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Zoomorphic Others: The Animalization of Stigma in Modern Literature

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An abstract of
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Abstract

Zoomorphic Others: The Animalization of Stigma in Modern Literature
By Kayleah Farist

Zoomorphism, the act of portraying humans with animal characteristics, is prevalent among texts that represent various stigmatized identities: intentionally deviant individuals such as violent criminals, but also individuals marked by categories of physical difference, such as disability and race. There is a historical narrative that frames non-human animal being as brutal, savage, even monstrous; consequently, the traditional reading of zoomorphism is one that emphasizes how this dehumanization works to further "other" the subject. Yet, recent scholarship has troubled the traditional Humanist notion of a proper divide between human and non-human animals. Once this divide is dismantled, the human and non-human animal hierarchy is disrupted, shattering this traditional understanding of the animalized human. Through an analysis of modern literary works, including Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis," Leonora Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet*, William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, I argue that zoomorphism is, in fact, a literary device that works to undermine or subvert these narratives of stigma; the image of the animalized human directly challenges the perceived divide between human and non-human, effectively satirizing the very notion of dehumanization perpetuated by the stigma associated with these various types of deviance.

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Chapter I

Introduction: The Animality of Stigmatized Identities

Zoomorphism, the act of portraying humans with animal characteristics, is prevalent among texts that represent various stigmatized identities: intentionally deviant individuals such as violent criminals, but also individuals marked by categories of physical difference, such as disability and race. There is a historical narrative that frames non-human animal being as brutal, savage, even monstrous; consequently, the traditional reading of zoomorphism is one that emphasizes how this dehumanization works to further "other" the subject. Yet, recent scholarship has troubled the traditional Humanist notion of a proper divide between human and non-human animals. Once this divide is dismantled, the human and non-human animal hierarchy disrupts itself, shattering this traditional understanding of the animalized human. Through an analysis of modern literary works, including Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis," Leonora Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet*, William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* I argue that zoomorphism is, in fact, a literary device that works to undermine or subvert these narratives of stigma; the image of the animalized human directly challenges the perceived divide between human and non-human, effectively satirizing the very notion of dehumanization perpetuated by the stigma associated with these various types of deviance.

I will begin by contextualizing what I am referring to as "stigmatized identities." In short, I understand this label as a possibility for any individual marked, or perceived as

marked, by difference of any kind, but especially those differences that negatively deviate from a desired or expected norm. In his text *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity,* Erving Goffman provides a comprehensive analysis of the formation, functioning, and logic of stigma with regard to certain identities; his conceptualization of stigma is crucial to what I am considering "stigmatized identities," as well as the significance of zoomorphizing those identities.

According to Goffman, the mere concept of stigma is grounded in the tension between the human and non-human; the stigmatized individual exists somewhere in that liminal space between human and non-human. He writes, "By definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances. We construct a stigma-theory, and ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents" (Goffman 5). The source of stigmatization is, then, "by definition" the assumption that the stigmatized is "not quite human," and this assumption governs the management of these identities.

Goffman differentiates between "discredited" individuals, whose "differentness is known about already or is evident on the spot," and the "discreditable," for whom "it is neither known about by those present nor immediately perceivable by them" (Goffman 4). While both categories necessarily experience identity-based anxiety, the "discreditable" experience a unique anxiety that centers on the potential of being discovered. The discredited are more prevalent in the texts that I have chosen because of the inevitably visible stigmatizing marks—non-normative embodiment in "Metamorphosis," or race, gender, and wealth in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, for

example—although *Crime and Punishment*'s protagonist Raskolnikov exemplifies the discreditable as long as his guilt is unknown. When it comes to regarding discreditable persons, Goffman notes, "The issue is not that of managing tension generated during social contacts, but rather that of managing information about his failing. To display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where" (Goffman 42). As we will see, this is precisely the anxiety that fuels Raskolnikov's human/non-human animal duality.

Goffman also discusses three common, distinct types of stigma. Unlike the categories of discredited and discreditable which, although individuals may move fluidly between them, are relatively rigid, these three types are merely overarching concepts that signify the range of stigmatized identity. He outlines these three types:

> Three grossly different types of stigma may be mentioned. First there are abominations of the body—the various physical deformities. Next there are blemishes of individual character perceived as weak will, domineering or unnatural passions, treacherous and rigid beliefs, and dishonesty, these being inferred from a known record of, for example, mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, [etc.] … Finally, there are the tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion, these being stigma that can be transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family. (Goffman 4)

These types of stigma are less categorical, and more indicative of the gamut of identities that might be stigmatized in any given context. These types align quite well with the three identities I will be considering: first, "blemishes of individual character"

(criminality and cruel behavior); second, “abominations of the body” (mental or physical disability); and third, “the tribal stigma of race” (blackness in the American South).

Although Erving Goffman does not speak directly of animalization, he does mention the issue of dehumanization frequently throughout his text. He cites a criminal as an example of an individual whose “minor accomplishments…may be assessed as signs of remarkable and noteworthy capacities in the circumstances”: “And that’s exactly the sort of patronizing you get from straight people if you’re a criminal. ‘Fancy that!’ they say. ‘In some ways you’re just like a human being!’” (Goffman 15). Similarly, he argues that, when we fail to categorize an individual based on the identities we understand, we instead categorize him as a “non-person”: “We are likely to attempt to carry on as though in fact he wholly fitted one of the types of person naturally available to us in the situation…If neither [treating him as someone better or worse than he is] is possible, then we may try to act as if he were a ‘non-person,’ and not present at all as someone of whom ritual notice is to be taken” (Goffman 18). These notions of not-quite-human and non-personhood are integral to the stigmatized status, and thus create space for a logical parallel between the not-quite-human and the non-human animal.

