to cry, and he 'kept on glancing at me, but just as though he were seeing not me but my open grave'[64]. Finally, the swimmer confesses - on top of the fact that he cannot swim - that:

> I cannot but observe that here I am not in my native country and in spite of great efforts do not understand a word of what is being said here. The most obvious thing to do now would be to believe in a case of mistaken identity, but here is no mistaken identity [...] my name is the one you call me by [...] it does not disturb me much that I do not understand you and it does not seem to disturb you very much, either, that you do not understand me. All that I believe I gather from the speech made by the honoured gentleman who spoke before me is that it was dismally sad, but this knowledge is not only enough for me, it is, indeed, even too much for me. And it is the same with all the conversations that I have had since my arrival here[65].

Brentano himself remarks that 'Even when there exists [...] the most intimate spiritual affinity between two people, the difference between them remains so pronounced that there are still occasions in which the one can neither agree with the other nor understand his behaviour'[66]. An example of such an affinity might occur within a family unit, and it is a part of Gregor Samsa's tragedy in "The

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[60] *Wedding Preparations in the Country*, p.314; KK6,232.
[61] Ibid., p.314; KK6,232.
[62] Ibid., p.315; KK6,232.
[63] Ibid., p.315; KK6,232.
[64] Ibid., p.315; KK6,232.
[65] Ibid., p.316; KK6,233.

Transformation" that although he regards his vocalizations as 'unmistakably his own voice'(TOS78;KK4,59), the chief clerk insists that "'That sounded like an animal'"(TOS85;KK4,66), and Gregor realizes that 'the words he uttered were evidently no longer intelligible, despite the fact that they had seemed clear enough to him'(TOS85;KK4,67). His gestures and behaviour are likewise misconstrued: his father drives him back into his room, and 'No plea of Gregor's availed, indeed none was understood; however meekly he twisted his head his father only stamped the harder'(TOS90;KK4,71-72).

Although Gregor tries to adapt his behaviour ('Gregor kept to the floor for the time being, especially since he feared that his father might regard any flight on to the walls or the ceiling as an act of particular malevolence'(TOS108;KK4,89)), it seems that the breakdown of the possibility of communication in his case means that, although the charwoman greets him, his family no longer has grounds to attribute (human) mental states to him; it does not occur to them that he can understand their conversation. His sister exclaims, "'You must try to get rid of the idea that it's Gregor'"(TOS120;KK4,101: recall Marty's analysis of proper names), while Gregor is left plangently asking, 'Was he an animal, that music could move him so?'(TOS117;KK4,98). Gregor's pitiful situation can, in this context, be seen as partly deriving from a failure of language as analysed by Marty.

Another aspect of Marty's work was a sustained critical engagement with Alexius Meinong, whom he regarded as deviating needlessly from a perceived Brentanian

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[66]*Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, p.36.

orthodoxy[67]; Meinong's work was also discussed by the Louvre-circle, and so there are grounds for assuming that Kafka was familiar with it, although it is impossible to establish the extent of this familiarity. In part, Meinong's work can be considered a response to a crucial ambiguity of Brentano's thought, that of the status of the "objects" of intentional states. While Brentano characterizes every mental state as "intending" an object, which is immanent to the state ("intentionally inexistent"), he left somewhat unclear exactly what could constitute an object. Objects can be either "inner" (eg. anger) or "outer" (eg. a tree); in a letter, Brentano referred to the immanent object as a "picture", and, Johannes Brandl suggests, 'The picture-metaphor was taken up by Brentano's students for explaining what an "immanent object" is. Indeed they took the metaphor as revealing an ambiguity in Brentano's use of the notion of "object"'[68]. There seem to be, in fact, quite a few questions to be answered: what are the criteria for establishing what counts as an object? What is the ontological status of an object, given that, for Brentano's purposes, its role is entirely immanent to mental phenomena, and the existence of "objects" independently of intentional states cannot be established? Are "objects" "simple" (implying some form of atomism)? What account can be given of aggregates of objects?

These issues were among the central concerns of Meinong's work, culminating in the postulation of a "theory of objects", conceived as a discipline in its own right. Whereas Brentano exercised a considerable influence over the direction of

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[67]See *Austrian Philosophy*, p.120.
[68]*The School of Franz Brentano*, p.276.

"continental" philosophy through the work of Husserl in particular, it is through Meinong's theories that he can be seen to contribute to "analytic" philosophy as well. Meinong's thought interested Bertrand Russell and undoubtedly informed his work, even if he was ultimately to consider Meinong confused and confusing[69]. Similarly, Meinong's contentions seem also to anticipate in certain respects some of Quine's arguments[70].

This sphere of influence derives in part from the fact that while Meinong's thought has as its point of departure "psychological" matters, its orientation is usually logical. His response to Brentano's alleged lack of clarity with regard to the nature of objects begins with a consideration of the relationships between parts and wholes. More specifically, he examines the issue of "complex" or "composite" objects, an analysis which leads him to postulate "objects of a higher order" which, as David Lindenfeld puts it, include both the relations and the complexes into which they enter'[71]. This vision influenced Christian von Ehrenfels, who felt that Meinong's move offered the basis for a more adequate analysis of complex objects; a favoured example is that of the musical melody which, Ehrenfels declares, is experienced as a whole rather than as a mere sum of its component notes[72]. In the work of Wundt, by contrast, the feeling produced by a chord is analysed as an aggregate of the feelings aroused by each individual note struck and their possible

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[69]See Russell's essay, "Meinong's theory of Complexes and Assumptions", in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell vol.4.*

[70] See "On What There Is", in *From a Logical Point of View.*

[71] *The Transformations of Positivism*, p.122.

[72] A melody can, for instance, be transposed into another key while retaining its identity; see "Über 'Gestalt-qualitäten'"; *Philosophische Schriften Band 3: Psychologie, Ethik, Erkenntnistheorie*, p.138 & 156.

combinations, an account which, he concedes, is 'exceedingly complicated'[73].

Ehrenfels referred to these wholes which are not strictly reducible to their parts as

"Gestalt qualities", and thereby instituted the research programme known as

"Gestalt psychology". Kafka's discussion of "Odradek" seems slightly reminiscient

of this ambiguous interplay of part and whole:

> One is tempted to believe that the creature once had some sort of intelligible shape and
> is now only a broken-down remnant. Yet this does not seem to be the case; at least
> there is no sign of it; nowhere is there an unfinished or unbroken surface to suggest
> anything of the kind; the whole thing looks senseless enough, but in its own way
> perfectly finished (TOS176;KK4,129)

It was during the period of Kafka's involvement with the thought of Brentano and

his associates and antagonists that Meinong's work on the status of objects took

shape. In 1902, he published *On Assumptions*, which was substantially revised in

1910 both to accommodate his subsequent findings and to respond polemically to

Marty's criticisms of the first edition. The crucial claim of this work is that

(intentional) thought is free to assume any object as its object (the 'Principle of

unrestricted freedom of assumption, or *unbeschränkten Annahmefreiheit*'[74]), even

if, as in the cases of fantasy and art, the object does not, or cannot, exist. In effect,

Meinong seeks to add "assumptions" to Brentano's triumvirate of presentations,

judgments, and phenomena of love and hate; they are 'in a certain sense

intermediate between presentation and judgment'[75], in that they are objects of

presentation but are "prior to", or independent of, determinations of existence,

which arise only at the level of judgment for Brentano.

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[73]*Outlines of Psychology*, p.160.
[74]*The School of Franz Brentano*, p.143.

In 1904, Meinong published what is arguably his most important text, an essay entitled "On the Theory of Objects" ("*Über Gegenstandstheorie*"; translated as "The Theory of Objects"[76]) which extrapolated the tendencies of *On Assumptions*. In the latter work, Meinong was already responding to what was widely acknowledged as a problem of Brentano's thought, the issue of "non-veridical" intentionality. A difficulty encountered by thinkers such as Frege and Russell who sought a logical explication of the fabric of language was that of explaining how a natural language can refer to "unicorns" or "the present king of France" without such references being obviously distinct, grammatically or logically, from sentences which predicate subjects whose existence is assured. A similar problem arises for Brentano in that "non-existent" objects (such as unicorns) could be presented in intentional states in the same manner as "truly existent" entities. Since reference to a transcendent world has effectively been disqualified, and the ground of judgment is essentially subjective, it seems that there is consequently no basis from which to distinguish such "non-veridical" objects of intentionality.

Not wishing to disrupt the framework of his theory of intentional states, Brentano addresses this problem by claiming that such a distinction would entail the introduction of two new objects of ~~intentionlity~~ intentionality, namely "the being of x" and "the non-being of x", which would have the same degree of "reality", and which would be distinguished only on the basis of the subject's attitude towards them: 'Hence we are certain that one cannot make the being or non-being of a centaur an object as

[75]*Austrian Philosophy*, p.120.
[76]In Roderick Chisholm, ed., *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology*.

one can a centaur;one can only make the person affirming or denying the centaur

an object, in which case the centaur, to be sure, becomes an object in a special

modus obliquus at the same time'[77]. To all intents and purposes, Brentano simply

reiterates his position: rather than addressing the problem, he does not seem to

admit that there is a problem. The only foundation of the discrimination between

veridical and non-veridical intentionality is subjective, and of the form "'A mentally

active subject is denying a centaur in the *modus praesens*"[78], a claim which is in

part dependent upon the idea that the irreducibly subjective ground of judgment

does not militate against its being objective in form. In any case, what cannot be

countenanced is any independent ground from which to arbitrate between existent

and non-existent objects.

Meinong was clearly unimpressed by Brentano's response to the issue (and

Brentano himself was ultimately to revise his position substantially in what may

have been an implicit acknowledgement of critiques such as that of Meinong), and

offers a more substantial analysis, albeit one which retains a certain opacity. He

begins with an assessment of a "class" of objects which are familiar but which do

not exist, taking as an example the "ideality" of the objects of mathematics: 'As we

know, the figures with which geometry is concerned do not exist'[79]. The failure to

acknowledge the extent of nonexistent objects which are objects nonetheless he

terms the 'prejudice in favour of the actual [*wirklich*]' or even 'the prejudice in

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[77]*Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, p.294.
[78]Ibid., p.292.
[79]"The Theory of Objects" in *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology*, p.82.

favour of existence'[80]. What the "prejudice" conceals is the fact that many facets

of human activity, from art to mathematics, involve essential reference to

nonexistent objects: there is a realm of nonentities, the dimensions of which are

rarely theoretically admitted.

Meinong elaborates Brentano's account of a centaur being an object of an

intentional state by pointing to the fact that one can describe the properties of a

centaur without this process being in any way hindered by the non-existence of

centaurs. This enumeration of the properties of an object he terms its "*Sosein*", its

"being-so". If we can analyse an object's *Sosein* unimpaired by the empirical fact of

its non-existence, then, according to Meinong, this reveals the independence of an

object's properties from its ontological status, 'the principle of the independence of

Sosein from *Sein*'[81]. This claim leads to perhaps Meinong's most notorious remark,

although its notoriety derives partly from its being quoted withgout its prefatory

qualification: 'Those who like paradoxical modes of expression could very well

say: "There are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects"'[82].

A feature of Meinong's theory to which several critics have objected is that he

does not discriminate between objects which do not exist and those which cannot.

Unicorns, for example, do not exist as a matter of fact, but their non-existence is

contingent in that the idea of a horse with a horn does not appear to involve any

inherent contradiction or biological impossibility. By contrast, it would seem that

"round squares" not only do not exist but moreover could not since they are

[80]Ibid., p.82.
[81]Ibid., p.82.

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inherently contradictory, impossible by definition. Meinong, however, disregards

such distinctions: 'Not only is the much heralded golden mountain made of gold,

but the round square is as surely round as it is square'[83].

Meinong seems to feel licensed to conflate the two "categories" of nonexistence

because he extrapolates the principle of the independence of *Sosein* from *Sein* such

that it applies not just to nonentities but *all* objects as such. Questions of being and

non-being do not apply to the object in itself, a situation he terms the '*Aussersein*

[outside of, or beyond, being] of the pure object'[84]: Meinong's exposition of this

claim is often cited but is rather symptomatic of the lack of clarity caused by his

lack of an adequate logical notation:

> the Object as such (without considering the occasional peculiarities or the
> accompanying Objective-clause which is always present) stands "beyond being and
> non-being". This may also be expressed in the following less engaging and also less
> pretentious way, which is in my opinion, however, a more appropriate one: the Object
> is by nature indifferent to being [*ausserseiend*], although at least one of its two
> Objectives of being, the Object's being or non-being, subsists[85].

The passage suggests that Meinong does not simply eradicate questions of being;

rather, he displaces them such that they inhere in the "Objective" (by which one

can, more or less, understand "proposition") rather than in the "pure" object. The

claim - rendered in a more familiar idiom - seems to be that questions of being are

issues of "second-order" logic, attaching to (existential) quantification rather than

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[82]Ibid., p.83.
[83]Ibid., p.82.
[84]Ibid., 83.
[85]Ibid., p.86.

predication[86]. Crucially, Meinong's emphasis is not upon this re-location of being, but rather upon the extent to which the "theory of objects" can proceed unencumbered by questions of being and non-being: 'knowledge [...] finds a field of activity to which it may have access without first answering the question concerning being or non-being'[87]. Meinong's theory adopts a stance of ontological neutrality.

All objects are, in their "pure" state, beyond being and non-being, and there is moreover a plethora of objects which are not only *ausserseiend* but also (as a matter of fact or by definition) non-existent but objects nonetheless: what does this abstract logical vision of nonentities and of objects hovering in a domain on which determinations of being can have no purchase, "pure" objects of which one cannot even say that they are, that they exist, have to do with Kafka? After all, Brod's claim that Kafka thought in terms of images rather than abstract theories seems to carry with it the impregnable authority of years of friendship. However, aspersions have been cast on Brod's reliability, at least with respect to the degree of Kafka's engagement with philosophical issues. Indeed, Kafka's work often displays a rigourously philosophical perversity, not least in the characteristic enumeration of

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[86]The signs in a proposition have an "adverbial" value, being arising only at the level of quantification. To take Meinong's example of the round square, if 'R' stands for 'round' and 'S' for 'square', then to say there is a round square is $[(\exists x) (Rx \ \& \ Sx)]$: literally, "It is the case that there is an object x such that x is round and x is square". To say that there is not a round square is $[\sim (\exists x) (Rx \ \& \ Sx)]$: "It is not the case that there is an object x such that x is round and x is square". What is crucial is that the operation of negation, in so far as it concerns being and existence is not considered a predicate, affects not the signs in the proposition but rather the existential quantifier itself $(\exists x)$, "It is the case that there exists an x...". Putting the negation sign inside the proposition does not have the same effect, denying one of the object's determinations rather than its existence, eg. $[(\exists x) (Rx \ \& \sim Sx)]$ ("It is the case that there is an x such that x is round and x is not square"), and so on. If the items within the proposition make up the "object", then it is true to say that they are indifferent to being, which is a matter of quantification. However, whether the object's *Aussersein* follows from the fact of nonentities is a matter for debate.

all possible significances of a given statement. Kafka's equally characteristic paradoxes are arrived at with argumentative rigour: the premise that 'our laws are not generally known'(GWC125;KK5,68) admits two hypotheses: that the law is secret, and that there are no laws, but only the facts of the nobility's conduct. The synthesis of the two hypotheses arrives at a situation which can be expressed only 'in a kind of paradox'(GWC126; KK5,69) before leading to the conclusion that 'the one visible and indubitable law that is imposed upon us is the nobility' (GWC126;KK5,69). Kafka's reasoning is at times almost syllogistic, and if he is typically drawn to conundrums which arrive at paradoxes or are aporetic, he still retains the idiom of logical purity: 'The crows maintain that a single crow could destroy the heavens. There is no doubt of that, but it proves nothing against the heavens, for heaven simply means: the impossibility of crows'[88].

The fact that Kafka's narratives adopt the rhetoric of logical argumentation of course does not imply any connection to Meinong's thought. However, assuming an awareness of Meinong's work on Kafka's part, it is legitimate to investigate moments of the latter's output which seem to respond to motifs of the "theory of objects". Even if a specific engagement with Meinong is not presupposed, there remains scope for an evaluation of the efficacy of Meinong in articulating the ontological dimensions of Kafka's texts. Again it is worthwhile pointing to possible allusions before moving beyond such a frame of reference in order to produce wider analyses.

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[87]Ibid., p.86.

"Description of a Struggle", as has been noted, acquires a rather privileged status in the context of this discussion, and contains a passage which seems almost to toy with the ambiguous logical and grammatical status of nonentities:

> 'I don't know', I cried without a sound, 'I really don't know. If nobody comes, then nobody comes. I have done nobody any harm, nobody does me any harm. A pack of nobodies. But it isn't quite like that. It's just that nobody helps me, otherwise a pack of nobodies would be nice. I would rather like (what do you think?) to go on an excursion with a pack of nobodies. Into the mountains, of course, where else? Just look at those nobodies pushing each other (CSS21;KK5,19-20)

What is playfully exploited here is the capacity of the term "nobody" to oscillate between the denotation of a nonentity and the capacity to function as an object in its own right, which is very much the apparent paradox which Meinong sought to affirm in classifying nonentities as entirely valid objects. A similarly whimsical paradox appears in the discussion of "ghosts" in "Unhappiness": "'You can never get a straight answer out of them. It's all shilly-shallying. These ghosts seem more uncertain about their own existence than we are, which seeing how frail they are is no wonder"[89]. The realm in which objects float without having been assigned to either being or non-being is characterized by Kafka as a zone of insecurity: this certainly seems to be the case with the hunter Gracchus:

> 'Are you dead?'
> 'Yes,' said the hunter, 'as you see' [...]
> 'But you are alive too,' said the burgomaster.

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[88] *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, p.89(KK6,32). As evidence of the philosophical nature of Kafka's outlook, one could point to the fact that the closest relatives of his aphorisms are those of Nietzsche or Wittgenstein in *Culture and Value*. See in particular aphorism 89, on the "trichotomy" of free will (BON95;KK6,37-38).
[89] (TOS36;KK4,38). Heidsieck points out that 'The term "ghost" was used by Brentano and Meinong to illustrate both the intentional structure of the "belief in ghosts" and the meaning of the linguistic reference to nonexistent objects in propositions like "Ghosts don't exist"'. "Logic and Ontology in Kafka's Fiction", in Lazar and Gottesman, eds., *The Dove and the Mole*, p.206.

'To some extent,' said the hunter, 'to some extent I am alive too. My death boat went off course; [...] So I, who asked for nothing better than to live among my mountains, travel after my death through all the lands of the earth.'
'And you have no part in the other world?' asked the burgomaster, knitting his brow.
'I am for ever,' replied the hunter, 'on the great stairway that leads up to it.'[90].

The state of *Aussersein* is here examined from the point of view of the object implicated in its ontological undecidability; perhaps a more characteristic scenario (one which occurs frequently throughout Kafka's output) is that of the protagonist who endeavours to seize upon an object whose being is nebulous, struggling to affix a determinate ontological status to that which is *ausserseiend*. Georg Bendemann writes to his friend in St. Petersburg before his confrontation with his father, who declares, "'You haven't any friend in St. Petersburg [...] How could you have a friend out there of all places! I simply can't believe it'"(TOS43;KK4,49). However, later on in the dispute, the father invokes the friend as a weapon against Georg: "'I've been writing to him [...] That's why he hasn't been here for such years now, he knows everything a hundred times better than you do yourself'"(TOS46;KK4,52). The friend's existence seems nebulous or fluid, constituted by acts of affirmation and denial; moreover, Kafka retrospectively understands the friend as 'the link between father and son, he is their strongest common bond'(D214;KK7,217), and furthermore notes that Georg's fiancée is constituted 'only in relation to the friend'(D215;KK7,217). Hence it seems that the friend is an object constituted in purely relational terms: his role is structural while

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[90]GWC49;KK5,77. It is worth noting that Meinong also referred to nonentities as "homeless entities" (see Grossman, *Meinong*, p.156-157), and also that in the fragment of "The Hunter Gracchus", the hunter refers to his interlocuter as 'a nonentity [*Ein Nichts bist du*] whom I'm filling up with wine'(GWC55;KK5,27).

his existence is (quite literally) debatable[91]. It is worth noting also that while "*Das Urteil*"is generally taken to refer to the father's sentence, it is also Brentano's term, "judgment" consisting in the affirmation or denial of an object's existence.

The mole in "The Village Schoolmaster (The Giant Mole)" seems to occupy a similar ontological position: as an object it serves to co-ordinate the relationship between the schoolmaster and the protagonist. Both seek to affirm the existence of the mole, the latter's pamphlet aiming to uphold that of the former, but their antagonism seems to militate against their mutual aim. In any case, the prodigious size of the mole cannot be definitively ascertained, 'especially if the existence of the mole has not been established wholly beyond doubt and at all events it cannot be produced'(GWC7;KK5,171). Even if the enormous animal were to be acknowledged, 'Every discovery is at once absorbed into the great universe of scientific knowledge, and with that ceases in a sense to be a discovery; it dissolves into the whole and disappears'(GWC13;KK5,178).

Another case, which has already been encountered, is that of "The Problem of Our Laws", in which the existence of the laws is itself a matter of conjecture. Indeed, in so far as it makes no tangible difference whether there are laws which the nobility maintains or the phrase "the laws" merely describes the nobility's practice, the questions of the existence of the laws could be said to be redundant. Klamm in *The Castle* could be said to add another nuance to such ontological aporias: in what could be considered a radicalization of Meinong's declaration of

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[91]The role of interpretation is obviously crucial, and will be addressed more fully in chapter 4, "Interpretation".

the independence of *Sosein* from *Sein*, there is no shortage of accounts of Klamm's "properties", but, as has been seen, they do not seem to add up. This proliferation of descriptions of Klamm's "being-so", it is implied, leads to the conclusion that there exists no single object in which all the properties inhere, given that the accounts are inconsistent. Either there exists a "Klamm" whose appearance is mutable ("'Apparently, he looks quite different when he arrives in the village and quite different when he leaves it, different before he's been drinking beer, different afterwards, different awake, different asleep, different alone, different in conversation, and [...] totally different up in the castle"'(C158;KK3,169)), or there is no single object "Klamm" but rather a plurality of objects to which the term "Klamm" is arbitrarily applied, or the question of there being such an object as "Klamm" is simply effaced by the multiplicity of descriptions, an exorbitant excess of *Sosein*.

The latter possibility seems in some sense to apply to the law of *The Trial* which could be said, in this context, to perform a comparable radicalization of Meinong's principle of the separability of *Sosein* from *Sein*. The existence of the law seems beyond doubt, even if it is "subjectivized", understood as a function of Josef K.'s consciousness. There is again an overwhelming mass of *Sosein*, accounts of the nature, features, functions, affects and effects of the law: in effect, the law's "being" is saturated by its exposition; there is no more to the law than its facets being described by this or that character[92]. The law itself, however, does not - and, as the

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[92]This relates also to the debate surrounding "complex" objects: in a sense, the law can be understood as the presentation of "parts" without the "whole" in which they are collocated. There is an analogy with Deleuze's understanding of "Gestalt qualities" as "multiplicities"; see "Theory of Multiplicities in Bergson", p.4.

priest's tale suggests, cannot - come to be presented as an object. It is immanent to every phenomenon in the novel, discussed at length, but neither presented nor presentable as such. While Meinong dealt with objects of presentation (presentation being, even before assumption, judgement, and so on, a necessary condition for an object's being an object), and sought to obviate questions of being by affirming the primacy of *Sosein*, here it seems that the law has being, a wealth of *Sosein*, but is simply not an object. The law seems to lend itself to an analysis effected through Meinong's apparatus, but also to exceed it.

Put in colloquial terms, Meinong's insistence upon the priority of *Sosein* leads to the assertion that an object's "improbability" is no hindrance to its description. An extension of this emphasis could lead to the notion that the unlikelihood of an event's occurrence (an "event" perhaps being understood here as the introduction of a set of related objects) need not impair a recounting of the experience of the event, its affects, its singular features. A beetle which was once human, and has apparently retained an identical consciousness through its transformation, is an "impossible" object, but the task is to analyse its determinations or characteristics in a manner which does not discriminate between it and what are intuitively assumed to be "actual" objects. Of course the possibility of the existence of objects may be affirmed or denied, but for Meinong this is a derivative task. The analysis of objects-as-such is a quasi-scientific endeavour which bestows upon the actual, the possible and the impossible an equal standing as data.

An emphasis of this sort may likewise be drawn from Brentano's stance. In so far as the only field of investigation is that of "inner perception", and reference to a

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transcendent reality is problematized, subjectivized, suspended, or - effectively - disqualified, the analysis of intentional phenomena is unaffected by reference to a purported material order of things, if this is conceived as something essentially distinct or separable from consciousness and its states. The existence of objects, states and events may be affirmed or denied (the ground of this judgment being subjective), but the pertinent feature is not the "reality" or otherwise of the object, state or event, but rather the act of judgment. The content of judgment is ultimately superfluous for the purposes of descriptive psychology, addressed only in an "oblique" fashion.

The proximity of this approach to that of Kafka seems clear if it is assumed - and it is difficult to imagine anyone doing otherwise - that one of the most distinctive traits of his literary practice is that of the wilfully literal, even prosaic, recounting of "counter-intuitive" events, objects, and situations. Gregor Samsa's transformation is not "phantasmagoric", beginning as it does with the recognition that 'It was no dream'(TOS76;KK4,57); attempts to return to sleep in the desire to see if 'this morning's fancies [*Vorstellungen*: the Brentanian term effectively dismisses the reality/appearance dichotomy that emerges in translation] might gradually dissolve'(TOS79;KK4,60) are futile. The matters of concern to him are mundane (he will be late for work, his employment will come under threat) and exploratory - the need for an investigation of a new set of phenomena and corporeal possibilities and affectivities. The narrative tone is not surrealistic but rather literalistic, its quotidian nature entering into a relationship of dissonance with narrative content,

although there is a degree of pathos which is more pronounced than in much of

Kafka's work.

It should be noted that "The Transformation" belongs to Kafka's "mature" work,

removed from the savage, wholesale rents in the fabric of self and world which

characterized "Description of a Struggle". The suggestion that both texts can be

approached effectively through Brentanian thought obviously rests upon the

assumption of a philosophical continuity to Kafka's work. Texts from Kafka's early,

middle, and late "periods" (the main distinction being that between the texts written

before 1912 and those composed after) share philosophical features: throughout,

the world, as Barry Smith puts it, 'acquires a certain plasticity'[93]. The differences

between, say, "Description of a Struggle", "The Transformation", and "The

Refusal" amount to a matter of degree; the "plasticity" of the world is extreme in

the first text, pushed to the point of a complete evanescence of reality, whereas

later it is perhaps all the more insidious, in that the intrusions of events, the logic of

which is bizarre, warped, or just slightly odd, are enveloped by a context of

quotidian concerns. The "plasticity" is constant: in Kafka's world, there is always

the *threat* of a rupture of reality[94].

There is also a continuity to the treatment of consciousness. Kafka's protagonists

(regardless of whether they are rendered in the first or third person, singular or

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[93]"Kafka and Brentano" in *Structure and Gestalt*; p.122.
[94]The emphasis upon "threat" is meant to convey the idea that it haunts texts even when it is not fulfilled; in a comparable sense, Deleuze and Guattari insist that the stories are "animalistic" even when they are not visibly concerned with animals. They point to the fact that although "In the Penal Colony", as it stands, does not contain any episodes of "becoming-animal", 'Kafka can imagine an animal conclusion to this text [...] in one version of the "Colony", the voyager finally becomes a dog and starts running in all directions on all

plural) are decidedly "minimal(ist)", possessing little in the way of "personality" or

other attributes which typically attach to literary characters, such as personal

history, motivation, physical appearance. If they can be characterized (and there is

indeed an instantly recognizable idiosyncrasy which they seem to share), it is

through their passivity, their tendency to be acted upon, their timidity, their fear,

their desire to be inconspicuous. Their similarity is all the more striking for

traversing the human/animal distinction: what seems to be presented are the bare

bones of consciousness (particularly in terms of what affects it), its "skeleton"[95].

There is perhaps an affinity between this "minimalism" of consciousness and

Brentano's dismissal of "introspection" ('How pathetically scanty my self-

knowledge is compared with, say, my knowledge of my room [...] Why? There is

no such thing as observation of the inner world, as there is of the outer

world'(BON14;KK6,53); 'Hatred of active introspection'(D244;KK7,248)). Kafka's

protagonists do not introspect in the sense of studying their "personalities" if such

an "inner world" is conceived as independent of outer perceptions, however

problematic their content. Although apparently presented from the interior, Kafka's

protagonists are denuded of interiority.

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fours, leaping around and hurrying back to his post (in another version a snake-woman intervenes)' (K39).
The reference is to the diary entries of 7th. and 8th. August 1917(D379-381;KK7,383-385).

[95] Alain Badiou makes a similar point apropos of Beckett's protagonists (he terms this process "methodical
asceticism"): 'In his own way, Beckett rediscovers an inspiration running from Descartes to Husserl: if you
want to undertake a serious enquiry into thinking humanity, it is necessary first of all to suspend everything
which is inessential or doubtful, to reduce humanity to its indestructible functions. The denuding of
Beckett's "characters", their poverty, their illnesses, their strange fixity, or indeed their wandering without a
discernable end, everything which has often been taken as an allegory of the infinite miseries of the human
condition, is nothing but the protocol of an experience, which must be compared to the doubt through which
Descartes reduces the subject to the vacuity of its pure enunciation, or to the *epoché* of Husserl, which
reduces the evidence of the world to that of the intentional fluxes of consciousness'; *Beckett*, p.19.

According to Barry Smith's forceful interpretation, this injunction against introspection is immediately redolent of Brentano's comparable interdiction. Smith in effect suggests that if it is assumed that Kafka is concerned in his narratives (at least to some extent) with the study of inner perception, then there is a coherent "explanation" of the peculiar character of his fictional world. It is argued that Kafka could not depict "ordinary experience", because in that case the reader's attentions 'would follow their natural course'[96], that of a focus upon external events (the content of (outer) perception) rather than their modes of manifestation in consciousness. Credence usually adheres to external phenomena, whereas for Brentano this almost unthought everyday priority is reversed: only the facts of inner perception are certain, whereas evidence of an external world is fundamentally unreliable. If the aim is to militate against quotidian assumptions and to concentrate upon inner perception, why not produce explicitly solipsistic narratives, in which the only "content" is that of subjectivity? 'The idea is spurious because inner perceptions are always of their nature dependent moments of more inclusive act-wholes, from which it follows that it is impossible to convey the data of inner perception except against the background of some cohesive framework of outer perceptions'[97], replies Smith. The inclusion of outer perception is necessary, but threatens a restitution of the conventional priority ascribed to its evidence: perhaps this credulity can be circumvented if the outer perceptions are in some way abnormal. The reader must 'somehow be deflected from his settled interest in that

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[96]"Kafka and Brentano" in *Structure and Gestalt*, p.127.
[97]Ibid., p.127.

which is unfolding in a represented outer world, without however this resulting in

its being directed inwardly in a futile attempt at introspection'[98]. The direction of

these remarks is quite clear:

> This can be achieved, I suggest, if the expected order of the outer world is presented
> matter-of-factly and in a step-by-step fashion but is in some way disrupted [...] I
> believe, indeed, that a strong case could be made to show that the peculiar aesthetic
> unity of Kafka's mature works is to a very large extent an unintended consequence of
> an attempt on his part to meet the conditions for partial isolation of inner
> consciousness by means of techniques of disruption of a sort which rest on the
> Brentanian "plasticity" mentioned above, and that he thereby succeeded, perhaps
> uniquely, in evolving a type of writing which could allow the peculiar forms of inner
> consciousness to be revealed. Thus the narrative in his later works is almost completely
> a matter of portrayal of experience from the point of view of the main protagonist,
> never in such a way as to resort to the expression of any kind of active introspection on
> his part, but always in such a way that the structure of his inner world is displayed in
> virtue of some contrast with an expected or somehow typical order in external reality,
> of some breakdown of the expected intermeshing of the inner and the outer. The world
> is depicted in such a way that the associated psychical phenomena can show themselves
> as completely and as nakedly as possible. The character of dogged literalism of Kafka's
> writings is a device to catch the reader off his guard when the expectations of a natural
> or reasonable order in the external world which it arouses are upset [...] In this sense,
> then, Kafka can be said to have developed a characteristically Brentanian mode of
> representation of the self[99].

This is a very clear and forceful articulation of the congruence of Brentano's

philosophy and Kafka's aesthetic, but there is a danger of this "aesthetic" being

regarded as merely a by-product of a philosophical agenda. In Smith's hands,

Kafka's writing seems to constitute a philosophical strategy, a perverse yet

systematic codicil to *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*[100]. Without

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[98]Ibid., p.127.

[99]Ibid., p.128.

[100]It would seem also that Kafka's project would have to be seen as a failure; the distortion of the world, it is claimed, serves to focus attention upon "inner perception" and the nature and structures of consciousness, and yet it seems that discussions often concentrate first and foremost upon this distortion of the world rather than its modes of manifestation in consciousness. However, it is worth considering the analogy between Brentano's programme for the analysis of intentional states and many of the stories which make up "Meditation": texts such as "The Sudden Walk", "Resolutions", "Absent-minded Window Gazing", "The Way Home", "Passers-by", "On the Tram", "Clothes", and "The Street Window", seem to aim at exhaustive analyses of transient, everyday states, preserving fleeting impressions.

wishing to reduce the philosophical ramifications of Kafka's work, a perhaps more

desirable approach is one which identifies a congruence of aesthetic and

philosophical concerns without subsuming one into the other, which does not make

Kafka a closet philosopher. Is it possible to preserve the philosophical force of

Smith's reading without assuming that Kafka's work can be fully *explained* in

philosophical terms, its mysteries decoded by philosophy?

The narrative voice - and especially the relationship between narrative

consciousness and that of the protagonist - of Kafka's texts perhaps provides a

helpful avenue of enquiry. Blanchot attributes to the composition of "The

Judgment" the "discovery" that narration can be accomplished with a move from

the first to third person[101], the institution of an irreducible distance between

authorial, narratorial consciousness and that of the protagonist. The location of this

"discovery" seems slightly odd given that its most clear exemplification is to be

found in "Wedding Preparations in the Country": "'And so long as you can say 'one'

[*man*] instead of 'I', there's nothing in it and one can easily tell the story; but as

soon as you admit to yourself [*du selbst*] that it is you yourself, you feel as though

transfixed and are horrified'"(CSS53;KK6,8). Moreover, this movement is

articulated by Blanchot as a distance between Kafka and his protagonists which

functions, paradoxically, to reinscribe their intimacy: 'he was writing narratives

about beings whose story belongs only to them, but at the same time about Kafka

and his own story, which belongs only to him. It seems the further he got from

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[101] *The Work of Fire*, p.21; Blanchot's work will be discussed at greater length in the next two chapters.

himself, the more present he became'[102]. For all his deconstructive affiliations,

Blanchot seems here to be close to Edwin Muir's simplisitic references to "Joseph

Kafka" and so on[103].

No doubt these conflations are encouraged by Kafka's own ambiguous

remarks[104], but what is of interest here is the "minimalism" of consciousness, an

effacement of "personality" which means that Kafka's protagonists can barely

become "characters". The third person narration of these figures is of an intriguing

sort. Despite the influence of "realism"[105] on Kafka's technique, there is not an

omniscient narrator. Crucially, the narrative voice knows no more than does the

protagonist. Perhaps the closest ("realist") analogy is that of Dostoyevsky's *Crime*

and Punishment: originally envisaged as a first-person "confession", it is narrated in

the third person, but such is the degree of collusion between the narrative voice and

the mind of Raskolnikov that it seems to participate in his sometimes hallucinatory

perceptions and to admit no other perspective. Likewise, Kafka's narratives do not

introduce alternative perspectives except in so far as they are encountered by - and

filtered through - the protagonist. For example, the reader is aware of what Arthur

and Jeremiah think of K., but only from the perspective of his reception of (and

response to) their criticism, hence in a mediated form rather than from their point

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[102]Ibid., p.21.
[103]See his preface to *America*, p.8.
[104]For example, on the one hand, we find (D215;KK7,217): 'Georg has the same number of letters as Franz [...] Frieda has the same number of letters as F. [Felice] and the same initial, Brandenfeld has the same initial as B. [Bauer], and in the word "Feld" a certain connection in meaning, as well', and on the other, "'It is not a cryptogram. Samsa is not merely Kafka and nothing else [*Samsa ist nicht restlos Kafka*]. *The Metamorphosis* is not a confession, although it is - in a certain sense - an indiscretion"'(Gustav Janouch, *Conversations with Kafka*, quoted in *The Complete Short Stories*, p.469).

of view. While not being exactly identical with the protagonist's consciousness, the narrative voice enters into a complicity with it to such an extent that the two become effectively inseparable. The narrative voice seems to be infallible with regard to the protagonist's perceptions, although these perceptions do not appear to include an awareness of their being narrated.

For Brentano, the possibility of the investigation of "inner perception" is bound up with the claim that every intentional phenomenon includes "oblique" self-consciousness (as Smith states, there is 'an accompanying self-consciousness "on the side" (*en parergo*, as Aristotle says)'[106] every presentation of an object includes awareness *that* there is a presentation of an object. This is the vantage point of inner perception (and therefore of descriptive psychology); the certain knowledge, not of the object presented, but of the fact of presentation. Thus the "voice" of descriptive psychology, as it were, is that of an infallible access to states of consciousness without any guarantee of the reality of their (outer) referents. Of course, for Brentano, these functions are collocated in the same consciousness, but in so far as there are two levels of awareness, two operations - that of having perceptions, and that of an awareness of the having of perceptions - which are fundamentally complicit, there seems to be an analogy with Kafka's narrative technique. In both cases, there is a knowledge that certain presentations are being experienced which emanates from a position of (epistemological) proximity to the experience itself. In both cases there is a juxtaposition of the "certainty" of the

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[105]Represented here primarily through Flaubert and Dickens, "The Stoker" being a "sheer imitation" (D388;KK7,391) of the latter.

noticing of perception taking place, the uncertainty of the "reality" of the content of

perception (the "plasticity" of the world), and the impossibility of gaining another

vantage point from which to assess the situation.

This claim is not quite identical with Smith's implicit assumption that Kafka's

project is in some sense reducible to that of Brentano, but rather points to a

structural analogy between the vantage points of the endeavours. This allows a

philosophical articulation of Kafka's narratives which does not amount to a

conflation of the two projects, which would be to stretch the analogy. There is

moreover a shift in focus: whereas much of this section has dwelt upon a purported

coincidence of Brentanian theory and the thematic concerns of Kafka's work, here

the claims concern Kafka's overall approach, his narrative strategies and the

apparent philosophical point of view of his narratives as such, and no longer dwells

to such an extent upon purported allusions. The latter serve largely as

"circumstantial evidence", suggesting the plausibility of a Brentanian reading, but it

is arguably more productive to create Brentanian perspectives on Kafka's writing in

general terms, as a framework for the philosophical encounter with these texts, than

to enforce claims of influence which do not move beyond minutiae. Perhaps the

most important facet of the Brentanian approach to Kafka, therefore, is the sort of

"template" it produces, the "principles" of reading Kafka which it suggests.

The most striking such "principle" is that of "literalism". As both Smith's account

and the reading of "The Transformation" suggested, a Brentanian approach will

analyse the states and events of Kafka's "world", however bizarre, entirely as

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[106]*Austrian Philosophy*, p.56.

intentional phenomena, to be described as such, independently of questions of

verismilitude. The corollary of this stance is that there is no need to "explain"

events in this "world" on the basis of anything transcending them; no such basis is

available, in any case. There is a double commitment, to ontological "neutrality",

and to the epistemological "realism" of the description of intentional phenomena,

regardless of the plausibility of their content. As has been hinted, there seems to be

a parallel ~~to~~ between this philosophical "literalism" and the "literalism" of Kafka's prose

technique, his undemonstrative and unadorned recounting of strange situations and

occurrences, the disturbingly quotidian nature of his protagonists' concerns.

The ambiguity of the relationship between Kafka's writing and Brentanian

thought seems to be embodied by a passage from *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, in

which Kafka's attention turns to descriptive psychology:

> How pathetically scanty my self-knowledge [*Selbsterkenntnis*] is compared with, say,
> my knowledge of my room. (Evening.) Why? There is no such thing as observation of
> the inner world [*Beobachtung der innern Welt*], as there is of the outer world. At least
> descriptive psychology is probably, taken as a whole, a form of anthropomorphism, a
> nibbling at our own limits [*Zumindest deskriptive Psychologie ist wahrscheinlich in
> der Gänze ein Anthropomorphismus, ein Annagen der Grenzen*]. The inner world can
> only be experienced, not described.(BON14-15;KK6,53)

It is very difficult to ascertain the tone of these remarks. On the one hand, the

opposition to notions of "inner observation" seem to repeat Brentano's contentions.