Finally, Goffman acknowledges the discourse of advocacy for stigmatized identities that specifically addresses this dehumanization:

> The individual is advised to see himself as a fully human being like anyone else, one who at worst happens to be excluded from what is…merely one area of social life. He is not a type or a category, but a human being…Since his affliction is nothing in itself, he should not be ashamed of it or of others who have it; nor should he compromise himself

> by trying to conceal it. On the other hand, by hard work and persistent self-training he should fulfill ordinary standards as fully as he can…Either no notice should be taken or the stigmatized individual should make an effort at sympathetic re-education of the normal, showing him, point for point, quietly, and with delicacy, that in spite of appearances the stigmatized individual is, underneath it all, a fully-human being. (Goffman 115-6)

This is particularly poignant in terms of the phenomenon I will analyze in this project. The above excerpt does not represent a call to action on Goffman's part; rather, this is the typical narrative of a call to action by advocate groups. This call stresses that the stigmatized individual is "fully-human," indeed confirming that there is some doubt cast on one's humanity. Furthermore, the correct course of action to redeem oneself from one's stigma is entirely complaisant; one should either take "no notice" or "quietly, and with delicacy" demonstrate his/her humanity to others. This response may achieve the desired result—acknowledgement of one's humanity—but it is blatantly problematic in that this places the burden of redemption on the stigmatized.

This is why redemptive manifestations of zoomorphism are so striking. The appropriate response to stigmatization, according to the discourse of various advocacy groups, is to calmly assert one's humanity. When zoomorphic representations are used to criticize, rather than reascribe, the dehumanized status of stigmatized identities, this achieves the same goal through entirely opposite means. Animality is the antithesis of calm, quiet, and delicate, and on the surface, distances one even further from the status of "fully-human." Yet, what we see in these particular texts—as I will later indicate—is a

subversive form of animalization that actually works to undermine the typical subhuman narrative of stigma.

I have chosen to focus on a multitude of texts in order to identify how the zoomorphic figure works in the various types of stigma that I have heretofore outlined and, thus, form an overarching conceptualization of this phenomenon. I begin with Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* to investigate the shifting function of animality in modernity; while these texts are not as overtly subversive as those I will address later, the human-animal hybridity that they produce provides a necessary foundation upon which subversion can occur. In particular, these two texts animalize criminal, cruel, and transgressive behaviors through a hybrid construction that threatens to reverse the positions of human and non-human animal, effectively disrupting the human-animal hierarchy.

Next, I consider Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis" and Leonora Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet* in terms of the animalization of disability. Both texts depict the disabled protagonist through an animalistic lens: in "Metamorphosis," this is a literal transformation into an animal, whereas *The Hearing Trumpet* emphasizes the shared social position of animals and the disabled. Kafka's simultaneously sympathetic and repulsive representation of non-normative embodiment reflects on both lost humanity and the disconcerting apathy of normative outsiders. With Carrington, we see a more blatant redemption of both disabled and animal life; the geriatric/animal utopia even celebrates their unity in a way that, like the previous texts, criticizes the callousness of those characters unmarked by stigma.

Lastly, I look at William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* two vastly different representations of the status of blackness in the American South. Faulkner's post hoc plantation narrative recreates, and then consequently deconstructs, the ties between the slave and the animal, such that animality is ultimately de-racialized. Hurston's novel utilizes a variety of symbolic animal representations to characterize black femininity and masculinity, which repeatedly work to undermine expectations of race and gender. By considering all of these texts together, I will generate an overarching conceptualization of the relationship between zoomorphism and stigma.

Chapter II

Hybrid Criminals and Animal Victims: The Brutality of Human Nature in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*

In Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan Fyodorovich states: "Indeed, people speak sometimes about the 'animal' cruelty of man, but that is terribly unjust and offensive to animals, no animal could ever be so cruel as a man, so artfully, so artistically cruel" (*BK* 238). Yet the image of the non-human animal is so often used to emphasize the cruelty of humans, especially in Dostoevsky's works. Typically, animalistic language and imagery denote the "beastliness" or "savagery" in human nature. While this trope of the man-beast does appear at times in his works, more often, the non-human animal appears vis-à-vis the human in a way that suggests, as Ivan does, that human cruelty far exceeds the confines of animality.

Duality and Hybridity in *Crime and Punishment*

One of the most iconic scenes of *Crime and Punishment* utilizes animal symbolism to investigate Raskolnikov's psyche. Before he commits the murder, Raskolnikov dreams of an old horse who is beaten to death by his owner Mikolka, a cart driver. There are a number of possible interpretations of this dream sequence—some critics argue the horse symbolizes Alëna, others Sonya, and others still, Raskolnikov himself—but perhaps a more compelling endeavor is investigating Dostoevsky's use of the symbolic horse. Through analyzing the symbolic roles of the victimized horse, I argue

that Mikolka and his horse represent the abuser/abused duality in Raskolnikov's personality but, more importantly, that Dostoevsky uses animality as a literary device in order to explore human nature.

In his dream, Raskolnikov is a child walking down the street when he witnesses Mikolka's abusive act. Mikolka's horse already appears incapable of pulling his cart due to his age and frailty, yet Mikolka demands several men join him on the cart, for no apparent reason other than to force his horse to bear the additional weight. The more his horse struggles, the more he whips her; by the end of the dream sequence, Mikolka has beaten her to death, repeating that she is his "property" to excuse his behavior. There are multiple critical interpretations of the dream sequence, most of which frame Mikolka as a representation of Raskolnikov, though what the horse symbolizes is debated. Whether it symbolizes Alëna, Sonya, or Raskolnikov, it seems the horse always represents a human character. This is not at all unusual: animals in literature must exist in relation to humans, in one way or another. Marian Scholtmeijer argues that "the author cannot cast off the legacy of culture and create the pure animal, the animal without reference to human constructions of the world. The need to make literary meaning out of the animal requires anthropomorphism" (Scholtmeijer 87). This necessary anthropomorphism appears in Raskolnikov's dream, especially since critics often interpret the horse as a symbol for a human character. For many interpretations, and indeed my own, the horse does not serve to illustrate the relationship between humans and horses, or anything about animal consciousness at all; rather, the horse's purpose is to draw attention to characteristics of *human* nature, both as they appear in the horse's victimized state and Mikolka's role as an abuser.