On the other, the claim that descriptive psychology constitutes 'a form of

anthropomorphism, a nibbling at our own limits' might amount to an opaque

critique, or at least a qualification of phenomenological pretensions. Moreover, the

passage is framed by a series of gnomic comments regarding the heterogeneity of

physical and spiritual worlds, and is followed by a passage denouncing

psychology's 'impatience'(BON15;KK6,53). Quite how the comments on

descriptive psychology relate to these surrounding remarks remains mysterious.

This ambiguity perhaps echoes the way in which Kafka's work can be read as

informed by early phenomenological theories, but only alongside a recognition of

the "violence" done to these theories by his singular creative imagination.

3. AUTHORSHIP/GENRE.

*A theory of the work does not exist, and the empirical task of those who naively undertake
the editing of works often suffers in the absence of such a theory*[1]

The preceding consideration of Kafka's writing from the perspective of proto-phenomenological thought was, inevitably, to a certain extent speculative. It appealed to a context (that of Kafka's awareness of "descriptive psychology" and associated theories) without this field of reference sufficing to decide the matter, to determine or fully substantiate the degree of the alleged influence. In fact, it is not clear what data would suffice to settle the question. Even Brod's strident declaration that, in his conversations with Kafka, Brentano was never mentioned[2] would not necessarily undermine the claim that, for example, Kafka "echoed" commitments derived from Brentano without being aware of the allusions, without integrating this process into his aesthetic as a deliberate, conscious component.

It is therefore necessary to strike a balance between two (apparently ~~agonistic~~ antagonistic) forces: the facts of Kafka's involvement with the "Louvre-circle" incite a reading of his work from the perspective of this "school" of thought, and yet this analysis seems unable fully to substantiate itself. In the absence of, for example, any explicit statements on Kafka's part regarding Brentanian thought, as an object of aesthetic appropriation or otherwise, the legitimacy of a proto-phenomenological analysis will always be open to interrogation. The attempt to "justify" such a reading can perhaps, as a consequence, be accomplished via an invocation of a "pragmatic" criterion: the analysis can be said, not to produce a "reconstruction" of a facet of Kafka's literary practice, but rather to ameliorate the philosophical comprehension of his work. The aim of the analysis is thus to produce a philosophically grounded reading, to generate an interpretative apparatus which could articulate philosophically that which (philosophically) is at stake in Kafka. The justification for such a reading must ultimately reside in its efficacy, in the extent to which it fulfils its

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[1] Michel Foucault, "What is an author?"; *Modern Criticism and Theory*, p.199.
[2] *Streitbares Leben*, p.169.

ambition, and the analysis could be undermined if it were to lack textual substantiation; it would consequently seem to constitute a theoretical imposition, a *reduction* of the enigmas of Kafka's texts to a single philosophical motif.

This procedure is, however, still fraught with difficulties. In particular, the criteria for "textual substantiation" seem bound to be rather vague. Umberto Eco has attempted to address the question through the concept of the "*intentio operis*": if the "*intentio auctoris*" is to be considered an illegitimate frame of reference for theoretical or practical reasons, then one does not thereby have to grant absolute licence to an "*intentio lectoris*". Rather, the reader enters into a "dialogue" with the text itself in which, in the process of reading, speculations are encouraged or negated by the text as it unfolds.

There remain substantial problems, however, which become particularly manifest in the case of Kafka: firstly, there is the postulation of an "*intentio*" of the text itself ('the intention of the text is basically to produce a model reader able to make conjectures about it'[3]), and furthermore there is a commitment to "internal textual coherence": 'How to prove a conjecture about the intentio operis? The only way is to check it upon the text as a coherent whole'[4]. In the context of this discussion of Kafka, one is making claims about a set of texts whose relation to a readership is nebulous, and, perhaps more importantly, one is framing "conjectures" which apply not to a single, internally consistent text, but to a variety of often fragmentary texts, scattered across a set of genres. It is clear that the invocation of the "pragmatic" criterion sketched above requires and presupposes a certain conception of how Kafka's texts are to be configured, and how their interplay with the contexts of their production is to be understood. In short, what has yet to be thoroughly investigated is the theoretical apparatus which might articulate the elusive nature of Kafka's literary production.

There is a relative wealth of information regarding Kafka's authorship and subjectivity. A study of Shakespeare, for example, is offered little in the way of biographical information –

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[3] *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, p.64.
[4] Ibid., p.65.

not that this paucity discourages interpretation – and still less in the way of evidence of how he conceived his aesthetic. In contrast, the Kafka critic may avail him/herself (apart from the novels, stories, and fragments of stories) of the diaries, a voluminous correspondence, and the accounts of contemporaries. On the one hand, this eventuality "ought" to guard against the lurid excesses which have sometimes afflicted the attempts to pin down the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. On the other, however, this array of texts creates a panoply of theoretical and interpretative dilemmas.

The extent to which the specificity of Kafka's authorship institutes a network of theoretical conundrums can be grasped from a consideration of its disruption of a set of "orthodox" priorities which one might adopt when approaching an *oeuvre*. One might begin, for instance, with the axiomatic assumption that an author's proper name or signature may be employed as a means of collocating a number of texts and bestowing upon them an identical origin. It is further utilized to shore up the relations between the texts; they perhaps partake in a (quasi-Wittgensteinian) "family resemblance", in a set of stylistic approaches or *topoi* characteristic of the author. Even if there are dissimilarities, one can still (implicitly depending upon their ascription to a single author) identify a temporal continuity, or distinct "periods". The texts may be further classified according to genre, an organization which in effect creates a generic hierarchy of texts in their relation to the author. Thus a reading may focus upon the main body of the author's production (published, complete, novels, stories, plays, poems, etc.) and refer, by way of support, to texts of a "supplementary" or "secondary" nature: unpublished, incomplete works, and then sketches, letters, and so on.

Even a superficial acquaintance with Kafka's output will tend to carry with it an awareness of the degree to which these priorities are obfuscated in this case. First and foremost, one encounters a body of work which the author meant to be destroyed, and immediately enters into the "ethics" of Max Brod's decision as editor-executor and his interpretation of Kafka's wishes and demands. The reader engages with an output in which those texts which might be regarded as "secondary" or "supplementary" (the diaries,

letters, and even the work produced in a bureaucratic capacity) are more extensive than those (the novels and stories) which might be considered "primary", if for no other reason than that it is upon these works that Kafka's reputation is founded.

These texts - even if they are assumed to be "primary" - pose another set of problems. The novels are not only incomplete, but also seem on some levels to resist completion ('This fate pursues me'(D318;KK7,323) writes Kafka, while many - Brod included – have observed that *The Trial* could be prolonged indefinitely): the novel which can perhaps gesture towards closure but which seems unable to attain it already seems to upset some of the conventions of the novel. *The Trial* includes an ending which some have regarded as something of an imposition; the order of the chapters is perhaps not definitive; there is a number of fragments (T235-266;KK2,197-216) which might be incorporated; and there is the story entitled "A Dream", whose relation to the novel is ambiguous.

Some of Kafka's stories were, of course, published, but stories or literary fragments often occur in the diaries and occasionally in letters, provoking the question of whether they could be extracted from their contexts and become stories in their own right. Kafka oversaw the publication of the diary entry which became "A Bachelor's Ill Luck", and yet there is a closely related entry (D130-131;KK7,132-133) which seems no less "complete" but which remains just an entry. Gabriel Josipovici, in explaining his editorial stance and decision to include certain literary "exercises" contained in the diaries, admits that 'it will always be a matter of personal decision which bits of the notebooks and diaries one chooses to regard as finished stories'[5]. This rather arbitrary process is similarly manifest in Brod's decision to exclude the "Blue Octavo Notebooks" from his edition of the diaries on the grounds that they 'are made up almost entirely of literary ideas, fragments, and aphorisms (without reference to the everyday world) [...] Notations of a diary nature, dates, are found in them only as a rare exception'(D492;KK7,538).

These ambiguities make it difficult to assign a clear status to the diaries: they contain passages which could be received as self-contained stories, and fragments which perhaps

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[5] *Collected Stories*, p.xxxix.

could have become stories (and the opposition between completion and fragmentation is here difficult to uphold); the diaries could be aesthetically appreciated in the same way as the stories, as writing, or perhaps as the "becoming-literature of 'life'". The reader may also have to decide upon what sort of authority to confer on Kafka's interpretations of his own work as they emerge in the diaries.

Conversely, the diaries may be regarded as primarily psychological revelation, as descriptive or symptomatic of Kafka's idiosyncratic "personality". This choice is perhaps even more tempting in the case of the "Letter to his Father". According to Brod, although it 'never fulfilled the function of a letter', it was 'undoubtedly intended to have that function'; since it did not therefore succeed as a letter, it may be considered 'the most comprehensive attempt at an autobiography that he ever made'[6]; one wonders if it would have been less of an autobiography had it been more of a letter. In the diaries, Kafka declares his desire to write an autobiography (D140;KK7,143), but later writes that 'In an autobiography one cannot avoid writing "often" where truth would require that "once" be written' (D163;KK7,168): should we therefore regard the letter as inevitably distorted insofar as it is autobiographical? Or as an attempt to provoke feelings in his father? As a search for a cause for his sufferings? Or, as Deleuze and Guattari would have it, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the Oedipus complex (K 10)? We will of course never know, but that fact will not prevent critics of a psychoanalytic disposition eagerly seizing upon it as the "key" to Kafka's literary production. It is the very legitimacy of such moves which must be theoretically assessed.

This process will be accomplished through a consideration of a number of theoretical configurations of authorship and its relation to genre, and a concomitant investigation of the "exemplarity" of Kafka's situation, culminating in an exploration of Kafka's own remarks about authorship, writing, and language itself.

What Kafka's scattered statements regarding his own artistic practice will suggest is that the invocation of the philosophical backdrop of his writing is here somewhat inappropriate.

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[6] *Wedding Preparations in the Country and Other Stories*, p.75-76(KK6,329-330).

If the criterion of (philosophical) contextual reference is to be that of an efficacious philosophical expression of Kafka's writing which yet does not amount to a reductive imposition, then it seems that in this context such reference must be dismissed. Kafka's authorship and agenda decisively exceed the purview of proto-phenomenological thought.

The question of the applicability of Brentanian thought to Kafka's authorial practice must be preceded by a recognition of the extent to which the category of the aesthetic represented a challenge for this "school". Max Brod's often scathing account of the "Louvre-circle" and associated figures emphasizes that "Brentanism" had not created an aesthetic, and pours scorn on Marty's fairly ludicrous account of the value of the artwork. This "value" inheres in the degree of richness of the "psychical content" produced by the artistic representation of objects: thus, according to Brod's synopsis, Marty was committed to the idea that a painting depicting a historical scene is of greater value than a landscape, which is in turn more valuable than a still life; a still life portraying three apples may be considered more worthwhile than a depiction of only one. However, Brod does describe the excited anticipation which attended Emil Utitz's attempt (which was to have been called *Von des Lebens letzten Rätseln*) to contrive an aesthetic for Brentanian thought. Although Utitz's undertaking remained partly unfulfilled[7], such an aesthetic was nonetheless constructed by Stephan Witasek, in his *Grundzüge der allgemeinen Ästhetik* of 1904.

Witasek's theory derives its immediate impetus from Meinong; in *On Assumptions*, the latter had, in the course of delineating the notion of the "assumption", drawn upon "phantasy" phenomena, using as examples children's role-playing games and art, and suggesting a continuity of the two. Although there seems to be no evidence that Kafka was familiar with Witasek's work, it can be assumed that he was aware of these stages of Meinong's argument.

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[7] Utitz's later work on aesthetics is accompanied by a move away from Brentano's influence, regarded as too detached from material and empirical concerns to be of aesthetic relevance: see *Die Grundlagen der jüngsten Kunstbewegung*, p.15-16. Witasek certainly regards all aesthetic qualities as ideal: see *Grundzüge der allgemeinen Ästhetik*, p.12-14.

Working from this initial standpoint, Witasek describes art-works as aggregates of "phantasy" elements, ranging from the simple to the complex; examples of the latter would be the "phantasy" "objectives" and "states-of-affairs" making up a novel. Features such as these provoke a "play" of "phantasy-feeling" in the observer, auditor, or reader, and it is ultimately this "play" that constitutes the art-work. The artist, in this scenario, is a more or less efficient emotional manipulator. As Barry Smith summarizes this position:

> the aesthetic relevance of the events, actions and processes represented in a painting or novel is seen to be confined exclusively to the feeling-material in the spectator to which they give rise [...] The skill of the artist here lies in a moulding of the narrative elements of the work [...] in order to establish relations between the different objects before our minds in such a way that the latter will constitute a kind of supporting fabric for our presentations and feelings[8]

The philosophical tenability of such an aesthetic is of less concern in this context than its applicability to Kafka, a notion which seems highly tenuous. Kafka's writing does much to disrupt the presuppositions of Witasek's theory, such as the priority accorded to aesthetic pleasure, and the reliance upon a notion of the art-work as an "organic unity"[9]. According to Witasek, if a verbal phenomenon is to be artistic, then it must belong to the realm of "phantasy", whereas other linguistic forms – through the intervention of judgment – leave behind such ontological indeterminacy. Many of Kafka's texts problematize this distinction: the aphorisms collected under the title "He"(GWC104-113;KK5,216-222) could be considered artistic phenomena (belonging to the world of "phantasy"), or – given their roots in diary entries – remarks made by Kafka which report obliquely upon himself, in which case they presumably relate to certain empirical phenomena, in which case they would interact with other intentional modes. In the case of these aphorisms, it is impossible to discriminate between the two possibilities. Witasek confers on all artistic phenomena the same ontological status, which leads one to wonder how he would account for the work which incorporates ontological vagaries within its own fabric. For him, artistic phenomena do not engage with judgment (artistic pleasure being defined through its opposition to

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[8] *Austrian Philosophy*, p.150.
[9] See *Austrian Philosophy*, p.136.

feelings associated with judgment[10]), but a crucial feature of Kafka's artistic world surely derives from the fact that one is confronted with the deliberately understated appearance of events which one judges impossible. A brief passage from *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* relates to such matters, but in a much more suggestive fashion:

> Art flies around truth, but with the definite intention of not getting burnt. Its capacity lies in finding in the dark void a place where the beam of light can be intensely caught, without this having been perceptible before (BON39;KK6,77)

If it seems superfluous to call upon an aspect of the philosophical backdrop to Kafka's work merely to suggest its irrelevance to his case, then the discussion has nevertheless served two purposes. Firstly, it serves to shore up the notion tentatively proposed above, that there is a criterion for assessing the "legitimacy" of philosophical contextual reference which need not be grounded on an indemonstrable claim of substantial influence, by showing that there is a clear case in which the appeal to a philosophical context does nothing to enhance the philosophical articulation of Kafka's literary production. Secondly, it covertly gestures towards those aspects of artistic production which are not thought through by the phenomenological approach but which are addressed by post-structuralism.

An aspect of the post-structuralist critique is motivated by the failure of this Brentanian theory of art and its phenomenological successors to comprehend theoretically the nature of authorship and its relation to genre. The artist is sometimes seen in such approaches as an orchestrator of emotional affectivity, but the nature of this orchestration is not substantially addressed beyond the assumption that the medium in which the artist works is essentially "transparent", directly transcribing and communicating the presumed artistic intention. Indeed, a certain lack of a sustained analysis of the nature of authorial practice seems to characterize the literary-theoretical "legacy" of phenomenological thought.

This legacy is most prominent in the "Geneva school" of phenomenological criticism (its most important exponents perhaps being Georges Poulet and Jean Starobinski), which tended to consist in a literary formalism which "methodologically" reduces the figure of the

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[10] See *Grundzüge der allgemeinen Ästhetik*, p.66-75.

author to the mere form of transcendental subjectivity (immanent to the text) in the attempt to disclose the work's *Lebenswelt*. As Wolfgang Iser declares by way of exposition of Poulet's approach, 'consciousness forms the point at which author and reader converge [...] on two conditions: the life-story of the author must be shut out of the work, and the individual disposition of the reader must be shut out of the act of reading'(MCT 226). Poulet himself claims that "'a work of literature becomes [...] a sort of human being, that [...] is, a mind conscious of itself and constituting itself in me as the subject of its own objects"'(MCT 226). In Iser's own hands, phenomenological literary criticism becomes a form of "reader response theory", in which 'the literary work cannot be completely identical with the text [...] The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual'(MCT 212[11]).

Thus phenomenologically-informed literary theory, in common with Russian Formalism (with its concentration upon the "literariness of literature") and New Criticism, tends "methodologically" to reduce the figure of the author to a formal void in the focus upon the "virtuality" of the work. As Terry Eagleton stridently declares, it could be objected that it thus amounts to 'an idealist, essentialist, anti-historical, formalist and organicist type of criticism, a kind of pure distillation of the blind spots, prejudices and limitations of modern literary theory'[12]. One does not have to subscribe to such invective to discern a certain theoretical under-determination of this approach. Authorial reference is disqualified, but in the absence of an argument for the radical (epistemological?) heterogeneity of author and work and the impossibility of a commerce between the two, this injunction seems to amount merely to the assumption that such reference would "contaminate" the formalism of the phenomenological encounter with the "idealized" work.

The problem is that it is difficult, on such grounds, to repress consistently dependence on some notion of the author, as for example a "signature" under which several texts convene.

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[11] For Iser, the author is present in the work as a "doubling" of the reader.
[12] *Literary Theory*, p.60.

The juxtaposition of, for instance, *Dubliners* and *Finnegans Wake* will rely to some extent on their shared ascription to "James Joyce", and moreover their stylistic dissimilarity (and any continuity) is probably most efficaciously accounted for by reference to the "life" and artistic development of James Joyce. Eagleton suggests that the Geneva school presupposed that an author's writings constitute 'an organic whole'[13], but such is the dichotomy between Joyce's two works that not only is it difficult to identify an "organic whole", it is even possible that, were there no reference to an author whose function spreads across the texts, they would not be ascribed to the same, or a single author.

This objection need not entail a commitment to reference to an "external", biographical existence of the author, but rather seeks to indicate that authorship requires a theoretical problematization and configuration which would amount to more than merely its "methodological" reduction.

Post-structuralist approaches to literature seem to offer just such an amplification of the study of authorship and the question of genre, most tangibly in the guise of deconstruction. The key figures of the "deconstructive" tendency of post-structuralism (although the term was coined by Derrida, it is here applied loosely to encompass Barthes, Blanchot, Derrida and De Man) share roots in phenomenology (usually that of Husserl) and its existentialist extrapolation, in particular that of Heidegger. This field of influence, however, was to be radically overhauled through the encounter with structuralist linguistics.

The impact of such theories of language (primarily represented by Saussure, but also involving figures such as Jakobson and Hjelmslev) traversed a number of disciplines, including anthropology (initially through Levi-Strauss), sociology and psychoanalysis (with Lacan, and later Kristeva) as well as philosophy and literary theory. Whereas phenomenology asserted the primacy of subjectivity and tended to regard the analysis of language as a derivative enquiry not subversive of its main focus, Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* declared that it would be a 'rather naive approach' which assumed

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[13] Ibid., p.59.

'that ready-made ideas exist before words'[14]. In the most celebrated passage of the treatise, Saussure states that, 'in language there are only differences *without positive terms*. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system'[15].

Post-structuralist thought will of course enter into a critical engagement with such a theory, but it is immediately clear that Saussure's account incites a rethinking of the nature of the (phenomenological) subject. The linguistic system predates the subject, and the subject emerges through entry into language; it is, in a sense, an "effect" of language. Since language is not the "property" of the subject (there cannot be a "private language"), the subject cannot "monopolize" meaning: the semantic possibilities of a given utterance inhere in a system which is not transparent to the subject. For deconstructive thought in particular, language displaces "self-presence" and the category of intention postulated by phenomenological positions.

Given that subjectivity is now regarded as vitally dependent upon the order of the sign, finding its purchase in the play of signification, it is hardly surprising that there is a pronounced anti-authorial tendency in post-structuralist literary theory. This emphasis is no longer that of a literary "formalism", and rather results from a vision of language as a polyphonous, polysemic network over which the subject can exercise no more than partial authority. This tendency finds its apotheosis in the notion of the "death of the author", which has often (and somewhat hastily) been taken to characterize post-structuralist literary theory in general.

Barthes' 1967 essay "The death of the author" (which was to a certain degree a manifesto for *S/Z*[16]) places heavy emphasis upon the contention that language is not a "medium"

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[14] *Course in General Linguistics*, p.65.

[15] Ibid., p.120.

[16] It might seem odd to treat Barthes as representative of post-structuralism, since he is often regarded as a structuralist. Although there is no real discontinuity in his work, it seems that, while his earlier work can be considered "structuralist", Barthes' concerns become increasingly convergent with those taken to characterize the "deconstructive" tendency in post-structuralist thought. Curiously, the elements of this transition can be glimpsed in his brief article on Kafka: on the one hand, there is the formalism and concern for systematicity characteristic of

which could surrender itself to subjective control. Rather, the subject emerges only through language and only in language: it is 'nothing other than the instance saying *I* [...] this subject [is] empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it'(MCT169). Hence also 'the author is never more than the instance writing'(MCT168). Not only is language the locus in which the authorial subject emerges, it is also the terrain in which it is effaced as a point of origin: 'Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing'(MCT168).

If "identity" is lost, the subject effaced, then the inevitable accompanying movement is the confounding of intention and the horizon of communication: 'a text is not a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture'(MCT170). This essential multiplicity of the text would seem to complicate the possibility of circumscribing it, of determining the ground of its cohesion. However, Barthes sees this function as being taken over by the reader: 'but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination'(MCT171).

Barthes is quite prepared to acknowledge the disjunction he has set up: 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author'(MCT172). He seeks to liberate the reader, and seems to feel that this must be at the expense of an author construed as a deified tyrant, the imposition of univocity on multiplicity. The apparent problem of treating "the" text as a plurality of "writings" is that there no longer seems to be a region, such as that of

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literary structuralism, with the claim that Kafka reveals that *'the being of literature is nothing but its technique'*("Kafka's Answer", in *Critical Essays*; p.135), and the focus upon Kafka's "structural precision", and "allusion" as 'a pure technique of signification'(ibid., p.136). On the other hand lie traits of "deconstructive" concerns, with the emergence of an idea dear to the later Barthes, that writing 'is an absolutely intransitive act'(ibid., p.135), and the claim that 'the writer can show only the *sign* without the *signified*'(ibid., p.135).

the "signature", in which the text can be circumscribed, in which its identity could be located. Thus the reader becomes the locus in which plurality is reassimilated as "unity", but at the cost of an "ideality" of the figure of the reader. Barthes' reader (in some respects rather like the disinterested subject of aesthetic judgment in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*[17]) is 'without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted'(MCT171). The most immediate resonance of this claim is that of its reinscription of the transcendental anonymity which afflicted phenomenological criticism's treatment of the subjectivity of the author (and reader); Barthes' desecration of the "Author-God" amounts as much to a transference of authority as a liberation of the text, since there is now a latent "Reader-God".

Barthes' essay is obviously an act of deliberate provocation, but it is indicative of the interpretative space opened up by the (post-structuralist) foregrounding of writing (*écriture*) or discourse and concomitant problematization of authorship (now a textual function rather than an "origin") and (generic) textual identity. The pursuit of these less immediately polemical theories, in their purported relation to Kafka, will involve an investigation of how consistently such commitments are maintained, and how successfully they can configure the status of an author's "life", context, and "supplementary" texts (statements about writing, psychobiographical testimony). The point of departure for this analysis is to be found in the sustained engagement with Kafka performed by Maurice Blanchot.

Blanchot's texts constitute a crucial transitional point in the emergence of post-structuralism in that they are informed to a significant yet ambiguous degree by Heidegger's reconfiguration of the phenomenological project, often refracted through Levinas' critique, and simultaneously anticipate many of the themes and techniques of Derridean deconstruction. Moreover, Kafka is central to the development of Blanchot's

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[17] See the Third Critique's second section, "The Satisfaction which determines the Judgment of Taste is Disinterested"; *Critique of Judgment*, p.38-39.

thought: his encounter with Kafka is one of his most sustained engagements with a creative writer, indeed sufficiently so for the dispersed essays in which it takes place to be collected as *De Kafka à Kafka*. Blanchot's *récits* similarly admit that most exhausted of attributes, "Kafkaesque".

Throughout his writings on Kafka, Blanchot is singularly sensitive to the pitfalls attending the attempt to grasp this elusive body of work:

> Whoever reads Kafka is thus forcibly transformed into a liar, but not a complete liar. That is the anxiety peculiar to his art, an anxiety undoubtedly more profound than the anguish over our fate [...] We undergo the immediate experience of an imposture we think we are able to avoid, against which we struggle (by reconciling contradictory interpretations) - and this effort is deceptive, yet we consent to it, and this laziness is betrayal[18]

Kafka's work, as Blanchot realizes, is at risk of becoming the object of an interpretative laziness, that of a theoretical agenda which exerts an inevitably reductive critical violence upon it, and which, in doing so, betrays the intangible force of Kafka's texts. This risk inspires in Blanchot a scepticism with regard to the litany of existentialist, religious, humanist and psychoanalytic appropriations of Kafka's output: 'They use almost the same words: the absurd, contingency, [...] the desire for God, the absence of God, despair, anguish. And yet of whom are they speaking?'[19].

Blanchot's admonitory stance in the face of such tendencies is coupled with what initially appears to be another sceptical attitude, applying to the identification of authorial subjectivity. His later work (which will be considered in the next section), in particular, represents narration as the zone in which subject-positions lose their purchase, while an earlier work declares that 'By removing it from any author [...] this distance gives the work for what it is'[20]. As De Man says of Blanchot's interpretative scepticism in this context, 'One is never so far removed from the center as when one assumes to have recaptured the origin of the self in an empirical experience that is taken to be the cause. Blanchot is not

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[18] *The Work of Fire*, p.4.
[19] Ibid., p.5.
[20] *The Space of Literature*, p.201.

likely to be misled in this direction'[21]. De Man couples this claim with Blanchot's declaration of the "impossibility" of self-reading: 'the writer never reads his work. It is, for him, illegible, a secret. He cannot linger in its presence. It is a secret because he is separated from it'[22]. The peculiarity of this statement is that it is unclear whether this "impossibility" is theoretical or merely pragmatic. It is also surprising to find Blanchot focusing to such an extent (and most notably in "Kafka and the Work's Demand") upon Kafka's diaries, which seem at times to enact the process of self-reading which had been adjudged "impossible". De Man, on the other hand, discerns another "methodological" move in Blanchot's work: the "impossibility of self-reading" constitutes a preparatory gesture, and the question of the subject can re-emerge once the work has been conceived as 'an autonomous entity, a "consciousness without a subject"'[23], which is termed in "Literature and the Right to Death" '*my* consciousness *without me* [...] an impersonal spontaneity'[24].

"Literature and the Right to Death" is in this context a crucial essay, for it indicates the sense in which Kafka's authorship has for Blanchot an exemplary status, that of its formulation in a relation to death. The relationship between literature and death is one of Blanchot's most persistent concerns, although the expression of this relation is occasionally ambiguous and not necessarily consistent. It is perhaps most clearly and forcefully articulated in this essay, which prefigures in important respects Derridean theories: its closest counterpart being the argument of "Signature Event Context".

Blanchot's contentions in "Literature and the Right to Death" are based upon the quasi-Hegelian claim that the act of naming consists in a negation of both the "entity" named ('my language essentially signifies the possibility of this destruction'[25]) and the "speaker". 'When I speak, I deny the existence of what I am saying, but I also deny the existence of

[21] *Blindness and Insight*, p.68.
[22] *The Space of Literature*, p.23.
[23] *Blindness and Insight*, p.78.
[24] *The Work of Fire*, p.328/331.
[25] Ibid., p.323.

the person who is saying it'[26]. This negation is portrayed as the introduction of the possibility of absence-as-death, and as the effacement of the signified, which is constituted only on the basis of the signifier. For Derrida, this absence is inscribed in the nature of the sign through the fact that a sign, in order to be a sign, must still be able to signify beyond the potential death-as-absence of both sender and receiver[27]. Blanchot similarly highlights the continued function of the author's language beyond his/her empirical absence: 'and at the end of everything is fame; beyond, there is oblivion; farther beyond, anonymous survival as part of a dead culture'[28].

Blanchot regards this situation as an instantiation of the "impossibility of death"[29], a formulation which indicates a relation to Heidegger's conception of death as "the possibility of impossibility"[30]; certainly Blanchot's idiom often recalls that of Heidegger. However, the critical aspect of his engagement with Heidegger is implied by his rejection of the reciprocity between "possibility" and "impossibility" in the latter's formulation. According to Blanchot, my empirical demise removes death as a possibility, one which structured "my world": 'to die [...] is the loss of the person [...]; and so it is also the loss of death [...] when I die [...] my impending death horrifies me because I see it as it is: no longer death but the impossibility of dying [*mourir*]'[31].

It can already be intuited that Kafka occupies a prominent position for this identification of the "impossibility of death": in Blanchot's assessment, he adopts the logic of the religious solution to the "impossibility" (metamorphosis as the metempsychosis of a "negative theology"[32]) but "secularizes" it to illuminate existence in the world: 'Kafka did not make this theme the expression of a drama about the next world, but he did try to use it to capture the present fact of our condition'[33].

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[26] Ibid., p.324.
[27] See "Signature Event Context"; *A Derrida Reader*, p.82-111.
[28] Op. cit., p.336.
[29] "Death" is *la mort* (See *De Kafka à Kafka*, p.53), which is often distinguished from "dying" (*mourir*), although not in an entirely consistent manner.
[30] See *Being and Time*, section 53; p.307.
[31] *The Work of Fire*, p.337; *De Kafka à Kafka*, p.52.
[32] Ibid., p.338.
[33] Ibid., p.338.

Blanchot's configuration of mortality and its attendant "impossibility" appears in various guises (for example, with an "ethical" inflection in "The Great Refusal"), but is persistently broached in relation to Kafka, for instance in a more explicitly Heideggerean idiom in "The Language of Fiction": 'he misses what he aims for, death being death only when one makes it one's own and it stops being the death of no matter whom'[34]. However, a certain tension arises within Blanchot's reflections when he applies the contentions of "Literature and the Right to Death" directly to literary texts. For while that essay expressed the relation to death (and its impossibility) as a necessary condition of naming, language, and literature in particular, Blanchot also sees this relation as embodied in certain texts, and this often provokes and necessitates a certain interpretative imposition.

This subtle manipulation of texts is identified by De Man apropos of Blanchot's reading of Mallarmé: 'Igitur's death then becomes for him a version of one of his own main obsessions, what he calls "la mort impossible", a theme more closely affiliated with Rilke and one that does not fully coincide with Mallarmé's chief concern'[35]. Blanchot's perhaps over-hasty recognition of his own theoretical agenda is possibly also latent in his insistence that the 'profound relation' to death to be found in Gide, amongst others, 'despite appearances [malgré l'apparence] is the one Kafka pursued also'[36].

Although one can perhaps sense in Kafka, as in Rilke, an adumbration of the themes of Blanchot's analysis of death, one can nevertheless still detect a certain imposition of conformity with his own concerns effected by Blanchot. Thus "Reading Kafka" concludes with a consideration of how 'death ends our life, but it does not end our possibility of dying; it is real as an end to life and illusory as an end to death'[37] and how this claim is embodied in Kafka's texts: "The Hunter Gracchus" depicts the dilemma of 'dead people who are vainly trying to finish dying', while 'Gregor's state is the state of the being who

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[34] Ibid., p.82.
[35] Blindness and Insight, p.72.
[36] The Space of Literature, p.95; De Kafka à Kafka, p.139.
[37] The Work of Fire, p.8.

cannot depart from existence', and Josef K. 'still has to have his share of survival, that of the shame [...] condemning him to live as well as to die'[38].

However, even a cursory examination of these passages would indicate that they are being conflated on a rather tenuous basis: "The Hunter Gracchus" asserts the impossibility of "properly dying" on the level of what Blanchot terms the "objective real"[39], in a very "literal" sense. Meanwhile, Josef K.'s dying exclamation is interpreted in *The Trial* as "It was *as if* the shame *would* outlive him [*es war, als sollte die Schaum ihn überleben*]'(T231;KK2,194; my italics), which does not imply that this shame *does* or *will* outlive him as Blanchot implicitly presupposes in order to subvert the finality of Josef K.'s death. Similarly, while the concluding flourishing of Gregor's sister might indeed suggest that 'life goes on'[40], this does not except in the most opaque sense denote the "impossibility" of Gregor's death, nor does it assert death's impossibility in any sense apart from that of the platitude that one person continues to live and flourish after another person has died, which seems a rather trivial version of the "impossibility".

What is indicated by this failure to accommodate the heterogeneous character of Kafka's texts? Does it not suggest that Blanchot, having sought substantiation in the diaries, is imposing a theoretical/thematic unity on Kafka's work, is implicitly claiming the "impossibility of death" as the defining trait of Kafka's writing, a step which would be dangerously close to the imposition of a "signified"?

The continuity between the projects of Blanchot and Derrida, it has been suggested, is apparent in the latter's "Signature Event Context". The immediate concern of this essay is to produce a critique of the prioritization of speech over writing (as it emerges in the work of J.L. Austin; Condillac and Husserl are also cited) in the attempt to apprehend language as communication.

Derrida's tactic in this analysis is that of insisting upon the "iterability" of the sign, the fact that, by definition, a sign must be capable of being repeated outside of the immediate

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[38] Ibid., p.8-11.
[39] See *The Infinite Conversation*, p.381.
[40] *The Work of Fire*, p.10.

context of its enunciation without losing its significatory function. He in effect reconstructs the logic which might lead to the dismissal of writing by identifying the features which seem both to denote the status of writing and to complicate a theory of communication.

One such feature is the fact that 'One writes in order to communicate something to those who are absent'[41], that the moment of inscription seems to complicate the invocation of a clearly circumscribed context which could assist a theory of communication. Derrida develops this claim by noting that for writing to function as such, it must be able to operate in the absolute absence of (any given) addressee: 'All writing, therefore, in order to be what it is, must be able to function in [this] [...] radical absence of every empirically determined addressee in general. And this absence is not a continuous modification of presence; it is [...] the possibility of the "death" of the addressee'[42]. Iterability thus consists in the possibility of the (unaffected) continued function of writing beyond the absence/"death" of the receiver, and thus also of the sender[43].

The features which seem to render writing problematic for a theory of communication are therefore seen to follow from the iterability of the sign, which is equally the condition of the spoken sign: 'Across empirical variations of tone, of voice, etc., eventually of a certain accent [...] one must be able to recognize the identity of the signifying form [...] this unity of the signifying form is constituted only by its iterability'[44]; thus the consequences of iterability which appeared to complicate the case of writing must apply *also* to speech.

Furthermore, Derrida argues that the iterability of the sign displaces the roles of both an "alleged real context" ('it belongs to the sign to be legible [...] even if I do not know what its alleged author-scriptor meant consciously and intentionally'[45]) and a 'semiotic and internal context': 'one can always lift a written syntagma from the interlocking chain in which it is caught or given without making it lose every possibility of functioning'[46]. The

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[41] *A Derrida Reader*, p.89.
[42] Ibid., p.91.
[43] Ibid., p.88.
[44] Ibid., p.94.
[45] Ibid., p.93.
[46] Ibid., p.93.

sign must function even if it is divorced from, for example, its referent or an intention to signify[47]. The fact that any word(s) can be '*cited,* put between quotation marks'[48] means for Derrida that 'it can break with every given context, and engender indefinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion'[49]. As he is quick to point out, 'This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring'[50].

Derrida's argument makes it clear that if iterability is to be taken as "axiomatic", and the production of a non-hierarchical set of (potential) contexts as its consequence, then the category of intention can have only a subordinate status. This does not mean that there is no "effect" of intention: rather, 'it will have its place, but from this place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and the entire system of utterances'[51].

In *Of Grammatology,* Derrida clearly exploits this point as the basis of a mode of reading: 'the writer writes *in* a language and *in* a logic whose proper system, laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely [...] the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language that he uses'[52]. This declaration occurs in the course of a virtuoso reading of Rousseau which persistently traverses the border between his "private life" (as "revealed" in the *Confessions)* and his theoretical agenda, tracing the logic of the "supplement" as it appears in both spheres. However, since Derrida has embarked upon a process of subverting Rousseau's determination of the "supplementary", the analysis cannot consistently criticize the *Essay on the Origin of Languages* and support itself through a supplementary reference to another text (which would here be "supplementary"), the *Confessions:* a hierarchy of texts (generic or otherwise) cannot be countenanced.

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[47] Ibid., p.95.
[48] Ibid., p.97.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., p.104.
[52] *Of Grammatology,* p.158.

It was argued that there remained in the (early) work of Blanchot an occulted tendency to retain such a structure in the attempt to identify the "impossibility of death" as a defining motif of Kafka's authorship: Derrida, however, addresses this tendency directly. His reading 'cannot legitimately transgress the text toward something other than it, toward a referent (a reality that is metaphysical, historical, psychological, etc.) [...] [or] toward a psychobiographical signified, or even toward a general psychological structure that could rightly be separated from the signifier'[53]. To construe even the "confessional" or "psychologically revelatory" text as gesturing to a "personality" or subjective experience beyond it, prior to it, its origin, is effectively to appeal to 'a signified outside the text whose content could take place, could have taken place outside of language'[54]: it is precisely this postulation of a subjectivity logically dissociable from the signifier which was undermined in the post-structuralist critique of phenomenology.

In this sense, and with the notorious slogan '*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*'[55], Derrida contends that the reading should consist in the production of a "signifying structure" that 'must be intrinsic and remain within the text'[56]. In these terms, in the encounter with Kafka's body of work there is not a group of literary texts on the one hand, and on the other a set of "personal" texts which point towards an "external", "historical" "reality" of Kafka's life constituted independently of linguistic incorporation. Rather, Kafka's "life" is interpretatively configured as an essentially textual phenomenon ('I am nothing but literature'(D230;KK7,233)), and the reading must pursue a path immanent to Kafka's texts without instituting a contextual hierarchy. To this it might be objected that such hierarchies are fundamental to the very structure of the encounter: it is counter-intuitive to imagine (as soon as one is given their generic identification) that one can engage with the diaries or letters without, at least implicitly, being informed by their apparent reference to an *"hors-texte"*.

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[53] Ibid., p.158-159.
[54] Ibid., p.158.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., p.159.

The implied Derridean response to such an objection consists in the analysis of the extent to which such textual encounters are determined by the "law of genre". In writing on Kafka's "Before the Law", Derrida focuses upon the extent to which the literary text is circumscribed by a set of culturally-embedded conventions, the work's 'legal personality'[57]. The 'axiomatic consensus' surrounding the text establishes 'the *presumed* reality of the author, bearing the name of Franz Kafka': 'The existence of its signatory is not fictitious, in contrast with the characters in the story'[58]. Complicit with this determination is the ascription of a title ('the title of a book allows us to classify it in a library, to attribute to it rights of authorship'[59]) in so far as 'the entitling event confers upon the text its law and its name, but this is a *coup de force*, for example with respect to *The Trial*, from which the story is torn to become another institution'[60].

These features amount to a summoning of the text before the law to which it must submit in order to attain its identity; if 'there is no such thing as a literary essence or a specifically literary domain strictly identifiable as such'[61], then "'literature" has something to do with the drama of naming, the law of the name and the name of the law'[62]. As the chiasmus suggests, this "naming" involves a reciprocity: 'it is necessary to think [*il y a lieu de penser*] together, no doubt, a certain historicity of law and a certain historicity of literature'[63]. This link between law and literature has its immediate 'guardians (author, publisher, critics, academics, archivists, librarians, lawyers, and so on)'[64] who are themselves functionaries of 'a more powerful system of laws [...] in particular the set of laws and social conventions that legitimates all these things'[65]. If the reference to "all these things" seems somewhat vague, it is because Derrida is sceptical with regard to the identification of features which define the literary text:

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[57] *Acts of Literature*, p.185.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., p.189.
[60] Ibid., p.201.
[61] Ibid., p.187.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., p.214.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

> If framing, title, and referential structure are necessary for the literary work as such to emerge, these conditions of possibility still remain too general and hold for other texts to which we would hardly ascribe literary value. These possibilities give the text the power to *make the law,* beginning with its own[66].

This passage alludes to a further factor, that of the text's capacity to produce its own law. There are texts, such as those of Kafka, which do not clearly submit to literary conventions ('among the works we have inherited there are those in which unity, identity, and completion remain problematic'[67]), and which therefore - at least implicitly - stand apart from the law of literature and institute a space from which their relation to this law may be assessed. "Before the Law" resides in the "margin" of literature: 'the powerful ellipsis it gives us does not entirely belong to literature. The place from which it tells us *about* the laws of literature, the law without which no literary specificity would take shape or substance, this place cannot be simply *interior* to literature'[68].

"Before the Law", in blurring conventional generic designations and in meditating upon the nature of law, reveals, according to Derrida, a certain legal-critical function of literature: the text,

> under certain determined conditions,...can exercise the legislative power of linguistic performativity to sidestep existing laws from which, however, it derives protection and receives its conditions of emergence. This is owing to the referential equivocation of certain linguistic structures. Under these conditions literature can *play the law* [*jouer la loi*], repeating it while diverting or circumventing it[69].