Symbolism that uses an animal to represent the human usually serves to reveal the animalistic qualities of human nature or human qualities that are perceived to be animalistic. Human animality, or the representation of the human as animalistic, is a return to the most rudimentary state of humanity: that which is still considered greater than the animal, but only minimally. As Marian Scholtmeijer points out, "there is nothing the least bit atypical about the belief that human beings are dragged down from the heights of virtue by their animal nature" (Scholtmeijer 15). That is, representing a character animalistically draws attention to the character's shortcomings. Thoreau, after years of "observing natural animals," came to the conclusion that "there is 'an animal' in us 'which awakens as our higher nature slumbers.' This animal…'perhaps cannot be wholly expelled'…but clearly it is our duty to attempt to expel it"; Thoreau "still impute[d] the worst in human nature to the animal in us" (Scholtmeijer 38). When the lines between human and non-human animals are blurred, the characteristics of the "animal (with)in us" become evident; thus, the primary purpose of the symbolic animal is to reveal the animal within the human.

If we are to consider Mikolka's horse as a representation of a human character, we must also keep in mind the symbolic roles of horses in relation to humans. Foremost, horses have been historically considered tools for human use; of any animal, they are perhaps the most easily associated with labor utility. Historically, before modernization placed horses in positions of labor, they symbolized valiance and nobility because of their appearance alongside knights and royalty. As with any large, strong animal, horses are often considered beasts, because of their unpredictability and capacity for destruction.

Lastly, any undomesticated animal—horses included—symbolizes "nature" at least to some extent, as compared to manmade "culture."

The most obvious symbolic role that Mikolka's horse fills is that of a tool: after all, she is a carthorse whose primary purpose in life—and the ultimate cause of her death—is human utility. Such an animal often exploited for human use finds itself in a moral gray area, somewhere between "living creature" and "object." Indeed, transgressing the line between the horse's use and abuse means also transgressing her role as an object/tool to a living being. Evaluating the ethics of a hypothetical cartdriver, like Mikolka, beating his horse, Marian Scholtmeijer asks: "But would the beating be cruel if the animal were assumed to be simply a tool requiring force, an object like a car or lawn mower on which frustrations could be vented without the question of ethics arising?" (Scholtmeijer 62). The pivotal moment which deems this beating "cruel" occurs when one determines that the violence no longer constitutes use, but rather, abuse; even then, one must believe the abuse is unnecessary. Scholtmeijer answers her own question shortly afterward by stating: "At a certain point, (though not normally at the point at which the horse is harnessed to the cart in the first place), emotional equipment engages and informs us that this act violates some ill-determined line between use and abuse" (Scholtmeijer 62). In Raskolnikov's dream, that line is just that, "ill-determined": Mikolka insists that his actions constitute "use" while onlookers contend for "abuse." Despite the crowd's cries, Mikolka repeats that the horse is his "property," with which he "can do what [he] like[s]" (*CP* 49). Thus, in addition to her physical weakness, he emphasizes the horse's objectivity and, consequently, lack of subjectivity. Her worth depends on her use value, which is evidently declining.

In the same way that Mikolka parallels the abusive side of Raskolnikov's personality, the horse's lack of subjectivity parallels that of his victim, or abused, side. The "abuser" Raskolnikov despises the "abused" Raskolnikov because he hates his own weakness; thus, the "abuser" seeks to suppress the "abused," and this is one motivation for his act of murder. Like the horse, his "abused" side suffers because he lacks agency. From his sister's impending marriage to his inability to pay his rent, his pre-murder character is defined by a sense of powerlessness. The "abuser," in an attempt to assert his agency, commits the murder that the "abused" fears. The murder is not indicative of a conflict between Raskolnikov and Alëna but, rather, a power struggle between the abuser and abused. Just as the horse's worth is determined by her use-value, Raskolnikov's self-worth depends on his ability to leave some lasting impression on his surroundings. The "abuser" recognizes that the "abused" is becoming impotent and must assert his dominance over the "abused" for the same reason that Mikolka attacks his increasingly impotent horse: out of frustration over the victim's uselessness.

The horse's weak nature also relates to the historically-rooted symbolic relationship between horses and nobility. In medieval literature—take the *Canterbury Tales*, for example—horses primarily appear alongside knights, and this association holds strong until around the time of the Renaissance, when modernization begins. At this point, the horse's role in society gradually turns to labor rather than nobility: "horses assume such preeminent material and symbolic importance in early modern culture…given that the precise nature of the horse's elite social significance undergoes an important shift during the same period" (Boehrer 18). For a moment, the symbolic role of "horse" fluctuates between high and low status, yet the sense of royalty never fully

vanishes. For example, “in his *Philosophical and Practical Treatise* of 1798, John Lawrence goes to great lengths to describe the proper care of horses. His [sic] holds horses in high esteem. They are ‘the most beautiful of all four-footed creatures’; the horse’s body…is vivified and informed by a *soul*” (Scholtmeijer 38). The horse has a “soul,” and yet serves primarily as a utility object. This incongruence between the image of the beautiful, royal, soul-bearing horse and the laborious, load-bearing workhorse, and the fluctuation between these two images, is reminiscent of Bakhtin’s carnivalesque. This is particularly true of the early modern literature to which Bruce Boehrer refers, but this incompatibility also manifests itself in Raskolnikov's dream.

Like the symbolic horse, Mikolka’s horse experiences a fall from grace. Mikolka encourages onlookers to revel at her expense rather than “being sorry for her”; she is humiliated for her weakness (*CP* 48). Her humiliation, in part, stems from comparing her performance to that of a healthier, idealized horse; she is pathetic because her feebleness contrasts with the ideal valiance that a horse *should* embody. Raskolnikov, too, feels humiliated—at least in terms of his “abused” personality—because he is incapable of asserting agency. The “abuser” must dominate the “abused” in order to save himself from the humiliation of revealing his weaknesses. Raskolnikov’s self-hatred, his fear of humiliation, is expressed in his dream through the Mikolka/horse relationship: Mikolka, the abuser, identifies the horse as a manifestation of weakness and humiliation and, consequently, establishes dominance over her to the point of destroying her. Raskolnikov yearns for the capacity to destroy his own humiliation to such an extreme extent.

In an interesting reversal of the traditional animal-beast association, here the “beast” is not the horse: it is Mikolka. The conflict is between two “animals,” the literal

and figurative. Viciousness and violence have long been integral to the concept of animality. Marian Scholtmeijer argues that "long-standing tradition cites the 'beast' as the source of evil in the world," and later, "when we wish to describe the people who commit appalling acts of violence, the most extreme expression we can find is that they are 'animals'" (Scholtmeijer 15, 68). It comes as no surprise when one onlooker tells Mikolka, "You're more like a brute beast than a proper Christian!" (*CP* 48). Both Mikolka and the horse represent Raskolnikov's flaws, but Mikolka does so in a way that is more indicative of traditional animality. That is, Mikolka is Raskolnikov's "animal within," and when that animal surfaces, it pushes Raskolnikov to murder. This animal within is only able to murder Alëna after the confidence he gains from destroying his prey: the pitiful, useless, old horse, or, Raskolnikov's own feebleness.

What implications, if any, does the parallel structure between Mikolka/his horse and Raskolnikov's dual personalities have on the nature/culture binary? Theories of human supremacy to animals rely on the association of animals with nature, humans with culture, and an impossibly distinct line between the two categories. Culture is the ability to exceed nature: Thoreau states, "Nature is hard to be overcome…but she must be overcome" (qtd. in Scholtmeijer 38). "Overcoming" nature is so difficult because the line between nature and culture, between human and animal, is a socially constructed dichotomy. Culture is not the result of a natural binary: it is defined in terms of that which is not "nature." That is to say, "culture is formed out of suppression of traits associated with the wild animal" (Scholtmeijer 68). This implies that animality and animal nature are still at the base of human nature; this is certainly the case when Mikolka is depicted as a "beast" for beating an animal that one might conventionally

refer to as a "beast." At the same time, the horse's role as a victim, garnering sympathy from the crowd, attributes an anthropomorphic consciousness to the horse. This upsets the distinction between humanity and animality, bringing into question what it means to be human—which is, perhaps, a central question to Dostoevsky's works as a whole. Another, less explored, question that arises is what it means to be non-human. Dostoevsky does not address this as directly as the first question, yet it is unavoidable when the question of animal cruelty, victimization, and subjectivity arises.

Marian Scholtmeijer addresses the meaning of such an animal victim: "Modern fiction works with the animal's resistance to assimilation into culture. The victimized animal in fiction is, therefore, the source of profound discomfort, as one hopes it is, or will be, in life" (Scholtmeijer 91). The "victimized animal" is discomforting not only because its narrative can be portrayed as particularly gruesome or traumatic, but also because sympathizing with the animal goes against the very idea of human superiority. There is an innate discomfort that comes with considering non-human subjectivity, because "culture" subsists on this idea of suppressing the "wild animal." If one attributes consciousness to, or in some way anthropomorphizes, the animal, this would upset conventional ideas of what constitutes the human vs. the non-human.

Marian Scholtmeijer claims, in a similar vein, that there is a "long-standing belief that, in overcoming violence, humanity conquers the beast in itself" (Scholtmeijer 68). Raskolnikov fails to conquer this "beast" within himself, allowing it to take over and push him to murder. The problem with attributing his murder to a "beast within" is that doing so aligns viciousness with animality in a way that ignores human capacity for

murder. What this analogy *does* allow, however, is a way to envision the depths of the human mind in terms of what we conventionally understand as animality.

In *Notes From Underground*, Dostoevsky introduces another type of animal, similar to the insect: the rodent. Rodents are often regarded, along with insects, to be on a lower tier of life, yet perhaps not to the same extreme as insects. If such a distinction could be made in the traditionally perceived hierarchy of life forms, insects would be the lowest form of animal life, while rodents would be the second lowest. Nevertheless, a "mouse" is what the Underground Man chooses as the "antithesis of a normal man," or rather, "a man of overly acute consciousness" (*NU* 8). It becomes evident that this "acutely conscious mouse" represents himself, as well as the figure of the Underground Man, as a character type. This hypothetical "man of overly acute consciousness," he notes, "considers himself to be a mouse; nobody asks him to do so" (*NU* 8). Although a mouse is an animal known for being a household pest and a burden to others, the Underground Man insists that no one but himself "asks" him to consider himself a mouse; he is a self-described "pest" or burden. This starkly contrasts with the way his former schoolmates treat him, but suggests that he takes responsibility for his tendency to burden others. This responsibility would certainly not be unfounded, considering his negative experience at Zverkov's celebration is entirely a result of his unwarranted attendance.

The Underground Man then describes how the mouse of "overly acute consciousness" reacts to feeling "offended": the mouse "rejects the idea of justice," and therefore "the only thing left to do is…creep ignominiously back into its mousehole. There, in its disgusting, stinking underground, our offended, crushed, and ridiculed

mouse immediately plunges into cold, malicious, and, above all, everlasting spitefulness" (*NU* 9). Although "acute consciousness" seems to be an indication of insight and intelligence, it leads to cynicism and isolation. Here is where human notions of murine characteristics come into play: the underground/mousehole is "disgusting" and "stinking," while the mouse is "malicious" and proceeds to plot its petty, invisible revenge. Instead of regretting his mousiness, however, the Underground Man seems to revel in it: he is proud of his "overly acute consciousness," although he recognizes it as his social downfall, because it feeds his superiority complex. Once he retreats to his "underground," the mouse starts plotting what the Underground Man calls "revenge," although it is almost too petty to consider revenge. The mouse takes revenge "only in little bits and pieces, in trivial ways, from behind the stove, incognito" because it does "not believ[e] in its right to be revenged" (*NU* 9). In this way, a rodent is the perfect characterization of the Underground Man: house mice damage property "incognito," as they spend most of their time in hiding, and their damage is "trivial" as it is often bothersome, but seldom destructive.