In the closely related reading of Blanchot, "The Law of Genre", Derrida articulates this literary "faculty" as a trait proper to literature as such. It is suggested that it may be "axiomatic" that the literary work 'bear the mark of a genre'[70], and emphasized that this "marking" does not belong essentially to the work itself ('the designation "novel" [...] is not novelistic'[71]). Thus there remains an essential distance between the text and a generic

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., p.185.
[68] Ibid., p.214.
[69] Ibid., p.216.
[70] Ibid., p.229.
[71] Ibid., p.230.

classification which is nevertheless necessary. This impossibility of the work's complete coincidence with "its" genre, and its concomitant irreducible relation to other genres, Derrida calls 'the law of the law of genre. It is precisely a principle of contamination, a law of impurity, a parasitical economy'[72].

Derrida emphasizes that 'this remarking-trait need be neither a theme nor a thematic component of the work'[73], but is nevertheless concerned with an "exemplary" instance: 'the *récit* [Blanchot's *Madness of the Day]* which I will discuss presently makes the impossibility of the *récit* its theme'[74]. There is arguably a similar priority in his reading of "Before the Law": in the attempt to identify an interplay between law and literature in which literature may exceed the law by which it is still determined, Kafka's story is represented as an "exemplary" moment, a text in which this drama is played out on the surface of the text. The question which this configuration raises - one which emerged apropos of Blanchot and which will be addressed more fully in the next chapter - is that of whether Derrida, through this gesture, risks considering the law/literature relation in reductive terms as the ultimate "content" of Kafka's text.

There is another law at work in Derrida's encounter with "Before the Law", which is self-imposed: the "law" of deconstructive interpretation. As has been seen, Derrida has disqualified the reading which would attempt to transgress the text, to refer to a "reality" which could be dissociated from writing. One such "illegitimate" move would be that of claiming that Kafka was influenced by Freud: Freud is mentioned by Kafka, but since there is no direct reference in Kafka's texts to influence, such a claim would constitute a gesture towards an extra-textual phenomenon. Rather than purely refraining from such a claim, Derrida in fact seems to allude to and then immediately withdraw from it, in a self-cancelling gesture that arguably becomes a motif of his reading.

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[72] Ibid., p.228.
[73] Ibid., p.230.
[74] Ibid., p.228.

Thus there is the introduction of 'Freud (whom Kafka is known to have read, although this Austro-Hungarian law of the early 1900s is not important here)'[75], followed by an allusion to the contemporaneous nature of the publications of Freud and Kafka, 'though this relation is of little interest to us'[76]. The reading of Kafka through Freud begins with, 'If, without taking into account any relation between Freud and Kafka, you now place yourself before "Before the Law"'[77], and the study of the relationship of priority between "Before the Law" and *The Trial* includes the declaration that 'chronology is of little relevance here, even if, as we know, it is only "Before the Law" that Kafka will have published, under this title, during his lifetime'[78].

What is the structure of these allusions? A suggestion is implanted, and then immediately disclaimed, but this abrogation arguably cannot efface the "memory" of the allusion to a zone of substantiation which is not available if theoretical consistency is to be maintained. Derrida is fully aware of, and has himself exploited, the function of Heidegger's writing "Being" *sous rature*: the act of effacement is acknowledged, but "Being" remains a legible trace; and analogous effect is arguably produced by an analysis which persistently alludes to claims which it cannot consistently formulate, which simultaneously offers and disavows lines of argumentation.

The capacity of literature to interrogate its "legal personality" is in part owing to the historical contingency of these determinations, according to Derrida: 'This history of conventions is very recent, and everything it guarantees remains essentially unstable, fragile as an artifice'[79]. A brief passage alludes to this history of 'the law that regulates problems involving property rights over works, the identity of corpora, the value of signatures, the difference between creating, producing, and reproducing, and so on. Roughly speaking, this law became established between the late seventeenth and early

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[75] Ibid., p.192.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., p.195.
[78] Ibid., p.217.
[79] Ibid., p.185.

nineteenth centuries in Europe'[80]. In effect, Derrida refers to a genealogy of the determinations of author, work, and genre; a gesture which calls to mind the overall "archaeological" method and the specific analysis of the "author-function" of Michel Foucault.

In his essay "What is an author?", Foucault contemplates the issues surrounding the identification of an author's work; his example is that of Nietzsche, but the set of questions surely applies equally to the case of Kafka:

> When undertaking the publication of Nietzsche's works, for example, where should one stop? Surely everything must be published, but what is 'everything'? Everything that Nietzsche himself published, certainly. And what about the rough drafts for his works? Obviously. The plans for his aphorisms? Yes. The deleted passages and the notes at the bottom of the page? Yes. What if, within a workbook filled with aphorisms, one finds a reference, the notation of a meeting or an address, or a laundry list: is it a work, or not? Why not? And so on, ad infinitum (MCT199).

This self-perpetuating series of questions bears witness, according to Foucault, not merely to practical, editorial difficulties, but moreover to the lack of a theoretical grounding of the "work": 'the word "work" and the unity that it designates are probably as problematic as the status of the author's individuality'(MCT199).

Characteristically, Foucault responds to this dilemma less by proposing a theory of authorship and the work than by offering a sketch of the historical shifts affecting the "author-function". Thus he claims that 'A reversal occurred in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Scientific discourses began to be received for themselves, in the anonymity of an established or always redemonstrable truth [...] By the same token, literary discourses came to be accepted only when endowed with the author-function'(MCT203). For Foucault, as for Derrida, these structures/strictures attaching to literature have a "legal" aspect: 'texts, books, and discourses really began to have authors [...] to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be transgressive'(MCT202). Hence Foucault's interpretation of a second historical movement: 'once strict rules concerning author's rights, author-publisher relations, rights of

[80] Ibid., p.215.

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reproduction, and related matters were enacted - at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century - the possibility of transgression attached to the act of writing took on [...] the form of an imperative peculiar to literature'(MCT 202).

Thus far Foucault's analysis is consistent with the commitments of *The Order of Things*. The aim of that work was to disclose the 'positive unconscious of knowledge'[81] of a given age, a latent conceptual plane of consistency from which seemingly discrete intellectual projects would all equally have their provenance, and which he terms the *"episteme"*. As he describes this underlying continuity of an epoch, 'the fundamental codes of a culture - those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices - establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home'[82]. The *episteme*, therefore, is the fundamental locus of coherence which is logically anterior to any given cultural expression of it: any intellectual endeavour will have a certain symptomatic value as the articulation of its epistemic context.

Two principles derive from this approach. Firstly, Foucault insists upon the radical discontinuity or incommensurability of *epistemi;* thus at the beginning of the nineteenth century, knowledge did not "progress" or advance preceding discoveries; rather, 'the mode of being of things, and of the order that divided them up before presenting them to the understanding, was profoundly altered'[83]. Secondly, Foucault subordinates discussion of individual thinkers to an analysis of their epistemic context: 'it seems to me that the historical analyses of scientific discourse should [...] be subject, not to a theory of the knowing subject, but rather to a theory of discursive practice'[84]. The notion of subjective agency is displaced in that the *episteme* is not itself caused by any identifiable subject: it is essentially unauthored, and any text to which subjective agency is ascribed has, from this point of view, a largely symptomatic value.

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[81] *The Order of Things*, p.xi.
[82] Ibid., p.xx.
[83] Ibid., p.xxii.
[84] Ibid., p.xiv.

Given these tendencies, it is not surprising that "What is an author?" begins and ends with an apparently strict anti-authorial position ('criticism and philosophy took note of the disappearance - or death - of the author some time ago. But the consequences of their discovery of it have not been sufficiently examined'(MCT198)), and that it also analyses authorship in so far as it emerges in historically contingent discursive practices.

However, Foucault commits what appears to be an alarming *volte-face* when he declares that 'I seem to have given the term "author" much too narrow a meaning'(MCT206). This interjection leads to the remarkable postulation of an authorship both wider in scope than many "orthodox" representations and apparently not subject to specific historical or epistemic modifications: 'one can be the author of much more than a book - one can be the author of a theory, tradition, or discipline in which other books and authors will in turn find a place. These authors are in a position which we shall call "transdiscursive". This is a recurring phenomenon - certainly as old as our civilization'(MCT206). It is worth noting that this identification of "founders of discursivity" seems directly to contravene the dismissal in *The Order of Things* of the idea of trans-epistemic influence as 'obscurely incantatory'[85].

"What is an author?" hence concludes with an apparent attempt to synthesize these two antagonistic contentions in a formulation which is decisive for the trajectory of Foucault's later work: 'still, perhaps one must return to this question, not in order to re-establish the theme of an originating subject, but to grasp the subject's points of insertion, modes of functioning, and system of dependencies'(MCT209). Indeed, Foucault will retrospectively declare that 'it is not power, but the subject, which is the general theme of my research'[86]. This shift in focus is similarly evident in a late discussion of authorship:

> Therefore, I believe that it is better to try to understand that someone who is a writer is not simply doing his work in his books, in what he publishes, but that his major work is, in the end, himself in the process of writing his books. The private life of an individual, his sexual preference, and his work are interrelated not because the work translates his sexual life, but

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[85] Ibid., p.56; the context is that of a dismissal of "Cartesianism".
[86] "The Subject and Power", appendix to Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*; p.209.

because the work includes the whole life as well as the text. The work is more than the work: the subject who is writing is part of the work[87].

This position seems to constitute a very delicate theoretical negotiation, but one which is perhaps rather appropriate in the case of Kafka: 'yes, if it were a question of words, if it were sufficient to set down one word and one could turn away in the calm consciousness of having entirely filled this word with oneself'(D34;KK7,27).

Foucault also employs Kafka as an example of a twofold movement: writing as a specific relation to death, and writing as the "death" of the author: 'the work, which once had the duty of providing immortality, now possesses the right to kill, to be its author's murderer, as in the cases of Flaubert, Proust, and Kafka. That is not all, however: this relationship between writing and death is also manifested in the effacement of the writing subject's individual characteristics'(MCT198). This passage is typical of a certain ambivalence on Foucault's part: the first sentence describes a historical mutation of the relationship between authorship and death, whereas the second echoes the claim, forwarded for example by Barthes, that writing as such entails the erasure of the authorial subject-as-origin. Ambiguities of this sort run throughout "What is an author?": we are told that the 'disappearance - or death –' of the author was recognized 'some time ago', and that the task of thought is 'to situate his recent absence'(MCT199). On the one hand, it is claimed that 'the author's disappearance [...] since Mallarmé, has been a constantly recurring event'(MCT200), and on the other that the disappearance of the author-function is to be envisaged as a future event, 'as our society changes'(MCT210).

Foucault's apparent vacillations in this respect are typical of the tensions latent in the post-structuralist accounts of authorship encountered thus far. It is often asserted that the effacement or displacement of the author is a function of textuality as such, that such an occlusion of the authorial subject is, effectively, an *a priori* of writing, and thus an ahistorical phenomenon. However, the "author" is often also taken to be a product of socio-historical determinations of the text and to be analysed as such; furthermore, there is also a tendency to identify the rise of a certain notion of writing (at the expense of the author) as a

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[87] From a 1983 interview which forms a postscript to *Death and Labyrinth*; p.184.

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fairly recent literary movement, one often attributed to Mallarmé[88]. In an analogous

fashion, the theoretical dismissal of the role of the author is considered co-extensive with

the disruption of the identity of the "work", of a body of works, or of "genre", and yet there

seem to remain considerable difficulties concerning these theories' attempts to "justify"

reference to texts or textual features which appear to be "personal" authorial testaments, to

produce an agenda which will licence such reference but which will not entail a return of

the figure of the author as conventionally configured.

A displacement of these questions is offered by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their

text *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure)*, a work

which can be regarded from the perspective of literary theory's encounter with Kafka as an

act of provocation. Rather than seeking to create disturbances in a model which bestows

upon the author an "originary" status and organizes texts in a hierarchical relation to this

origin (by asserting the "effacement" of the origin or subverting generic categories),

Deleuze and Guattari call upon an alternative conception of the *oeuvre,* one which

abandons such hierarchies:

> How can we enter Kafka's work? This work is a rhizome, a burrow. The castle has multiple entrances
> whose rules of usage and whose locations aren't very well known [...] We will enter, then, by any
> point whatsoever; none matters more than another, and no entrance is more privileged even if it seems
> an impasse (K3).

This passage emphasizes the "arbitrary" or rather "pragmatic" nature of the pursuit of a

theme through Kafka's work. This pursuit of a theme - or motif, or technique, etc. - may

depart from any point, and will be immediately led to another point in the *oeuvre;* thus

"moments" in Kafka's work are immanently and immediately connected to each other

without these connections being traversed by a (generic) hierarchy of texts. At the

inception of *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,* Kafka's work is presented as an

undifferentiated web of virtual connections; a reading, starting from an "arbitrarily"

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[88] For a critique of this persistent invocation of Mallarmé, see Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author,* p.8-
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selected point, "actualizes" a series of connections. The author, in this scenario, is constituted as a "writing-machine", as a zone of pure literary production. The theoretical tenets underlying this "map" of Kafka's output obviously require some elucidation, and the investigation of this version of authorship must begin with an account of Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the human.

Deleuze and Guattari offer various appellations for their thought, which are to a certain degree interchangeable[89], but it is clear that its orientation is fundamentally that of a materialism derived from certain tendencies at work in Spinoza, Bergson, and Nietzsche. "Life" is for them a quasi-Heraclitean flux of "becoming" - flows of intensities which constitute "desiring-production". This productive, intensive flux is not undifferentiated, but rather enters into various forms of organization, through the processes of "stratification" and "territorialization". These emergent organizations are dubbed "machines"[90], and the human body is thus regarded as a complex of various machines, their processes and interactions. A 'continual flow'[91] traverses distinct machines, each of which exercises a function proper to it; thus the material flow of digestion moves through 'the intestine-machine and the stomach-machine, the stomach-machine and the mouth-machine'[92], and so on. As this example implies, the machines are inherently connected to each other; although they may be distinguished according to their functions, they are not strictly separable:

> one machine is always coupled with another. The productive synthesis [...] is inherently connective in nature [...] This is because there is always a flow-producing machine, and another machine connected to it that interrupts or draws off part of this flow [...] And because the first machine is in turn connected to another whose flow it interrupts or partially drains off, the binary series is linear in every direction[93].

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[89] 'RHIZOMATICS=SCHIZOANALYSIS=STRATOANALYSIS=PRAGMATICS=MICROPOLITICS'; *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.22.
[90] *Anti-Oedipus* refers to "desiring-machines", and *A Thousand Plateaus* (as well as *Kafka*) to "machinic assemblages": they are being conflated for the purposes of this exposition.
[91] *Anti-Oedipus*, p.31.
[92] Ibid., p.36.
[93] Ibid., p.5.

Furthermore, a single organ can be implicated in a variety of machinic processes; thus the mouth oscillates between being 'an eating-machine', 'talking-machine' and 'a breathing-machine', and so forth[94]. If the account thus far seems to amount merely to the translation into another idiom of the most elementary facts of biology, then it is worth considering the implications of this conception for a theory of the body. If, for example, the human body is defined by the machinic processes in which it engages, then it cannot be strictly circumscribed: *Anti-Oedipus* begins with the example of the breast which 'is a machine that produces milk, and the mouth a machine coupled to it'[95]. The machines of a body are always connected to other machines which may or may not be "inside" that body: machinic interactions may extend beyond the apparent boundaries of the body. In the above example, what is produced is a "machinic assemblage"[96] of breast and mouth, and this "breast-mouth assemblage" involves two bodies, but is "possessed" by neither, is rather a "complex" of the two, with agency distributed between them, inhering in the assemblage itself. In this sense, the human use of technology amounts less to an appropriation of an inanimate artefact than a form of prosthesis whereby the human body is "extended" through the creation of a new assemblage; it becomes technologized.

It is from this perspective that authorship can come to be viewed as a "writing-machine", that is, as a zone of production instituted by an assemblage of the body writing and the emergent body of writing. Authorial agency inheres not in a pre-existent subjectivity but is rather immanent to the event of writing (the becoming-literature of the body and the becoming-body of literature, the body of the writer being implicated in the process of the materialization of the work) and the mechanisms and processes proper to this event. "Authorship", to all intents and purposes, denotes simply a zone of pure literary productivity. In so far as Kafka's writings all equally emanate from this writing-machine, they have an identical status, hence the avoidance of generic hierarchy: 'It is useless to ask

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[94] Ibid., p.1.
[95] Ibid.
[96] The term for "assemblage" is "*agencement*" (see chapter 9 of *Kafka: pour une Littérature Mineure*, "*Qu'est-ce qu'un agencement?*", p.145-157), which introduces the notion of agency; an agency, however, that is distributed rather than being "possessed" by one element of a machinic interaction.

whether the letters are a part of the oeuvre or whether they are the source of some of the themes of the work; they are an integrative [*intégrante*] part of the writing machine or the expression machine'[97].

It is this "levelling-out" of the various facets of Kafka's production which facilitates the identification of Kafka's work as "rhizomatic". The "rhizome" is opposed to "arborescence", the model which, according to Deleuze and Guattari, underpins many theoretical superstructures, including that of the organization of authorship and genre. In an "arborescent" diagram, one (derivative) element can be linked to another only via reference to their common origin; that is, connections are hierarchical and transcendent ("molar"). In a rhizome, by contrast, 'any point [...] can be linked to anything other, and must be'[98]. These connections are immanent and pragmatic ("molecular"), and thus a "rhizomatic" configuration of Kafka's work envisages not a hierarchical division of texts in their presumed proximity to Kafka but rather a web of ceaselessly intertwining writings undifferentiated on the basis of their relation to the writing machine.

However, Deleuze and Guattari do not simply disregard the differences between stories, novels, letters, and so on; rather, they seek to express the differences in machinic rather than generic terms[99]. The claim is that different types of narrative are propelled by, or embody, different machines, which constitute different 'gears'(K45) of the writing machine. The difference between the stories and the novels, in this analysis, lies not in their respective conformities to different genres or literary "archetypes" or conventions, but rather in the fact that the stories reach conclusions whereas the novels do not. The "structures" of the stories allow for closure, whereas it is by no means accidental that the novels lack satisfactory conclusions[100], since they bear witness to processes that inherently resist closure.

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[97] K32; *Kafka: Pour une Littérature Mineure*, p.58.

[98] *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.7.

[99] Their procedure is thus opposed to a 'critical image of literature [which] cannot take on a major form without invoking a transcendental function, or without appealing to certain categories that would each time function as constants whether that of the "author", "narrator", the "text", "genre", or "narrative mode"' (Gregg Lambert, "On the Uses and Abuses of Literature for Life", *Deleuze and Literature*; p.140).

[100] Deleuze and Guattari adopt a vituperative attitude towards the ending of *The Trial*: it is 'a premature, delayed,

Stories and novels are powered, therefore, by distinct literary machines, "machinic indexes" and "machinic assemblages" respectively[101]. The suggestion is that a story introduces a finite number of elements, instituting enigmatic relationships between them without these relationships constituting a wider process which can spread beyond the confines of the story's constituents by assimilating further elements. In contrast, the novels witness the (often chaotic) operations of processes which seem to function through their endless incorporation of new elements; the protagonists of the novels are forever encountering new figures who are implicated in manifold ways in the machinations of the prevailing system of power, and there does not seem to be any internal constraint on the number of such figures. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, in their own terms, 'The machinic indexes are the signs of an assemblage that has not yet been established or dismantled because one knows only the individual pieces that go into making it up, but not how they go together [...] Thus there remain machinic assemblages as objects of the novel [...] they group, give birth to series, start proliferating, taking over all sorts of human figures or parts of figures'(K47-48). In other words, the assemblages' ability to appropriate new elements (which is in principle limitless) dictates the novels' structural resistance to closure, whereas the finitude of machinic indexes, and their inability to form an assemblage, allow for the possibility of closure, for the resolution of their interrelationships.

Running parallel to this machinic analysis is Deleuze and Guattari's account of doubles and trios in Kafka's work. It is claimed that Kafka often introduces such arrangements of elements or characters, but whereas in the stories a duo or trio remains strictly circumscribed, 'the doubles and the triangles that remain in Kafka's novels show up only at the beginning of the novels; and from the start, they are so vacillating, so supple and transformable, that they are ready to open onto series that break their form and explode their terms'(K54). This is a curious analysis; it is claimed both that doubles and trios 'remain distinct'(K53) from each other, and that 'it is no less true that the duos and trios

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aborted ending'(K44), since it seems to complicate their distinctions.
[101] Deleuze and Guattari also identify "abstract machines" which can appear either as stories or in novels; they will be discussed later.

interpenetrate'(K54). Given the invective against 'so many unfortunate ~~psychoanalytic~~ psychoanalytic

interpretations'(K9), it is strange to encounter the apparently reductive assertion that

"triangulation" is essentially familial in origin (K53), particularly as this claim collides with

the acknowledgement that trios, for instance bureaucratic ones, can emerge when 'there

isn't even a preexisting familial triangle'(K54). Moreover, the idea that doubles and trios

arise 'only at the beginning of the novels' presumably relies upon some mysterious,

unstated disqualification of figures such as Josef K.'s executioners, K.'s assistants, and

Delamarche and Robinson.

It is not clear, in a more general sense, that a combination of the machinic account and

the remarks about doubles and trios will suffice to articulate clear-cut structural differences

between stories and novels (elsewhere Deleuze and Guattari in fact stress a 'constant

transversal communication'(K40) between the various streams of the writing machine), if

that is in fact what the analyses strive to offer. It can be seen, for instance, that "Blumfeld,

an Elderly Bachelor" possesses the potential, at least, to cut across the distinctions drawn

by Deleuze and Guattari's "post-generic" account.

"Blumfeld, An Elderly Bachelor" is an interesting case in that the reader encounters

doubles and trios (and their fusions) in the course of the narrative, but there does not appear

to be a central, privileged configuration, the resolution of which will facilitate the story's

ending. Furthermore, there does not appear to be anything preventing the narrative from

branching off, forming new groupings and assimilating new elements. Although the text is

certainly a story (even in the sense of witnessing doubles, trios, the introduction of

elements without the creation of an assemblage in which they function, and the possession

of a conclusion of sorts), it simultaneously violates certain of Deleuze and Guattari's

contentions. Laura Quinney claims that 'the senselessly bouncing balls [...] reify the

monotony of his (Blumfeld's) own existence'[102], but endowing the balls with such a

symbolic or allegorical function seems to entail a neglect of the extent to which they are

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[102] "More Remote than the Abyss" in Harold Bloom, ed., *Franz Kafka*, p.225.

elided with other elements in the story; the enumeration of these elements may help to identify the nature of the series of elements which constitutes the story.

When the reader is first acquainted with Blumfeld's consciousness, he begins to think about acquiring a dog which would follow 'no one but its master'(GWC15;KK5,109), an idea which he rejects on the grounds of the uncleanliness which he attributes also to the charwoman. When he first hears the noise of the balls in his flat, 'it reminds him of the sounds produced by paws pattering one after the other over a floor'(GWC17;KK5,111); thus the dog and the balls are associated through Blumfeld's wish for a companion. He soon realizes that the two balls attempt to maintain a station behind his back (like that of the attendants of the Czar and the President in his magazine): 'But hardly has he turned when the balls describe a semicircle and are already behind him again [...] Like submissive companions, they try to avoid appearing in front of Blumfeld'(GWC18;KK5,112).

When Blumfeld goes to bed, the balls are again linked to the idea of a dog ('It's as if he owned a little dog for which he wants to make a soft bed'(GWC21:KK5,116), and when he wakes and attempts to give the balls to the charwoman' s son, 'the janitor's two little girls appear from the door opposite and [...] take up position on either side of Blumfeld'(GWC25;KK5,121) in a spatial arrangement which recalls that of the balls.

When Blumfeld moves to his office, the location of his assistants echoes the nature of the movement of the balls: 'they stand all day, pressed against their desks. For them of course this is very uncomfortable, but it also makes it very difficult for Blumfeld to keep an eye on them'(GWC28;KK5,123), when 'he had imagined himself standing in the centre behind the desks, keeping an eye on everything'(GWC32;KK5,127). The assistants arrive arm in arm in a parallel with the co-ordinated motion of the balls, before one assistant tries to obtain the broom from the servant who 'feels especially responsible for the sweeping'(GWC34;KK5,130). Ignoring the assistant's pleas, 'the servant [...] turns around and thinks he can safely use the broom again'34;KK5,130), before the assistant attempts to grab it and the scene is interrupted by Blumfeld.

Perhaps it is true to say that this drama of the servant's stubborn devotion to sweeping in some way "symbolizes" Blumfeld's attachment to his routine which is similarly disrupted by the balls. However, such a reading tends to ignore the extent to which several disparate elements are elided through their spatial configuration (the balls, the girls, the assistants) rather than necessarily through a common "signified". It seems that up to a point a purely differential relation between these elements is constructed, in that they may be elided with each other without referring outside of the series of which each is a member. Although the story is clearly constituted through the doubles and trios whose function Deleuze and Guattari seek to elucidate, there is not, as there is in "The Judgment", a privileged site (that of the central double of father and son, around which the other figures revolve) which can effect the closure of the story.

Certainly the dispute over the broom engenders no sense of resolution as did Georg's death, and in so far as there appears not to be a central duo or trio (the balls are most remarked upon, but the story abandons them and does not return), there is consequently no scope for such a resolution: one can imagine the story's continuation, with the introduction of new elements which share the spatial arrangement which recurs throughout the narrative. In effect, the story produces a series, through which an implied relation between diverse elements is created, which does not appear to have clearly circumscribed limits; that is, it approaches precisely those features which Deleuze and Guattari took to distinguish the structure of the novels from that of the stories.

There is a further "generic" postulation offered by Deleuze and Guattari, that of "minor literature"; a formulation which is said to be exemplified by Kafka, and which has perhaps proved the most immediately influential, at least in literary circles; it is also perhaps their most accessible response to Kafka. However, it is the very accessibility of the conception of "minor literature" that seems rather surprising and problematic. To give a preliminary and rather hasty sketch, "minor literature" denotes a literary practice which exploits a major language in such a way that it institutes a subversive practice internal to this language.

The notion of "minor literature" serves at least initially to articulate the paradoxes of Kafka's relation to the German language, strikingly expressed by him as 'The impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing German, the impossibility of writing differently. One might almost add a fourth impossibility, the impossibility of writing'[103]. As is immediately evident, the dilemma consists in a fraught relationship with both German and language itself. To focus upon the former conflict for the time being, it is to some extent the effect of being caught at the juncture of several linguistic avenues or possibilities.

Firstly, Kafka feels intensely the inadequacy as he sees it of German for Jewish experience: 'The Jewish mother is no "Mutter", to call her "Mutter" makes her a little comic [...] we give a Jewish woman the name of German mother, but we forget the contradiction that sinks into the emotions so much the more heavily'(D88;KK7,86). And yet, despite his being enticed by Yiddish and its popular theatre, and his later study of Hebrew, and the availability of the Czech language, he chooses to write in German.

There is a further perversity to this choice in that the German of Prague was not a pellucid, expressive medium but rather a dialect with a rather loose syntax, an impoverished idiom. Kafka's choice was not to efface these features but on the contrary to accentuate them in the creation of a stylistic approach which is wilfully undemonstrative, even prosaic in its bureaucratic idiom yet simultaneously stark and unsettling in its almost banal recounting of disturbing and rebarbative events and situations.

It is slightly strange that Deleuze and Guattari's characterization of "minor literature" seems, at least superficially, to give a quasi-generic expression to this strategy since such a move would seem retrogressive given their earlier disruption of the question of genre, and the extent to which it appears to coincide with a thoroughly conventional critical recognition. Thus for example George Steiner remarks that 'Kafka was inside the German language as is a traveller in a hotel [...] The house of words was truly his own. That was the shaping impulse behind his unique style, behind the fantastic nakedness and economy of his writing. Kafka stripped German to the bone of direct meaning, discarding, wherever

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[103] *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors*, p.289;KK8,337-338.

possible, the enveloping context of historical, regional or metaphoric resonance'[104]. It would be misleading, however, to equate Deleuze and Guattari's pronouncements with questions of genre and prose style in any strict and strictly circumscribed sense. Rather they maintain that their conception precedes generic identification: 'There has been much discussion of the questions "What is a marginal literature?" and "What is a popular literature, a proletarian literature?" The criteria are obviously difficult to establish if one doesn't start with a more objective concept - that of minor literature'(K18). Minor literature thus denotes a capacity to construct a "subversive" literary practice within a major language, exploiting its continuous variation and operating at a level which precedes literary theory and which is not saturated by linguistic concerns but is also immediately political. Kafka is restored to the political and seen as disruptive of the tyrannies of sense-making and certain coding practices.

A triptych of features sustains this analysis and indicates minor literature. These elements are a high coefficient of deterritorialization, the linking of everything to the political, and the collective assemblage of enunciation. "Deterritorialization" is a term which infuses Deleuze and Guattari's thought as a whole, but in the present context denotes a dessication of language, denuding it until it approaches inarticulacy, pushing it to the limits of sound and sense. The claim that in a minor literature everything is political is delineated as follows: 'the cramped space (of minor literature) forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics [...] In this way, the family triangle connects to other triangles - commercial, economic, bureaucratic, juridicial - that determine its values'(K17). These connections, which are not relations of analogy but direct intersection, are indeed prominent in Kafka, but there is a further claim, that the protagonist is essentially "given" through this network of connections rather than as an individuated narrative locus. This applies most directly to those stories by Kafka (most notably "The Investigations of a Dog" and "Josefine the Singer, or the Mouse People") which describe pack behaviour, the co-ordinated configurations of social groups, but is said to apply also

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[104] *Language and Silence*, p.148-149.

to, for example, the protagonists of the novels. From this perspective, the letter K designates less an essentially individual protagonist than a position defined by its relations to intersecting regimes of power and control.

There is no scope here to investigate these two latter claims further than noting that they are to a considerable extent extrapolated from, and substantiated by, the passage in Kafka's diaries entitled "The Literature of Small Peoples"(D148-151;KK7,151-154). It is immediately clear that Deleuze and Guattari are allowing themselves considerable licence, since Kafka's brief exegesis of literary minority is occasioned by the contemporary Jewish literature of Warsaw and contemporary Czech writing, and it is not obvious that it does, or could, or was meant to, apply to Kafka's own practice. Deleuze and Guattari elsewhere analyse such features as fundamental to language as such, and if one presupposes their configuration then it is of course legitimate and indeed effective to read Kafka is such terms, but this is quite different from asserting that Kafka articulated such commitments as a literary programme.

The characterization of minor literature as escorting a high degree of linguistic deterritorialization forms a more ambiguous component of the analysis. What has yet to be established is the nature of the link between Kafka's socio-linguistic context, and concomitant disenfranchised position in relation to the German language, and his enterprise as a writer of minor literature, as burrowing into the German language and instituting a minor, intensive linguistic undertaking therein. Certainly Deleuze and Guattari often gesture towards an almost causal relationship between the social given of linguistic alienation and the production of minor literature; thus they ask rhetorically, 'How many people today live in a language that is not their own? Or no longer, or not yet, even know their own and know poorly the major language that they are forced to serve? This is the problem of immigrants, and especially of their children, the problem of minorities, the problem of a minor literature'(K19). It would seem that "minor literature" denotes less a series of literary phenomena than the socio-political conditions engendering them: 'We might as well say that minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary

conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature'(K18).

However, both of these quotations are followed by sentences which seem almost to retract the close identification of socio-linguistic contexts and the emergence of minor literature, and this ambiguity infuses much of the discussion. For example, a long parenthetical analysis invokes the cases of Joyce and Beckett, declaring that, 'as Irishmen, both of them live within the genial conditions of a minor literature'(K19). However, the comparative analysis of the two ultimately arrives at a distinction between Beckett's practice of stripping language to its most elemental pulses of signification, which was of course conducted first and foremost in French, and Joyce's use 'of English and every language'(K19). Hence neither case refers directly back to a specifically Irish relationship with the English language, the traits of which would presumably be widespread in the Irish use of English. Similarly, one might note that Beckett occupies a singularly privileged position as an exemplar of minor literature, and argue that there is a close analogy between his practice and that of Pinter, who is of course an Englishman writing in the English language and who therefore does not betray any socially discernable linguistic disenfranchisment.

One could multiply such examples in order to add weight to the critical point that the relationship between certain determinate socio-liguistic contexts and minor literature is perhaps not mere coincidence but is nonetheless at most a question of propensity. However, Deleuze, writing on his own, actually makes a stronger claim: he writes, apropos again of Kafka and Beckett,

> what they do [rather than exploit multilingualism], [...] is invent a minor use of the major language within which they express themselves entirely; they minorize this language [...] They are great writers by virtue of this minorization: they make language take flight, ceaselessly placing it in a state of disequilibrium [...] This means that a great writer is always like a foreigner in the language in which he expresses himself, even if this is his native tongue[105].

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[105] *Essays Critical and Clinical*, p.109.

Hence it would seem that the characteristics of minor literature apply not to a literary hybrid but to "great" literature as such, highlighting the writer's capacity to create a style, a patois, an idiolect.

Minor literature will hence be characterized less by the social fields from which it emerges than by the deterritorialization of language. What has yet to be encountered is Deleuze and Guattari's presentation of the traits of the deterritorialization of language as it emerges in Kafka's work and animates his practice. The following passage offers a distillation and clarification of this identification:

> Since articulated sound was a deterritorialized noise but one that will be reterritorialized in sense, it is now sound itself that will be deterritorialized irrevocably, absolutely. The sound or the word that traverses this new deterritorialization no longer belongs to a language of sense, even though it derives from it, nor is it an organized music or song, even though it might appear to be. We noted Gregor's warbling and the ways it blurred words, the whistling of the mouse, the cough of the ape, the pianist who doesn't play, the singer who doesn't sing and gives birth to her song out of her nonsinging, the musical dogs who are musicians in the very depths of their bodies since they don't emit any music. Everywhere, organized music is traversed by a line of escape - in order to liberate a living and expressive material that speaks for itself and has no need of being put into a form. This language torn from sense, conquering sense, bringing about an active neutralization of sense, no longer finds its value in anything but an accenting of the word, an inflection (K21).

The deterritorialization of language in Kafka, then, emerges at junctures where quotidian language breaks down and is transfigured as expressive material which evades significatory practices. The problem is that while this event no doubt marks a leitmotif of Kafka's work, it describes moments in his work rather than his practice as such. One could perhaps multiply the examples but would nontheless remain with a finite number. Conversely, one could say that, to take an example, E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* contains a similar motif, that of the inhuman voice resonating in the cave which does not belong to the order of signification, but Forster surely does not thereby belong to minor literature.

What is required is not only a concatenation of incidences of the deterritorialization of language in Kafka, but also an account of his literary undertaking as inherently, at the moment of inscription, effecting this disturbance. To this end, it would be necessary to

articulate the relation between the irrevocable breakdown of signification on the one hand and the quirks of an unsettling use of German which still belongs to the linguistic order of German on the other. The elements of such a demarcation are present elsewhere in Deleuze and Guattari's thought but the apparent conflation of the two levels here bestows on the analysis a slightly haphazard atmosphere.

By way of a preliminary conclusion, it could be said that Deleuze and Guattari could balance their account of the breakdown of a language of sense in Kafka with an analysis of its counterpart, a vertiginous proliferation of signification which seeks to exhaust semantic possibility but which, through this very process, arrives only at aporias. The most famous such example is that of the dialogue between the chaplain and Josef K. in *The Trial* regarding the parable of the law, and an apparatus which could envelop such interpretative *mises-en-abyme* is arguably offered by Deleuze in his demarcation, in an essay called "The Exhausted"[106], of three mechanisms driving Beckett's use of language.

Deleuze and Guattari do, in fact, address other aspects of Kafka's relationship to, and use of, the German language in the course of their exposition of minor literature, but these references are of a rather scattergun nature, part citations of attitudes toward language espoused in the diaries, part sociolinguistic history, erratically switching between Kafka's linguistic practice as such and certain features of certain stories without establishing grounds for their correlation.

A rather more patient account is clearly called for, one which discriminates to a greater degree between features such as the status of Prague German, the linguistic options open to Kafka and their relations to territoriality, Kafka's attitude toward them, and his linguistic practice. The status of Prague German was slightly more ambiguous than Deleuze and Guattari seem to realize, as they arguably conflate its nature with both Kafka's literary deterritorialization and his attitudes regarding language as such. For many years, it was regarded as a particularly pure form of German, isolated as it was from any perceived

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[106] Ibid., p.152-174.

abuses of the language occurring in Germany[107]; subsequently, this very purity became an

object of caricature, *Prager Deutsch* seeming mannered in an almost theatrical fashion[108].

It also became infused by Czech and, more generally, Slavic influences, at the levels of

accent, vocabulary, and grammar; in some quarters, this cross-fertilization was seen as a

source of linguistic fecundity and thus to be celebrated[109], whereas in others, it was

deplored: Mauthner's view of Prague German as a '"paper language"'[110] was linked, as

Spector notes, to issues of territoriality, Prague's German speakers lacking both an ancestral

claim to the territory they occupied, and proximity to "living" German. Wagenbach, too,

discusses Mauthner's account, and offers details of the Czech influences, which included -

from the perspective of orthodox German usage - misuse of prepositions (*"darauf denken"*,

"auf was brauchst du das"), pronominal verbs (*"Sich spielen"*), and omission of articles[111].

Although not universally recognized as an impoverished German riddled with errors, it

seems clear that such a perception affected both Kafka and Brod, the latter responding with

an advocation of Hebrew obviously consonant with his Zionism[112] but amounting to an

artificially imposed "reterritorialization", according to Deleuze and Guattari. Kafka's

attitude was far more ambivalent: aside from German, he flirted at times with the linguistic

alternatives open to him, and it is striking that these flirtations coincide with important

personal relationships, his affection for Löwy reflected in his speech on Yiddish, the letters

to Milena containing numerous Czech fragments and meditations on the sonorities of the

language, and his last relationship, with Dora, inspiring the study of Hebrew. None of these

linguistic options, however, receives a full commitment; nor does the German within which

Kafka dwells reluctantly, feeling something of a foreigner without a homeland to which he

could return. In this respect, Brod's reterritorializing goals stand in stark contrast to Kafka's

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[107] *Prague Territories*, p.75; this attitude prevailed until about 1893.
[108] Ibid., p.76.
[109] Ibid., p.77; similarly, Ripellino declares that, 'this linguistic Babel, the proximity of clashing elements within the huge melting pot of the Hapsburg Empire sharpened wits and acted as a tremendous stimulus to creativity': *Magic Prague*, p.20.
[110] Quoted by Spector (*Prague Territories*, p.79) and Wagenbach (*Franz Kafka*, p.77).
[111] *Franz Kafka: Années de Jeunesse*, p.78.
[112] See *Prague Territories*, p.81.

attunement to this irreducible feeling of linguistic homelessness, to which he gives voice in

his reflections on Yiddish: as Spector puts it,

> the Yiddish language [...] is continuous flux [...] Its words are all imported, and themselves do
> not sit still within the language (*Diese ruhen aber nicht in ihm...*). The Yiddish "whirl of
> language" is for Kafka an escape from "language" in the ordinary sense [...] Yiddish is not [...]
> an international language, representing an embrace of all nations. In fact, it represents the
> opposite: this nationlessness, this lack of hold on any specific territory[113].

It is interesting that this emphasis is not peculiar to Kafka's reflections on Yiddish; his

remarks on the Jewish use of (Prague) German run along similar lines: regarding *das*

Mauscheln ('a term with an ambiguous referent: now it is a Bohemian form of Yiddish,

now a Germanized Yiddish, now a Yiddishized German. In all of its uses, it carried a

distinctly derogatory flavor, which we might capture with the pejorative phrase "Jew

talk"'[114]), he discerns a 'self-pitying usurpation of foreign property [ie. German]'[115], and

also refers to a 'gypsy literature that had stole the German babe from the cradle'[116].

Remarks such as these are expressive of an attitude toward the socio-linguistic climate

of Prague which - not being peculiar to Kafka - does not by itself represent the singularity

of his linguistic practice. His early work, in particular, exhibits the Czech influences which

were said to debase Prague German (Wagenbach cites propositional misuse and the

expansion of the use of the verb *geben*, following the broad application of the Czech

dati[117]), and throughout his writing Slavic inflections are discernable[118], as are other

digressions from German grammatical conventions[119]. However, such features are coupled

with a refusal of verismilitude, there being no attempt to convey specific social, cultural, or

geographical milieux; similarly, the purity and economy of Kafka's style, its lack of

ornamentation, is regarded by Wagenbach as 'a riposte [...] to the verbal asphyxia of his

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[113] Ibid., p.89 (parentheses from Kafka's introductory talk;KK6,306-309)); the Yiddish spoken in Prague included far more borrowings from German and Hebrew than later East European Yiddish; see p.85.
[114] Ibid., p.90.
[115] *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors*, p.288;KK8,336.
[116] Ibid., p.289;KK8,338.
[117] *Franz Kafka*, p.78; see also "Description of a Struggle": '*Ich gab die Hände von meinen Ohren* [I took my hands from my ears]'(CSS25;KK5,23).
[118] See *Franz Kafka*, p.80.
[119] See, for instance, the rather odd sequence of tenses in "The Top" (GWC134;KK5,90).

milieu[120], the nakedness of his idiom issuing an implicit indictment of artificial enrichment of the dialect. In this sense, Kafka's writing is by no means merely symptomatic of a given socio-linguistic context, the most characteristic traits of his practice betraying an irreducible linguistic idiosyncrasy.

Although it is worth noting the economy of Kafka's style, this feature is coupled with a specific sort of prolixity, the attempt to realize a form of semantic exhaustion. Page after page - often without being split into paragraphs - can be devoted to the enumeration of all the possible senses and implications of a given statement or event. This process is however continuous with the aforementioned "economy" of Kafka's work, since it similarly lacks anything resembling a gratuitous rhetorical flourish, being rather a painstaking process. Such passages are accomplished in language which welds a philosophical idiom (often revolving around terms such as "possibility", "necessity", and "impossibility", the latter word in particular being used extensively and with considerable emphasis by Kafka) to a quasi-bureaucratic officiousness which is at odds with the often perplexing nature of the narrative content; the dissonance thus created is characteristic of the unsettling qualities of Kafka's writing, with bizarre events enveloped in wilfully prosaic, undemonstrative prose, a 'plain, monodic style of relentless rigour, a metaphysical legalese'[121]. Also characteristic of Kafka's stylistic practice is the repeated use of a single term, or variants of it, which can have the effect of suggesting links between separate events, as is the case with *überfallen* in *The Trial* (Txxiii-xxiv) and *mächtig* in *The Castle*[122], and the extensive use of words such as *allerdings*, *übrigens*, and *gewissermassen*, the latter two being members of a series of non-commital terms which, as Ronald Gray puts it, 'add to the impression that a barely asserted portrayal is being offered'[123], or at least surround statements with layers of qualification and reservation.

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[120] *Franz Kafka*, p.82.
[121] *Magic Prague*, p.50.
[122] Ronald Gray, "But Kafka Wrote in German", in *The Kafka Debate*; p.245. Milan Kundera rightly stresses the importance of Kafka's repetition of certain simple key words, and laments the tendency of translations to introduce variations, in accordance with received stylistic conventions running counter to Kafka's repetitious economy: "A Sentence", in *Testaments Betrayed*, p.101-120.
[123] Ibid., p.246.

Linguistic traits such as these seem linked more to epistemological reservations than to the particular circumstances of *Prager Deutsch*, and indeed this discussion has moved on from historical linguistics to quirks of Kafka's vocabulary which cannot really be said to typify anything but the individuality of an author's choice of words. This shift of focus mirrors Kafka's famous enumeration of the "impossibilities" afflicting writing, as it moves from the qualms attaching to a particular strain of German which is experienced as "foreign" to an impossibility of writing as such, suggesting a further level of enquiry, that of Kafka's attitudes to language over and above his remarks on the particular linguistic context from which his writing emerged. These attitudes are unusual to the extent that their closest counterpart would appear to lie in the linguistic attitudes and practices characteristic of schizophrenia.

In the course of their account of "minor literature", Deleuze and Guattari describe Kafka as enacting a 'schizo politeness'(K26), and this brief allusion perhaps hints at a further zone of enquiry. Whereas linguistic deterritorialization is facilitated in the account of "minor literature" at least in part by certain socio-linguistic milieux, elsewhere in the thought of Deleuze and Guattari, "schizophrenia" is said to be the great agent of deterritorialization, linguistic or otherwise. Their use of the term "schizophrenia" is undoubtedly ambiguous and perhaps misleading, but suffice it to say that for them "schizophrenia" is not identical with its clinical diagnosis: Deleuze claimed that 'the schizophrenics in hospitals are people who've tried to do something and failed, cracked up'[124].

As the subtitle "Capitalism and Schizophrenia" (shared by *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus)* suggests, "schizophrenia" in this context is less a psychiatric phenomenon than a political one. Schizophrenic forces (in a blanket use of the phrase) are just those which evade or subvert the various impositions ("stratification" and "territorializations") of the (capitalist) state. Schizophrenic forces are those which resist the disciplining of the body,

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[124] *Negotiations*, p.23.

the coding practices to which the individual is forced to submit[125]: they are

deterritorializing forces and thus enact the same movement which was said to be exercised

by Kafka upon the German language. In an analogous fashion, Louis Sass, in *Madness and*

Modernism, separates the traits of the schizophrenic use of language from their clinical

setting and uses them to cast light upon post-structuralist theories of language. This is

perhaps facilitated by the claim that the schizophrenic use of language does not amount to a

linguistic disorder[126] (like that of aphasia, for example, which fuelled Jakobson's analysis

of metaphor and metonymy) but rather to a somewhat "perverse" attitude towards, and use

of, language which is particularly widespread amongst schizophrenic patients but which is

not necessarily confined to such individuals. The point of this excursion is to suggest that

Sass's characterization seems to articulate in several respects the idiosyncracies of Kafka's

linguistic dispositions, and that it can indirectly hint also at a relationship between

"schizophrenia" and Kafka's practice which would possess the capacity to ground Deleuze

and Guattari's analysis of "minor literature" in their wider account of the mechanisms of

"deterritorialization", thereby gesturing towards a substantiation which it has thus far

seemed to lack - one which derives not from historical linguistic contingencies, but from a

harnessing of "schizophrenic" forces.

Sass' characterization of "schizoid" language[127] is complicated, as he acknowledges, by

various factors: the lack of a consensus regarding its status, the fact that its traits do not

appear in all cases, with certain patients exhibiting only certain purported linguistic

"symptoms", and then only intermittently, and finally evidence that schizoid language is

sometimes employed wilfully. However, his account still provides numerous intriguing

lines of enquiry. Schizophrenic people, he argues, tend not to "socialize" their language,

that is, they do not seem to take into account the social contexts and conventions of

communication. Thus they may switch from topic to topic without explaining the

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[125] This is too large an issue to address here; suffice it to say that Artaud's refusal to inscribe himself in a familial
nexus is a crucial reference point for Deleuze and Guattari: 'I don't believe in father / in mother, / got no /
papamummy' (*Anti-Oedipus*, p.14).
[126] *Madness and Modernism*, p.176 and notes 4 and 5.
[127] The following exposition is derived from *Madness and Modernism* p.174-209.

transitions, or they may invent peculiar, quasi-neologistic phrases, or use everyday words with obscure meanings.

"Impoverishment" may afflict schizophrenic language in various guises: there is a tendency to over-abstraction, vacuous, aimless philosophizing embodied in an inappropriately pompous idiom. Schizophrenic individuals may feel acutely the inadequacy of language; they may not discern a connection between an object and its name, or feel that their experiences are of an order which cannot be expressed through language. Sass quotes a patient who declares that, "'One talks and it seems one says nothing and then one finds that one has been talking about the whole of one's existence and one can't remember what one said"'[128].

Sass draws an intriguing distinction between people who have suffered certain types of brain damage and who insist upon the univocal nature of meaning and schizophrenics who seem 'hypersensitive to the polysemous nature of language'[129]. Observers may find their discourse opaque, but patients equally so, offering baffling interpretations of their remarks while confessing their own bewilderment. Conversely, their speech and writing may be driven less by semantic than phonematic principles, those of assonance, alliteration or other "arbitrary" word associations. This attention to the (acoustic or graphematic) materiality of the signifier may result in schizophrenics experiencing their discourse as sounding like a tape recording, or "hallucinating" language, seeing it as an autonomous, alien region in which they realize no identification: hence language may be seen as tickertape, or as words emerging from another person's head[130].

The pursuit of many of these traits through Kafka's work will involve the broader issues of techniques and thematic concerns, but it is worth noting that this latter feature, the vision of language as an autonomous alterity rather than as a "property" of subjects, is a recurrent concern of the diaries in particular, and informs his comments on writing; thus it is a component of his own, albeit non-systematic, account of authorship. Certain passages

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[128] Ibid., p.192.
[129] Ibid., p.178.
[130] Ibid., p.179.

from the diaries seem almost perfectly to exemplify the emphases of Sass' account; thus,

for example:

> I also read aloud to her, the sentences proceeded in a disgusting confusion, with no relationship
> to the listener [...] The difficulties (which other people surely find incredible) I have in speaking
> to people arise from the fact that my thinking, or rather the content of my consciousness, is
> entirely nebulous, that I remain undisturbed by this, so far as it concerns only myself [...] yet
> conversation with people demands pointedness, solidity, and sustained coherence, qualities not
> to be found in me [...] *I couldn't expel the mist from my head* (D329;KK7,335-336).

Similarly, other traits diagnosed as symptomatic of schizoid language by Sass are

apparent, such as the inability to form steady, stable connections between phrases and their

referents: 'Three days ago I should have felt to my very marrow that a Stockholm ghost

was speaking here, that "threats by the Triple Entente", "neutrality", "official statement by

Sweden", were only inspissated [*zusammengeballte*] things of air of a certain shape, which

one can enjoy with one's eye but can never succeed in touching with one's

fingers'(D326;KK7,333); likewise, there are numerous accounts of the frustrated and

frustrating breakdown of language: sentences 'immediately prove unusable, dry, broken off

long before their end, and pointing with their towering fragments to a sad

future'(D138;KK7,141).

Perhaps more striking is the persistent evocation of language as an autonomous, alien

fabric: this tendency has already been encountered in its most startling manifestation in the

tale of Shamefaced Lanky. That letter does of course constitute a very early and in some

respects atypical text, but the autonomy of language which it so strangely envisages

remains as an undercurrent through to the very last diary entry, where 'every word, twisted

in the hands of the spirits - this twist of the hand is their characteristic gesture - becomes a

spear turned against the speaker'(D423;KK7,429). There are "hallucinations" of language

notably similar to those reported by Sass peppered throughout the diaries: in 1911, at

Rudolf Steiner's lecture, Kafka remarks that, 'In general, the spoken sentence starts off

from the speaker with its initial capital letter, curves its course, as far as it can, out to the

audience, and returns to the speaker. But if the period is omitted, then the sentence, no

longer held in check, falls upon the listener immediately with full force'(D45;KK7,40). He later has a vision of "ventriloquism":

> The artist, seemingly not participating, sits there like us, in his bowed face we see only the mouth move from time to time, and instead of reading the verses himself, he lets them be read over his head [...] Many words were dissolved by the voice, they were taken hold of so gently that they shot up into the air and had nothing more to do with the human voice until, out of sheer necessity, the voice spoke some sharp consonant or other, brought the word back to earth, and completed it (D190-191;KK7,193).

Certain aspects of Kafka's description of literary production echo this conception of language: 'I draw the words as if out of the empty air. If I capture one, then I have just this one alone and all the toil must begin anew'(D137;KK7,140); likewise, language is seen as a 'stream' from which 'blindly and arbitrarily I snatch handfuls'(D118;KK7,119). Apropos of Dickens, Kafka depicts the genesis of a story as akin to the approach of a locomotive, the author submitting to its pursuit (D51;KK7,46): although he immediately disclaims this account, it surely foreshadows his later assertion of an "organic" aesthetic:

> There seems no hope that this newborn thing ['The Village Schoolmaster (The Giant Mole)], still incomplete and tender in every, joint, will be able to keep alive in the completed organization of the world, which, like every completed organization, strives to close itself off. However, one should not forget that the story, if it has any justification to exist, bears its complete organization within itself even before it has been fully formed (D322;KK7,327)

Sass links the phenomena of schizophrenic language to deconstructive positions, eliding the schizophrenic's sense of the autonomy of language and focus upon the materiality of the signifier severed from its communicative "socialization" and ~~signified to~~ signified with the apotheosis of the signifier in Mallarmé and the deconstructive theorists for whom the latter is a touchstone[131]. However, an accompanying movement in Kafka is an emphasis upon the corporeality of writing which seems to be more effectively rendered by Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the writing-machine with its concomitant bodily emphasis. Their insistence upon the primacy of the body (and the ways in which they conceive the notion of

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[131] *Madness and Modernism*, p.198-205; see also Derrida on Artaud's schizophrenic language, in "La parole soufflée" (*Writing and Difference*, p.169-195).

the body) derive to a considerable extent from Spinoza, and Kafka understands his desire for writing in terms which recall the Spinozist postulation of the body's *conatus*[132]:'but I will write in spite of everything, absolutely; it is my struggle for self-preservation'(D300;KK7,304).

Perhaps Kafka's most vivid portrayal of the corporeality of writing accompanies his reconstruction of the production of "The Judgment": 'the story came out of me like a real birth, covered with filth and slime'(D214;KK7,217). The ability to write is interpreted throughout the diaries as a physical capacity, one determined by the states of the body, from 1911 ('It is certain that a major obstacle to my progress is my physical condition. Nothing can be accomplished with such a body'(D124;KK7,126)), through 1915 ('Provided proof of this by writing one and a half wretched pages of a new story that I have already decided to discard [...] part of the blame for which my listless stomach certainly shares'(D333;KK7,340)), to 1922: 'It is as if the possibility of a calm creative life - and so creativity in general - were somehow closed to me because of physical reasons, because of year-long physical torments'(D401;KK7,408). Writing is 'a consuming fire inside me'(D351;KK7,354) which requires 'a merciful surplus of strength'(D384;KK7,387) but promises to give strength in return (D101;KK7,100).

This corporeality of writing seems to affect both the body writing and the body of writing: thus Kafka can say both that he is 'plagued by dreams, as if they were being scratched on me'(D411;KK7,418) and that the story of the white horse 'has meaning but is weak; its blood runs thin [...]Yesterday the white horse appeared to me for the first time before I fell asleep; I have an impression of its first stepping out of my head, which was turned to the wall, jumping across me and down from the bed, and then disappearing'(D270;KK7,275).

It is precisely this reciprocal implication of the body writing and the body of writing that is rendered by Deleuze and Guattari's materialist conception of the writing-machine,

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[132] 'The endeavour (*conatus*) wherewith a thing endeavours to persist in its being is nothing else than the actual essence of that thing' (*Ethics* Part 3, Proposition 7).

the assemblage which describes the zone of literary production. Moreover, there are signs that their discussion of Kafka's linguistic and authorial position in fact runs along similar lines to that of its "schizoid" interpretation, albeit in a less "systematic" fashion than that produced by Sass' account, and with a new emphasis upon the creativity of the linguistic traits which appear in the language of both Kafka and schizophrenia:

> Kafka tells us how, as a child, he repeated one of his father's expressions in order to make it take flight on a line of escape: 'end of the month, end of the month'. The proper name, which has no sense in itself, is particularly appropriate for this sort of exercise. *Milena* [...] begins by evoking 'a Greek or Roman gone astray in Bohemia, violated by Czech, cheated of its accent', and then, by a more delicate approximation, it evokes 'a woman whom one carries in one's arms out of the world, out of the fire', the accent marking here an always possible fall, or, on the contrary, 'the lucky leap which you yourself make with your burden'.
> It seems to us that there is a certain difference [...] between the two evocations of the name Milena: one still attaches itself to an extensive, figurative scene of the fantasmatic sort; the second is already much more intensive, marking a fall or a leap as a threshold of intensity [...] In fact, we have here what happens when sense is actively neutralized [...] all these marks of the poverty of language show up in Kafka but have been taken over by a creative utilization for the purposes of a new sobriety, a new expressivity, a new flexibility, a new intensity. 'Almost every word I write jars up against the next, like Negroes in a minstrel show'. *Language stops being representative in order to now move toward its extremities or its limits.* The connotation of pain accompanies this metamorphosis (K 21/23).

Aspects of this account will be pivotal to a reading of Kafka which will "exploit" commitments derived from Deleuze and Guattari's encounter with Kafka and let them resonate with elements of a Brentanian conception of his work's components. One way of hinting at the potential force of such a reading is that of approaching it negatively, through a consideration of the interpretative tendencies which it opposes, which will be a concern of the next section.

In advance of that undertaking, it is worth summarizing the conceptions of authorship and genre which have materialized from this analysis. In the context of Deleuze and Guattari's wider project, the author comes to be understood as a writing machine, as a zone of literary productivity. The work is understood as a rhizome, as a web of connections which includes connections to the work's "outside", to socio-political milieus and assemblages: 'the function of the book is thus to assemble with this heterogeneous outside, to move

"rhizomatically", and not to "represent" the world'[133]. In this light, the questions surrounding the invocation of Brentanian thought are recast: the issue is no longer that of the legitimacy with which the reading can transgress the text; rather, the text is reconfigured as a network involving immanent connections both to philosophical milieus and the context of reading. The text is defined in terms of these connections and forces, affects and effects rather than its internal constituents, consistency or coherence, a situation which leads one to wonder how a text can come to be regarded as clearly circumscribed, individuated, "a" text at all. Eco suggests that emphasis must be given to local, "pragmatic" descriptions, each ascribing a contingent consistency and unity to a particular region of the rhizome[134]; the individuality of the text may also be suggested by the singularity of its affectivity. The role of genre has been taken over by the investigation of the "gears" of language propelling the text, emerging from the vibration and continual variation of its linguistic fabric. These features essentially amount to the production of style[135], meaning that invention is prioritized over conformity to generic "givens".

Kafka's creativity is seen to reside as much in his reworking of theories of authorship and genre as in the perpetually perplexing worlds described by his narratives; it is the interpretative encounter with the latter, however, that now emerges as an issue; again, Kafka's work will be seen to constitute a challenge to the philosophical apparatuses brought to bear on his writing.

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[133] Kenneth Surin, "The Deleuzian Imagination of Geoliterature", in *Deleuze and Literature*; p.173.
[134] See *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, p.82.
[135] See Deleuze's discussion of "style" in *Proust and Signs*, p.161-169.

4. INTERPRETATION.

It is the fate and perhaps the greatness of that work that it offers everything and confirms nothing[1]

Camus' succinct proclamation forcefully articulates the dilemma arising from the encounter with Kafka's work. Kafka's texts, with their disconcerting force and capacity to entice, to unsettle preconceptions with their systematic yet strange and paradoxical logic, simultaneously demand and resist interpretation. It seems almost impossible and even reprehensible not to experience or offer a reaction or interpretation to his output which is in some sense "philosophical" in scope and inclination, and yet as soon as such a response is formulated, its foundations seem to slip away, as the reader is confronted by further enigmas which elude his/her reading, confounding the current interpretation and demanding a new one.

This is hardly an original observation, and indeed most interpretations of Kafka incorporate such a caveat, an acknowledgement of the essentially partial and preliminary nature of their grasp of Kafka's creations. This situation arises largely because of the irreducibly mysterious qualities of the *Lebenswelt* of Kafka's texts, but also arguably reflects upon the nature of interpretation, for which undertaking Kafka represents something of a "limit case". Nor is it clear that an acknowledgement of the perpetual contingency of interpretative responses to Kafka necessarily eliminates the tendency to promulgate (implicitly or explicitly) interpretations as the "keys" to Kafka's writing: to assert that an interpretation cannot be final and definitive does not imply that the interpretation will not have reductive effects.

Another obvious consequence of this effect of Kafka's work -its tendency to invite and resist interpretative apprehension at the same time - is the sheer volume of secondary literature. If interpretation seems to be demanded yet is condemned to incompletion, then it is perhaps not surprising that Kafka commentary is a self-perpetuating industry, each new work seeking to complement or to react against preceding responses and incorporating new omissions of its own;

hence there are also works of "tertiary literature"[2].

This proliferation of secondary literature (with which this study is inevitably complicit) renders it impractical to attempt to address the whole myriad of Kafka interpretations. The analysis will therefore be guided by the particular philosophical trajectory (that running from phenomenology to post-structuralism) mapped in the preceding chapter, and the readings of Kafka which emerge from, and instantiate, this transition.

The interpretative encounter with Kafka is one which tends, in any case, to be philosophically charged, even in the hands of critics whose orientation is primarily "literary", whether defined in institutional or thematic terms. It can seem somehow inappropriate to confine oneself to "literary" issues narrowly conceived (questions of rhetorical technique, narrative voice, patterns of language and imagery, etc.) as if they could be disentangled from their expression of opaque ontological conundrums. However, a complementary charge could be levelled at the response to Kafka which is informed first and foremost by a philosophical agenda, that it will result in the abstraction of a philosophical architecture from its fictional encapsulation, thereby failing to acknowledge Kafka's literary accomplishments in their own terms, reducing his output to a set of abstract theories which are analysed as such[3].

In this sense, a motif of this section is that of a critical appraisal of "metaphorical" interpretations. In this context, "metaphorical" is used very loosely, to encompass those readings which configure Kafka's texts in allegorical, symbolic, "theological", or "transcendental" terms[4]. This broad sense of metaphor derives from Deleuze and Guattari (inevitably citing Kafka's "Metaphors are one among many things which make me despair of writing"(D398;KK7,403)), and can therefore only be fully delineated in the encounter with their critique of "orthodox" interpretation and proposed alternative

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[1] *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p.110, footnote.
[2] See, for example, Franz Kempf's *Everyone's Darling*.
[3] Milan Kundera has offered a similar reproach: '*Kafkology is an exegesis*. As such, it can see only allegories in Kafka's novels. They are religious [...] psychoanalytic, existentialistic, Marxist [...] Kafkology does not look to Kafka's novels for the real world transformed by an immense imagination; rather, it decodes religious messages, it deciphers philosophical parables'; *Testaments Betrayed*, p.44. Wilhelm Emrich provides a comparable critique: *Franz Kafka*, p.81-85.
[4] In an analogous manner, studies in the philosophy of language often use the term "metaphor" to encompass a broad range of rhetorical tropes, the crucial distinction (although it is of course open to question) being that between the literal and the figurative.

"method". However, the position might be summarized as one which opposes a course of reading which situates itself as immanent to Kafka's texts, describing (as opposed to trying to "decipher") their mechanisms, techniques and thematic traits, to the attempt to "interpret" Kafka's work in so far as this amounts to an understanding of it which is related to a conceptual apparatus which stands in a transcendent position *vis-à-vis* Kafka's texts. Put more simply, the latter approach stands accused of having - at least potentially - reductive effects in that a "metaphorical" interpretation will conceive of Kafka's work as signifying or gesturing towards a narrative which is in principle dissociable from the text and could be posited as its "signified". The figure of the father is a crucial motif of Kafka's texts, but, according to these commitments, the task of reading in this respect is that of analysing the functions of this figure, its points of insertion and effects upon the narratives, rather than that of attempting to represent the father as the kernel of Kafka's work, to regard other facets as derivative from this figure, patriarchal ciphers, in an approach which is undoubtedly tempting given the availability of Kafka's biographical "supplement" as supporting material. Similarly, the nature of interpretation is "at play" in Kafka, being frustrated, convoluted and self-perpetuating, but again the issue is that of the role of such moments or movements rather than that of whether Kafka's work could be regarded as essentially an allegory of interpretative aporias. The ultimate "justification" for such a stance must consist in a claim that, on the one hand, the interpretative attempt to "decode" Kafka's concerns has intrinsically reductive tendencies, and, on the other, that the proposed alternative programme escapes such a fate but seems rather to articulate or express all the enigmas of pathways of Kafka's work without diluting their force.

Within the site of the literary-theoretical/philosophical encounter with Kafka, there is a certain reciprocity at work: a critique of an interpretation of his texts simultaneously attaches to a certain extent to the philosophical position underlying it, and equally a philosophical critique of a theoretical agenda may impugn the reading of Kafka to which it gives birth. What is at stake is at once patterns of philosophically-inflected Kafka interpretation and "the" course of recent "continental" philosophy.

The preceding chapter bore witness to the manner in which the key figures behind the emergence of post-structuralist strains of thought developed under the influence of phenomenological positions and configured their theories in part as a reaction to this (apparent) hegemony. The version of (loosely) phenomenological theory which dominated the intellectual climate while the major figures of the post-structuralist "movement" were undertaking their intellectual development was that of existentialism. The prominence of existentialism was owing, at least in part, to the popular profile of Sartre and Camus, and the accessibility of the literary dissemination of their ideas; it is also worth noting that while Derrida, for example, performs on the one hand a critique of phenomenology, he also, on the other, undertakes a latent revisionism, regrounding phenomenology in the work of Husserl and Heidegger as an arguable reaction against a perceived distortion of it on the part of (French) existentialism.

The literary endeavours of Sartre and Camus were complemented by a willingness, in their more strictly "philosophical" work, to call upon literature in support of their arguments, to render literature a "legitimate" component of philosophical reasoning, and not merely a possible source of exemplification. An important instance of this tendency is that of Camus' essay "Hope and the Absurd in the Work of Franz Kafka", which forms an appendix to his most recognizably "philosophical" work, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and which is continuous with the argument of the work as a whole.

Camus identifies as the kernel of Kafka's work the 'perpetual oscillations between the natural and the extraordinary, the individual and the universal, the tragic and the everyday, the absurd and the logical'[5]. The "absurd" (a key term) is said to be in this context the product of an excess of logic, and while this undoubtedly expresses a fundamental dimension of Kafka's work, it is juxtaposed with a sense of "hope", the identification of which is slightly more troubling. It is essentially based upon the idea of a progression from *The Trial* to *The Castle*, such that '*The Trial* diagnoses, and *The*

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[5] *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p.102.

Castle imagines a treatment'[6]. While we are told that K. was to have found an accommodation with the villagers, by way of contrast to Josef K.'s violent end, it is nonetheless contentious effectively to impose an ethical teleology upon works which at so many other levels of their organization resist teleology. The declaration that Kafka's work 'in the long run' leads 'to that tremendous cry of hope'[7] certainly seems to amount to an imposition of univocity, even when it is qualified by an admission of the fundamentally bleak character of this hope.

It is equally strange that Camus' existentialist Kafka (and he does not hesitate in regarding him as such) should emerge in such an unambiguously religious light, even if this guise is to a certain extent that of "negative theology". We are told that '*The Castle* is perhaps a theology in action, but it is first of all the individual adventure of a soul in quest of its grace'[8], that Amalia's revolt 'has for ever cast her out from the love of God'[9], that Barnabas represents the negation of God, that K. is 'endowed solely with his mad hope, the desert of divine grace'[10], and finally that the absurd hope of Kafka-the-existentialist is 'the very hope which at the time of early Christianity and the spreading of the good news inflamed the ancient world'[11]. A similarly immediate postulation of an essentially theological orientation of Kafka's work is evident in Sartre: if the "meaning" of the acts of Kafka's characters persistently eludes them, this is because 'the acts have on principle a meaning which is their *true meaning* and which neither K. nor the Surveyor will ever know. Without doubt Kafka is trying here to express the transcendence of the divine; it is for the divine that the human act is constituted as truth. But God here is only the concept of the Other pushed to the limit'[12].

This immediate recourse to the idiom and concepts of (negative?) theology is both slightly strange in the work of two avowedly atheist thinkers and rather more intrusive and hasty than that which emerges in those works which consider Kafka's relation to forms of Jewish identity, tradition, and

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[6] Ibid., p.104.
[7] Ibid., p.107.
[8] Ibid., p.101.
[9] Ibid., p.106.
[10] Ibid., p.107.
[11] Ibid., p.108.
[12] *Being and Nothingness*, p.266; Sartre also writes that 'one of the meanings' of *The Trial* is that of 'the characteristic in human reality of being perpetually *in court*. To be free is to *have one's freedom perpetually on trial*' (p.502). As should become clear in the next section, this can be seen as something of an imposition, since freedom is scarcely an issue for Kafka's

thought. However, what is perhaps of more concern here is the interpretative logic which upholds the suture of Kafka's work and theological concerns. Although Camus begins, having presupposed the essentially symbolic character of Kafka's work, by declaring the impossibility of a precise decoding of symbols ('there is no word for word rendering'[13]), he goes on to argue that 'A symbol [...] assumes two planes, two worlds of ideas and sensations, and a dictionary of correspondences between them. This lexicon is the hardest thing to draw up. But awaking to the two worlds brought face to face is tantamount to getting on the trail of their secret relationships'[14]. Kafka's unsettling depictions of "everyday life" are so on account of their symbolic correspondence to a 'supernatural anxiety'[15]: what is postulated is, in effect, a transcendental order revealed symbolically through Kafka's texts and a necessary order of symbolic correspondence, however difficult the "lexicon" may be to discern. The disturbing possible effect of this outlook is that of a tendency to regard the "surface" of Kafka's writings as merely superficial or contingent, a level to be bypassed in the attempt to uncover the presumed metaphysical sense lying beyond or behind it; moreover, this notion of an order of symbolic correspondence seems to imply also a certain univocity: once the reader is "on the trail" of the "secret relationships", then he/she will presumably be able to assert with confidence *the* symbolic meanings or at least frame of reference of Kafka's literary constructions.

It should be noted that Camus elsewhere cautions against such declarations, emphasizing the essentially partial, pragmatic, and non-definitive nature of his reading, but the interpretative tendencies sketched above are nonetheless apparent in his essay, and will recur as a persistent feature of certain approaches to Kafka's work.

The response to the domination of the phenomenological concerns and commitments of existentialism, and the catalytic role of structuralist linguistics in this process, has already been encountered. It should be noted, however, that alongside the nascence of post-structuralist

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protagonists; it tends to be seen as misleading, and subordinate to issues of escape, respite, flight, or disappearance.
[13] Op. cit., p.100.
[14] Ibid., p.102; Camus' contentions bear comparison with Kristeva's characterization of the "symbol" as it emerged in 'the second half of the Middle Ages [...] these elements (symbols) refer back to one (or several) unrepresentable and unknowable universal transcendence(s); univocal connections link these transcendences to the units evoking them'; *Desire in Language*, p.38.

philosophy (deconstruction, Foucauldian "archaeology", Deleuze and Guattari's "schizoanalysis",

etc.) there emerged strains of thought in other fields of thought such as anthropology, sociology,

feminism and psychoanalysis which were similarly informed by an inflection of varities of

structuralism.

There is no scope here for a sustained consideration of "orthodox" psychoanalytic interpretations

of Kafka[16], but suffice it to say that such readings tend to be complicit with the postulation of a

"psychobiographical signified" as identified and rebutted by Derrida in *Of Grammatology* in a

critical move which was witnessed in the previous chapter. To give a superficial account,

psychoanalytic criticism will tend to seek psychoanalytic motifs in Kafka's work, be they

archetypes or symptoms of Kafka's own implied neuroses. This latter approach, in particular, will

ground the literary texts in the context of Kafka's fraught familial relationships and thus make of the

motifs and thematic concerns of his work a patriarchal cipher. Thus one could argue that such

interpretations rely upon an unproblematized equation of character, narrator, author and the

psychology or "life" of the author and equally impose a univocity upon the work; the law and the

castle betray the father's judgment as much as "The Judgment" itself[17].

With the figures of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva[18], however, psychoanalytic commitments are

traversed by structuralist linguistics and thus form a counterpart to the philosophical transition from

phenomenology to post-structuralism delineated previously.

Lacan extrapolates Freud's identification of a quasi-linguistic structure of the unconscious to offer

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[15] *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p.102.

[16] The work of the leading psychoanalytic triumvirate of Freud, Jung and Adler (and likewise that of later theorists such as Klein), whilst undoubtedly philosophical in its ramifications, is obviously tangential to the movement from phenomenology to post-structuralism which guides this analysis, and is therefore not a major concern of this study. It is only with the advent of a psychoanalysis informed by structuralist linguistics that it comes to partake in this philosophical trajectory.

[17] There is not scope here for a substantial consideration of the psychoanalytic responses to Kafka; Marthe Robert's interpretation (in *Franz Kafka's Loneliness*) remains perhaps the most influential. Rainer Kaus' *Erzählte Psychoanalyse bei Franz Kafka* offers a striking example of the tendencies sketched above, with its explicit formulation of a psychoanalytic diagnosis; see p.58-63. For an analysis of the general Freudian inclination to conflate author and character, see Jean-Louis Baudry's "Freud and 'literary creation'" in *The Tel Quel Reader*, p.70-93.

[18] It should be noted that Kristeva's work stands apart from the other psychoanalytic approaches discussed here, at least in terms of their treatment of Kafka. She consistently inserts Kafka's work into a "polyphonic" "tradition": 'All of the most important polyphonic novels are inheritors of the Menippean, carnivalesque structure: those of Rabelais, Cervantes, Swift, Sade, Balzac, Lautréamont, Dostoievski, Joyce, and Kafka'(*Desire in Language*, p.79-80). Aspects of her early work (less influenced by psychoanalysis) also bear comparison to the Deleuzian themes which will emerge later in this section; see her focus upon the literary text as a network of connections in "Towards a semiology of paragrams" in *The Tel Quel Reader*, p.25-

an analysis of its nature in a manner which is indebted to the idiom, terminology, and commitments of structuralist linguistics, and in particular Jakobson's theory of metaphor and metonymy, which are equated with the processes of condensation and displacement respectively[19]. According to Lacan' s account, a child enters the "Imaginary" through the "Mirror Stage"[20], an initial identification with a specular image of itself. This primal scene is linked with Eros, the mother, and narcissism, and is followed by entry into the "Symbolic", the order of language, cultural codes, and the father[21]. This latter process fixes the subject's position in language as an "I", but at the expense of the subject's *"aphanisis"*, or "fading". Language, as the "discourse of the Other" (again, there is an emphasis upon the impossibility of an idiolect, language is essentially constituted as alterity for the subject), 'represents the subject for another signifier, which other signifier has as its effect the *aphanisis* of the subject'[22]: subjectivity for Lacan is a perpetual tension of identification, fading, and alienation from language as the discourse of the Other which opens the possibility of the subject's signification.

This theory has been applied to the case of Kafka in a number of guises. Charles Bernheimer, for example, understands "The Judgment" in terms of a dialectic of, on the one hand, Eros, metonymy, the mother, the child, and narcissism, and on the other, Thanatos: metaphor, the father, and the law. In his version of the story, Georg Bendemann creates for himself a narcissistic mother through his correspondence with his (imaginary?[23]) friend. This fantasy is then undermined by the confrontation with his father as identified by Lacan - with law (the "name-of-the-father"[24]) and the Symbolic, and here quite literally with Thanatos. However, reflecting upon Kafka's account of the story's "birth", Bernheimer argues for the essentially Erotic and "maternal" character of Kafka's authorship, an identification calling for a curious conflation of motherhood and (male) orgasm: 'his *Verwechslung*

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[19] See, for example, "The insistence of the letter in the unconscious" in *Modern Criticism and Theory*, p.79-105.

[20] See "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" in *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, p.122-127.

[21] See *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, p.280-282.

[22] *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, p.218.

[23] For Bernheimer, the friend *is* imaginary, an arguable erasure of the story's ontological ambiguities.

[24] See *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, p.282; the *"nom-du-père"*, typically, revolves around a pun, the phonic similarity to *"non-du-père"* meaning that the "concept" refers also to the father's "no".

into a woman giving birth to a child-story is actually the Erotic stimulus that incites his final ejaculation'[25].

This psychoanalytic discerning of gender ambiguity has been adopted by a number of (more or less psychoanalytic) feminist critics, as in Nina Pelikan Straus' identification of a fluidity of gender positions in "The Transformation"[26] and Daniela Pacher's postulation of the "femininity" of art in Kafka, emblems of which are Josephine, and Grete's violin playing[27]. Elizabeth Boa claims that "Up in the Gallery" offers a comparable vision of gynocentric art: the equestrienne 'is a *Kunstreiterin*, a female art-rider. The designation marks her as a model of the artist, not just the artist's model. She is at once the art-work and its performer'[28]). The story itself, it is suggested, initially describes and enacts a (male) 'ejaculatory dream'[29], in which 'the phallic hammer-blows of applause suggest male sadists watching a woman perform to the whip'[30], ending abruptly with the phrase 'But since it is not so'(TOS162;KK4,117), which makes a 'dry mockery of a young man's fantasies: it castrates'[31]. There is a resultant 'crisis of masculinity'[32], leading to 'yet another confirmation of patriarchy'[33].

There is undoubtedly a fundamental ambiguity of sexuality and gender in Kafka's work; in addition to the claims described above, Deleuze and Guattari highlight elements of homo-eroticism in Kafka (K69). However, while the critical texts at issue here tend to avoid the danger (so tempting for psychoanalytic criticism, given the prevalence of a vision of art as symptomatic of neuroses and complexes[34]) of referring Kafka's fiction back to the context of his troubled relationships with his family and with women, there seems to remain a reductionism inherent in their conceptual apparatuses.

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[25] *Flaubert and Kafka: Studies in Psychopoetic Structure*, p.186.
[26] "Transforming Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*", in *The Metamorphosis* (Norton Critical Edition), p.126-140.
[27] See *Everyone's Darling*, p.97-98.
[28] *Kafka: Gender, Class, and Race in the Letters and Fictions*, p.18.
[29] Ibid., p.11.
[30] Ibid., p.10.
[31] Ibid., p.11.
[32] Ibid., p.11.
[33] Ibid., p.12.
[34] A widespread psychoanalytic gesture; in the context of a discussion of theorists influenced by Lacan, the latter's grotesque view of Joyce is worth noting: 'he is the simplest consequence of a refusal – such a mental refusal! – of a psycho-analysis,

Boa, for instance, initially regards the castle as 'a veiled phallus'[35]; when unveiled, 'it becomes [...] the insane self-display of some wretched inmate, a penis not a phallus'[36]. K. is a 'castrated diminutive'[37] and 'cannot be the phallus which the castrated castle lacks'[38]. Identifications such as these would seem to rely upon an assumption of symbolism, of a symbolic order facilitating the identification of the castle as a site of castration and phallic aspiration and presumably offering criteria for such an identification, which otherwise seem to be lacking. It is above all perplexing to encounter a feminist critic perpetuating Lacan's phallocentrism, according to which every quest is ultimately reducible to a quest for the phallus, haunted by the threat of castration. Derrida has suggested of this tendency that although Lacan dubs the phallus the "transcendental signifier", it seems rather to function as a signified[39], hence as a continuation of what Derrida terms "phallogocentrism". Having characterized as "logocentric" philosophical rhetoric which seeks to create and uphold hierarchical conceptual oppositions, Derrida identifies as a particular facet of this "logocentrism" the 'privilege accorded to the phallus as a mark of presence [...] a continuity of phallus in logos'[40].

An argument of this sort fuels the work of figures such as Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, in their "excavations" of the "gendered" nature of philosophical discourse in particular, and their postulation of an alternative *écriture féminine*. Cixous' reading of Kafka's "Before the Law" is similar in many respects to that of Derrida – which will be discussed shortly – but also contains echoes of psychoanalytic commitments (and, by association, traces of the alleged reductionism) in suggestions such as 'perhaps the drive to enter [the door to the law] is similar to that of wanting to enter the body of the mother'[41], and 'Kafka's story is obviously written in relation to his father [...] Kafka was composed of his father, which was not very amusing because the latter was a tall, thin

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which, as a result, his work illustrates'; *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, p.xli.
[35] Op. cit., p.253.
[36] Ibid., p.254.
[37] Ibid., p.254.
[38] Ibid., p.254.
[39] 'This transcendental signifier [the phallus] is therefore also the signified of all signifieds'; *A Derrida Reader*, p.472-473.
[40] Peggy Kamuf's exposition: *A Derrida Reader*, p.313.
[41] *Postmodern Literary Theory*, p.179.

man whom he could not contain. He dies from his father, but an interiorized father'[42].

Although Cixous is an important deconstructive theoretician, there is a number of texts dealing with Kafka in which deconstruction seems to have become another interpretative "-ism"; no longer, as in Derrida's hands, the production of a signifying structure immanent to the text (the foregrounding of certain self-subversive traits already latent in the text), but rather an interpretative apparatus which may be employed to apprehend the text from without. The work of Charles Bernheimer has been mentioned previously; another essay of his ("Symbolic Bond and Textual Play: Structure of *The Castle*") arguably represents such a movement, a "deconstructive" reading which has become a wholescale proliferation of a Derridean idiom with more concern for identifying its own philosophical agenda than the nuances of how such an agenda may or may not be insinuated in Kafka's text:

> Thus the textuality of the castle is defined as displacement, fragmentation, postponement, duplicity. The plurality of books on the table is indicative of the fissure that has always-already occurred in some hypothesized original, unified Text, the indelible inscription of a paternal Logos. These books are already interpretations of interpretations, signifiers of previous signifiers [...] They are the parricidal traces of a deconstructed Logos[43]

In a sense, it may be unfair to impugn deconstruction (and immediately Derrida, whose relation to the "literary" is notably more subtle than that of many literary theorists who have been influenced by his work*) through certain of its literary-critical appropriations. However, this gesture serves partly to set the terms of the ensuing debate: to what extent is there a complicity between deonstructive stances as "originally" formulated and their appropriation by interpreters whose work has to some extent totalizing, reductive, and thus (in terms of the deconstructive resistance to the attempt to reduce "dissemination", or polysemy, to univocity) "illegitimate" effects? As in the preceding section, the most convenient point of entry into this question is to be found in the work of Blanchot, in which one finds "deconstruction" in its nascent form.