It is this moment of the mouse's revenge when the mouse/Underground Man begins to mirror Raskolnikov. For its revenge, the mouse "will suffer a hundred times more than the object of its vengeance, who might not even feel a thing" (*NU* 9). Indeed, Alëna dies because she is Raskolnikov's victim, yet her suffering is relatively short and painless compared to Raskolnikov's lifetime of psychological suffering. The Underground Man continues: "But it's precisely in that cold, abominable state of half-despair and half-belief, in that conscious burial of itself alive…herein precisely lies the essence of that strange enjoyment" (*NU* 9). That "strange enjoyment" is both that in

which the Underground Man revels and that which pushes Raskolnikov to murder Alëna. For both men, this "strange enjoyment" comes from proving oneself; the Underground Man proves to himself his intellectual superiority, and Raskolnikov proves to himself that he can exert agency and assert his presence. Both characters, in spite of their psychological and emotional suffering, get a certain satisfaction from knowing they have the power to affect other people, even if they do so negatively. In this way, Raskolnikov is an Underground Man.

Animal Abuse in *The Brothers Karamazov*

Raskolnikov is not the only Dostoevskian character who faces the idea of a "beast within." Rather, the "beast within" is a trope that Dostoevsky often utilizes to investigate the bounds of human nature. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan claims: "There is, of course, a beast hidden in every man, a beast of rage, a beast of sensual inflammability at the cries of the tormented victim, an unrestrained beast let off the chain, a beast of diseases acquired in debauchery" (*BK* 242). This is the same "beast" he invokes when he describes the human being as "a wild and wicked animal" that is far more "cruel" than any non-human animal (*BK* 234, 238). The irony here is substantial: in one moment, Ivan refers to humans as "animals" because of their cruelty, yet moments later, he claims that attributing "'animal' cruelty" to humans is unjust to animals. Perhaps this indicates a revelation on his part regarding the nature of human superiority. Such a revelation would echo Zosima's teachings on loving animals: "Love the animals: God gave them the rudiments of thought and an untroubled joy. Do not trouble it, do not torment them, do

not take their joy from them, do not go against God's purpose. Man, do not exalt yourself above the animals: they are sinless, and you, you with your grandeur, fester the earth by your appearance on it" (BK 319). While I would not go so far as to call *The Brothers Karamazov* an animal welfare narrative, this philosophy certainly becomes relevant at many points in the text. The capacity for human cruelty toward non-human animals is a demarcation of evil at multiple points in the novel.

In the same speech in which he deems humans "beasts" and "cruel," Ivan recounts a story nearly identical to Raskolnikov's dream. He argues that "we [humans] have our historical, direct, and intimate delight in the torture of beating" by referring to Nekrasov's "poem describing a peasant flogging a horse on its eyes with a knout." In the poem, Nekrasov "describes a weak nag, harnessed with too heavy a load…The peasant beats her, beats her savagely…drunk with beating, he flogs her painfully, repeatedly: 'Pull, though you have no strength, pull, though you die!'" (*BK* 240-1). Ivan's interpretation is clear: the peasant is representative of human cruelty and evil. What complicates this story is the way Ivan immediately turns this story into one of anthropocentrism: "But that's only a horse; God gave us horses so that we could flog them…But people, too, can be flogged" (*BK* 241). This allows him to transition into stories of cruelty to children. While his argument is still focused on the human capacity for cruelty, his statement that "God gave us horses so that we could flog them" offers a direct contrast to Zosima's claim that "God gave [animals] the rudiments of thought and an untroubled joy," and that to "torment" an animal would be to "go against God's purpose." Thus, while Ivan seems to be developing a sense of animal suffering, he is yet unable to connect this to animal consciousness or justice. In short, the image of the victimized animal serves only to

contrast animal innocence with human cruelty, in a way that emphasizes the cruelty while glossing over the ethics of animal rights.

Another such narrative of animal abuse is that of Smerdyakov killing cats: "As a child he was fond of hanging cats and then burying them with ceremony. He would put on a sheet, which served him as a vestment, chant, and swing something over the dead cat as if it were a censer. It was all done on the sly, in great secrecy" (*BK* 124). The frankness with which Smerdyakov killed these cats is not surprising considering his capacity to kill: this event from his childhood foreshadows his later act of patricide. After catching Smerdyakov, Grigory tells him: "You are not a human being, you were begotten of bathhouse slime, that's who you are" (*BK* 124). Once again, abusing an animal is a behavior indicative of cruelty and evil. This time, however, Grigory goes as far as to deny Smerdyakov's humanity because of this act. Rather than calling him a beast or an animal for his behavior, Grigory calls him "bathhouse slime": that is, a mold, a microorganism so miniscule and undesirable that most people would barely consider it a living organism. If we are working with a traditional hierarchy of human superiority, this means that this act of abuse moves him even lower than the animal: he is not only sub-human, but sub-animal as well. Albeit still functioning in a model of human supremacy, the denial of Smerdyakov's humanity once again utilizes the animal in order to emphasize the evil of human nature.

A later example of animal cruelty which, in fact, also involves Smerdyakov, occurs when Kolya tells the story of Ilyusha feeding a pin to a dog, Zhuchka. He says that Smerdyakov "had taught the little fool [Ilyusha] a silly trick—that is, a beastly trick, a vile trick—to take a piece of bread, the soft part, stick a pin in it, and toss it to some yard

dog, the kind that's so hungry it will swallow whatever it gets without chewing it, and then watch what happens," which he does to Zhuchka, who "rushed for it, swallowed it, and started squealing, turning round and round, then broke into a run, still squealing as she ran, and disappeared" (*BK* 535). Although Ilyusha is the one who throws the bread to Zhuchka, it is Smerdyakov who convinces him to throw it, so it is Smerdyakov who Kolya depicts as "beastly" and "vile." This is especially the case because Ilyusha is immediately traumatized by what he has committed: he "was crying as he told [Kolya], crying, clinging to [him], shaking: 'she squealed and ran, she squealed and ran'" (*BK* 535). The compassion of Ilyusha's response, in part, absolves him from blame, for he is simply a "fool" for listening to Smerdyakov, the "beastly" one. Indeed, the act was Smerdyakov's idea, just as it was his idea to kill cats. This time, though, he is a "beast" rather than "slime." A "beast" is, of course, a strong insult that denotes evil and cruelty; however, it lacks the extreme denial of humanity of when Grigory calls him "slime." This subtle nuance can, perhaps, be attributed to the fact that he *acted* to kill cats, while (potentially) killing a dog was simply his *idea*.