While Blanchot's earlier work.- that discussed in the previous section - tended to revolve around

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[42] Ibid., p.173; it is odd – given the emphasis be accorded to the corporeal dimension of Kafka's relationship with his father - that the description should be inaccurate: Kafka's father was far from thin.
[43] *The Kafka Debate*, p.372.

the postulation of an intimacy of authorship and death, perhaps the most significant feature of his later engagements with Kafka (represented primarily through *The Infinite Conversation*) is that of his invocation of what he terms "the neutral": *le neutre*, which can mean either "neutral" or "neuter", an ambivalence exploited by Blanchot. This is not to suggest that the two "periods" of Blanchot's work loosely demarcated in this way are incommensurable: indeed, one aspect of their continuity is established by the exemplary status bestowed on Kafka throughout.

This continued identification of Kafka's exemplarity is announced in Blanchot's explicit, if not unambiguous, declaration that 'what Kafka teaches us - even if this formulation cannot be directly attributed to him - is that storytelling brings the neutral into play'[44]. The neutral is inferred from Kafka's work: the essential link between narration and the neutral is already implied by Kafka before it is articulated by Blanchot himself. This singular privilege of Kafka demands explanation, and immediately provokes the question which will ultimately appear badly formulated: what is the neutral?

In "René Char and the Thought of the Neutral", Blanchot articulates the particular "ontological" dimension occupied by the neutral, a plane which lies beyond the purview of "orthodox metaphysics", a designation which incorporates even Heideggerean ontology. The extent to which the thought of the neutral escapes Heidegger's thought is suggested by Blanchot's critique of the former's conception of the *Lichtung* and "disclosedness": the neutral is '"foreign" to the disclosure that is accomplished in and through light'[45]. Blanchot suggests that Heidegger's *Sein* might have denoted the neutral were it not for the emphasis accorded to *Dasein's* access to the disclosure of Being: this postulated access, which consists in 'the relation [...] between Sein and truth, a veiling unveiling itself in the presence of *light* [...] does not prepare us to seek the neutral'[46].

While such comments appear to be critical of Heidegger, Blanchot's identification of 'the neutral of what we call being, which already places being in parentheses and in some sense precedes it'[47]

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[44] *The Infinite Conversation*, p.384.
[45] Ibid., p.300.
[46] Ibid., p.458.
[47] Ibid., p.303.

seems to resemble Heidegger's argument in "On the Essence of Truth" rather than to undermine it. Moreover, Blanchot retains a quasi-Heideggerean idiom, and, in doing so, implies a parallel between the neutral and the Heideggerean portrayal of the relation to death: 'to live "authentically" [...] is to have a relation with the unknown as such [...] [which] does not allow one to live ahead of oneself and, moreover, withdraws every center from life'[48]. This link between the neutral and the nature of death is likewise suggested by Nordholt: 'the ontological domain of dying - limit rather than domain – [...] is what Blanchot calls "the neutral"'[49].

However, Blanchot highlights the linguistic character of the emergence of the neutral, which *'comes to language through language'*[50], and exploits the double sense of *le neutre* to evoke a relation between the neutral and the neuter gender: 'what belongs to the neuter is not a third gender opposed to the other two [...] [it] cannot be assigned to any genre whatsoever'[51]. This relation is not consequently one of synonymy (*'the neuter, or neutral, is not simply a grammatical gender [...] it orients us toward something else'*[52]), a contention which incites the question of the nature of the linguistic "emergence" of the neutral, if it is indicated by, but not identifiable with, the neuter.

Blanchot outlines the neutral literary act as that which *'frees meaning as a phantom, a haunting, a simulacrum of meaning [...] because it bears the preliminary of all meaning, which is its obsession'*[53], and would furthermore *'lack direct relation to a subject who would accomplish it'*[54] - characterizations which perhaps already hint at the primacy of Kafka's work. The depiction of the neutral literary act is expanded in "The Narrative Voice", where the neutral is represented as an *"a priori"* feature of narration, since 'to write is to pass from "I" to "he" ("*il*") [which] does not simply designate another me'[55]. In this essay, the discovery of the 'uncharacterizable "he"', which does not

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[48] Ibid., p.302.
[49] *Maurice Blanchot: l'écriture comme expérience du dehors*, p.56.
[50] *The Infinite Conversation*, p.303.
[51] Ibid., p.299; Blanchot's remarks at this point perhaps yield an analogy with Heidegger's claims regarding the gender of *Dasein* as described by Derrida in "*Gecshlecht*: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference": *Dasein* is neither of (the) two genders, but is not therefore simply neuter; it rather contains the originary essence of sexuality prior to any binary opposition of genders. See *A Derrida Reader*, p. 380-402.
[52] *The Infinite Conversation*, p.303.
[53] Ibid., p.304.
[54] Ibid., p.305.
[55] Ibid., p.380.

merely indicate a covert (authorial) subjectivity, is attributed to *The Space of Literature*[56], and yet in *The Work of Fire*, it is ascribed to Kafka: 'Kafka grasped the fecundity of literature [...] from the moment that he felt literature was the passage from *Ich* to *Er* [...] That is the great discovery of the first important story he wrote, "The Judgment"'[57]. If there is, from the perspective of Blanchot's discourse, an interweaving of his voice and that of Kafka - an ambiguity which is doubtless a mark of respect - then there emerges the question of whether or not his reading of Kafka might, in a similar gesture, amount to a new voicing of the fabric of the latter's literary creations.

Blanchot does indeed declare his opposition to a certain interpretative logic which perhaps runs parallel to the critique offered at the inception of this section: 'let me immediately add that I am in no way proposing a new interpretation of *The Castle*. Nor am I suggesting that K. is purely and simply the writer Franz Kafka, the Castle the Biblical word, the Offices the Talmudic commentaries, the Village the site of the faithful'[58]: such hasty identifications 'do not fail to disappoint us'[59].

In this essay ("The Wooden Bridge"), Blanchot identifies as the function of the neutral in Kafka's work (immediately *The Castle*) the cumulative effect of the travel from interpretation to interpretation, a movement which essentially asserts the priority of proliferating, indeterminate interpretations over any centring, unifying site of truth in 'an ever-expanding sequence of exegetic versions that finally only bear upon the very possibility of exegesis itself'[60]. The "centre" is thus effaced by the interpretative abyss which constitutes it and renders it neutral, 'the vanishing point from which the speech of the narrative, and within it all narratives and all speech about every narrative, would receive and lose their perspective'[61].

This priority of Kafka's writing in Blanchot's "uncovering" of the effects of the neutral is analogous to that which was encountered in the previous section in the context of Blanchot's focus

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[56] Ibid., p.380.
[57] *The Work of Fire*, p.21.
[58] *The Infinite Conversation*, p.393.
[59] Ibid., p.395.
[60] Ibid., p.393-394.
[61] Ibid., p.396.

upon the intimacy of authorship and death. Just as Blanchot began by arguing that death necessarily underscores any act of writing but turned to the case of Kafka's authorship in its singularity for an exemplification of this "phenomenon", so here the neutral is on one level portrayed as an *a priori* of narration, and on another as a movement to be discerned in particular texts by Kafka rather than in other texts - Blanchot invokes the cases of Flaubert and Mann[62] - where, superficially, one might expect to find it. Two (perhaps not mutually exclusive) responses offer themselves, both of them versions of the logic of exemplarity. On the one hand, it might be argued that the neutral as a latent corollary of narration constitutes the "unthought" of the literary text, and therefore, while underpinning the work, need not be discernable in it: Kafka's texts, in which the neutral is played out on the "surface", as a *topos,* thus represent a "limit case" which nonetheless reflect upon writing as such, unveiling what is usually hidden. On the other hand, it could be said that Blanchot finds traces of his own excavation of ontological vagaries in the work of a few writers (Kafka first and foremost; the case of René Char has also been encountered in passing), whose work is then raised to the level of a general "truth" (precisely because Blanchot cannot find his agenda embodied elsewhere), in a possibly illegitimate erasure of the singularity of their literary enterprises. This latter reaction is manifestly the more immediately sceptical, and yet the former also carries with it the possibility of a critical perspective. If the importance of Kafka's work is thought to lie in its elevation to the level of a defining thematic concern, a movement inherent to narration as such, then does this gesture not risk reducing Kafka's texts to what they reveal about "the very possibility of exegesis"? What is significant now is not Kafka's "idiosyncrasy" but the ways in which his work reflects upon philosophical issues surrounding the possibility of literature.

Blanchot's reading of *The Castle* is prefaced by qualifications, but is still arguably symptomatic of the temptation, for a deconstructive theorist, firstly to alight upon those moments in Kafka's work which enact or "describe" the aporias of interpretation, potentially to the detriment of other movements in his texts, and then to propose (even in a tentative fashion) these features as

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[62] Ibid., p.382; these writers are presumably being called upon on the basis of their shared aesthetic will-to-impersonality, or

philosophically what is essentially at stake in Kafka in a stance which can amount to a certain imposition of univocity. The paradox is that this "univocity" resides in the latent suggestion that what Kafka "teaches us" is that interpretation is irreducibly polyphonous, indeterminate, consigned to dissemination. The terminology employed here is recognizably that of theorists who derive their impetus, for the most part, from Derrida, and before drawing any precipitous conclusions regarding the effects of deconstructive interpretation, it is necessary to encounter Derrida's own meeting with a Kafka text.

This meeting is also the site of a testament to the importance of Blanchot for Derrida's thought, as he allows *The Madness of the Day* to infiltrate his exploration of the minutiae of Kafka's text, "Before the Law"[63]. That there is a continuity between their respective endeavours - in their relation to Kafka - is suggested also by the apparent allusions to Blanchot's "neutral" in Derrida's reading: 'Nor yet is the law a man; it is neutral, beyond sexual and grammatical gender, and remains thus indifferent, impassive, little concerned to answer *yes* or *no*'[64], and, 'the same madness defers the law as the nothing that forbids itself and the neuter that annuls oppositions'[65]. In another echo of Blanchot[66], Derrida foregrounds the analogy between Kafka's parable, and its role in *The Trial*, and Talmudic practices: 'This entire chapter ["In the Cathedral"] is a prodigious scene of Talmudic exegesis, concerning *Before the Law*, between the priest and K.'[67]. The essentially open-ended nature of the interpretations, and the set of narrative frames which they institute, serves to constitute the site of the law as essentially distant. The set of framing devices which both determines and yet removes the site of the law and its parable is dubbed a 'differantial atopology'[68] by Derrida - a phrase which both evokes Blanchot's 'hypertopia'[69] and perhaps indicates that a more radical gesture on Kafka's part is being identified.

ironized authorship, a putative trait of the "neutral".

[63] *Acts of Literature*, p.206.
[64] Ibid., p.207.
[65] Ibid., p.209.
[66] See *The Infinite Conversation*, p.393.
[67] *Acts of Literature, p.217.*
[68] Ibid., p.209.
[69] *The Infinite Conversation*, p.462.

Différance - the neologism, suggesting both "differing" and "deferring", which marks Derrida's critical engagement with both Saussure's prioritization of semiotic difference and Heidegger's ontological difference[70] - captures, perhaps more clearly than the neutral, the temporal aspect of the situation of Kafka's protagonists: 'the discourse of the law does not say "no" but "not yet", indefinitely [...] What is deferred forever till death is entry into the law itself, which is nothing other than that which dictates the delay [...] What [...] cannot be approached is the origin of *différance*'[71]. This motif of indeterminate temporal deferral seems to escape Blanchot's conception of the neutral, which is addressed in predominantly spatial terms: for Derrida, *différance* marks the conjunction of "spacing" and temporization".

Derrida's reflections again coalesce with those of Blanchot in their relation to Heidegger, which is explicitly articulated as '(law, another name for Being, Being, another name for law; in both cases, the "transcendent", as Heidegger says of Being)'[72]. Similarly, a parallel between the waiting depicted in Kafka's "Before the Law" and Heidegger's Being-towards-death is implicitly suggested, when the wait is configured as '*Différance* till death, and for death'[73], and it is revealed that the 'door [...] is unique and specifically destined and determined for you'[74], in which one can recognize the Heideggerean *Jemeinigkeit* of death.

The conflation of law with Heidegger's Being, it should be noted, is not necessarily endorsed by Derrida in so far as it could be understood as a rehearsal of a Heideggerean interpretation, one which is also conducted partly in the conditional tense. Derrida is not necessarily guilty of such a hasty imposition of a transcendental narrative upon Kafka's narrative. He does, however, insist upon the allegorical nature of "Before the Law": it is 'at once allegorical and tautological'[75], and indeed is understood as an allegory of textuality itself: 'The story *Before the Law* does not tell or describe anything but itself as text [...] The text guards itself, maintains itself - like the law,

[70] See "*Différance*" in *A Derrida Reader*, p.61-79.
[71] *Acts of Literature*, p.205.
[72] Ibid., p.206.
[73] Ibid., p.204.
[74] Ibid., p.210.
[75] Ibid., p.212.

speaking only of itself'[76]. Furthermore, 'Kafka's text tells us perhaps of the being-before-the-law of

any text'[77]. There is a certain ambiguity with regard to the framing at work in these declarations: on

the one hand, the insistently self-contained, self-referential, "tautological" character of "Before the

Law" is to be discerned when it is regarded as 'insular'[78], as a text standing on its own. On the

other, its status as revealing the text's submission to the laws of textuality (hence the work of

interpretation) and simultaneous resistance, on the basis of its 'unreadability'[79] to this

circumscription seems implicitly to be asserted on the basis of its position in *The Trial*. There is

undoubtedly a deliberate exploitation of the ambiguities adhering to the framing contexts of Kafka's

story in Derrida's text, but this play arguably also displays certain commitments which uphold some

of the reductive traits of deconstructive criticism.

The suggestion that *The Trial* is in some sense revelatory of the aporetic nature of interpretation,

the vagaries of textuality, notions of absence and deferral - in short, of the concerns of

deconstruction as popularly understood - is perhaps inevitably supported on the basis of a

prioritization of "In the Cathedral". The "risk" of this foregrounding is that of regarding other

movements and moments of the novel as subordinate to the parable of the law and its interpretation;

the significance of other events is ultimately established on the basis of their relation to this scene,

which represents the novel's "kernel". There are hints that Derrida does subscribe to this priority in

some form: he highlights the extent to which the dialogue between the priest and Josef K. represents

a repetition of the "parable", and claims of the relationship between the two texts that there is 'a

metonymic interpretation of each other'[80]. No doubt *The Trial* incorporates an interpretative

convolution of "Before the Law", but the assertion implies also that the latter text be able to

undertake a microcosmic exegesis of the former. Indeed, Derrida suggests that the effect of the

inclusion of the one text in the other is that of 'condensing the whole of *The Trial* in the scene of

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[76] Ibid., p.210-211.
[77] Ibid., p.215.
[78] Ibid., p.217.
[79] Ibid., p.211.
[80] Ibid., p.213.

"Before the Law"[81]. This implied commitment to the notion that the priest's tale can somehow encapsulate the entirety of the novel is later restated as: 'the latter [*The Trial*] would therefore have already set up a *mise-en-abyme* of everything you have just heard, unless "Before the Law" does the same thing through a powerful ellipsis which itself would engulf *The Trial*, and us along with it'[82]. This priority of the parable of the law, implicitly configured as the point around which *The Trial* revolves, seems to some extent axiomatic for a deconstructive interpretation of the novel. Even if Derrida does not endorse the presumed Heideggerean response to "Before the Law" which he envisages ('Its "truth" is this non-truth which Heidegger calls the truth of truth'[83]) he nonetheless retains the logic which affirms that this moment of the novel is the one in which its truth would reside, even in its inaccessibility, deferral, or erasure: it seems moreover to be a corollary of this logic that the rest of the novel be interpretatively submitted to this locus of non-disclosure. The problematization of this gesture does not yet amount to the creation of an alternative conception of the novel's architecture which would evade the potentially reductive fixation with this passage; it is in the work of Deleuze and Guattari that such a model will be found.

A critical reaction to the priorities - regarded as having potentially or actually reductive effects - which seem to underpin deconstructive interpretations of Kafka does not imply that such responses amount to arbitrary impositions upon Kafka's texts, as if it were not truly the case that the obfuscation of interpretative apparatuses is at work in Kafka as a persistent thematic concern. Rather, the issue is that of the scope and significance of this facet of his work, of whether semantic indeterminacy can legitimately be considered not just a theme of the novels and stories, but, philosophically, the most crucial. Despite the aspersions cast over the interpretative priorities which seem to be endorsed by Derrida's essay, the brevity of his engagement with Kafka must be acknowledged; this is not, however, the case with Blanchot, whose protracted deployment of Kafka's work seems, at first sight quite remarkably, to include not a single response to *Der Verschollene*. It is of course true that Blanchot does not pretend to offer a systematic,

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[81] Ibid., p.209.

comprehensive overview of Kafka's work; it is similarly true that any account will bestow upon certain aspects of Kafka's writing an interpretative privilege, and that this is an inevitable feature of reading, hence not in itself a ground for criticism. However, it seems fair to assume that Blanchot does not address *Der Verschollene* because he regards it, as have others, as to some extent anomalous, which it is only if it is approached from a preconstituted and clearly circumscribed philosophical outlook, such as that which makes up Blanchot's deconstructive orientation; looked at from another perspective, there are clear aspects of continuity with the other two novels. Again, there is a suspicion that one is being offered a view of Kafka's work which has selected those moments which conform to a philosophical position at the expense of other currents of his output. *Der Verschollene* becomes, at times, the novel which disappeared.

There is, furthermore, a tendency to regard Kafka - like Mallarmé - as *sui generis,* and moreover as an isolated precursor of certain post-structuralist commitments without there being a full consideration of what role these aspects are playing in his work, or when, how, and why they emerge; there is little investigation as to why his work is so amenable to deconstructive appropriation. There is no single or definitive answer, but one can rehearse a position which would in some sense "account for" a certain "primacy of interpretation" in Kafka's work, and would render it less prophetic than an admittedly idiosyncratic response to a given philosophical conundrum. This distinction lies between an implied vision of Kafka as working in a philosophical vacuum, his philosophical significance, like that of Nietzsche, belonging to the future, and an insistence upon situating Kafka's irreducible philosophical idiosyncrasy in a relation to the contemporary debates which, it was suggested earlier, can be said to infuse his work.

One such debate was that surrounding the problem of non-veridical intentional objects, and prominent among the responses was Meinong's theory of *Aussersein,* or position of ontological neutrality, a position which, in this context, seems to enter into a certain unclear affiliation with Blanchot's meditations as they weave their way through the issues attending Kafka's writing: Kafka

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[82] Ibid., p.217.

would seem to open up a space in which there might be points of contact between Blanchot's "neutral" and the "theory of objects". Blanchot's "neutral" is formulated, at least in part, as a response to Heideggerean ontology, from which it is distinguished via the insistence that the ontological "realm" which it designates is prior to Being, putting it 'in parentheses' and escaping disclosure; in an analogous fashion, Meinong's *Aussersein* is described as an ontological zone "indifferent" to determinations of being, the "theory of objects" an analysis which is not answerable to the being/non-being disjunction. There would seem to be some complicity between the two positions, both striving to articulate a "neutral" domain hovering beyond the purview of orthodox ontology's fixation with determinate modes of being.

A curious light is shed upon Blanchot's response to Kafka, or at least that part of it which revolves around a conception of the "neutral": in so far as it succeeds in expressing a certain ontological opacity as it emerges in Kafka's work, it also - inadvertently - coincides to a degree with a proto-phenomenological theory with which Kafka's writing was contemporaneous and - arguably - conversant. This turn of events reflects also - and in a similarly strange fashion - upon the relationship between phenomenological and post-structuralist tendencies. According to the narrative sketched earlier in this study, post-structuralist thought in general - its deconstructive manifestation being at issue here - can be defined in part through its critical comportment to phenomenology, suggesting some sort of decisive transition. Here, however, there appears to be some form of coalescence of deconstructive and early phenomenological theories, the sense of an alliance which would seem to run counter to such an account; in purely philosophical terms, this scenario might provoke the postulation of a retention of a certain complicity with phenomenological concerns lying within deconstructive theory, resisting the critical assault on the phenomenological subject.

The strange alliance can be treated in another manner, more suggestive given the remit of this study: given that it is Kafka's work that has incited the identification of a Blanchot-Meinong interface, one could focus less upon the wider significance of the apparent congruence of the two

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[83] Ibid., p.206.

philosophical theories than upon the capacity of Kafka's work to facilitate such an identification. In short, it could be said that this ability to give rise to such juxtapositions is a trait of the (philosophical) idiosyncrasy of Kafka's writing, a component of the capacity, captured by Borges, to create connections between disparate sources, connections that might not have been discerned otherwise. In terms of the philosophical trajectory at issue here, Kafka's work would emerge as a site which can generate new perspectives on the relationship between phenomenological and post-structuralist strains of thought.

Before pursuing such a line of enquiry, however, the affiliation between Blanchot and Meinong requires further attention. Although there would seem to be a shared vision of an ontological "neutrality", the two thinkers remain substantially heterogeneous, responding as they are to quite separate sets of problems. Even if there is an ontological accord, it has been seen that Blanchot's discussion of the "neutral" moves on from strictly ontological concerns to a consideration of its narrative encapsulation, its emergence through a proliferation of interpretations of the castle's proceedings which amounts to an interrogation of the very possibility of such accounts. The question is that of whether the invocation of Meinong's thought can lead similarly to an ontological perspective upon the interpretative convolutions in Kafka's work.

Meinong's thought - in relation to Kafka's writing - was introduced via a fairly small number of possible allusions: what is now required is a more comprehensive account of the ways in which Meinongian motifs function in Kafka's texts, the contexts of their emergence and their narrative effects. Over and above the appearance of objects vacillating between or beyond being and non-being in "Description of a Struggle", "Unhappiness" and "The Hunter Gracchus" lies a response to this *Aussersein* which emerges persistently, and might be described as a primacy of interpretation. If objects can have essentially elusive ontological states, and the ground of judgment (the affixing of a determinate ontological status) is irreducibly subjective, then it seems that such objects are bound to be sites of contestation. More specifically, the attempt to "fix" an ontological status becomes the work of interpretation, one which is destined to be both frustrated, contested, and even

contradictory, since it revolves around a fundamental ontological indeterminacy.

This situation has already been glimpsed in the earlier discussion of "The Judgment": the being or non-being of the friend cannot, it seems, be objectively determined, but is rather a function of his invocation by the contesting parties. His being can be understood, as it is, retrospectively, by Kafka, as relational, or equally as a value asserted by whichever interpretation of events holds sway at a given point in the proceedings: to adopt Meinong's terminology, the friend is a "homeless object", with contesting "Objective-clauses" attempting to superimpose determinate ontological values upon that which lies essentially "beyond" such values. In a sense, the question of the friend's being or non-being becomes effaced by the clash of interpretations: interpretation becomes the means by which a judgment is effected, but since the judgment is cast on that which eludes ontological determinacy, it cannot be definitive; thus it potentially gives rise to another interpretation.

A similar situation is evident in "The Village Schoolmaster": although the narrator believes that both he and the schoolmaster 'had proved our principal point, namely, the existence of the mole'(GWC4;KK5,169), this alleged success is subverted by the fact that 'individual points of disagreement prevented the friendly relations growing up between us'(GWC4;KK5,169). In fact, the question of the mole's existence drops out of the equation as the issue becomes that of the relationship between the schoolmaster's pamphlet and that of the narrator, attempting to endorse it, and hence also of the antagonistic relationship between the two men. The discrepancies highlight the extent to which the situation has become an interpretative dilemma (the mole 'at all events [...] cannot be produced'(GWC7;KK5,171); there is no empirical reference point), departing from the issue of the mole to include the schoolmaster's supplement, the narrator's pamphlet upholding that of the schoolmaster, the journal's confusion of the two texts, the hope that a professor might pass the issue on to a student who could write a further confirmation, and so on. Again, the absence of a grounding ontological determinacy leads to an exegetical proliferation, the prospect of which dismays the narrator. In "The Problem of Our Laws", this process has been going on for some time; in fact, '[...] the laws are very ancient, centuries of work have gone into their interpretation and by

now this has probably become law itself'(GWC125;KK5,68). This labour of interpretation has been undertaken despite the fact that the existence of the laws is 'a matter of conjecture'(GWC125;KK5,68): again, the role of entities whose very being is nebulous has been taken over by interpretation, to such an extent that the interpretation of the laws has itself assumed the status of law.

A comparable primacy of interpretation arises in situations which do not involve explicitly Meinongian objects, those lying beyond being and non-being, but which do involve an analogous intangibility. The inaccessibility of the law, as set forth in "In the Cathedral", leads the intercession of interpretation, the dialogue between the priest and K. framing and doubling that between the man from the country and the doorkeeper. In a similar vein, in *The Castle*, the excess of bureaucracy leads to doubts about the existence of the original letter ordering the appointment of a land surveyor ('"Sordini: yes it *was* remarkable, because the letter I had remembered did not exist, I: of course it did not exist, the whole file had been lost, Sordini: but there ought to have been a note about that first letter and there was none'"(C58;KK3,64)); it is unclear whether any decision has been taken regarding K.'s appointment ('"a number of things suggest it has, a number suggest not'"(C62;KK3,69)), and it is not even clear whether the letter that K. did receive referred to his being appointed (erroneously or otherwise) as a land surveyor: '"Nor is there a single word in it to say that you have been taken on as a land surveyor, instead it merely talks in general terms about his lordship's service and even that is not stated definitely, you are simply admitted 'as you know', in other words the burden of proof that you have been taken on is upon you'"(C64;KK3,71). The apparent impossibility of ascertaining that events have occurred, that decisions have been taken, that letters refer to anything and whether missives even exist seems to result from a tidal wave of bureaucratic exegesis, and provokes a further deluge, condemned never to resolve the matter on account of this impossibility, a palimpsest with no possibility either of deciphering the original message or of discerning that there was one. This episode is a microcosm of the overall architecture of the novel; a similar sort of conundrum emerges, as has been seen, through the fact that accounts

of Klamm multiply without anyone being sure that they refer to a single person, or several, or a single person with a protean being; the name itself seems to suffice, shorn of any ostentive or denotative connection to an entity.

It seems, therefore, that a reading which seeks to identify the ways in which a Meinongian ontological neutrality functions in Kafka's texts runs along similar lines to Blanchot's claims regarding the "neutral" as it inhabits Kafka's prose, the latter deconstructive enterprise appearing to echo the latent effects of an early phenomenological input. However, it could of course be argued that this invocation of Meinong is complicit with the tendency, diagnosed earlier, to impose a philosophical narrative as a means of "explaining" the mysteries of Kafka's work, a gesture which, it was alleged, has inherently reductive effects.

To this it might be countered that, for the reasons outlined during the account of the Brentano school, Meinong's theories might actually be "at play" in Kafka's work and thus amount to a philosophical concern immanent to the textual fabric rather than one gratuitously imposed from without. However, as was conceded in section 3, this claim seems bound to escape full substantiation given that the evidence of Kafka's proto-phenomenological forays is somewhat circumstantial, lacking any definitive statement on Kafka's part. The alternative "justification" of the use of Meinong's thought is that it helps to maximize the philosophical interpretability of Kafka's work, while also offering the interesting "geneaological" possibility that those facets of Kafka's texts which are most assimilable into a deconstructive apparatus are also those which can be understood as exploitations of the travails of early phenomenological thought.

The justification or otherwise for a reading of Kafka in the light of this avenue of Brentano-derived thought is however overridden by its apparent failure to live up to the "methodological" commitment offered by section 3, to the discovery of a theoretical apparatus capable of articulating philosophically (at least potentially) all the intricacies of Kafka rather than alighting upon a few moments and claiming them as the "essence" of Kafka's output. Whether or not the claim that Kafka is in some sense responding to the issue of *Aussersein* serves to elucidate the attraction of Kafka for

deconstructive theorists, such an account will (at least in its present form) be open to the charge laid against the latter group, that there is a blindness (even if it might be the ground of insight) with regard to those strands of Kafka's literary web which are not obviously amenable to the theoretical concerns at work.

It may be claimed, on the one hand, that there may be quite specific reasons why Kafka's texts are a seductive object for deconstruction, reasons which moreover tie his work, in its philosophical ramifications, back to its roots in a phenomenological context, thus recalling and reviewing deconstruction's emergence through a critical engagement with phenomenology. On the other hand, however, the whole debate may be qualified: this inscription of a relationship between early phenomenology and deconstruction in Kafka's work serves to redouble the sense partiality of the use of Kafka's work in the scene of this debate thus far. It could be claimed that deconstruction and the proto-phenomenological reading (as it appears in this context) are here allied in their shared comprehension of a perhaps rather superficial movement of Kafka's work. Such is the verdict delivered by Deleuze and Guattari (although 'superficial movement doesn't mean a mask underneath which something else would be hidden'(K45)), whose work has implicitly fuelled the critical comments of this section. The question is that of what sort of commitments lead them to issue such a provocative proclamation.

Deleuze and Guattari's formulation is typically strident: 'It is absolutely useless to look for a theme in a writer if one hasn't asked exactly what its importance is in the work - that is, *how it functions* (and not what its "sense" is)'(K45). On the face of it, a quite simple imperative is enforced, and yet it is accompanied by a critical agenda, the suggestion being that "interpretation", with a hermeneutic fixation with "sense", misses the importance of a theme's function. The problem with the preceding discussion of the instances of ontological neutrality (whether this neutrality be expressed in the idiom of Blanchot or Meinong) is that it runs the risk of neglecting to consider the function of these instances, their specific role in the machinery of Kafka's world; for Deleuze and Guattari (given the conjunctive view of machines encountered earlier), this role can be understood

largely through the connections thereby forged: to understand the function of one part of a machine, it is necessary to observe the other parts affected by it, and the nature of this affection.

To a certain extent, such features have already been glimpsed in the consideration of "The Judgment", in the suggestion that the figure of ontological neutrality (the friend) has a relational value if it not a fixed ontological one. The friend connects to the blood relation between father and son, according to Kafka, who also notes that the role of the fiancée is orchestrated by that of the friend. The existence and allegiances of the friend are sites of ~~conestation~~ contestation between father and son, as are the family business and Georg's mother; the role of the friend is thus analogous to that of the other figures, or rather, the friend partakes in the same antagonistic play of forces between father and son as the other figures, forming connections with other spheres of Georg's life which likewise are subsumed into the conflict. Ontology, family, and bureaucracy are aligned as they are invoked in the course of the argument's oscillations, the friend's ontological fluidity being mirrored in the fluidity of his role.

These observations would seem to constitute supplements to the interpretative gestures revolving around the "theme" of ontological neutrality, addressing their shortcomings by responding to the injunction to explore the function of the "theme". However, Deleuze and Guattari's approach is rather more polemical: the advocation of enquiry into functions and connections is associated with a wholescale opposition to "interpretation" ('So, should we support realist and social interpretations of Kafka? Certainly, since they are infinitely closer to noninterpretation'(K46)), portrayed as inextricably tied to the "metaphorical" pole, and as failing to analyse "function" less through carelessness than on account of a hermeneutic commitment which inevitably leads the interpretation in the opposite direction. Bruce Baugh offers a summary of this position:

> [...] interpretation rules out questions of use and efficacy in favour of meaning-exegesis [...], and in two ways. First, knowing the meaning of something (a symbol, word, image) gives us no clue as to what it does or what is done with it, its operative use or its positional functioning within an [...] assemblage [...] Second, interpretation is a process of identification: 'this means that'. This holds whether interpretation holds via analogy, representation or symbolism. In every case, the aim is to assign an identifiable meaning or set of meanings that correspond to a signifier, thereby excluding others [...] Deleuze and Guattari regard this as a 'flattening out' of the polyvocal nature of the real[84].

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[84] *Deleuze and Literature*, p.37.

Furthermore, it is asserted that deconstruction still belongs essentially to this order, paradoxically repeating this interpretative logic in the course of announcing its obfuscation:

> By the same token, pluralising meaning, or making meaning indefinite, does not circumvent any of these [interpretative] difficulties [...] When the concern for 'identifying' meaning ceases, then the difficulties of doing so because of ambiguity or undecidability become uninteresting. From this standpoint, it doesn't matter whether interpretation seeks a signified meaning or a 'transcendent signifier' supporting a 'chain of signification' in which each signifier signifies another signifier, endlessly [...]. The recent interpretative turn to [...] 'pure textuality' and the like merely puts the signifier in the place formerly occupied by the signified[85]

It must be said that Baugh here echoes Deleuze and Guattari's tendency to caricature to a certain extent the position from which they seek to differentiate themselves[86]; however, even if there is a quasi-satirical aspect, there is no doubting the fundamental seriousness of the objection. In so far as a deconstructive interpretation alights upon precisely those aspects and moments of Kafka's work which embody or reflect upon its own agenda, and these moments are treated as the crux, upon which the rest of the text depends, it is complicit with an orthodox desire for a "signified". Bernheimer's claim that Barnabas' account of the castle reveals the absence of a *Logos* (or the site of its effacement) is, in this sense, of the same order as any declaration that the castle means, represents, symbolizes, is an allegory of, is a metaphor for, something else, be it paternal authority, the phallus or its absence, or Zionist aspiration, and so on.

The charge is one of straightforward reductionism, and it is worth noting that it cannot be said to apply directly to the approches of Blanchot and Derrida, who are perhaps more sensitive to such interpretative risks. Rather, Blanchot's concerns might be termed "meta-interpretative", in that he regards *The Castle's* exegetical proliferation as ultimately bearing upon 'the possibility of writing (and of interpreting) *The Castle*'[87], the novel itself as already enacting its own commentary 'in the part of it that is silent'[88], and is sensitive to the risks of claiming that it 'contains [the neutral] [...] as its center (and the absence of any center)'[89]. The danger is that of identifying precisely these meta-interpretative conundrums as the heart of the novel's enigma; Blanchot seems sensitive to this risk to

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[85] Ibid., p.37.
[86] The charge is essentially identical to that which emerged in the course of Derrida's critique of Lacan, and thus presumably one to which Derrida is sensitive. Deleuze and Guattari are also prepared to dismiss interpretations which rely upon notions of allegory, metaphor, or symbolism as merely 'stupidities'(K45), in a rather cavalier fashion.
[87] *The Infinite Conversation*, p.394.

an extent which seems to prevent him from venturing any further in his analysis, his texts on Kafka characterized by an elaborate and delicate rhetoric of reservations and qualifications attending the temptation to commit this identification, a temptation which remains palpable in his writing. Derrida likewise seems to discern a meta-interpretative level, with "Before the Law" as an allegory of textuality and its "unreadability", a focus which could be said to presage a reductive interpretation of *The Trial* in so far as it is hinted that the novel's mystery is 'condensed' in this passage.

This possible objection is again consonant with Deleuze and Guattari's treatment of the "parable" of the law, its elevated, "revelatory" status being unsustainable on the basis of the novel's overall architecture and movement (K44). This, and other such episodes and stories, constitute what they term 'abstract machines', by which they mean that the priest's tale recounts an ideal diagram of the law, the law's fable of itself; however, such abstract machines 'don't function, or no longer function'(K47). The law as it appears in the narrative is divorced from its function, its effects upon the social field, it is ' a self-destructive machine and cannot develop in a concrete way'(K48); this image of the law, produced by the law's operation (it is a specific modality of its functioning), is however misleading in that it severs the form of the law from its function. It is of course the latter aspect that preoccupies Deleuze and Guattari, and it offers a quite different vision, of the law, not as absence or transcendence, but rather as unconstrained proliferation, immanent to every social field traversed by Josef K.. The law may be portrayed as infinitely removed from the one who seeks it, but it functions by flooding the life of the accused, seeping in precisely where it is not sought. It might be noted that *The Trial* preoccupies Deleuze and Guattari more than any other text as they formulate these points: perhaps the balance can be redressed slightly if, applying these principles, a broader account of power in Kafka's work can be proposed, even if *The Trial* will remain its most perfectly realized expression.

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[88] Ibid., p.394.
[89] Ibid., p.396.

5. POWER/DESIRE.

In Kafka's work, power is polymorphous and all-pervasive. It persistently insinuates itself into domestic life, bureaucratic life, sexual and amorous life and even animal life, ceaselessly creating connections as it flows. It weaves a network which enmeshes the persecuted, paranoid protagonist, the array of characters who articulate its functions, the anonymous agencies who seem to orchestrate its machinations.

Despite its apparent omnipresence (at least in the novels), the nature of the power which haunts Kafka's texts is notoriously elusive, particularly when it seems to be founded in a transcendental anonymity, a theological absence, or an infinite ontological regress. The preceding chapter, however, suggested an alternative approach: rather than focus (exclusively) upon those passages which debate the origin of the network of power, and its constituent inaccessibility, a reading can focus instead upon its functions. The undertaking is to describe not the essence of the law but rather its points of insertion, its effects, its techniques and its functions.

It is at this point that the theory of power developed by Michel Foucault through his analyses of disciplinary practices becomes valuable, particularly in so far as it suggests that such a theory can be implied through a focus upon the concrete machinations of its institutions. Moreover, if we are to follow Foucault and ground a theory of power which could aspire to a description of its operation throughout Kafka's work in concrete modes of punishment, then we must start from those texts by Kafka which deal overtly with legal operations. Such an initial strategy has the added benefit of allowing the interpretation to consider specific details of Kafka's legal knowledge (and their possible influence on his fiction), thereby rooting the alleged transcendental dimensions of the law in a clearly circumscribed context.

The use of Foucault's work perhaps requires particular justification, since his writing does not address itself to Kafka, aside from a few passing references. However, the production of a Foucauldian reading of Kafka clearly functions as an enactment of the "principles" of reading as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari and encountered in the previous section. Moreover, the use of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (*Surveiller et Punir*) couples such a fulfillment of this "programme" of reading with a wealth of historical analyses which are both absent from Deleuze and Guattari's own reading and profoundly suggestive when juxtaposed with the enigmatic machinations of Kafka's regimes of power, and with the historical peculiarities of Kafka's own legal experience. It is worth noting that *Discipline and Punish* acknowledges its debt to Deleuze and Guattari[1], thus giving weight to the notion of a certain continuity of the two projects; Deleuze and Guattari furthermore spot 'a certain Kafkaesque resonance'(K97) in Foucault's text.

Discipline and Punish aims to carry out a genealogy of Western determinations of, and responses to, "criminality" and deviance. Foucault is particularly interested in the shift from a paradigm of justice as retribution for a criminal act, characterized by the spectacle of public execution and 'the tortured, dismembered, amputated body, symbolically branded [...] exposed [...] to public view'[2], to that of a legal system devoted to exercising control over the criminal mind, 'judging something other than crimes, namely, the "soul" of the criminal'[3].

This transformation of the object, focus, and techniques of power, with its relation to the production of knowledge and the determinations of the subject, is evidenced by the metamorphosis of the institutions of the law. Hence the public spectacle of justice avenging itself on the body which has transgressed its laws gives way to a new sphere of judgment,

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[1] *Discipline and Punish*, p.309, 2nd note.
[2] Ibid., p.8.
[3] Ibid., p.19.

which 'is [now] also passed on the passions, instincts, anomalies, infirmities, maladjustments, effects of environment or heredity; acts of aggresssion are punished, so also, through them, is aggressivity'[4], and thence to the human factory of the prison.

By this stage in his intellectual career, Foucault had moved away from the emphasis of *The Order of Things* upon the strict incommensurability of ~~epistemi~~ *epistemai*, and allows several competing discourses to co-exist: he states, for example, that 'there remains [...] a trace of "torture" in the modern mechanisms of criminal justice - a trace that has not been entirely overcome, but which is enveloped, increasingly, by the non-corporal nature of the penal system'[5]. Changes are gradual and do not erase vestiges of previous systems of discipline. The chronological circumscriptions of the various punitive regimes are consequently slightly vague, but suffice it to say that Foucault tends to represent the figure of the executioner as an essentially pre-nineteenth century phenomenon, one which is ~~superceded~~ *superseded* at roughly the turn of that century, in an echo of the location in time of the birth of "man" postulated by *The Order of Things*. Foucault notes that 'protests against the public executions proliferated in the second half of the eighteenth century'[6], and enumerates the new penal codes which appeared between 1769 and 1810, inaugurating a new concept of justice.

Discipline and Punish does, however, articulate a tension which was ~~displaced~~ *avoided* by *The Order of Things;* one which is created by the insistence, on the one hand, on the radical heterogeneity of the punitive systems involved (as it is famously portrayed at the book's inception), and the admission, on the other, of a degree of interplay between these competing systems: 'in the late eighteenth century, one is confronted by three ways of

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[4] Ibid., p.19.
[5] Ibid., p.16.
[6] Ibid., p.73.

organizing the power to punish'[7].

This tension is significant in that it seems - up to a point - to echo the peculiarity of the punitive systems which haunt Kafka's work. To suggest that such a notion might "explain" the mysteries of the regimes in Kafka's texts would of course constitute a precipitous and naive gesture, yet there remains a sense in which something of the disturbing quality of these literary constructions seems to be generated by their curious commingling of elements derived from ~~discreet~~ discrete modes of punishment. The reader is confronted by the bizarre alliance of the "inhumanity" of the execution and the sophisticated machinery of a modern judicial network, in which the corridor of an office building could be the site of a twentieth century *auto-da-fé*.