A fourth, more isolated, incident of animal cruelty occurs when Kolya recounts a time he convinced a man to kill a goose. While Kolya stops to watch geese, a "local fellow" asks him, "What are you looking at the geese for?" He "turned to the fool and answered him: 'I'm thinking about what the goose might be thinking about…Do you see that cart full of oats?...if the cart rolled forward a bit now—would it break the goose's neck or not?'" Moments later, the man "gave a tug, and—cr-r-ack, the wheel rolled right across the middle of the goose's neck" (*BK* 548-9). The peasants who witnessed this, as well as the judge he oversaw the case, were only concerned with the monetary value of

the goose. However, he claims this event is what "botched [his] reputation" in the town (*BK* 548). Although there is no mention of the cruelty in this act, this story parallels Zhuchka's in that a man convinces a "fool" to commit a "vile trick." Kolya makes no account of his own cruelty, but we do see him attribute "beastliness" to Smerdyakov for committing quite the same act. Even if the cruelty of his idea is not explicit, onlookers must have perceived it as cruel to have such an impact on his "reputation" in the town.

These four distinct narratives of animal cruelty in *The Brothers Karamazov* have one thing in common: they all exemplify unnecessary harm to animals in a way that emphasizes the human capacity for cruelty. Regarding this capacity for cruelty, Ronald LeBlanc argues that "the intoxication of cruelty that inflames the blood in some human beings, Dostoevsky would insist, is, in the final analysis, a pathologically human trait, not a natural animal one…This inner beast, Dostoevsky is telling us, is the cruel, sadistic, 'artistic' face of the dangerously sensual and instinctual creature that only human beings are capable of becoming" (LeBlanc 226). LeBlanc asserts that, much like Ivan, Dostoevsky believes that humans are capable of a particular cruelty far worse than that of any "natural animal." This is why Dostoevsky, according to LeBlanc, depicts characters as "beastly" or "predatory": these "militant carnivores…were intended primarily as warnings about the dire consequences that would ensue if man's base animal instincts and bestial urges were allowed to be unleashed" (LeBlanc 233-4). On the one hand, LeBlanc argues that humans are more cruel than animals; on the other, he argues that it is the "animal instincts" in humans that give them this capacity for cruelty. To reconcile this, let us return to the notion of nature vs. culture. If culture constitutes everything which is not "natural," and which humans create, then culture must be what causes

human cruelty to transcend that of the "animal instinct." That is to say, "animal instinct" in the *context of culture,* where animality has no place, is the root of human cruelty. Thus, we have not escaped the notion of the non-human animal as a "beast" which, when used to depict the human, connotes savagery.

Of any type of animal, there is one that Dostoevsky uses almost universally to symbolize human evil: the insect. Ronald LeBlanc argues that "in order to foreground the bestial nature of human beings," Dostoevsky "consistently links his characters with lower forms of animal life, and especially with those from the insect and arachnid realms" (LeBlanc 76). He does this in numerous texts, namely with spiders in *Crime and Punishment* and the association between members of the Karamazov family and indiscriminate insects in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Insects are, as LeBlanc points out, often considered "lower forms of animal life," particularly if we are working with a traditional hierarchy based on human supremacy. Just as when Grigory refers to Smerdyakov as "slime," characters who are compared to insects are depicted not only as sub-human, but sub-animal as well.

Svidrigaylov describes hell as "one little room…with spiders in every corner, and that that is the whole of eternity." When Raskolnikov responds that the afterlife must be something "juster and more comforting than that," Svidrigaylov insists: "For all we know, that may be just; and, you know, I would certainly make it like that, deliberately!" (*CP* 245). Later, Raskolnikov depicts himself as a spider: "I murdered for myself, for myself alone, and whether I became a benefactor to anybody else, or, like a spider, spent the rest of my life catching everybody in my web and sucking the life-blood out of them, should have been a matter of complete indifference to me at that moment!" (*CP* 354).

The way Dostoevsky aligns evil with spiders indicates, as LeBlanc suggested, that insects inhabit a "lower form of life," as do murderers and other such evildoers.

This association of evil with insects is further exemplified by the repeated reference to the Karamazovs as "insects." The narrator describes Fyodor Pavlovich as "in his sensuality, often as cruel as a wicked insect" (*BK* 93). Later, Mitya tells Alyosha: "I want to tell you now about the 'insects,' about those to whom God gave sensuality: To insects—sensuality! I am that very insect, brother, and those words are precisely about me. And all of us Karamazovs are like that, and in you, an angel, the same insect lives and stirs up storms in your blood" (*BK* 108). Later still, Mitya says of himself again: "I loved depravity, I also loved the shame of depravity. I loved cruelty: am I not a bedbug, an evil insect? In short—a Karamazov!" (*BK* 109). In all of these instances, being a Karamazov necessitates being an insect, which, in turn, necessitates "sensuality." Anatomical concerns aside, this suggests that an "insect" is a creature that acts purely for pleasure. This brings an interesting dimension to Raskolnikov's depiction as a spider; if insects and arachnids are "sensual" creatures of pleasure, then his urge to murder must be a carnal, predatory impulse.

Ronald LeBlanc addresses such a carnal impulse in his analysis of Dostoevsky's use of insects. He argues:

> What has perhaps not been emphasized sufficiently about Dostoevsky's use of insect and arachnid imagery, however, is the highly predatory nature of many of the crawly creatures he mentions, especially spiders and tarantulas, that trap and then devour the other (invariably weaker) insects…Such predatory imagery reinforces the dynamics of power

> relationships between and among human beings in Dostoevsky's fictional universe, which, according to Gary Cox, can be seen as polarized between 'tyrants' and 'victims,' or 'masters' and 'slaves.' (LeBlanc 76-77)

These "insect" characters, he points out, are often "predatory": their evil actions are based in a carnal, "predatory" impulse to assert their dominance. This is the case with Raskolnikov, who murders simply to prove he is capable, and certainly the case with Fyodor Pavlovich, whose entire life centers around his own egocentrism. This is also the case with Smerdyakov, who, although not explicitly referred to as an insect, would have inherited this insect-trait from Fyodor Pavlovich. His decision to murder his (presumed) father is indicative of Smerdyakov's desire to prove his dominance over Fyodor Pavlovich.