Even if one does not yet wish to pursue such a line of thought, it is nonetheless apparent that there are coincidences between the opaque judicial procedures of Kafka's work and the "methodology" of punishment which, for Foucault's study, belongs essentially to the "classical age".

Fundamental to this punitive paradigm, according to Foucault, is the focus upon the criminal act itself and the body which commits the offence. Justice was essentially an act of retribution, seeking 'to reproduce the crime on the visible body of the criminal'[8] in a symmetrical act of violence. Indeed this emphasis upon symmetry was such that on some occasions, the execution became 'an almost theatrical reproduction of the crime'[9]. The system of justice underpinning this visceral punishment had as its locus of power and authority the figure of the sovereign, such that 'the condemned man represents the symmetrical, inverted figure of the king'[10]. The justification for the exercise of the "surplus power" produced by the invocation of the ruler was constituted by an intricate hierarchy of

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[7] Ibid., p.130.
[8] Ibid., p.55.
[9] Ibid., p.45.

"proofs", at the pinnacle of which was confession, the ultimate goal of the investigation. The confession did not, however, imply any knowledge on the part of the defendant 'either of the charges or of the evidence'[11]; moreover, guilt was, to a certain extent, presupposed: 'one could not be an object of suspicion and be completely innocent'[12].

The secrecy of the investigation was counterbalanced by the publicity of the execution: if the law was unassailable, it nevertheless sought to deploy its pomp in public, to induce a catharsis. Central to this undertaking was the role of the executioner: in the ideal case, the accused would surrender him/herself to an efficient execution, and justice - enacting the king's power - would appear not merely vindicated but triumphant.

However, the complexity and volatility of the power relations involved were revealed in the cases of botched executions, in which the executioner would face punishment and the hostility of the crowd (thus revealing his complicity), or in instances of protests on the part of the accused, particularly if he/she received popular support. This latter eventuality - the threat of rioting - contributed, according to Foucault, to the emergence of a new system of punishment. Other factors were of course involved, such as the perceived arbitrariness of judgments and the inhumanity of torture and execution[13]. The initial form of the response to these objections is concisely stated by Foucault:

> Shift the object and change the scale. Define new tactics in order to reach a target that is now more subtle but also more widely spread in the social body. Find new techniques for adjusting punishment to it and for adapting its effects. Lay down new principles of regularizing, refining, universalizing the art of punishing. Homogenize its application. Reduce its economic and political cost by increasing its effectiveness and multiplying its circuits. In short, constitute a new economy and a new technology of the power to punish: these are no doubt the essential *raisons d'être* of penal reform in the eighteenth century[14]

As Foucault suggests, one of the central principles of this renovation is that of an economy of punishment; the new system seeks - at least to some extent - to regulate the

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[10] Ibid., p.29.
[11] Ibid., p.35.
[12] Ibid., p.42.
[13] Foucault's "antihumanism" leads him to downplay the role of humanitarian objections, such as those of Beccaria, Montesquieu and Voltaire.

minds of its subjects[15], to limit the possibility of re-offence[16] and to link the crime with the punishment according to a rigid code[17]. The threat to the potential transgressor is thus more subtle yet more insidious: the penalty, rather than being the possibility of public torture, is intended to be elided with the idea of the crime in the mind of a person even contemplating offence. Moreover, the crime is no longer, in an opaque extrapolation, an affront to the sovereign, but rather offends against society as a whole, a transposition of objects which lends to the punishment a semblance of "democracy" or "popularity".

In addition to this "internalization" of the idea of punishment and new location of its authority, a shift occurs in the focus and nature of the investigation and consequent sentencing practice. The investigation seeks not merely to identify the author of an act, but also to examine 'the profound nature of the criminal himself, the presumable degree of his wickedness, the intrinsic quality of his will'[18]: in short, the "criminal" is identified as a distinct species of person, over and above his/her visible acts. This rise of a criminal anthropology is mirrored in the new status of the investigation: 'The verification must obey the general criteria for all truth. In the arguments it employs, in the proofs it provides, legal judgement must be homogenous with judgement in general'[19]. The goal of this quasi-scientific procedure became the reform or rehabilitation of the criminal, and this process was inevitably temporal: 'Time, operator of punishment'[20]. Therefore, 'within a short space of time, detention became the essential form of punishment'[21]; and hence the rise of the prison. If the punishment thus became less public, the codes of the law became more so; it became necessary that they be in a sense appropriated by the citizens:

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[14] Op. cit., p.89; Foucault uses *"pouvoir"* for "power" in all the passages quoted here.
[15] Ibid., p.102.
[16] Ibid., p.93.
[17] Ibid., p.95.
[18] Ibid., p.98.
[19] Ibid., p.97.
[20] Ibid., p.108.
[21] Ibid., p.115.

punishment is directed above all at others, at all the potentially guilty. So these obstacle-signs that are gradually engraved in the representation of the condemned man must therefore circulate rapidly and widely; they must be accepted and redistributed by all.. .everyone must see punishment not only as natural, but in his own interest; everyone must be able to read in it his own advantage[22]

The prison thus seeks to inculcate its effects throughout society.

It is not, however, as if all subjects simply acceded to a quasi-humanist consensus;

Foucault insists upon the roles of other techniques of the emergent prison system[23]. Firstly,

'punishment was seen as a technique for the coercion of individuals; it operated methods of

training the body [...] by the traces it leaves, in the form of habits, in behaviour'[24];

secondly, there arose 'the idea that the machinery of justice must be duplicated by an organ

of surveillance that would work side by side with it'[25]. Foucault sees the "Panopticon" as

the apotheosis of these tendencies. Bentham's model proposes, through its very

architectural configuration, a maximally efficient apparatus of power. Its organization of

space, the location of each cell in an identical relation to the central tower, ensures that

'individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised,

in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre

and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous

hierarchical figure'[26]. The effect is to confront each individual with a sense of permanent

visibility, thus inducing a form of introjection:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection[27]

In short, the subject is bound to be determined through the relation to the omnipresence of

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[22] Ibid., p.108.
[23] Again, Foucault seems to be undermining the rhetoric of the Enlightenment project: since prisons are (empirically) ineffective at "reforming" individuals, it is suggested that the real motivation behind their emergence is that of the production of a more efficient machine of control, of a new object of knowledge.
[24] Ibid., p.131.
[25] Ibid., p.96.

the powerful gaze. Foucault is typically at pains to point out that this situation does not imply a central, orchestrating agency: surveillance itself is the motor rather than the one carrying it out: 'it automatizes and disindividualizes power [...] Any individual, taken almost at random, can operate the machine'[28].

The juxtaposition - of the horror of torture and execution and the monotonous chronology of prison life - which forms the inception of *Discipline and Punish* is celebrated for its dramatic exposition of part of the book's project, that of tracing the succession of these incommensurable regimes. The peculiarity of the punitive systems which appear in Kafka's work, when assessed in this context, lies in the fact that they seem to borrow their devices equally from incompatible disciplinary mechanisms.

The explorer of "In the Penal Colony" could, for instance, be regarded as fulfilling the role of the audience at an execution, as Foucault describes it: 'in this scene of terror, the role of the people was an ambiguous one. People were summoned as spectators [...] they must be the witnesses, the guarantors, of the punishment, and [...] must to a certain extent take part in it'[29]. The voyager is however also the voice of a humanist outrage at the "barbarity" of the spectacle, and his response is perhaps akin to that of an implied modern reader, shocked at the suggestion of a furtive torture taking place in an "enlightened" age, assisted by the technological sophistication of modernity.

In many respects, "In the Penal Colony" seems to dramatize the transition elaborated in Foucault's text. The executing officer is the advocate of an increasingly anachronistic law, the features of which coincide to a great extent with those drawn from Foucault's exposition of the "spectacle of the scaffold". The law is a seemingly indecipherable text; guilt is presupposed; the accused has no opportunity for defence, and is in fact unaware of

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[26] Ibid., p.197.
[27] Ibid., p.202-203.
[28] Ibid., p.202.

the charges, or that the sentence has been passed. The punishment is the literal inscription of the crime upon the body; the transfiguration of the crime is achieved as, at the sixth hour, "'Enlightenment dawns on the dullest'"(TOS137;KK4,160), the accused recognizing the script of the sentence. The officer demonstrates the executioner's complicity as, his plans faltering, he offers his body to the machine, entering into a symbiotic relationship with it; there is perhaps even an analogical relation between the role of the old commandant and the figure of the sovereign in Foucault's analysis.

The decline of this mode of punishment is equally manifest: although the new commandant "'would find it impossible to alter any part of the old system, at least for many years to come'"(TOS128;KK4,152), and the machine "'is effective even if it stands all alone in this valley'"(TOS141;KK4,165), the officer is afflicted by a nostalgia for the days of the public impact of executions, when the valley was "'crammed with people;everyone came along just to watch it'"(TOS140;KK4,164). He is similarly aware of the voyager's revulsion, acknowledging that "'perhaps you object on principle to capital punishment'", and recognizing that his methods may be regarded as outmoded: "'you might say, for example: 'We have a different kind of judicial process', or 'In our country the accused is granted a hearing before he is sentenced', or 'With us the condemned man is informed of his sentence', or 'We have other sentences besides the death penalty', or 'We only used torture in the Middle Ages'"'(TOS142;KK4,166). Thus deprived of a sympathetic audience and a fully-functioning machine, the officer submits his body to the disintegrating apparatus as a sacrifice which yet generates no epiphany.

If "In the Penal Colony" therefore represents - in Foucauldian terms - a dramatization of the motifs involved in the major shift in the configurations of punishment, then *The Trial* seems to occupy a far more ambiguous position in relation to the concerns of *Discipline*

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[29] Ibid., p.58.

and Punish. There are some zones of coincidence with the regime of the old commandant and the officer: the presumption of guilt and the ignorance of the charge on the part of the accused are perhaps the most immediately apparent. Josef K. is in a perverse sense "branded" by his supposed crime in that the accusation renders him mysteriously sexually attractive. The fundamental implication of the executioner in the exercise of punishment is mirrored in the lashing of Josef K.'s arresting officers, and ultimately his executioners wish him to accede to his execution by carrying it out himself.

However, these elements are juxtaposed with others which seem to belong more properly to the system of which the Panopticon is the microcosm. Just as the effect of panopticism is to deprive the subject of privacy, to appropriate his/her every action for scrutiny, surveillance and discipline, so Josef K. finds that the fact of his case insinuates itself into every realm of his existence; it encroaches on his domestic life, his familial life, his bureaucratic life, even his sexual life. Increasingly prominent - through Titorelli's account - is the temporal aspect of justice. The "omnipresence" of the law's jurisdiction is expressed in part architecturally, the machinations of the law always seeming to take place 'in the office next door'(K50), Titorelli's studio opening on to the offices of the law although it appeared to be located at the other end of the city. The inaccessibility of the "origin" of the law, the "central absence" articulated through the parable which prefaces the text of the law, is likewise reminiscent of the confounding of the presence/absence opposition at the centre of the Panopticon, which serves 'to make the presence or absence of the inspector unverifiable'[30]. The polymorphous, "impersonal", inaccessible, arbitrary machinations of the law, which render *The Trial* so enigmatic, bizarre and even shocking seem in part to be constituted by a strange and secret alliance of elements drawn from (historically) discrete regimes of justice.

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[30] Ibid., p.201.

Such would seem to be the inevitable initial conclusion of a Foucauldian account of law

and punishment in Kafka's work. This analysis need not necessarily constitute a mere

imposition of Foucault's agenda upon the work of a writer unaware of the historical and

political dimensions of the systems portrayed in his work. Indeed, the fact of Kafka's

training in law implies rather the reverse: that the Foucauldian account is to some extent

"reconstructing" a deliberate exploration, mutation, and subversion of judicial networks.

Kafka's study of, and involvement in, legal issues suggests that he was fully aware of the

transition in systems of justice and punishment described by Foucault. Moreover, the earlier

paradigm, which Foucault tends to regard as having been to a considerable extent discarded

at the start of the nineteenth century, was decisively dismissed by the Austro-Hungarian

empire as late as 1873, with the introduction of the *Austrian Code of*

Criminal Procedure[31].

Although torture was abolished in 1788, the system of justice which had employed it

prevailed in its essentials until fairly shortly before Kafka's birth, and was consequently not

a distant historical curiosity. This system - based on the *Constitutio Criminalis Theresiana*

of 1768 - certainly also included many of the key features invoked by Foucault to

characterize the regime which preoccupies the early stages of *Discipline and Punish*. In

addition to the role of the Emperor, the proceedings 'were written and secret in all stages;

the informer and grounds for suspicion remained secret, and no defence counsel was

admitted except for the submission of a written appeal. Even after the abolition of torture in

1788, the main goal of the criminal inquisition and trial was to secure the accused person's

confession'(IC 116).

During the gradual erosion of this system, a number of controversies arose, such as that

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[31] On page 7 of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault conflates the abolition of torture (1788) in Austria-Hungary with the institution of a "modern" code, which did not take place until 1873. Public executions carried on until at least 1888; see *Magic Prague*, p.184.

surrounding the concordat of 1855 which surrendered a certain amount of jurisdiction to the Catholic church, which was described by Kafka's law tutor Heinrich Singer as threatening "'a caricature of the Middle Ages'"(IC 106). Even after the introduction of the 1873 code, major rifts emerged, and Kafka was involved in the ensuing debates. There appeared a dispute between legal "positivism" and the "Free Law" movement: the positivists typically insisted upon the absolute character of the law and of legal precedent, whereas the "Free Law" camp advocated a more pragmatic approach, allowing for free interpretation of laws, particularly with regard to cases to which no existing law clearly applied, and for which there was no obvious precedent. Although his post at the General Workers' Accident Insurance Agency demanded neutrality, it seems that Kafka's sympathies lay with the "Free Law" movement; he condemned a typically "positivist" wholesale extrapolation of existing workers' accident insurance laws as an "'insufficient interpretation of an insufficient law'"(IC110).

Prominent amongst the mediating figures in this controversy was Oskar Kraus, who, while being a moderate "positivist", emphasized the defeasibility of extant laws and precedents, invoking in the process Aristotle and Bentham. Kraus was of course also a leading post-Brentano philosopher and the editor of *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint;* this interplay between legal theory and varieties of proto-phenomenological thought was similarly evident in the debates regarding the nature of criminal investigation. Some argued for its elevation to the status of a scientific methodology, and typical of this strain of thought was the 1904-1905 series of seminars given by Hans Gross, in which Kafka participated (IC111-113). Gross' psychological hypothesis (loosely derived from Brentanian theory) suggested that, in their ignorance of the charge, defendants would be more likely to divulge (involuntarily) evidence of their culpability[32].

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[32] See the section on *"psychologische Tatbestandsdiagnostik"* in Gross' manual (written with Friedrich Geerds).

Far from being mere curiosities of legal history, these details arguably inform Kafka's work and render it so particularly amenable to Foucauldian analysis, and moreover establish a relationship between this latter approach and the influence of Brentanian thought. A reading of some of Kafka's texts, with these factors and associations in mind, suggests that Kafka manipulates, in Foucauldian terms, an alliance of heterogeneous systems of justice and punishment; that this bizarre synthesis constitutes a subversive mutation of the regime of law prevalent in Kafka's lifetime; and that this perverse appropriation is allied to his exploitation of Brentanian modes of thought.

Thus while "In the Penal Colony" sets up a comparatively straightforward confrontation between two incompatible regimes of justice (that of the officer and the old commandant on one side, and that of the voyager and the new ~~commander~~ commandant on the other), in other texts these opposing systems become inextricably entangled. "The Problem of our Laws" can be read as an allusion to the earlier paradigm described by Foucault - and specifically, to the Austro-Hungarian code of 1768 - with its vision of a secret, inaccessible legal system belonging exclusively to the nobility. It equally stands in a close proximity to those passages in Kafka's work which exploit Meinong's notion of the *Aussersein* of objects: the existence of the laws is itself debatable. The story also seems to satirize the competition between the "positivist" and "Free Law" movements: 'I am not thinking here of the various possible ways of interpreting the laws, or of the disadvantage involved when only a few individuals [...] are allowed to take part in their interpretation [...] For the laws are very ancient, centuries of work have gone into their interpretation and by now this has probably become law itself; there does still remain a certain possible latitude of interpretation, but it is very limited'(GWC125;KK5,68). All these issues - even before one considers invoking Kabbalism as a further aspect - are thus at play in this brief but dense text.

Handbuch der Kriminalistik, p.611-612.

This intricate confusion of judicial regimes - and of legal history, philosophy and political debate - is played out on a broader canvas in *The Trial*. The extent to which the novel effects enigmatic syntheses of elements derived from disparate systems of punishment has already been suggested apropos of *Discipline and Punish*. It also, Heidsieck argues, undertakes an almost systematic distortion of the 1873 legal code (IC 117-119), even with details as seemingly trivial as Josef K.'s being deprived of a chair during the first interrogation. In this context, the novel seems to be suggesting that the "modern", "enlightened" mode of justice is always capable of relapsing into the arbitrariness and "inhumanity" of apparently outdated procedures: Josef K, appears to be granted the oral, public hearing demanded by the 1873 code, but eventually realizes that the event is a sham, that the audience is entirely composed of officials of the court, feigning partisanship before 'beginning to discuss what had occurred, as students might'(T53;KK2,45). The court's procedure is reminiscent, simultaneously, both of lack of any defendants' rights in the earlier system of justice, and of Gross' notion that the accused's ignorance of the charge would aid the progress of the investigation by obfuscating psychological defence mechanisms. Another component of the process of the sustained mutation of legal procedures is Titorelli's enumeration of the methods of temporary escape from the machinations of the law: in 1907, Max Lederer gave a talk to the "Louvre-circle" about his study of the probation system in America (IC 118), entering a debate which had been recurring since 1903. Titorelli's exposition insidiously inverts and distorts this idea: instead of the convict's sentence being suspended or repealed on grounds of reformed conduct, the accused person is besieged by the possibility of their case being arbitrarily resumed. Again, the implication could be said to be that the logic of a modern judicial network is still complicit with that of its antecedent; it has perhaps inverted the values involved, but constantly threatens a reversion to the "inhumanities" of the past. The unsettling

implication of *The Trial* is that in a twentieth century city, and a "modern" society, with all the assumptions that might entail ('K. lived in a state governed by law, there was universal peace, all statutes were in force'(T6;KK2,9), torture is still being carried out, no longer as a public spectacle, but in a hidden corridor or a deserted patch of wasteland.

The prophetic dimension of Kafka's work has of course often been noted. The reading of his texts as harbingers of Nazism makes this perverse interplay of torturing despotism and modern penal mechanisms all the more vivid and arresting: the Holocaust constitutes the ultimate and ruthless synthesis of the "inhumanity" of the earlier paradigm and all the sophisticated machinery of the twentieth century; the death camps are run according to a viciously efficient economy of labour and technology; "*Arbeit macht frei*" is the disingenuous reiteration of one of the founding ethics of the prison; the (albeit invisible) labelling of the accused in *The Trial* has an all too real, recent counterpart.

This latter feature, the "branding" of the body, is the product of a process succinctly described by Foucault: 'the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations [*les rapports de pouvoir*]have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs'[33]. As Foucault's concatenation of techniques suggests, he regards the implication of the body as underlying the transition in punitive regimes, as a "substratum" or "constant". In addition to the forms of inscription which have already been mentioned, attention should perhaps also be drawn to the "trained" bodies in Kafka's work, whose movements are co-ordinated; examples are the assistants of Blumfeld and those of K. in *The Castle*. A parallel phenomenon is that of the extent to which those implicated in the operations of Kafka's systems exist in a state of continual physiological exhaustion. According to Foucault, these appropriations of the body *also* contribute to the production of the "soul": 'The history of

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[33] *Discipline and Punish*, p.25; *Surveiller et Punir*, p.34.

this "micro-physics" of the punitive power would then be a genealogy or an element in a genealogy of the modern "soul". Rather than seeing this soul as the reactivated remnants of an ideology, one would see it as the present correlative of a certain technology of power over the body'[34]. This passage perhaps reiterates on a macrocosmic level the claim made apropos of the Panopticon, that it "introjects" the prison's gaze, instituting an introspective subjectivity: the punitive regimes and associated social processes described by *Discipline and Punish* produce the "soul". If there is an analogy in Kafka, it is perhaps that of the protagonist whose position is "fixed" by the roles with which he or she is identified; many characters are defined by their obligations to familial and bureaucratic hierarchies.

These points are central to Foucault's theory of power (and consequently knowledge: 'We should admit rather that power produces knowledge[*savoir*]'[35]), of which there is a concise exposition on page 26:

> [This] study presupposes that the power exercised on the body is conceived not as a property, but as a strategy, that its effects of domination are attributed not to 'appropriation', but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings; that we should decipher in it a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege one might possess[36]

Several pertinent commitments are condensed in this passage. There is no scope for a one-way exercise of power, a person or group simply exerting power over another individual or group without being reciprocally implicated in the process; in effect, this situation is manifested by the example of the executioner's complicity which appeared likewise in Kafka. Foucault concludes from this that there cannot be a central agency, orchestrating the machinations of power, and indeed such origins of power are obfuscated by Kafka in, for example, *The Castle* and *The Trial*, even when the parable of the law gestures towards such an origin as precisely that which is inaccessible. Power inheres in the

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[34] *Discipline and Punish*, p.29.
[35] Ibid., p.27; *Surveiller et Punir*, p.36.
[36] *Discipline and Punish*, p.26.

relation between, for example, two individuals, enveloping both but being "possessed" by neither; something of this claim has already been glimpsed in the analysis of "The Judgment".

"The Judgment" articulates the power relations inherent in family life, and on occasions represents bureaucratic life as continuous with this drama; an easy "parallel" to institute, since the business in question is a family one. Instantiations of aspects of Foucault's account of power have equally be found on the level of socio-political organizations, and indeed Foucault insists upon the extent to which power relations cut across seemingly discrete regions of human conduct:

> This means that these relations go right down into the depths of society, that they are not
> localized in the relations between the state and its citizens or on the frontier between classes and
> that they do not merely reproduce, at the level of individuals, bodies, gestures and behaviour,
> the general form of the law or government; that, although there is continuity (they are indeed
> articulated on this form through a whole series of complex mechanisms), there is neither
> analogy nor homology, but a specificity of mechanism and modality[37]

There is no hierarchy of models of power networks; the law is not merely counterfeited in domestic life, nor (as a Freudian critic would have perhaps have it) is the law a transposition of a more fundamental family conflict. These claims underpin the contentious, and seemingly reckless series of equations which forms a sort of coda to the analysis of the Panopticon:

> Is it surprising that the cellular prison, with its regular chronologies, forced labour, its
> authorities of surveillance and registration, its experts in normality, who continue and multiply
> the functions of the judge, should have become the modern instrument of penality? Is it
> surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble
> prisons ?[38]

The regime of control instantiated by the prison extends far beyond the prison in a series of "resemblances" which reveals the fundamental identity of power relations, a "panopticism" which is manifested only contingently by the Panopticon: in "Advocates",

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[37] Ibid., p.27.

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Kafka envisages a legal process which extends far beyond the law court; in fact, it extends

everywhere:

> Yet if it were not a lawcourt, why was I searching for an advocate here? Because I was
> searching for an advocate everywhere, he is needed everywhere, if anything less in court than
> elsewhere [...] within the law itself, all is accusation, advocacy, and verdict, and any
> intervention by an individual here would be a crime. It is different, however, with the evidence
> that leads to the verdict; this rests on inquiries, on inquiries made here and there, from relatives
> and strangers, from friends and enemies, in the family and public life, in town and village – in
> short, everywhere (GWC138-139;KK5,104).

"Advocates" does not of course simply exemplify or endorse Foucault's claims. However,

there is a parallel between Foucault's assertion (to put it crudely) that fundamentally the

same power relations emerge under "a specificity of mechanism and modality" in

apparently diverse human organizations and the extent to which ~~discreet~~ discrete realms of life tend

to be inextricably entwined in Kafka's work, caught up in the same movement.

What has become clear is that "panopticism" is not identical with Bentham's proposals,

or indeed any concrete prison: rather,

> [The Panopticon] is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form [...] it is in
> fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use [...]
> Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form
> of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used[39]

Equally, the parable of the law in *The Trial* presents the law reduced to its "ideal form",

"detached from any specific use": in this sense, it, and the Panopticon, constitute what

Deleuze and Guattari dub "abstract machines"(K47). By this term, they seek to indicate the

form of a machine divorced from its concrete operation; "Before the Law" gestures towards

the pure form of the law, whereas *The Trial* itself portrays the "actual" machinations of the

law, its functionaries, its procedures, and its effects upon those implicated in its processes.

This distinction between the "detachable allegory" of the law and its operation elsewhere in

the novel is, for Deleuze and Guattari, what renders the parable somewhat misleading, and

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[38] Ibid., p.227-228.
[39] Ibid., p.205.

in labelling it an abstract machine, they seek to distinguish it from the general "structure" of the novel - and of Kafka's other novels - which is that of a "machinic assemblage".

This formulation denotes the concrete operations of the machine of the law; in this sense, the law is no longer absent or transcendent, but rather 'stops being reified and isolated; it no longer exists outside the concrete, socio-political assemblages that incarnate it'(K48).

If Kafka's authorship, a "writing machine", is conceived as pure literary productivity, then the novels constitute its most perfect deployment in so far as the machinic assemblages which they describe furnish an unconstrained proliferation of effects. What these terms aim to articulate is the extent to which the novels seem to implicate their protagonists in processes which appear to be essentially interminable: *The Trial*, for instance, will never cease enumerating the figures caught in the machinations of the law, as the law will never cease its insinuations into all facets of human life. The structure of the novel is on one level akin to that of deferral described by Titorelli.

Deleuze and Guattari distinguish these features in the demarcation of the assemblages of the novels from the more closed systems of the stories: 'the doubles and the triangles that remain in Kafka's novels show up only at the beginning; [...] and from the start, they are so vacillating, so supple and transformable, that they are ready to open onto series that break their form and explode their terms'(K54). Similarly, if there are doubles and trios in the novels, they occupy no privileged position like that of the father/son duo of "The Judgment", where, once the double has been elucidated by the subsidiary arrangements, a space for closure (Georg's drowning) is opened up.

Thus the law functions not as a fixed configuration of elements or as an intangible point abstracted out of existence but as an operation *immanent* to every aspect of social organization. The law's operations thus run counter to the transcendental image offered in the cathedral (which image is nonetheless produced by the law's operation): *'An unlimited*

field of immanence instead of an infinite transcendence'(K51). If the law is elusive, it is not because its origin stands at an infinite ontological remove, but rather because it is everywhere, even - and especially - where it is least expected: 'if the law remains unrecognizable, this is not because it is hidden by its transcendence, but simply because it is always denuded of interiority: it is always in the office next door, or behind the door'(K45). Within this general framework of the proliferation of the appearances of the law, Deleuze and Guattari indicate several more particular instances, firstly the "subsets" of proliferations which function as microcosms of the more general process, such as Block's simultaneous employment of six or more advocates, and Titorelli's repeated depictions of the same scene. Similarly indicative of the structure of the assemblage are the figures which Deleuze and Guattari dub "connectors", such as the women of *The Trial*. Although the law multiplies its effects across seemingly disparate segments of Josef K.'s life, it appears that each female character is inextricably linked to a given segment; Fräulein Bürstner to Josef K.'s flat, Elsa to the bank, the washerwoman to the court, Leni to the Advocate's house, and the girls to Titorelli's studio.

However, these characters institute what is for Deleuze and Guattari a crucial equation - that of law with desire. Just as the law appears in multiple social fields, so it appears on another plane as desire: thus Josef K. moves from his erotic encounters with Fräulein Bürstner and the washerwoman to his discovery that the law books are pornographic and that his relations with Fräulein Bürstner seem to fluctuate with the case itself. The first girl he meets as Titorelli's studio 'peered up at him sideways. Neither her youth nor her deformity had prevented her early corruption. She didn't even smile, but instead stared boldly and invitingly at K.'(T141;KK2,122), and the Lawyer explains that Leni's "peculiarity" '"consists in the fact that [...] [she] finds most defendants attractive [...] defendants are indeed often attractive. It is of course remarkable, in a sense almost a natural

phenomenon [...] it must be a result, then, of the proceedings being brought against them, which somehow adheres to them"'(T184-185;KK2,157-158).

Thus although the female figures are each attached to a particular segment, they can be arranged to form a series, each of the elements of which eroticizes the section, manifesting the machinations of the law as a quasi-vampiric desire, instituting an equation of the two in a process which is complicit with the way in which the law's effects persistently establish correspondences in an essentially unlimited fashion. The women drag Joseph K. away from the case in the direction of a desire which is nonetheless formulated in a relation to the progress of the case; as the priest admonishes, "'You seek too much outside help [...] particularly from women"'(T213;KK2,180)[40].

This is similarly the case in *The Castle*: the nearest K. gets to Klamm is when he spies on him before his sexual encounter with Frieda, which drags him away from the figure he seeks. Again, power (here Klamm's embodiment of the castle's authority, rather than the law) is juxtaposed with eroticism, the two entering into an enigmatic relationship, one which reappears in numerous guises throughout the novel, perhaps most prominently in Amalia's tale, with the rejection of sexual advances constituting an act of insurrection against the castle's authority.

Furthermore, the novels as descriptions of the operations of machinic assemblages do not depict the institution of such configurations but rather their "dismantling": thus the law does not proceed in an orderly or teleological manner but is rather characterized by the senselessness of its officers, the chaos of its meetings and its excessive, endless, unregulated, ominpresent insinuation into all the diverse forms of human organization, creating as it does apparently arbitrary connections between realms of human conduct which have no other or obvious affiliation.

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[40] Larysa Myktya offers, in "Woman as the Obstacle and the Way", a similar analysis with a more conspicuous

If there are thus fissures in the machinations of these systems of power, it would seem that their incorporation of the individual into their proceedings can never be final and definitive. It would be equally misleading, however, to suppose that the subject can simply or effectively escape the clutches of these systems: perhaps the most comprehensive attempt to do so is that undertaken by the protagonist of "The Burrow", who, as a consequence, achieves not emancipation but rather a near-constant state of paranoia, a sheltering from real or imagined threats from without. Equally, each of Karl Rossmann's "escapes" inaugurates a renewed cycle of acceptance and then rejection.

As Titorelli's celebrated discourse suggests, if liberation is in principle or practice impossible, then there remains the option of obtaining temporary relief[41]. It is a question of developing a strategy which allows one to live within a network of power without being oppressed by its operations; an accommodation like that which K., it is alleged, was to realize by way of conclusion in *The Castle*. More radically, perhaps, in "A Report to an Academy", the primate protagonist negotiates a partial release by embarking upon a process of becoming-human. The passage introducing this strategy is singularly striking; if the Foucauldian analysis of Kafka focuses to a considerable extent upon the necessity of inscribing subjectivity in a web of power relations and the simultaneous impossibility of an individual controlling them, then the ape articulates a parallel demand: the necessity of flight, the impossibility of freedom:

> I fear that it may not be understood precisely what I mean by a way out. I use the term in its
> most ordinary and its fullest sense. I deliberately do not say freedom. I do not mean that
> grandiose feeling of freedom in all directions. Perhaps I may have known that as an ape, and I
> have come across men who yearn for it. But for my part it was not freedom that I sought, either
> then or now. Let me say in passing: freedom is all too often self-deception among men. And if
> freedom counts as one of the most sublime feelings, equally sublime is the deception that
> corresponds to it [...]
> No, freedom was not what I wanted. Only a way out... (TOS190;KK4,142)

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feminist inflection.
[41] There are of course different treatments of such matters: "The Investigations of a Dog" ends on an apparently emancipatory note; more typical, however, is the vision of a freedom that cannot be attained because of the very constitution of the protagonist: for example, 'He feels imprisoned on this earth [...] But if he is asked what he wants he cannot reply, for [...] he has no conception of freedom'(GWC106;KK5,217).

6. READING KAFKA.

> When Gregor Samsa wakes up in the morning he doesn't just feel like a noxious insect, he *is* a noxious insect[1]

> The act of becoming is [...] never a reproduction or imitation (K 13)

> There is nothing metaphoric about the becoming-animal. No symbolism, no allegory (K 35)

The transformation of the human into the animal (or indeed *vice versa*, in "A Report to an Academy") is not to be understood "metaphorically" (symbolically, allegorically), via analogy, or in any other way than literally: it is upon this imperative that these citations concur. In doing so, they seem both to resist certain major currents of Kafka interpretation and to institute what might seem an implausible or surreal alliance. On the face of it, the two strains of thought represented above would seem wholly heterogeneous, and their congruence here does not imply any latent substantial homogeneity, but rather merely that in this context (that of how one is to approach Kafka's work), there is an intersection; a scenario perhaps analogous to a Venn diagram. It is this coincidence that is to be exploited here.

Although these two positions are here concerned with a thematic matter, that of "becoming-animal", the impact of their interaction is perhaps most striking when it is considered as a matter of "principle", that of an insistence that Kafka's work be treated philosophically as literal. The hope is that from this "principle" may arise a philosophically-grounded yet non-reductive reading of Kafka, one which, therefore, tacitly opposes the allegedly reductive effects of many philosophical approaches to his texts. Before the introduction of this reading there stands the issue of the philosophical import of this strange affinity.

The case for regarding Kafka's work as "influenced" (whatever qualifications have subsequently been attached to the notion of "influence") by early

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[1]Barry Smith, "Kafka and Brentano" in *Structure and Gestalt*, p.123.

phenomenological thought was made at the inception of this study. If it is therefore assumed that such theoretical positions seep into Kafka's literary universe, where they are transformed by his idiosyncratic imagination, then perhaps the intersection at issue here means that the work of Deleuze and Guattari functions as an articulation of this process, that of Kafka's mutation of descriptive psychology. This does not mean that Deleuze and Guattari consider the putative influence of proto-phenomenology (although it is discussed in passing: K 94), but rather that their work seems to express the bizarre uses to which Kafka puts such theories more effectively than, for example, does the "deconstructive" tendency in post-structuralist thought. It was claimed that Kafka's texts can be viewed through the work of Brentano and his theoretical interlocutors, but this process also involves an account of the enigmatic transformations, extrapolations and subversions to which Kafka subjects such approaches. It is, to a certain extent, these processes which Barry Smith aims to identify, and, in doing so, he arrives "accidentally" at a position which resembles, in this context, that of Deleuze and Guattari. This seems to suggest that in their encounter with Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari voice an approach which likewise is expressive of the grotesque uses to which Kafka puts early phenomenology even if they do not recognize this alleged source; this is the other side of the coincidence.

There now arises the question of which aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's sometimes "eccentric" apparatus enables them to give philosophical voice to the peculiar qualities of Kafka's response to Brentanian thought in a way which seems to elude deconstructive theory. The latter stance, it has been argued, tends to foreground matters of interpretation and textuality, thereby perhaps picking up on one facet of Kafka's response to the Brentano school and rendering it absolute, the kernel of Kafka's work or at least the focus of its philosophical significance.

The exposition of the Brentano school, and its resonances with Kafka's work, involved a portrayal of its striking "pluralism", or diversity of concerns, and also the diversity of moments and contexts in Kafka's texts which could be said to engage with it, however "unconsciously": visual perception, colour, darkness, noticing, exhaustion, sleep, ontological undecidability, interpretation, gesture, language (the fragile fabric of conversation), impossible objects, events and transformations, law, aesthetics, music, the status of objects, proper names, and configurations of subjectivity and its world. This diversity is arguably better accommodated by a rhizomatics of both work and reading. This means that Kafka's work is treated as an essentially open-ended network of connections. A reading pursues certain series of such connections, the choice of which is fundamentally "arbitrary" in that the construal of the work as rhizomatic militates against a hierarchical prioritization of any given point of entry. Pushed to its extreme, the idea that in a rhizome every point involves an immanent connection to every other point would seem to indicate that a reading of Kafka along these lines would, if it were fully to incarnate its agenda, cover everything. This is perhaps an impractical demand, and indeed Deleuze and Guattari's practice is palpably animated by their theoretical preoccupations.

A recognition of this sort would seem to suggest that Deleuze and Guattari are culpable of a reduction of Kafka's work in a fashion akin to that of the theorists whom they oppose. The difference seems to lie in the emphasis upon the "arbitrariness" attending the decision to pursue a certain trail in the rhizome of Kafka's texts; this decision is "pragmatic" and is of course not without tangible theoretical motivations, but in so far as this admission is consistently upheld and invoked in order to obviate the totalization of any given line of reading, then it seems that Deleuze and Guattari can consistently pursue the themes they consider to be the most productive while still opposing "metaphorical" interpretations. The advantage of a rhizomatic approach, therefore, seems to consist in the fact that in its very formulation it admits and affirms a multiplicity

of paths of reading, none of which is *in principle* privileged, thus catering for the diversity which was said to characterize Kafka's response to Brentanian thought. Moreover, concomitant to this affirmation of multiplicity is a resistance to those interpretations which reduce Kafka's texts to one or more theoretical narratives (thereby reducing the multiplicitous nature of the work), to which texts stand in a "metaphorical" relation, hence the affirmation of the literal, and the coincidence with the programme of Brentanian reading.

The image of the Venn diagram was invoked in order to suggest the nature of this coincidence, since it does not imply any substantial philosophical compatibility of the projects of Brentano and Deleuze and Guattari. Indeed, in terms of their central focuses, or points of departure, the two projects would appear to be not merely distinct but wholly antagonistic[2]. Brentano himself begins with mental phenomena as that which is immediately given and as the sole ground of certainty; the world is co-ordinated around subjective experience and can be addressed only through reference to presentation. Deleuze and Guattari, by contrast, offer a vision of material flows which suggests that the issue is that of the processes by which discrete organisms can arise. From this perspective, consciousness is an emergent phenomenon, a product of more primordial processes of individuation and organization, and thus far from possessing any primacy.

It would seem, therefore, that there arises a situation of the sort described by Borges in his identification of Kafka's "precursors". These two systems of thought appear incommensurable, and yet Kafka's work seems to create some sort of coalition, which would not have been apparent had Kafka not written. This naturally suggests that it is a philosophical idiosyncrasy of Kafka's texts which allows them to conjure such a counter-intuitive alliance, and that the pursuit of this curious "pact" will perhaps help to express this idiosyncrasy.

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[2]From a Deleuzian perspective, Éric Alliez summarizes the position of contemporary philosophy as "the impossibility of phenomenology" (*De L' impossibilité de la phénoménologie*).

It was claimed that the role and nature of interpretation in Kafka's texts can be construed as a response to features which recall Meinong's theories, and that it is the quality of this response which entices deconstructive approaches. In a comparable, but broader, sense, it could be said that the specific nature of the operations which Kafka exercises in his writing on elements which can be understood as Brentanian is such that it facilitates a DeleuzoGuattarian reception. Put more simply: such is the force of Kafka's treatment of proto-phenomenological components of his work that they undergo a transformation and emerge as items receptive to "schizoanalytic" capture. This "force" transforming Brentanian elements is that of the philosophical imagination which animates Kafka's writing.

This mutative force will perhaps become most clearly discernable through a closer examination of Kafka's texts in detail, but a preliminary sketch of it - in terms of the philosophical narrative at work here - can already be envisaged. A crucial point of departure is the nature of subjectivity, since the dichotomy between the two philosophical "poles" is most apparent with respect to this issue. It was claimed that the model of subjectivity which infuses protagonists can be understood as originating in Brentano's work; in particular, there is an analogy between Brentano's paring down of consciousness to its most elemental operations and the "minimalist" nature of Kafka's "characters". If there is thus far a parallel, the move which belongs distinctively to Kafka is an extrapolation of this consciousness such that it can apply equally to animal life, and it is with this treatment of animals that Kafka acquires a crucial status for Deleuze and Guattari.

The early piece "Description of a Struggle" seems to witness a manoeuvre which has a slightly different emphasis: an explosion of Brentanian consciousness, one which almost systematically pushes its features to the point of a catastrophe of self and world; if this act of violence can be understood as a "schizophrenic" convulsion of descriptive psychology, then again it holds an

interest for "schizoanalytic" reading. Concomitant with this operation on the self is the way in which reality becomes evanescent, or "plastic" in Smith's terms - this parallel being natural enough in a Brentanian outlook since the "world" is co-extensive with mental phenomena. The protagonist's skeletal consciousness is hence beset by events and systems whose logic is a constant source of perplexity, devoid of any everyday rational order. The approach of Deleuze and Guattari picks up on an aspect of this movement which escapes Brentanian theory, that of its "political" nature, the way in which Kafka's texts seem to move beyond the alleged input of descriptive psychology to depict the manner in which subjectivity is inscribed in a network of relations which exceeds it and with which it has a fraught relationship. An obvious example of such a network is the system of familial relationships, and in the treatment of it there is an affiliation between the agendas of proto-phenomenological reading and that of Deleuze and Guattari, in as much as they share a resistance to psychoanalysis, a scepticism which is also shared by Kafka.