Conclusion

In all three of these texts, Dostoevsky utilizes animal symbolism to demonstrate how human nature imitates the negative characteristics conventionally attributed to non-human animals, often to a more severe extent. This animalization often appeals to a baser, savage image of humanity: the capacity for a human to behave in ways that are considered uncivilized or vicious. Although Dostoevsky's texts portray human nature as more cruel and calculating than animal instinct, there is seldom an animal welfare narrative present; Dostoevsky's motive is not to validate animal life, but to portray human nature as even more indifferently cruel and unjust than that of the animal. The potential for an animal welfare narrative in Dostoevsky is not absent, especially in terms

of Zosima's belief in loving animals. However, animal innocence is only a consideration when used to contrast human corruption. Zosima may practice compassion for compassion's sake, but these novels—and the late 19th century as a whole—are more concerned with asking what it means to be *human*.

Ronald LeBlanc's text demonstrates that human animality is not only a Dostoevskian construct, but also a device used by other 19th century Russian writers, especially Tolstoy. In a society heavily focused on modernization, where what constituted "civilization" was changing rapidly, the question of "what it means to be human" pervaded daily life. As a result, art began to address this question by comparing and contrasting the human with the non-human animal: "As the society Dostoevsky and Tolstoy inhabited in late tsarist Russia was increasingly 'becoming modern,' the desiring human body that they and some of their contemporaries portrayed in their writings began more…to be characterized in terms of…the 'zoological' self: that is, the instinctual 'animal' or 'beast' that is said to dwell inside every human being" (LeBlanc 227). This "instinctual beast" embodies the human capacity for physical, psychological, and emotional cruelty to other humans and, in some cases, to other animals.

When society was beginning to modernize so quickly, yet human nature remained much the same, this gap opened room for criticism on which behaviors were civilized and which were savage. Since human nature seemed to stagnate in this evolving culture, it tended toward savageness or beastliness. Ronald LeBlanc further states that "Dostoevskian 'bestiality'…remind[s] us that the process of 'becoming modern' during the second half of the nineteenth century in Russia put into question what it meant to be a human being," because this process of "becoming modern" revealed humanity's

"devilishly carnal appetites…that not only challenge and threaten our human nature, but also help to define it" (LeBlanc 237). These appetites might be for things that humans instinctively need, e.g. food and sex; often, however, these appetites are for blood and glory. Much of the evil in these three texts centers on a specifically human desire for cruelty to others for the sake of personal satisfaction. This desire is uniquely human, yet Dostoevsky uses animalistic imagery to portray this desire because it emphasizes how *in*human these behaviors *should* seem. That is, these behaviors—Raskolnikov's murder, Smerdyakov's patricide, Father Karamazov's egocentrism, the Underground Man's petty isolationism, and many others—seem so inhuman at first, but are deeply rooted in distinctively human traits. By using animal symbolism to portray these behaviors, Dostoevsky exposes this conflation of human nature and animal instinct. Only when thinking of human behavior in terms of animal behavior does one realize how uniquely sinister human behavior can be. This idea of "animal instinct" that lies deep within the human becomes an inadequate scapegoat for the cruelty of which only humanity is capable.

Chapter III

Unrecognizable Embodiment: Non-Human Disability in Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and Leonora Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet*

Mental and physical disability threaten our understanding of what we consider human. Sander Gilman posits, "For the most elementally frightening possibility is loss of control over the self, and loss of control is associated with loss of language and thought…the mad are perceived as the antithesis to the control and reason that define the self" (Gilman 23). If we understand humans in contrast to non-human animals, as beings who are capable of rational thought and sophisticated communication, then individuals with mental disorders or disabilities related to normative communication (e.g. deafness or speech impediments) certainly challenge what distinguishes the human from other animals. The reverse is troubling as well: an individual with non-normative embodiment (e.g. having crippled or deformed body parts), but otherwise meeting expectations for normative cognitive functioning, similarly challenges our definition of humanity. When both mental and physical disabilities are present, an individual completely fails to meet our standards for constituting a human being. Disability ethics aside, the trouble with this notion is that the normative physical and mental status is socially constructed; "normal" embodiment and cognition are defined in terms of what is most common and familiar, not by some fundamental standard. When we look at the relationship between disabled humans and non-human animals, there is a tendency to judge one's status as human in terms of the extent of one's animality. However, these two texts offer us another perspective: we might consider, first, the socially constructed nature of the divides

between human/animal and abled/disabled; then we will find that, given the fact that all humans are indeed animals, the animalization of disability can highlight and criticize the cruelty and lack of compassion in "normative" humans.

Animal Transformation as a Metaphor for Disability in "The Metamorphosis"

Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis" might not be readily categorized as a disability narrative in the conventional sense; that is, Gregor Samsa is not a human born with, or who develops, some specific disorder or condition (physical, mental, cognitive, or otherwise). Outside of disorders that might lead to animalistic behavior or aesthetics—such as rabies or leprosy—and psychological conditions that result in delusions of therianthropy, animal transformation is not generally recognized within a medical model of disability. However, much of Gregor's experience as an insect parallels that of a person becoming disabled. A bug functions as an appropriately controversial animal to depict disabled experience: bugs incite revulsion, have an embodiment without identifiably human traits, and are professionally exterminated. Yet, there remains something redemptive in Gregor's representation as insect/disabled human. Kafka depicts Gregor's position within his family dynamic in a way that highlights a human tendency to discriminate against non-normative embodiment while simultaneously troubling the boundaries of what we consider human.

Elements of disabled experience permeate Gregor's new animal embodiment. He encounters changes in his mobility: his legs "flicke[r] helplessly," and as he tries to get out of bed, "the lower part of his body…prove[s] itself too difficult to move"

("Metamorphosis" 3, 9). He is functionally mute—his voice is "intermingled…[with] an irrepressibly painful squeaking which left the words positively distinct only in the first moment and distorted them in reverberation"—and losing his sight ("Metamorphosis" 7, 65). While these conceptions of disability exist in the narrative, however, the way Gregor's transformation parallels disabled experience cannot be reduced to a particular diagnosis. Rather, a more productive parallel is in Gregor's new way of experiencing the world: in particular, the interior and social ramifications of coming into his new embodiment.