If the role accorded to subjectivity seems to remain a major bone of contention between early phenomenological thought and Deleuze and Guattari, other avenues of Kafka's work seem to offer less tortuous routes between the two. The relationships between parts and wholes, a central preoccupation of Ehrenfels and Meinong, was discussed in relation to Kafka; in the case of the regimes of power and control depicted in his work, there seems, again, to be a contortion of this logic in that one encounters parts without the purported whole in that they inhere being presentable. Kafka's gesture in this respect seems close to the manner in which Deleuze invokes such theories, understanding "Gestalt-qualities" less as composite unities than as singular presentations of a multiplicity of elements: 'Husserl here agrees with the work of his contemporary Ehrenfels who, in 1890, spoke of Gestalt qualities, distinct from the qualities proper to the elements, of another order than those qualities, and [...] the work of Stumpf [...] Thus there we have what the non-numerical multiplicity is [...] The more clearly the

elements, the notes of a melody are perceived, the more forcefully the quality of the set affirms itself[3]. The notion of multiplicity plays a vital role in Deleuze's work, and here he seems to follow the intuition of this study in referring it back to the Brentano school, the nature of his appropriation simultaneously echoing that of Kafka.

The work of Marty seems to offer a Brentano-derived articulation of certain aspects of Kafka's literary portrayal of linguistic practice, notably his focus upon the fragile fabric of conversation. Marty's consideration of the role of gesture, the dynamic and fluctuating nature of meaning, the importance of an account of the infelicities and indeterminacy afflicting linguistic performance, and the role of social constructs in maintaining these features, all seem to contribute to an analysis of the pitfall-strewn dialogues in Kafka's texts. Again, Kafka's practice seems to amount to pushing such features of Marty's account to their point of collapse, a gesture doubtless informed by his strained relationship with the German language, and indeed language as such. It is at this point that Deleuze and Guattari's analyses seem to grasp aspects of Kafka's manipulation of these elements: while Marty considers the social construction of linguistic practice, Deleuze and Guattari go further (although perhaps with a certain continuity) in postulating the "order-word"[4] as the most fundamental unit of language, hence expressing the way in which, in Kafka's texts, conversations are marked by power relations, a "political" dimension which seems both to exceed Marty's work and to denote Kafka's apparent response to it. Furthermore, Kafka's visions of a corporeality of language seem both to go beyond Marty's analysis of gesture and to be receptive to a DeleuzoGuattarian account.[5]

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[3] "Theory of Multiplicities in Bergson", taken from http:www.imaginet.fr/deleuze/TXT/ENG/bergson.html ;p.4

[4] 'The elementary unit of language - the statement - is the order-word. Rather than common sense, a faculty for the centralization of information, we must define an abominable faculty consisting in emitting, receiving, and transmitting order-words. Language is made not to be believed but to be obeyed [...] Every order-word, even a father's to his son, carries a little death sentence - a Judgment, as Kafka put it'; *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.76.

[5] See Chapter 3.

Undoubtedly the most striking facet (in terms of these philosophical concerns) of Kafka's presumed response to descriptive psychology is his exploitation of its literalism, the feature which underpins its scientific aspirations and which presages Husserl's phenomenological reduction of the *Lebenswelt*. As has been indicated, it is here that Kafka's work most clearly institutes an intersection of the work of the Brentano school and that of Deleuze and Guattari, in that his use of the ontological ramifications of proto-phenomenological methodology heads in the direction of the "theme" of becoming-animal. Becoming-animal is, as will be seen, only one aspect of this movement; the shared resistance to metaphorical understandings of Kafka's work discussed above will serve to articulate in ontological terms the philosophical peculiarity of Kafka's literal treatment of what would seem to have an irreducibly metaphorical status.

The philosophical narrative which has emerged from this sketch seems to consist in the idea that the nature of Kafka's exploitation of theories drawn from the Brentano school is such that it pushes them into a proto-DeleuzoGuattarian position. This philosophical narrative also suggests a related endeavour: one could investigate the peculiar relationship between seemingly disparate philosophical frameworks as it is set up by Kafka's work, but a more important issue here is that of the specific qualities of these literary texts that enable them to create such a strange juxtaposition.

The philosophical narrative glimpsed above will therefore remain implicit to some extent. The focus rather is to exploit this counter-intuitive philosophical relationship as a means of exploring Kafka's work philosophically but without reducing it to this or any other philosophical narrative. The components of this narrative rather contribute to a philosophical articulation of the forces at play in Kafka's work, of how they inform the themes and techniques of his texts, a process which seeks ultimately to express the philosophical impact of their machinations rather than to "explain" it, and thus offer a "resolution". There is a matter of priority: Kafka's work has been invoked in order to establish and

reflect upon the juxtaposition of the Brentano school and Deleuze and Guattari, but the central task involves both a consideration of those features of his texts which allow them to create this juxtaposition (which has already been glimpsed), and an exploitation of the juxtaposition as a means of reading Kafka.

An advantage of this approach, it has been suggested, is that it facilitates an articulation of the various facets of Kafka's work in their diversity precisely because it is not (in principle) governed by a transcendent philosophical narrative of which Kafka's texts are configured as metaphors. A symptom of the latter stance is a tendency not only to prioritize certain moments of Kafka's work (which is perhaps inevitable in any investigation), but also to render them the kernel, to foreground them at the expense of a dismissal of other, seemingly incompatible, aspects, which are hence treated (whether implicitly or explicitly) as anomalous.

Nowhere is this more clearly the case than with the reception of *Der Verschollene*. Given that this text constitutes a third of Kafka's novelistic output, and that its protracted, erratic, composition from 1911 to 1914 renders it contemporaneous with the production of so many crucial texts, and evidently an abiding concern, it is surprising that it receives so little critical attention, a point often raised by those who do discuss it. Udoff's *Kafka and the Contemporary Critical Performance* is one of the more important recent collections, representing as it does the most influential literary-theoretical approaches to Kafka (Derrida, Corngold, Bernheimer, Gross, Koelb, etc.), and yet it contains just one fleeting discussion of this novel. Blanchot's persistent engagement with Kafka (albeit one which does not have systematic or comprehensive pretensions) yields not a single discussion of *Der Verschollene*. These are matters of neglect, although this neglect may itself be revealing. Some have gone further in explicitly regarding the novel as anomalous: what are the grounds for this opinion?

In the Anglophone world, the work of Edwin and Willa Muir is perhaps almost as influential as that of Brod for our initial reception of Kafka's work; in terms of

its theoretical reception, one might add the name of Walter Benjamin. In this sense, Edwin Muir's preface to *America* (his translation of *Der Verschollene*) merits investigation as a text which helped to set the terms through which is the novel is understood. Although at many points he seeks to highlight the resemblances between this novel and the other two, his conception of why it might be regarded as quite different is significant. First of all, 'America is one of the happiest of Kafka's stories'[6]. Often referred to in this context (Muir invokes it to claim that 'the last chapter shows that the ending, too, was intended to be a happy one'[7]) is Brod's recollection of Kafka envisaging a *deus ex machina* ending, in which Karl's parents would be miraculously restored to him (MWD x), although, as Brod himself notes, Kafka also entertained the idea of a much darker *dénouement*[8].

Having asserted that the novel is happy, Muir embellishes this point in a curious manner: 'it is pure enjoyment, free improvisation without any or without much serious afterthought'[9]. One might ask whether the claim is that pure enjoyment is evidence of free improvisation, or whether this spontaneity itself evokes pleasure, but in any case Muir seems to contradict this point in what follows: 'Kafka is working everything out as he did in his two allegorical novels [...] He leaves nothing out of account [...] with the most painstaking logic he arrives at broad farce'[10]. How can "free improvisation" co-habit with "painstaking logic"?

A major difference between this and the other two novels, according to Muir, lies in Karl's freedom, which is created by his separation from his father, whereas in the other two, 'the tie is unbroken and father and son remain confronted'[11].

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[6]*America*, p.8
[7]Ibid., p.9
[8]See Max Brod, *Franz Kafka*, p.137, and *Diaries*, entry for 30th. September, 1915(D343-344;KK7,351).
[9]*America*, p.8
[10]Ibid., p.8
[11]Ibid.

This is a remarkable claim since in *The Trial* and *The Castle*, the father/son

relation does not figure; Muir concedes that the confrontation is 'invisible'[12], and

one can only assume that he presupposes a psychoanalytic interpretation which

sees the law and the castle as univocal symbols of paternal authority. A clearer

distinction lies in his statement that *Der Verschollene* 'contains no inaccessible

castles and no mysterious courts of justice'[13]. This is superficially true, but

arguably relies upon a vision of the law and the castle as infinitely transcendent;

if, following the analysis of Chapter 5, we look at how power structures function

then the correspondence between the machinations of the law and the castle and

those of the various systems encountered by Karl (the ship, the hotel and the

theatre being the most prominent) is obvious, as will be discussed later in more

detail. Deleuze and Guattari's reading of "The Stoker" echoes their

understanding of the law as an assemblage; even if the ship's assemblage is not

all-pervading or staged through a 'parable', its effects and modes of function are

ultimately part of the same process which is incarnated by the law:

> If the boiler room isn't described in itself [...] that is because a machine is never
> simply technical. Quite the contrary, it is technical only as a social machine, taking
> men and women as part of its gears along with things, structures, metals, materials
> [...] [Kafka's] genius is that he considers men and women to be part of the machine
> not only in their work but even more so in their adjacent activities, in their leisures,
> in their loves, in their protestations, in their indignations, and so on [...] The stoker
> is part of the 'room of machines', even, and especially, when he pursues Lina who has come
> from the kitchen (K 81).

The central difference invoked by Muir is that *Der Verschollene* 'has little

trace of allegory'[14], whereas *The Trial* and *The Castle* are 'the two allegorical

novels'[15]. This argument is however qualified by the claim that 'there is

something allegorical, or at least representative, about the hero'[16]; Karl 'stands

for natural goodness and innocence [...] His is the story of innocence, as that of

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[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., p.7
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., p.8
[16] Ibid.

the heroes of the other two books is the story of experience'[17]. This claim

obviously derives from Muir's interpretation of *The Trial* and *The Castle* as

theological allegory, dealing with "divine justice" and "divine grace"

respectively. It is true that Kafka refers to Karl and Josef K. as 'the innocent and

the guilty'(D343-344;KK7,351), but one might point to the ambiguities of this

judgment: there is Kafka's description of himself as 'devilish in my innocence

[*teuflisch in aller Unschuld*]'(D293;KK7,297), and one might also see this diary

entry less as a judgment than as a description of how the protagonists are judged

by the systems in which they participate: just as Josef K.'s guilt is presupposed

by the law (even though he had done nothing wrong), so Karl's essential

innocence is presupposed, notably by his uncle and the Head Cook. Muir also

regards the ending as allegorical[18], although this claim is premised both on

Brod's report of a "celestial" intervention, and on the idea that this scenario

would render the novel an allegory of the father/son relationship along the lines

which he claims to discern in the other two novels.

A comparable difference of *Der Verschollene* lies in the fact that 'it deals with

ordinary people [...] and they are not intended to have a symbolical meaning or

to stand for anything but themselves'[19]. Unfortunately, no indications are given

as to which traits render the characters of this novel more "ordinary" than those

of the other novels; furthermore, if, as is suggested, the characters of *The Trial*

and *The Castle* have "symbolical meaning", then it is tempting to ask what these

meanings are. What does the washerwoman, for example, stand for? It is difficult

to envisage an answer which would not amount to a clear interpretative

imposition.

The governing assumption of Muir's remarks is obviously that *The Trial* and

The Castle are allegorical, that they cannot but be received as allegory, and that

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., p.10
[19] Ibid., p.7

it is *Der Verschollene*'s mostly non-allegorical nature that makes it anomalous. There is, however, a remark which casts a curious light over this axiom: 'in the other two stories, Kafka's allegory is superb, taken as allegory; but the essence of his genius lies in those turns of his imagination which are quite unpredictable and cannot be given allegorical meanings'[20]. Even if the two other novels are essentially allegorical, this feature does not help the identification of the 'essence' of Kafka's creativity: if this identification is taken to be central to an understanding of Kafka's work then, by Muir's own account, the focus upon allegory is a misleading avenue of enquiry.

Each one of the features called upon to distinguish *Der Verschollene* thus seems less than decisive. The novel's allegedly "happy" character must be subjected to certain qualifications; such a claim perhaps also testifies to a lack of recognition of the features of Kafka's work which Bataille terms its "childishness"[21], or of the humourous notes struck by many of his texts[22]. The happiness of the ending, as discussed above, must remain undecided, and it is arguably only by effacing this ambiguity that the book can be considered decisively, ultimately happy; furthermore, the structures of the text, as will be seen, seem to militate against not only any simple, uplifting resolution, but also against the possibility of conclusion: in an echo of Deleuze and Guattari's remarks concerning *The Trial*, there is a sense in which any resolution would seem an artificial interruption, a transgression of the narrative's logic. Karl's "freedom" seems to be deduced from a questionable interpretation of the other two novels, and again seems to be of less significance than escape; indeed, being free seems to Karl 'the most worthless condition'(MWD88;KK1,110);

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[20] Ibid.

[21] See *Literature and Evil*, p.154.

[22] Deleuze and Guattari: 'Kafka's gaiety, or the gaiety of what he wrote, is no less important than its political reality and its political scope. [...] We will term "low" or "neurotic" any reading that turns genius into anguish, into tragedy, into a "personal concern". For example, Nietzsche, Kafka, Beckett, whomever: those who don't read them with many involuntary laughs and political ~~terrors~~ are deforming everything'(K96).   tremors

moreover, this alleged freedom seems to contravene the macroscopic movements and structures of the novel. In conclusion, it seems that the novel can be considered anomalous only in so far as allegory is rendered the central trait of Kafka's (novelistic) output. The focus upon allegories of interpretation has been analysed as an important "subset" of this interpretative gesture, and it is worth noting that the nature of conversation in *Der Verschollene* closely resembles that of the other novels ('he knew that whatever he said would look quite different in retrospect from the way he had meant it to sound, and that whether it was good or bad depended solely on the way it was judged'(MWD126;KK1,156)), so it would seem that it is the lack of parable-like illustrations of this feature that leads to the novel's neglected status.

The obvious implication of these remarks is that there is a far stronger case to made for *Der Verschollene's* continuity, which seems to suggest that it is only the superimposition of a predetermined theoretical agenda (even as merely a narrow sense of what is characteristic of Kafka) that induces a closure of the connections linking the novel to other points of Kafka's work. Regarding the novel's continuity, the first thing to note is the similarity of the narrative voice to that of the other two novels, and indeed many other texts. This is a matter both of literary technique and - more importantly, in the context of this study - epistemological positioning with respect to the protagonist. It was claimed that the latter aspect can be understood as analogous to the point of view of descriptive psychology, and indeed, in writing on *Der Verschollene* without any reference to (or, apparently, knowledge of) the Brentano school, Franca Schettino makes this point quite clearly:

> The reader only *borrows* Karl's gaze, thus remaining aware that the actual viewer of - and actor in - the text's reality is Karl. This awareness lets the reader look at what Karl looks at, and also at a *gazing Karl* [...] The narration does not step aside for description [...] The end result of this phenomenon is not a description of the harbor view, but is, rather, a narration of the act of vision associated with that view[23]

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[23] *The Dove and The Mole*, p.114

This account mirrors perfectly the essential features of the practice of 'inner perception', and hence *Der Verschollene* shares in the general analogy between Kafka's narrative strategy and the standpoint of descriptive psychology.

This philosophical aspect of *Der Verschollene's* narrative constitution has a literary counterpart, this being Kafka's "Dickensian" novel. This identification is clearly motivated by Kafka's comments regarding this affiliation[24], but the qualifications which attend such a comparison are telling. Whereas *David Copperfield, Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* describe their heroes' fortunes, which, although fluctuating, generally follow an upward path, a trajectory which is accompanied by a passage to self-knowledge, enlightenment and maturity, Karl's "journey" hardly seems teleological. His circumstances fluctuate without instantiating any overall improvement, and his "character" does not mutate; to paraphrase Gerson Shaked[25], it is a *Bildungsroman* with no *Bildung*.

Kafka's relation to "realism" (the definition of which is notoriously contentious; suffice it to say that Dostoyevsky and Flaubert are writers of crucial importance for Kafka, alongside Dickens, Kleist and Hamsun) is complex and ambiguous. On the one hand, *Der Verschollene* makes little attempt, despite the specificity of its locations, to convey cultural or geographical realism (Brooklyn bridge leads to Boston, San Francisco shifts to the East Coast), so there is little "realism" in the sense of (social) verisimilitude or Stendhal-like *mimesis*[26]; Kafka's America has a "phantasmagoric" quality. On the other hand, there is a great deal of precision in the rendering of visual detail, and as Muir notes, the novel's 'strange world' emerges from this precision: it 'becomes stranger the

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[24]Kafka views "The Stoker" as a 'sheer imitation' of Dickens; however, this identification is followed by a harsh critique of Dickens, charged variously with writing passages of 'awful insipidity', 'barbarism', 'heartlessness' and of relying upon 'rude characterizations'(D388;KK7,391).
[25]*The Dove and The Mole*, p.142
[26] 'Why, my good sir, a novel is a mirror journeying down the high road. Sometimes it reflects to your view the azure blue of heaven, sometimes the mire in the puddles on the road below'; *Scarlet and Black*, p.365.

more realistically, the more circumstantially, it is described'[27]. Schettino's description of the "realism" of the narration of the act of vision being available only in an "oblique" fashion is embellished by him as characteristic of the "photographic" nature of the narrative. The precision of the recounting of vision effaces the "reality" of the contents of the visual field; they thus become simulacra, or "photographs": there is a 'constant invasion, by the *photographed*, of the field of the "real"'[28]. There is a sort of realism without reality, or rather a reality which shares its features with Brentano's "objects of outer perception".

There would thus seem to be a collusion between several features: the epistemological location of the narrative voice, the stance of proto-phenomenological thought, the techniques of literary "realism", and an evanescence of the real. *Der Verschollene* resembles what has been invoked previously to characterize Kafka's practice in general, and in fact highlights such qualities through its relation to a Dickensian blueprint. Another obvious respect in which this novel resembles much of the rest of Kafka's output is the tendency for subjectivity to be understood through its insertion into (already established) structures which strive to "fix" it.

Throughout the novel, Karl finds himself enmeshed in agonistic arrangements of characters, from his accidental role in the discussion of the ship's organization to his ambiguous position between Uncle Jakob and Mr. Pollunder, and from there to his confrontation with the Head Waiter and Head Cook, which leads in turn to his conscription by Brunelda and Delamarche. Delamarche and Robinson belong to an instantly recognizable group of characters - the figures who accompany the protagonist, refusing to be shaken off (Benjamin similarly states, of a similar motif, that 'these assistants belong to a group of figures which recurs through Kafka's work'[29]), other representatives being Blumfeld's assistants, Josef

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[27]*America*, p.7
[28]*The Dove and the Mole*, p.121
[29]*Illuminations*, p.113

K.'s executioners, and Arthur and Jeremiah. This situation does not necessarily lend itself to the initial analysis of doubles and trios put forward by Deleuze and Guattari: each structure allows for the introduction of another figure which complicates the network of relationships (for example, Mack, Mr. Green, Klara, Therese, the Head Porter, the student, and so on), but there does not seem to be any element intrinsic to the structure which determines or limits the number of such additional figures.

These structures seem not to be clearly circumscribed or stable. Their potentially open-ended nature recalls Deleuze and Guattari's description of the "machinic assemblage", as do many other features of the novel. The fact that characters from different 'segments' of the novel can be compared in terms of their roles in the power structure of which they are elements suggests that the power structure repeats itself in its essentials, is incarnated by different characters, with Delamarche and Robinson constituting links to a certain extent. Evidence for this claim lies in the intricate links and parallels between the various systems into which Karl enters. In broad terms, there appear to be similarities in the configurations of characters, but there are also 'microscopic' echoes. Michael Hofman claims that,

> Objects and relationships are not haphazard, but more like deformed replicas of
> each other. One thinks of the meals at Mr. Pollunder's house, outside the hotel,
> Robinson's picnic on the balcony, and the welcome feast at Clayton (each one a
> last supper) [...] the washings. Karl's high-tech shower at his uncle's, his wash in
> the Head Cook's room, Brunelda's medieval bath; such details as tickets, passports
> and visiting cards, music, drink and beards (MWDxi)

To this list could be added letters (for example, those of Uncle Jakob and the Head Cook), and raised platforms.

Each of the major systems entered into, therefore, contains echoes of the others. Each one also offers a glimpse of a chaotic, or "dismantling" regime of organization which seems "inhuman": there is Uncle Jakob's telephone room, in which 'people were criss-crossing the middle of the floor, in all directions, at great speed. No one offered a greeting, greetings had been abolished, each one

fell into the tracks of the man ahead of him and kept his eyes on the floor, across which he wanted to make as rapid progress as possible' (MWD34;KK1,44), the confusion enveloping the under-porters and their change-overs at the hotel ('Besides, it was confusing, the way one piece of information followed on the heels of another, and merged with it' (MWD132;KK1,163); this scene is followed by the sight of the telephone room, which obviously resembles that of Uncle Jakob), the disorder of the election of the judge, and the way in which the running of the theatre is complicated by its size.

A crucial feature of Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of *The Trial* (and it can also apply to *The Castle*) is that of their discerning the relationship between sexuality and the operations of power. This relationship seems also to emerge in *Der Verschollene*; indeed the catalyst for the narrative is Karl's punishment, meted out by his parents, for his sexual misadventure. Following this line of exploration, it is not difficult to sense an erotic charge which pervades Karl's encounters with Klara (See MWD 46;KK1,59), Therese ('she threw herself down on his bed, pressed her face against the sheets and sobbed [...] Now he couldn't remain completely hidden under the bedclothes any more, he stroked her arm a little'(MWD94-95;KK1,118)), and even Brunelda, when she presses him against the balcony; if these instances are less explicit than those of the other two novels, they at least reproduce the feeling of being overpowered ('she almost throttled him in an embrace'MWD21;KK1,29)) which afflicted Karl in the encounter which led to his exile. The node of a power structure is again juxtaposed with (and, by implication, expressed through) the sexualized encounter. It could also be added that, as in the other novels, the organizations are affective, the schedules of the hotel and the dormitory, in particular, breeding exhaustion.

Der Verschollene also partakes in Kafka's typical arrangement of space (Hofman suggests that the action could all take place in one room (MWDxi)), and, in particular, that of *The Trial*. On the ship, Karl 'was forced to make his

way through numerous little rooms, along continually curving passages and down tiny flights of stairs, one after the other [...] he found that he was totally and utterly lost'(MWD3;KK1,9), and he finds himself in a similar predicament in Mr. Pollunder's house, with its innumerable empty rooms and labyrinthine corridors: 'he really didn't know if they had climbed one flight of stairs or two, or none at all'(MWD49,KK1,63). Just as in *The Trial* entrances to the law courts seem countless and always nearby, so here Karl is 'astonished' (MWD64;KK1,82) by the proximity of an exit in Mr. Pollunder's house, and the Head Porter declares, 'I am in a certain sense put in charge of everything, because I am in charge of all the hotel entrances, this main entrance here, the three central and ten side entrances, not to mention innumerable little doors and other exits'(MWD135;KK1,166), and Karl is grabbed by Delamarche while fleeing from the police, his captor emerging from a door 'which wasn't the front door of the house, but an unobtrusive side-entrance'(MWD147;KK1,181).

This bewildering multiplicity of ways in and out facilitates Karl's various "escapes", the exits also typically opening onto a traffic jam. These blockages recur in the novel and seem to constitute another inhuman system, blocking attempts at flight, and forming a congested landscape, an underlying system of which the hotels and houses are nodes. Policemen attempt to orchestrate the flows of cars (MWD72;KK1,91), which seem summoned (MWD78;KK1,98), just as the underground train seems 'pulled by an irresistible force' (MWD100;KK1,125). When Karl leaves the hotel, the cars appear to be pushing each other (MWD 137;KK1,169), and when he sets off, 'the all-encompassing traffic calmly accommodated the arrowy thrust of the car into itself' (MWD139;KK1,171); most strikingly, the street is 'a tiny piece, no more, of a gigantic circulatory system that couldn't be arrested without understanding all the forces operating on its totality'(MWD31;KK1,41). This all-enveloping, incomprehensible play of forces is succinctly described by Hofman: 'Almost

more than action and gesture is the emphasis on blocking, grouping, distance, movement, positioning'(MWDxii).

The effect of "blocking" also highlights the abortive nature of Karl's various "escapes". Each attempt to flee leads to the insertion (voluntary or not) into another system. Just as in *The Trial*, there is no emancipatory possibility, but merely the possibility of strategic manoeuvres, and just as the law inflitrates all the various facets of Josef K.'s life, so here each apparent escape leads to another capture, the enrollment into another hierarchical organization of forces, however unstable, and each system seems to reproduce the relationships of the previous one; the power-structure repeats itself, being incarnated by different characters (which are not necessarily related) and different organizations. These organizations seem themselves to be "arborescent", but the ability of the power structure to repeat itself endlessly (at least in principle), to connect all the various locations[30] and figures of the novel, seems to make it "rhizomatic". The systems described by the narrative are arborescent while the narrative itself is rhizomatic, enacting the ceaseless proliferation of the machinic assemblage.

This scenario also informs what might be termed the narrative temporality of the novel: as Hofman argues, citing Harmut Binder, 'the chapters are in triads: wandering, adoption, and expulsion'(MWDx). However, this process, which has its own temporality, is a component of a larger, cyclical structure of the novel: the move from the acceptance into a system to ejection from it repeats itself - the pattern recurs with each new organization within which Karl becomes embedded, different characters enacting similar roles. There seems to be a sort of temporal loop within which Karl is ensnared, as (structurally) the same narrative repeats itself, each escape inaugurating another cycle[31]. Moreover, this aspect of the novel is resolutely anti-teleological: each cycle, rather than being redemptive, enlightening, or emancipatory, is a component of an overarching repetition which

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[30]As Gershon Shaked says, there is 'an overall net-like pattern, creating in space coherent elements that the novel lacks in its temporal sequence'; *The Dove and the Mole*, p.138
[31]This feature relates to Deleuze's concerns, and in particular those of *Difference and Repetition*.

Shaked terms "Sisyphean": 'The only rationale of this 'entrance into closed space and emergence from it' is its recurrence [...] Its persistence transforms it into the Sisyphean Syndrome. This syndrome is an accumulative result but it is also the theme of every one of the chapters'[32]. Given this organization, both microscopic and macroscopic, it is easy to discern how the novel can be said, in principle, to resist closure, how it is misleading to invoke a purported redemptive conclusion, and how it is likewise a trap to build too much upon an analogy with a Dickensian *Bildungsroman*.

The upshot of this discussion is that *Der Verschollene* clearly offers fertile ground for philosophical exploration. This assertion has ramifications which are both critical and creative. The critical component amounts to a suspicion regarding the neglect of this novel. Given that there seem to be only the most tenuous grounds for seeing *Der Verschollene* as substantially different from the other two novels (philosophically, or in any other way), it is arguably the case that it is only if certain aspects of the other two have been totalized, rendered the definitive traits of Kafka's work, that this novel can come to be dismissed, even implicitly, through neglect. It is only if a certain theme (in the context of this study, that of interpretation has been foregrounded) has been rendered absolute that blockages are created, the symptom of this eventuality being that there is an apparatus which claims - however tentatively - to represent the philosophical kernel of Kafka's writing but which finds itself unable to articulate certain aspects of his work which do not clearly testify to this "kernel". In some cases, this impasse leads to a dismissal of these seemingly heterogenous avenues - they are regarded as anomalous, even, implicitly, as aberrations on Kafka's part[33], whereas the "fault" seems more clearly to lie in the imposition of a reductive theoretical apparatus.

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[32]*The Dove and the Mole*, p.140

[33]This is a situation playfully noted by Borges: 'The first Kafka of "*Betrachtung*" is less a precursor of the Kafka of the gloomy myths and terrifying institutions than is Browning or Lord Dunsany"; *The Total Library*, p.365.

The alternative to this dilemma can be discerned in Deleuze and Guattari's conception of rhizomatics, as it is formulated in relation to Kafka. To recapitulate: Kafka's work is treated less as a set of texts which are ordered generically, or hierarchically in their relation to the author, than as a plane, or a web of connections, series of which are animated by a path of reading. Reading is something of an experiment, the pursuit of series of connections (whether they be thematic, stylistic, or philosophical traits) which aims at an expression of the forces imbuing these connections rather than the absolute prioritization of any one series, a manoeuvre which is undermined by the initial, axiomatic conception of the rhizome.

The pursuit of thematic connections can be misleading: in a way, what is being explored is less "themes" in the sense of defining motifs that could somehow distil the "essence" of the whole output than the manner in which thematic concerns infiltrate, recur, mutate, resonate with each other. These resonances (and, perhaps more importantly, dissonances) are themselves forces which demand an expression which is philosophical in its orientation. Stylistic and thematic traits are pursued but not rendered absolute, or definitive (there is perhaps an analogy with the Wittgensteinian "language-game"), and Kafka's work is treated as a maze of such traits, certain series of which are alighted upon by a certain pathway of reading. This configuration of the oeuvre and the ways in which a reading can travel through it suggests also that the selection of a point of departure (and hence to a certain extent the nodes which any given reading will encounter) is "arbitrary", in the sense that there is no intrinsic ground for the production of a hierarchy of avenues to be followed in the course of reading. A corollary of this feature is that the pursuit of particular series of connections, and the relationships between the series, cannot amount to the uncovering of a "deep structure" of Kafka's work: there is no reason to highlight one path of enquiry as revelatory the fundamental mechanism of his writing - this gesture would, again, have reductive implications. In a sense, everything is on the surface: there is no

fundamental structure hidden beneath, nor is there any transcendent narrative above, somehow unifying the diverse facets of the surface.

It is perhaps misleading to describe the procedure of the experiment of rhizomatic reading as "arbitrary", if this makes it sound like an unconstrained, anything-goes enterprise. "Pragmatics" is the label Deleuze and Guattari prefer to attach to their procedure, and they emphasize that there is no lack of criteria: 'Although there is no preformed logical order to becomings and multiplicities, there are *criteria*, and the important thing is that they not be used after the fact, that they be applied in the course of events, that they be sufficient to guide us through the dangers'[34]; in short, the rhizomatic experiment involves the immanent production of its own criteria. "Pragmatism" also suggests that the choice of routes through the work is not unmotivated - indeed it is difficult to imagine a reading which had no (philosophical) motivations. In the present context, it could be said the reading is animated by two major criteria: firstly, the selection of a path of enquiry is motivated by how philosophically productive it is, how pertinent to this philosophical narrative (the curious juxtaposition of early phenomenology and Deleuze and Guattari); this fecundity is a feature which emerges in the course of the reading, and a further point is that it is important not to elevate this criterion and motivation above its pragmatic origin, its status as an axiom of this reading, and thereby render it absolute. The second criterion is that of how far any particular technique, motif or element will lead through the tangled web of Kafka's writing, how creative an avenue is opened up. This second criterion follows on from the first: if the "agenda" is that of the pursuit of philosophical forces at play throughout Kafka's work, then certain paths will not aid this pursuit, whereas others will turn out to be more productive, although this feature does not bestow upon them any priority beyond

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[34]*A Thousand Plateaus*, p.251; see also Eco's *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*: 'A structure that cannot be described *globally* can only be described as a potential sum of *local* ~~descriptions~~ [...] *descriptions* every local description of the net is a *hypothesis*, subject to falsification, about its further course; in a rhizome blindness is the only way of seeing [...] and thinking means to *grope one's way*'(p.82).

their efficacy in the context of this programme[35]. For instance, there is no preconstituted, intrinsic reason why a reading should not enter with the choice of the vulture as an impetus; however, this motif alone will not lead far, since there is only one vulture in Kafka's work, and if the reading is to advance, it will have to branch out into other fields of enquiry, even if they begin from "The Vulture". By contrast, if the reading were to commence with an exploration of the various systems with which the figure of the son connects, then there already opens up a plethora of zones to be explored.

The latter example was chosen partly because it may appear to resemble an orthodox prioritization of the father/son conflict. There is no question that this relationship is prominent, so the difference lies in its treatment. There is a temptation to transform the father/son conflict into a transcendent narrative of Kafka's work, its key, and thereby to assimilate other facets into its clutch (the law as the law of the father), and even to disavow heterogenous aspects. Against this "temptation", the question for the programme of reading outlined above would be that of what mechanisms organize the son's position, of the systems to which the son connects, and of how this motif relates or does not relate to others. In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari insist that the son's role is not exhausted by a familial designation but connects also to other social and political milieux, as indeed does the family. In crucial texts (for this figure) such as "The Judgment" and "The Transformation", there is also a bureaucratic system which has a hold over the son (the chief clerk, the family business); rather than subsume these intersecting planes into a "primordial" familial nexus, the issue is that of exploring these modes of intersection, thus of articulating social and political planes in their complex relationships with family life. Neither is this a question of an inverted relation of priority, whereby the structure of the family is derived

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[35] As Bruce Baugh puts it, 'Pragmatic concerns do indeed guide the experimental analysis of literature to the extent that a text, like anything else, can produce a vast number of effects, and this forces us to be selective, and focus on those effects which matter to us. That will be a function of what we want to do, not just in our reading, but in our lives'; *Deleuze and Literature*, p.41.

from wider social organizations through which alone it becomes interpretable; it is a matter of exploring the collision and collusion of planes, a polyphonous effect as opposed to a univocal foregrounding of the father.

Following these "principles", Deleuze and Guattari enter Kafka's work through a portal they describe as 'modest'(K3), that of the portrait of the porter with a bent head seen by K. in *The Castle*: a brief glimpse which connects immediately to the proliferation of bent heads throughout Kafka's writing, and of photographs and portraits, and of the intersections of these elements. Already the motifs lead the way to many, diverse points in Kafka's work; moreover, 'we won't try to find archetypes that would represent Kafka's imaginary [...] We aren't even trying to interpret, to say that this means that'(K7).

The "modesty" of this entrance does not prevent Deleuze and Guattari from pursuing connections and juxtapositions of elements which are particularly suggestive for their thinking. Likewise what will follow is a selection of routes through Kafka's work which seem to welcome the insertion of motifs drawn variously from proto-phenomenological thought and that of Deleuze and Guattari, the interplay of which expresses something of the philosophical idiosyncrasy of Kafka's writing, its singular Borgesian ability to facilitate such an interplay within the fabric of its construction.

If the aim is therefore to see how two disparate philosophical agendas play off each other in the light of Kafka's work, as a means of experiencing the idiosyncrasy which allows such an interplay, then the entrances and paths chosen are those which most forcefully facilitate this interplay, although this is not to subordinate Kafka's work to these agendas. The question of subjectivity has been invoked to suggest just how disparate in crucial respects the two theoretical outlooks at issue here are, and thus just how strange the philosophical character of Kafka's writing must be for it to stage any sort of alliance between the them. An account of subjectivity according to Kafka which relied upon the work of

Brentano highlighted its "minimal" or "ascetic"character[36]. A closely related matter is that of the proximity of the narrative voice, which occupies an ambiguous position between subjectivity and objectivity. It is "subjective" in that its knowledge of the world is commensurate with that of protagonist, and "objective" in that it has infallible access to the protagonist's consciousness; this crucial ambiguity echoes the viewpoint of descriptive psychology.

The "minimalism" of Kafka's personnages means that we have little or no idea of how they look, and that they have little in the way of "personality", beyond a desire to be or to become inconspicuous. They aim to be polite, and if they are strident it is often out of a desire to avoid misrepresentation. That this sketch covers so many of Kafka's protagonists indicates the extent to which they resemble one another; again, this is a point alighted upon by Borges: only one character appears in his work, 'the *homo domesticus* so German and so Jewish, desirous of a place, no matter how humble, in some Order – in the universe, in a ministry, in an insane asylum, in jail'[37]. The phrase 'so German and so Jewish' is perhaps misleading in that it seems not to acknowledge the complexity of Kafka's relations to Jewish and German identity (seeming to suggest an easy reconciliation of the two), and also fails to discuss what is perhaps most striking in this context, that the similarity of Kafka's protagonists traverses any human/animal disjunction, unless there is a tacit anthropomorphism. There is no substantial distinction between the human and animal protagonists (nor is the character of the bridge particularly different), and the distinction can even be unclear or undecidable[38].

Kafka's depiction of animal life is notable for its lack of concern for verisimilitude: the only real indications that Josefine's society is that of mice

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[36] "Methodical asceticism" was the term employed by Badiou to summarize his account of the paring down of consciousness in Beckett; *Beckett*, p.19.

[37]*The Total Library*, p.503.

[38] See, for example, this diary entry: 'Once more I screamed at the top of my voice into the world. Then they shoved a gag into my mouth, tied my hands and feet, and blindfolded me'(D376;KK7,381). The entry continues, with it remaining unclear whether the captured narrator is animal or human.

(apart from the title) derive from a couple of passing references to whiskers and fur; Deleuze and Guattari further note that 'Kafka's animals never refer to a mythology or to archetypes'(K 13), and there are also the cases of more 'fantastic' animals, such as that of "A Crossbreed". If there is a distinction to be drawn, it is not between human and animal life, but between the seemingly singular protagonist and the phenomenon of multiple subjectivity, that of the pack or group. Examples include "Children on a Country Road", "Fellowship", "The Problem of our Laws", "Jackals and Arabs", and in particular the late stories of animal packs, dogs and mice. This collective subjectivity is typically expressed through a single protagonist, who is nonetheless licensed to speak for all[39].

The pack, conceived as a multiplicity (or a 'collective assemblage of enunciation'(K85)), is of great interest to Deleuze and Guattari, and they take these instances of a collective, multiplicitous subjectivity to reflect back upon the seemingly individual, "isolated" protagonist. Responding in part to the "emptiness" of "K.", the sense in which it does not denote a "personality" but a position with a limited set of traits and modes of relation to given milieux, they declare that 'it is useless to ask who K. is'(K 84). "K." is analysed instead as a term which can be understood through its integration into a set of networks, and the ways in which it institutes relationships between them: in this sense,

> K will not be a subject but will be a general function that proliferates and that doesn't cease to segment and to spread over all the segments [...] general is not opposed to individual; general designates a function and the most solitary individual has a function that is all the more general in that it connects to all the terms of the series through which it passes (K 84).

This claim (which obviously follows on from the reading of *The Trial*, in particular) means that the 'isolated' protagonist can be seen as in a sense no less multiplicitous than that which speaks for the pack, or indeed the collective subjectivity of the pack itself. "K." emerges in 'a polyvalent assemblage of which

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[39]Deleuze and Guattari discuss the role of the 'extreme individual' (the sorcerer) in relation to tribes and becoming-animal in *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.243.

the solitary individual is only a part'(K86), and thus its function is not exhausted by its role as the name of an individual, but is also expressed through the multiplicity of series or networks to which it connects; later in their career, Deleuze and Guattari expand on this idea by asserting that 'in fact, the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities'[40].

These notions would seem to be wholly incompatible with Brentanian thought. However, as has been witnessed, Brentano can construct "the unity of the soul" only on the basis of a multiplicity of objects, whether this composite 'unity' be at any given time or through time. "Unity", in this scenario, does not denote a unified entity but rather a set of relationships holding between objects for a certain duration, like a certain pattern of waves constituting a river's flow at a certain moment, to use Brentano's analogy. "Unity" is almost a misnomer if it is opposed to multiplicity, and can be used only if a certain multiplicity obtains. A remark of Kafka's is striking for the way in which it almost repeats Brentano's argument while shattering its conclusion: 'In one and the same human being there are cognitions that, however utterly dissimilar they are, yet have one and the same object, so that one can only conclude that there are different subjects in one and the same human being'(BON34;KK6,72).

There are further analogies: Marty's account of linguistic practice incited a postulation of a collective subjectivity, and Deleuze's invocation of Ehrenfels and Stumpf in the definition of multiplicities has also been touched upon. In the latter case, it was suggested that whereas Ehrenfels' aim would seem to be to discern a higher level of inherence (hence perhaps to reinstate unity in another location), Deleuze's interpretation shifts the emphasis somewhat. As he says elsewhere, 'a multiplicity is defined not by its elements, nor by a center of unification or comprehension. It is defined by the number of dimensions it has'[41], and in this shift of focus, he seems to capture something of how aspects of Kafka's work

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[40] *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.249
[41] *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.249

relate to the theory of "Gestalt-qualities" and its associates, with the law seeming to be constituted by a multiplicity of elements and dimensions within which these elements emerge but without a centre or whole in which they inhere and gather together.

The proto-phenomenological subject is constructed on the basis of the multiplicity of objects, the combinations of which conspire to produce a composite unity. This situation is akin to the understanding of aggregates offered by Brentano's associates, whereby multiplicity is regarded as "unified" at a higher level of organization, a gesture which seems to be subverted in some sense by Kafka, both in those cases which could be regarded as specifically engaging with such accounts and on the more macroscopic level of the organization of the larger systems which emerge in his texts. An analogous "violence" towards the composite unities to be found in Brentanian thought is offered by Deleuze, who also configures subjectivity as multiplicity in his reading of Kafka, thus perhaps recognizing something of the subversive quality of Kafka's relationship with early phenomenological thought.

If *The Trial* (to use a privileged example) is read in the light of Brentanian thought, then the law may be considered a function of subjectivity[42], with events and characters perhaps facets of a fragmented, dispersed subject, this fragmentation and dispersion marking Kafka's mutation of the subject of "inner perception". According to Deleuze and Guattari, subjectivity is not given as an isolated consciousness but with the entire socio-political field which it traverses: these points are complicitous in that in both cases the protagonist's subjectivity is co-ordinated with the entire fictional world in which it emerges and with which it is co-extensive, so that the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity becomes undecidable. The effect of this vital ambiguity is unsettling, and it is perfectly conveyed by the features of the narrative voice discussed previously,

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[42]This is the line followed by Barry Smith; see "Kafka and Brentano" in *Structure and Gestalt*, p.137-139.

the way in which it likewise engages in a tense oscillation between subjectivity and objectivity.

The other striking "oscillation" which has been encountered is that between the human and the animal, the manner in which essentially the same form of subjectivity can be realized in either "category". This capacity for the subjectivity of Kafka's texts to cut across the human/animal disjunction implies a certain "fluidity" of the body. When addressing this point, Heidsieck calls upon the work of Kastil, who understood Brentano's work along Cartesian lines (IC49-53), and also marshalls the line from "Wedding Preparations in the Country" ('I don't even need to go to the country myself, it isn't necessary. I'll send my clothed body'(CSS55;KK6,10)) as evidence of a mind/body split operating in Kafka's work. However, what has transpired above would seem to militate against such a reading, since it could be said to amount to a form of monism, there being an indissociability of the protagonist's consciousness and the world in which it figures. In any case, the introduction of Cartesian elements into Brentano's theory would seem a retrogressive step, in that Brentano's insistence that the role of the "world" is exhausted by its immanent manifestation in intentional states and that the question of the existence of a 'world' beyond this role cannot coherently be framed would appear to obviate the postulation of a radically different "substance" and concomitant interaction problem.

The early sketch of a reading of "Description of a Struggle" in the light of Brentano's thought touched upon the manner in which the body as it features in this text might be understood by descriptive psychology. More specifically, the body seemed to participate in the overall movement of the story, that of the rupturing of the stability of a Brentanian world. Thus the body partakes in the fracturing which afflicts consciousness ('To give his body unity he clasped his hands together'(CSS34;KK5,32)) and the "plasticity" which besets the world, as it spreads over the landscape. "The Transformation" was read in the light of a more detailed debate, that surrounding Brentano's treatment of pleasure and

pain. Gregor's dilemma (and its specifically corporeal dimension) can be articulated within the terms of Brentano's thought (Barry Smith's undertaking, which sees corporeal transformation as the introduction of 'a quite different world [...] including that of his own physical body'[43]), yet, in terms of the detailed description of the sensations of pleasure and pain, seems more in line with Stumpf's critique of Brentano. By siding with Stumpf - however "unconsciously" - , Kafka seems to move away slightly from Brentano's treatment of the body; Gregor's subjectivity appears unaffected, at least in terms of his preoccupations (bureaucratic and familial), but there is a radical transformation of his corporeality, with new zones of sensitivity, new capabilities, along with the diminishing of other senses, which obfuscates his thought. The story can therefore be read with reference to the Brentano/Stumpf debate, as implicitly siding with Stumpf (the focus being upon the corporeal aspects of Gregor's transformation, the appearance of new zones of sensitivity), and this gesture also renders it close to a Deleuzian conception of the body.

In their text on Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari describe 'becoming-animal' as 'the production of a continuum of intensities in a nonparallel and asymmetrical evolution'(K13), and elsewhere[44] in terms of a human body adopting the set of movements and affects which define the body of the animal. Gregor's body acquires the affects and movements proper to a beetle. Framed in these terms, it seems that there is not too substantial a difference between this account (although there are of course differences of terminology) and that which considers "The Transformation" a warped reflection of the Brentano/Stumpf dispute, at least in so far as Stumpf's argument revolves around an understanding of the body which highlights regions of sensitivity; the more radical Deleuzian move is to define the body (invoking Spinoza[45]) in terms of such zones and their

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[43]*Structure and Gestalt*, p.123
[44]See *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.274-275
[45] See Deleuze's essay "Ethology: Spinoza and Us", in *Incorporations*, p.625-633.

affectivities and capacities for movement. The other obvious intersection of the two philosophical poles (which recalls that which inaugurated this section) is generated by the fact that both understand the transformation literally, in terms of the details of corporeality.

However, Deleuze and Guattari's account is embellished further by the notion of "becoming-animal" as the "deterritorialization" of the human, as the means by which the protagonist can attempt to fly from that which binds him as a human subject. On a first inspection, there would seem to be problems with this account: firstly, the stories dealing with animals (and in particular the later ones) treat them as equally caught up in mechanisms of control, the laws of the pack or animal society. It would seem that the "becoming-animal" of the human would thus be futile in that it would appear to lead to the integration into another, similarly constrictive social system, and indeed Deleuze and Guattari do refer to the 'no way out of the animal way out'(K36). In this case, there is the possibility of another line of flight, such as the abortive fast undertaken by the canine philosopher of "The Investigations of a Dog". Likewise, "A Report to an Academy" could appear paradoxical, dealing as it does with the becoming-human of the ape; this would seem, on the face of it, a retrogressive becoming, a reterritorialization. However, what is clear is that this becoming is merely the complicit converse of becoming-animal, in that it equally traces a line of flight, negotiating the ape's release from the cage: it is the same mechanism operating according to a different trajectory.

The anorexic project alluded to above (and which also appears vividly in "A Hunger Artist") ties in with another prominent feature of the body as lived by Kafka's protagonists: the will to waste away, to "become imperceptible", to use Deleuze and Guattari's terminology[46]: 'Two possibilities: making oneself infinitely small or being so. The second is perfection, that is to say, inactivity, the first is beginning, that is to say, action'(BON 40;KK6,78). This is very much the

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[46]Ibid., p.279-290

propels

extreme corporeal expression of the desire which ~~propells~~ so many of Kafka's

protagonists - the desire to become inconspicuous. Throughout their dealings

with their intimidating worlds, these characters constantly strive to negotiate an

inconspicuous position, hence their politeness, their concern not to be

misunderstood, not to cause even inadvertent offence. Even their more strident

moments (Josef K.'s denunciation of the court, for example) occur within the

framework of this overpowering wish; Gregor's attempt to rescue the portrait of

the woman in fur occurs as a moment of thoughtlessness against the backdrop of

his efforts not to offend his family: in order to spare his sister the sight of his

transformed anatomy, 'he one day transported a sheet to the sofa on his back

[...] and arranged it in such a way that he was now completely covered, and his

sister would not be able to see him even if she stooped down'

(TOS100;KK4,82). The apogee of this desire is the wish to waste away bodily,

to become imperceptible; in a sense, the hunger-artist would have achieved this

were it not for his retention of a desire to be acknowledged, and the concluding

revelation that "'I could never find the nourishment I liked. Had I found it,

believe me, I [...] would have eaten my fill just like you and everyone

else'"(TOS219;KK4,199-200)[47]. That this statement subverts the ascetic project

seems to be evidenced by the way in which the narrative voice pulls away from

its typical proximity to the protagonist's consciousness for the concluding

paragraphs, forming an echo of the close of "The Transformation", a text

similarly dealing with an apologetic will to disappearance. What is encountered

here is the extreme corporeal expression of the motivation which constantly

drives Kafka's characters, ultimately played out as the desire to build a burrow

for oneself, although even then the fear of detection is all-consuming.

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[47]The connections of this text are manifold: it relates to the dog's fast in "The Investigations of a
Dog", and also to his pressing question regarding the source of nourishment. Deleuze and Guattari's
discussion of anorexia (see *Anti-Oedipus*, p.1) institutes the idea of a confused relationship between
the mouth as an organ for eating and for speaking, a juxtaposition which they see at work in Kafka:
'The dogs try to take over the mouth of the investigating hound by filling it with food so that he'll stop
asking questions'(K 20)

The anorexic projects (as a "subset" of the attempts to become inconspicuous) can be seen as the extreme form of a widespread emaciation of Kafka's characters, with emaciation also being related to a pervasive exhaustion. The people of Kafka's world are often sapped of their vitality and consequently struggle to achieve any clarity of perception: a particularly striking example of this widespread phenomenon is that of K. falling asleep in Bürgel's room, because it constitutes one of the few instances of the narrative voice indicating that there is a gulf between the protagonist's assessment of his comprehension and its real extent: a dissonance is created between the recognition that the 'further significance [...] escaped him'(C234;KK3,248), and the view that 'now he thoroughly understood everything, he thought'(C237,KK3,251). K.'s dream is juxtaposed with an apparently verbatim recounting of the speech, highlighting the collapse of his ability to concentrate. The passage is unusual in its ironic distance from K. (the distance between narrator and character being usually scarcely perceptible), in its foregrounding of the gap between K.'s belief that he has understood and the real extent of his understanding. Cases such as this one are reminiscent of the impediments which can, according to Brentano and Marty, thwart "inner perception", and in particular, Chisholm's reading of "noticing" as something achieved only on the basis of some effort.

The cause of this exhaustion obviously lies in the oppressive effects of the various power networks into which the protagonists are inserted; in this respect, Foucault's analysis of the ways in which power relations are inscribed on the body ("In the Penal Colony" constituting the shockingly literal apotheosis of this feature) was called upon as a means of expressing the corporeal effects of these power networks, and the consequent obfuscation of Brentanian consciousness. "Inner perception" struggles against the stifling atmosphere of the law's passages, a situation which brings together the pitfalls encircling a consciousness which seems to be suffering all the malaises envisaged by early phenomenology, the corporeal causes, and the way in which these corporeal causes themselves

reflect upon the operations of power; it also opens up another avenue of enquiry, that of the topography of Kafka's work, the way in which its architectural constructions embody the systems which inhabit them, and indeed the spatial organization of Kafka's work in general.

The spatio-temporal "organization" of Kafka's fictional universe was first encountered in the preliminary reading of "Description of a Struggle" as a contortion of Brentano's thought; in this text at least, disorganization seems to prevail. The lack of attention to such matters in *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* is striking; given Brentano's theoretical apparatus, it is evident that he cannot countenance the absolute existence of space and time as lying beyond presentations of objects, forming a basis prior to, and separable from, any given presentation. In his only clear statement on this issue, Brentano discusses science as reliant upon the 'assumption' of a world which 'resembles' one ordered by temporal progression and possessing three dimensions[48]. In the accompanying note[49], he denies that this assumption of such a resemblance can be pushed any further; it cannot be declared that the world *is* like that[50]. This lack of an account of any structures which might maintain spatial and temporal stability seemed to be played out in "Description of a Struggle" through alarming discontinuities, and through the final vision of the narrator's body undergoing an unconstrained expansion, spreading over the valley: in this early text, considered as an "explosion" of Brentano's thought, the rending of the world involves the disruption of spatio-temporal stability, space and time partaking in the dramatic "plasticity" of the world. If stable spatial and temporal organizations are thus not given in the philosophical background through which Kafka's work can be read, then there is scope for any number of spatio-temporal convolutions.

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[48]*Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, p.98
[49]Ibid., p.99
[50]Later in his career (1911), Brentano considers space further, conceding that there can be perceptions of space as full or empty (ibid., p.277), although he still denies the "existence"(ibid., p.277, Kraus' footnote) of space, its "reality" beyond such perceptions. His posthumous addenda (published in the 1924 edition) include the introduction of the idea of a spatial continuum.

Borges highlights one tendency amongst such disruptions, namely a Zeno-like "impossibility of movement", citing - perhaps audaciously - *The Castle*, as a whole, as an example[51]. On a smaller scale, this notion is articulated explicitly in "The Next Village", and in the conundrum of the imperial messenger of "The Great Wall of China". The latter case, in particular, repeats Zeno's logic: there are too many steps to be taken for progress to be achievable:

> he is still only forcing his way through the chambers of the innermost palace, never will he get to the end of them; and if he succeeded in that, nothing would be gained; down the stairs he would have to fight his way; and if he succeeded in that, nothing would be gained; the courtyards would have to be traversed, and after the courtyards the second, outer palace; and again stairs and courtyards; and again a palace; and so on for thousands of years; and if at last he should burst through the outermost gate - but never, never can that happen - the royal capital would still lie before him [...] No one can force his way through there (GWC 67;KK5, 59)

Here the accumulation of negative vocabulary and its repetition (*'niemals wird sie überwinden* [...] *nichts wäre gewonnen* [...] *niemals, niemals kann es geschehen* [...] *Niemand dringt hier durch'*) conspire to generate the sense of impossibility. There is perhaps an affiliation between these visions of the impossibility of movement and the broader claim, that Kafka's protagonists cannot realize escape in an emancipatory sense. This additional apparent impossibility could be said to be linked to the spatial confines in which the protagonists find themselves.

The perplexing nature of Kafka's world is here manifested by the fact that this impossibility of movement is by no means consistent; rather, it is often juxtaposed with a facility of movement which is equally alarming, and even more so when it runs alongside the impossibility. Thus "A Country Doctor" ends with the protagonist declaring that, 'never shall I reach home like this; my flourishing practice is done for [...] old man that I am, I go drifting around' (TOS161;KK4,117), but earlier, his experience had been of 'a mighty rushing that pervades all my senses. But that too is no more than a moment, for as though my patient's yard opened up directly beyond my gate, I am already

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[51]*The Total Library*, p.363.

there'(T157;KK4,113). Likewise, the impossibility attending the imperial messenger's attempt to leave the palace confines is combined with the ease of movement he would realize were he to overcome the impossibility: 'If he could reach the open fields how fast he would fly, and soon doubtless you would hear the welcome hammering of his fists on your door'(GWC67;KK5,59).

This contrast finds an echo in Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions (as they emerge in *A Thousand Plateaus*, without direct reference to Kafka) of "smooth" and "striated" space. The former is 'nomad space'[52], in which lines of flight stretch unimpeded in every direction (as the land unfurls beneath the protagonist of "The Wish to be a Red Indian"(TOS31;KK4,34-35)), whereas the latter is 'sedentary space [...] instituted by the State apparatus'[53], for instance the urban organization of space, with walls, the institution of regional centres, and strictly constrained pathways. It seems that the mouse of "A Little Fable" moves from the former type of space ('"At first it [the world] was so big that I was afraid"'(GWC135;KK5,91)) to the latter, as '"these long walls are closing in on each other so fast that I have already reached the end room"' (GWC135;KK5,91). The mouse moves from wide open expanses to ever more confined corridors and chambers, the cat ironically voicing a possibility of flight that it is too late to pursue.

These narrow, confined chambers are somewhat reminiscent of the corridors and stairways of *The Trial*, the novel with perhaps the most striking topographical construction. This is not to say that similar features do not appear in the other novels (the parallels in *Der Verschollene* have been encountered), or indeed in other moments of Kafka's work: one thinks immediately of the labyrinthine tunnels of "The Burrow". The cramped passages and stairwells of *The Trial* conspire to produce an oppressive, stifling atmosphere: Josef K.

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[52]*A Thousand Plateaus*, p.474. Nomads are another of Kafka's preoccupations: see "The Great Wall of China", "Jackals and Arabs", and "A Leaf from an Old Manuscript"; these stories accord with several of Deleuze and Guattari's claims regarding "nomadology". See "Treatise on Nomadology", *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.351-423.
[53]Ibid., p.474

discovers that the air of the law's offices is '"terribly thick and stifling [...] on days when the traffic of involved parties is heavy you can hardly breathe"'(T73;KK2,61), and remarks of Titorelli's staircase that 'the air was oppressive as well'(T140;KK2,121); prolonged exposure seems to lead to Block's emaciation.

Josef K. is initially surprised by the anonymity of the buildings used by the law: following the directions, he arrives at a street 'flanked on both sides by almost completely identical buildings, tall gray apartment houses inhabited by the poor'(T38;KK2,34), and asks, 'so the law court offices were in the attic of this apartment building? That was an arrangement scarcely calculated to inspire much respect'(T65;KK2,54). Later, he will come to recognize that attic rooms are characteristic spaces for the law's operations, and moreover that the law can use other spaces for its purposes, such as the cathedral and his office building. It can infiltrate all manner of architectural spaces, seemingly designed for other purposes. The claim underpinning this feature is that 'the court was attracted by guilt, from which it actually followed that the room for the inquiry would have to be located off whatever stairway K. chanced to choose'(T39;KK2,35). This assertion ties in with the startling incidences of architectural contiguity (to use Deleuze and Guattari's term), whereby the law appears unexpectedly, in a building which had seemed far from its clutches: the whipping of the arresting officers occurs in 'a mere junk room'(T60;KK2,74), and Titorelli's studio, it transpires, opens onto the law courts (T164;KK2,141). Of this phenomenon, Deleuze and Guattari remark:

> This is the most striking topography in Kafka's work, and it isn't only a 'mental' topography: two diametrically opposed points bizarrely reveal themselves to be in contact [...] It's the same in *Amerika* and *The Castle*. Two blocks on a continuous and unlimited line, with their doors far from each other, are revealed to have contiguous back doors that make the blocks themselves contiguous (K73).

This spatial "plasticity" obviously connects to other movements foregrounded by Deleuze and Guattari: just as the law infiltrates diverse facets of the social field, implicating them in the process, so the spatial organization of the novel's

"world", reified architecturally, leads to separate architectural "blocks" forming connections with the law. In short, there emerges a sort of architectural rhizome.

However, there would seem to be a quite different form of spatial and architectural organization at work in some of Kafka's texts, those which seem to gesture towards a central, transcendental authority, removed from the architectural constructions yet orchestrating them. The Tower of Babel is a persistent preoccupation (although the project is always contorted by Kafka's peculiar logic; see, for instance, "The City Coat of Arms"), and there is also the case of "The Great Wall of China". In the latter story, the architectural configuration seems to be dictated by an inaccessible, transcendent authority, which alone can orchestrate the relationships between the discontinuous blocks, and is compared to the Tower of Babel: 'the Great Wall alone would create, for the first time in the history of mankind, a secure foundation for a new Tower of Babel'(GWC62,KK5,54). Up to a point, Deleuze and Guattari understand this sort of scenario as opposed to that of the novels: there is a 'real distinction'(K75) between the two arrangements. It could be said, however, that there is a sort of transcendental "lure" at work.

Adding to the list of Kafka's Meinongian "nonentities", the role of the emperor is so opaque that the very possession of an emperor is debatable: 'If one were to conclude from such phenomena that basically we have no emperor at all, one would not be far from the truth'(GWC68;KK5,61). In any case, nobody knows what entity is named when the emperor is invoked: 'They do not know which emperor is reigning, and there are even doubts as to the name of the dynasty'(GWC67,KK5,60). Typically, this inability to determine the being of an emperor leads to his role being taken over by interpretation; specifically, the emperor marks a position immanent to the social fabric, generated by its organization, its legends and its education system (GWC67,KK5,60).

The architectural discontinuities of the story (the method of piecemeal construction) are revealed to serve not a transcendent diagram (a Babel-like

project, the comprehensibility of which is doubted by the narrator), but rather the social organization of the labourers: 'one could not, for instance, make them spend months or even years laying stone upon stone in some uninhabited mountain region hundreds of miles from their homes; the hopelessness of such laborious toil [...] would have reduced them to despair [...] It was for this reason that the system of piecemeal construction was chosen'(GWC60,KK5,53). These discontinuities render the wall largely ineffective as protection against the nomads, who operate in "smooth space": it 'could easily be destroyed time and again by the nomads [...] [who] kept shifting from place to place with incredible rapidity like locusts, and so perhaps had an even better picture of how the wall was progressing than we who were building it'(GWC59;KK5,51). The discontinuities are a problem in terms of the putative function of the wall (which is a matter for debate more than an item of knowledge), but not in so far as they breed social cohesion, link bands of workers from different sites, thus generating connections across the immense social and geographical field.

The law weaves together architectural blocks, and, with them, apparently divergent aspects of Josef K.'s life, and the wall project weaves together piecemeal constructions: in both cases, these functions seem to be immanent to the social field, but are also embellished with a transcendental narrative, the parable of the law running parallel to the book expounding the wall's Babel pretensions. In both cases, these "abstract machines" run counter to the assemblage of the social field, as it binds discrete architectural blocks. In *Der Verschollene*, architectural blocks were linked by the all-encompassing flows and blockages of traffic, and moreover manifested structural similarities, including architectural resemblances; in a sense, they are almost interchangeable, or could be put into a different order. This situation recalls the debates surrounding the order of the chapters of *The Trial*, which is not clear-cut, and was also linked to the narrative temporality of the novel. This temporality is non-linear, to the extent that it evades the onward, redemptive path of the *Bildungsroman*, and

involves cycles and repetitions, an overall structural system which finds its microscopic exposition in Titorelli's enumeration of the possibilities open to the accused person.

The field opened up here is that of the numerous temporal convolutions at play in Kafka's work. The bridge seems to have lost all conception of temporal succession, being unsure as to whether this day was 'the first, whether it was the thousandth [...] my thoughts were [...] always moving in a circle'(GWC46,KK5,84), while Gracchus seems to be caught in some sort of fissure in the space-time continuum, condemned to move perpetually without ever arriving. In particular, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* are replete with aphorisms regarding the nature of time, the logic of which is often enigmatic. The constant preoccupation here is that of the difficulty of understanding the relationship between the temporality of this world and the eternity of a postulated "Beyond": 'To every instant there is a correspondence in something outside time. This world here and now cannot be followed by a Beyond, for the Beyond is eternal, hence it cannot be in temporal contact with this world here and now'(BON31;KK6,69). This impossibility of "temporal contact" seems to be related to the idea that eternity cannot be conceived temporally, that it is in fact the "justification" of time: 'But eternity is not temporality at a standstill. What is oppressive about the concept of the eternal is the justification, incomprehensible to us, that time must undergo in eternity'(BON46;KK6,83). From the point of view of eternity, it is apparently impossible to understand how anything could take place: because 'the decisive moment in human evolution is perpetual [...] nothing has yet happened'(BON16,KK6,54), and, 'If I shall exist eternally, how shall I exist tomorrow ?'(BON37;KK6,74). For all their logical idiom, the reasoning underlying these aphorisms is often baffling; it is difficult to say more than that there is a juxtaposition between temporality and its other, eternity, which provokes all manner of dissonances, ambiguities, and paradoxes. There is a connection to the way in which there are visions both of an impossibility of

movement and of an alarming rapidity of movement; lying amongst the gnomic statements regarding time and eternity is the story "An Everyday Occurrence", a slightly less absolute version of these tendencies, as A takes only ten minutes to travel to H on the first day, but ten hours on the second, returning in 'no more than an instant'(GWC99;KK6,55), only to miss B a second time over. Space and time are notable components of the overarching peculiarity of Kafka's world.

Aspects of this peculiarity can be articulated through the combination of early phenomenological thought and that of Deleuze and Guattari, and it is moreover expressed in the fact that this bizarre combination can come into being. The combination was introduced through the fact that the disparate philosophical positions meet in an insistence upon the literal: non-existent, non-veridical, impossible events or objects (those which should have a merely metaphorical status) must be understood in literal terms. Apart from the cases in which this insistence has already been invoked (notably with reference to Kafka's treatment of animals, of becoming-animal), there is a number of entities which ordinarily could not function except metaphorically being treated literally. This literalism is manifested through the methodical treatment of the corporeal traits of their existence: 'Strange how make-believe, if engaged in systematically enough, can change into reality'(D405;KK7,411).

Some examples shed a curious light on this phenomenon: an angel is, of course, a figure whose "reality" is generally taken to be that of a phantom, insubstantial, and in all probability metaphorical rather than literal. When an angel descends upon one of Kafka's characters, its existence initially seems to be not only literal, but also only too corporeal, as it smashes through the plaster of the ceiling, causing havoc in the room below. Then a humourous, bathetic note is struck: 'it was no living angel, only a painted wooden figurehead off the prow of some ship, one of the kind that hangs from the ceiling in sailors' taverns, nothing more'(D292;KK7,296), not that this observation serves to make the situation any less bizarre. A similar sort of humour infuses the account of 'ancient

knights', who go 'gadding about [...] in dreams, irresponsibly brandishing their swords'(D327;KK7,334): again, the effects are only too corporeal, as the protagonist meets his friends on Sunday with a sword protruding from the back of his head as a result of this irresponsibility. 'This block and tackle of inner being [*Dieser Flaschenzug im Innern*]' (D225;KK7,227) might seem a metaphor, but is imagined in literal terms: 'a small lever' sets in motion 'all the chains [which] clank down their prescribed path one after the other'(D225;KK7,227); similarly with the notion of a 'spiritual battle': it is taking place 'in a clearing somewhere in the woods [...] often as I leave the woods I hear, or think I hear, the clashing weapons of that battle. Perhaps the eyes of the warriors are seeking me through the darkness of the woods'(D271;KK7,275). There are other deflationary interventions of the literal, even the prosaic: the souls of the dead fly up to heaven but revert to matter, become rocks, and crash back to earth (BON21;KK6,60); the problem of having a hole in the back of one's head is that 'it makes him nervous, it distracts him from his work, and moreover it irritates him that just he should be the one to be debarred from the spectacle'(D391;KK7,396); the problem of being a ghost is that one is unsure of one's existence (TOS36;KK4,38). In the same way that language was seen as corporeal, an autonomous medium with its own actions and effects, so here there are entities whose formulations ought to consign them to an irreducibly metaphorical status being treated literally, this "literalism" being so fully-fledged that it painstakingly describes the corporeal conundrums of these objects.

A subtle critique of this sort of account is offered by Stanley Corngold, with his notion of the "metamorphosis of metaphor", one which is obviously formulated initially in a relation to "The Transformation" and resists accounts which prioritize the literal aspect of transformation. Corngold summarizes his conception as follows:

> Kafka's metamorphosis - through aberrant literalization - of the metaphor 'this man is

a vermin' appears to be an intricate and comprehensive act in which one can discern three orders of significance, all of which inform *The Metamorphosis*. These meanings emerge separately as one focuses critically on three facts: that the metaphor distorted is a familiar element of ordinary language; that, the distortion being incomplete, the body of the original metaphor maintains a shadow existence within the metamorphosis, and the body of *this* metaphor - a verminous bug - is negative and repulsive; and finally, that the source of the metamorphosis is, properly speaking, not the familiar metaphor but a radical aesthetic intention.[54]

In many respects, this version would seem to be diametrically opposed to the central tenets of this discussion, treating Gregor's transformation as a meta-metaphorical operation rather than one to be encountered in literal terms. However, there are points of contact: after all, Corngold begins with the recognition of what he terms "aberrant literalization", feeling that it requires explanation. He appears to feel that it can be understood only as a component of a wider meta-metaphorical process partly because a purely literal understanding would remove the story's disturbing qualities: it is 'not correct' to suggest 'that in *The Metamorphosis* literalization of the metaphor is actually accomplished; for then we should have not an indefinite monster but simply a bug'[55]. Moreover, he claims that there would be a mis-reading involved: 'Only the alien cleaning woman gives Gregor Samsa the factual, entomological identity of a "dung beetle" [...] The cleaning woman does not know that a metamorphosis has occurred, that within this insect shape there is a human consciousness'[56].

Is it really less shocking to take the transformation literally? Surely a world in which such transformations can occur, literally, is shocking enough; in their objections to this view, the above remarks seem to believe that the insect's possession of consciousness requires further explanation, but in Kafka's world there does not appear to be a qualitative distinction between human and other consciousnesses. The foregrounding of this feature would appear to generate just as much shock as the postulation of a deranged metaphor, although the ground of this judgment is inevitably subjective. Regarding the alleged mis-reading,

[54]*Franz Kafka: The Necessity of Form*, p.57
[55]Ibid., 56
[56]Ibid.

while it is true that the charwoman does not know that the insect once bore a human consciousness (although, paradoxically, she is all the more friendly in her ignorance), it is not clear that the family are commited to such a recognition: they do not acknowledge his gestures, they do not realize that he can understand their conversation, and they strip his room. This attitude, which ultimately amounts to a denial of anything resembling human consciousness, gradually hardens, leading to a final denial:

> 'If he could understand what we said,' repeated the old man, and by closing his eyes absorbed his daughter's conviction that this was impossible, 'then perhaps we might be able to come to some arrangement with him. But as things are –'
> 'He's got to go,' cried his sister, 'that's the only solution, father. You must try to get rid of the idea that it's Gregor. That's our real disaster, the fact that we've believed it for so long. But how can it be Gregor? If it were Gregor, he would have realized long since that it isn't possible for human beings to live together with a creature like that [...] But as it is, this creature persecutes us'(TOS120;KK4,101-102)

In short, the family does eventually treat Gregor as "simply a bug"; if their literal attitude regarding Gregor takes longer to settle in than that of the charwoman, it nonetheless arrives at a comparable position: in separating Gregor's name from his corporeal condition, his sister issues the final blow.

A more serious qualm regarding Corngold's account lies in the fact that he seems to feel that he identifies the "metamorphosis" as an operation exercised on a simple, easily identifiable metaphor ('"this man is a vermin"', and elsewhere, 'traveling salesman/crawling insect'[57]): there would seem to be the danger of seeing the story as an opaque, obfuscatory mechanism witholding a quite simple "meaning". Nonetheless, there would be clues allowing the reader to "decode" the story's "key", the original metaphor upon which the story is a perverse meditation. Furthermore, in other stories these clues would not be present: hence, 'as the story of a metamorphosed metaphor, *The Metamorphosis* is not just one among Kafka's stories but an exemplary Kafkan story; the title reflects the generative principle of Kafka's fiction'[58]; this is because this story contains the ingredients of the metamorphosis, the founding metaphor. However, the

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[57]Ibid., p.97
[58]Ibid., p.76

number of texts dealing overtly with transformation is limited, and it could be assumed that in those texts which do not do so, one would have to make more or less educated guesses as to the nature of the founding metaphor, given that the reader encounters the results of the metamorphosis rather than its action; there would be a metaphor pre-existing the text, founding it yet lying beyond or behind the words in some mysterious realm.

The further reasons for a resistance to this ultra-metaphorical account obviously lie in a consideration of the philosophical backdrop through which Kafka's work can be read: the philosophical resonances of his texts point to ontological positions which allow for an impossible transformation to be treated literally, as ontologically real. Brentano offers the literal attitude or approach to non-veridical events or objects, and Meinong embellishes this methodological stance with an ontology which caters for the reality of the impossible and non-existent, justifying - as it were - the Brentanian approach by following through the ontological implications of the methodology: the procedure of descriptive psychology need no longer be embarrassed by its inability to discriminate between existent and non-existent, possible and impossible objects, since there is now an ontology declaring the superfluity of such a sharp distinction.

One of the founding principles of Meinong's theory, as has been seen, is that of the independence of *Sosein* from *Sein*, and Kafka's work seems sometimes to play out a similar sort of priority, recounting the features of objects regardless of their unlikelihood. The parallel is not exact, since the being of these objects is assumed and not addressed as such (in contrast to those moments which seem to embody the principle of *Aussersein*), but this assumption is itself counter-intuitive, and what is striking is the extent to which the narrator carries on with the project of description without even reflecting on the assumption. Examples include the half kitten, half lamb of "A Crossbreed"(GWC75;KK5,82), the 'pale blue-green' animal 'about the size of a marten' resident in a synagogue[59], and,

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[59]"The Animal in the Synagogue", in *Parables and Paradoxes*; p.49;KK6,288.

most bizarre of all, Odradek, that most enigmatic of objects (TOS176-177;KK4,129-130).

In its final version, Meinong's "theory of objects" - which, as has been seen, can be fruitfully called upon as a means of exploring a plethora of moments of Kafka's work - effectively amounts to a paradoxical logic, a logic of paradox, what has been termed a "paraconsistent logic"[60]. This summary attaches to two crucial points. Firstly, it is in these terms - as a paradoxial logic - that Deleuze understands and draws upon Meinong's thought, thereby instituting another relationship between early phenomenological thought and his own. Secondly, the notion of the paradox has often been used to characterize the perplexing qualities of Kafka's universe, an identification which has a certain appeal here, in so far as it represents not an "explanation" but rather an articulation of the endlessly enigmatic nature of Kafka's world.

Deleuze represents paradox as 'opposed to *doxa*, in both aspects of *doxa*, namely, good sense and common sense'[61], with these notions of "sense" being understood as philosophically determined. The context of this formulation is that of a discussion of Lewis Carroll, whose work offers the paradox of verse which is defined as nonsense but which has the effects of sense: 'over and above the immediate pleasure, there is something else, a play of sense and nonsense, a chaos-cosmos'[62]. There is a co-presence and interplay of sense and nonsense, which on the face of it amounts to a contradiction: paradox can be understood as the co-existence of contradictory forces, which would certainly seem to contravene the aforementioned *doxa*. In the discussion of paradoxical philosophies which ensues, a place of honour is reserved for Meinong:

the propositions which designate contradictory objects themselves have a sense [...] Impossible objects - square circles, matter without extension, *perpetuum mobile*, mountain without valley, etc. - are objects "without a home", outside of being, but they

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[60]See Roman Tuziak, "Paraconsistent Logic: History and Motivation", in *Eidos: Philosophical Writings no. 1*, p.65-74

[61]*The Logic of Sense*, p.75

[62]Ibid., p.xiii

have a precise and distinct position within this outside: they are of "extra being" - pure, ideational events, unable to be realized in a state of affairs. We are obliged to call this paradox "Meinong's paradox", for Meinong knew how to draw from it the most beautiful and brilliant effects.[63]

Meinong's theory is paradoxical in that it creates a realm which can be inhabited by impossible, contradictory, paradoxical objects; a further paradox is that this does not necessarily detract from the logical rigour of his theory. More recent research into "paraconsistent logic" has suggested logical systems which support paradoxes need not be self-defeating, invoking Meinong in the process:

> Meinong's theory of objects is another example worth a special mention. It has been shown [...] that this theory is inconsistent, and it turns out that in particular it violates the Law of Non-Contradiction. It seems, then, that some systems of paraconsistent logic [...] can serve as a basis for the inconsistent but non-trivial theory of Meinong, giving it a new interpretation and perhaps some hope for survival.[64]

In Meinong's case, and indeed in general, a logical standpoint seems to dictate certain ontological commitments, and a pressing question, if the premise that paradoxical or paraconsistent systems of logic, and in particular those that violate the law of non-contradiction, need not be "trivial" is accepted, is that of what a world embodying them would be like. Tuziak, citing Lukasiewicz, offers the following example:

> He [Lukasiewicz] considers the situation that you are falsely accused of murder, and though you have witnesses establishing your alibi, there is one witness found who makes a false assertion that you are a murderer. Since in this weird society contradictory assertions do not exclude each other, the jury can state without any confusion: although you did not kill anybody, you did kill the victim and you are guilty. You will not be punished for not killing, but you will have to go to prison for the killing.[65]

This bizarre scenario seems somewhat reminiscent of Kafka's world at its most perplexing (as in Deleuze and Guattari's paraphrase of the party scene from "Description of a Struggle": 'the supplicant (1) wants to play the piano because he is feeling happy; (2) doesn't know how to play; (3) doesn't play at all [...]; and (4) is congratulated for having played so well'(K5)); in particular, there is an obvious echo of the chaplain's declaration that 'the commentators tell us: the

[63]Ibid., p.35
[64]Roman Tuziak, "Paraconsistent Logic: History and Motivation", in *Eidos: Philosophical Writings no. 1*; p.70
[65]Ibid., p.66

correct understanding of a matter and misunderstanding the matter are not mutually exclusive'(T219;KK2,185). It would seem that at times Kafka's world is paraconsistent in the strong sense of incorporating contradiction: one thinks in particular of Gracchus' conundrum, that of being simultaneously dead and not dead, and perhaps even of such asides as 'Dread of night. Dread of not-night'(BON13;KK6,52).

In more general terms, there is a sense in which Kafka's world is paradoxical, persistently contravening both "good" and "common" sense, infused by an unnerving logic which is intimately associated with the widespread "plasticity" of the world. The narrator of "The Problem of Our Laws" declares that 'one can really only express the matter in a kind of paradox: Any party which would repudiate, not only belief in the laws, but the nobility as well, would instantly have the whole people behind it; but such a party cannot arise, for no one dares repudiate the nobility'(GWC126;KK5,69), and the declaration is characteristic in that the reasoning arrives at a point which undermines the possibility of the premise which inaugurated the chain of reasoning.

The paradoxical nature of the "logic" of Kafka's world is perhaps most clearly laid bare in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, the idiom of which is often logical; examples proliferate, the following being a small selection:

> Destroying this world would be the task to set oneself only, first, if the world were evil, that is, contradictory to our meaning, and secondly, if we were capable of destroying it. The first seems so to us; of the second we are not capable. We cannot destroy this world, for we have not constructed it as something independent; what we have done is to stray into it; indeed, this world is our going astray, but as such it is itself something indestructible, or, rather, something that can be destroyed only by means of being carried to its logical conclusion, and not by renunciation; and this means, of course, that carrying it to its logical conclusion can only be a series of acts of destruction, but within the framework of this world.(BON43;KK6,80)

> And so you want to fight against the world and, what is more, with weapons that are more real than hope and faith. There probably are such weapons, but they can be recognized and used only by those who have certain definite qualifications; I want to see first whether you have these qualifications.
>   Look into it. But if I have not got them, perhaps I can get them.
>   Certainly, but that is a matter in which I could not help you.
>   And so you can only help me if I already have the qualifications.
>   Yes. To put it more precisely, I cannot help you at all, for if you had these qualifications, you would have everything.(BON48;KK6,85)

> They were given the choice of becoming kings or the kings' messengers. As is the
> way with children, they all wanted to be messengers. That is why there are only
> messengers, racing through the world and, since there are no kings, calling out to
> each other the messages that have now become meaningless. They would gladly put an
> end to their miserable life, but they dare not to do so because of their oath of loyalty.
> (BON28;KK6,66)

Such passages are of course not confined to these notebooks; for instance, in

the diaries, we find:

> Usually the one whom you are looking for lives next door. This isn't easy to explain,
> you must simply accept it as a fact. It is so deeply founded that there is nothing you
> can do about it, even if you should make an effort to. The reason is that you know
> nothing of this neighbour you are looking for. That is, you know neither that you are
> looking for him nor that he lives next door, in which case he very certainly lives next
> door. You may of course know this as a general fact in your experience; only such
> knowledge doesn't matter in the least, even if you keep it forever in mind.(D376;KK7,380)

Furthermore, paradoxes are at work on a more macroscopic level: it could be

said that *The Trial* is propelled by the paradox of a system which can make an

arrest without charge, and *The Castle* by that of an organization which can

employ an unnecessary land surveyor and remain inaccessible to him: the fact

that these paradoxical networks are glimpsed only in so far as they are refracted

through the protagonist's limited comprehension serves only to heighten the

perplexity. This widespread movement is realized at the extreme end of the

spectrum as the bizarre collisions and collusions of contradictory forces and self-

undermining chains of reasoning, but just as the "paraconsistency" of certain

logical systems need not entail their "triviality", so the fact that the systems,

events and objects are often paradoxical does not militate against their minute

exegesis.

The invocation of philosophical expressions of paradox amounts essentially to

an articulation - in philosophical terms - of the enigmatic character of Kafka's

world. Saying that this world is philosophically paradoxical, and in what senses,

cannot generate an "answer" or "explanation" in so far as a trait of paradox

would seem to be its resistance to resolution. Rather, what is encountered is an

account of the philosophical stakes of this paradoxical quality in terms of the

bizarre character of its logical "skeleton", and thus not even an account of the

content of Kafka's narratives as such. What is effectively asserted is that, from the standpoint of philosophy, Kafka's work must stand as irreducibly paradoxical, its oddity challenging (and perhaps even inciting) philosophical perspectives yet perpetually resisting capture. In this sense, what is addressed is the specific nature of the philosophical resonances of his texts, and simultaneously their irreducibility to philosophy, the latter gesture constituting an affirmation of Kafka's achievement as a creative writer.

Another paradox emerges through the fact that this account of paradox in Kafka revolved around an alliance of Meinong and Deleuze: in terms of the light cast by Kafka on philosophy - and specifically the relationship between phenomenological and post-structuralist thought - , this situation plays out philosophically Kafka's ability, so deftly stated by Borges, to forge enigmatic relationships between seemingly disparate writers. This curious relationship between the two philosophical poles (understood through their shared resistance to certain interpretative tendencies and their intriguing points of contact) marks both an interesting perspective on the orthodox narrative concerning the "transition" from phenomenology to post-structuralism, and moreover the idiosyncrasy of the philosophical impact of Kafka's work, the idiosyncrasy of his relation to philosophy. To characterize these points as (philosophically) 'paradoxical' finally amounts to an affirmation of this idiosyncrasy, of the enigma of Kafka's work, of its irreducibility and its greatness. It remains as intense and inscrutable as the gaze of its author's dark eyes.

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