Melissa De Bruyker argues that these characteristics of his "deteriorating" embodiment "go hand in hand with his altered state within the world and upset his otherwise monotonous life," and of his "helplessly" flickering legs, she argues: "'helpless' not only signals the lack of firm ground beneath his feet but also its consequence, the protagonist's instability from this moment onward. The defective body forming a border between mind and external space can be related to Gregor as well as to expectations within his surroundings" (De Bruyker 193). The disconnect between Gregor's mind and body—his capacity for rational thought within an uncooperative physique—highlights, as well, the disconnect between his family's "expectations" and what he is able to achieve. This points, too, to the disconnect between the (othered) self and the social sphere: "By turning to physical characteristics Kafka points toward the body as a boundary between the contested self and the outside world" (De Bruyker 204). De Bruyker continues: "[Gregor's legs'] number and movement not only lead to blindness and helplessness but also to uncovering. The blanket on top of Gregor's belly—his vulnerable spot—threatens to fall off" (De Bruyker 193). Indeed, Gregor is threatened

by his newfound vulnerability, and the anxiety of being seen ("uncover[ed]") and thus causing harm (to his family or himself) becomes his central concern throughout the text.

If we are looking for a metaphorical representation of disability, we might consider Gregor's changing embodiment as an incidental cause of, rather than as a metaphor for, physical disability. What I posit, instead, is that Gregor is forced to encounter the world in an entirely unfamiliar way, in terms of both his psychological and social experience. If Gregor is a disabled figure, he primarily represents the experience of "madness" or mental illness. Cyrus Abbasian even deems "Metamorphosis" a narrative of psychosis:

> Kafka describes…how this initially bed bound and haplessly transformed creature tries to survive. Its predicament could be interpreted as psychotic: dreamlike and detached from reality…With disordered speech, perplexed and lost in time, but paradoxically calm and initially insightless in a nightmarish yet serene universe, the 'bug' struggles on. Psychosis has been associated with loss of personal identity—hence a bug—and a variety of hallucinations, visual, somatic, and auditory, can be teased out from Kafka's descriptions. More subtle changes, such as changes in taste (the bug eats only rotten food), and anorexia are also there. (Abbasian 49)

Gregor's changing mental state—from that of a human to that of an animal—is at the center of "Metamorphosis" as a disability narrative. More importantly, his removal from the social sphere serves as a metaphor for the social stigma of madness.

Although Gregor's titular "metamorphosis" into vermin occurs pre-narrative, the metamorphosis that we do witness is his deterioration into the realm of social death. As

he loses social contact, his psychological means of encountering the world become detached from his previous human experiences and shifts, gradually, to non-human experience. This transition is most apparent when Gregor's family attempts to rearrange his furniture. This moment symbolically represents the transition from human to non-human through the removal of furniture that, now useless, had been designed only for human embodiment. More significantly, this event triggers a revelation in Gregor: "Was he really eager to let the warm room…be turned into a cavern in which he would, of course, then be able to crawl about in all directions without disturbance, but at the same time with a quick and complete forgetting of his human past as well?" ("Metamorphosis" 54) While his humanity has been at stake from the beginning of the narrative, this marks the first time that he has been concerned about this loss.

This revelation interrupts his internal transition into animality, but simultaneously solidifies his social transition. The only way Gregor can prevent his family from removing his belongings is physical; specifically, he must use his animal body as a barrier between his family and his belongings. This method reinforces the animality of his social experience—that is, his interaction with others is purely physical, and he has no means by which to communicate his capacity for reason—and his family's reaction to his body confirms their understanding of him as a creature. The mere sight of his body brings his mother to "near death" from fear ("Metamorphosis" 59-60), which in turn provokes his father to attack him ("Metamorphosis" 63-64). Margot Norris argues that "the humans of [Gregor's] world become exposed and alienating in their incomprehension, callousness, and final indifference to him and his needs," and this moment certainly

concretizes that indifference (Norris 20-21). Indeed, this substantiates his new social position of exclusion; he ceases to be a son and becomes subject to extermination.

John Robertson aptly compares Gregor's family's pursuit of his extermination and their treatment of him to the legal euthanasia of disabled newborns:

> The situation dramatized by Kafka captures most of the pressures facing parents of defective children. The middle-class Samsa family…[is] shocked by this strange trick of fate and recoil in horror, attempting to hide their shame by isolating Gregor in his room. His sister and mother feel sympathy. They leave him milk and bread, and sometimes sit with him. But revulsion soon takes over. As the psychic and economic burdens mount, the family sinks into depression and lethargy. Gregor realizes their embarrassment, and to save them from further grief decides to die. On his death, the Samsa family suddenly awakes, dismissing the charwoman and boarders who knew of their shame, and begins life anew. (Robertson 215-16)

Although Gregor is an adult—a fact that comes with a separate set of ethical issues—his family is dealing with the same moral dilemma surrounding "defective" children in that they must decide the fate of a child who cannot communicate his desires. Furthermore, his family must weigh their own ease against Gregor's, and ultimately, determine whether he ought to live. This is why the insect is such an apt choice to represent the disabled; as Melissa De Bruyker argues, "A pet…could still be linked to the family home. Bugs, on the contrary, lacking both sight and insight, need to be extinguished" (De Bruyker 194). Their relief after his death indicates that the family values their own

convenience over Gregor's life: as Tahia Thaddeus Reynaga notes, "The passages that follow his death describe the liberation that ensues for the Samsa family" (Reynaga 70). Gregor's death ends both his own suffering and his family's; yet, his family's suffering is caused solely by their disgust, not because Gregor has become a burden.

The euthanasia dilemma is precisely what transforms this narrative from a dehumanizing representation of disability to a criticism of disability stigma. That is, Gregor's transformation points out the animalistic qualities of disabled experience in a way that highlights the similar treatment of disabled humans and vermin. Thus, Kafka criticizes the cruelty of Gregor's family, rather than Gregor's questionable humanity. Margot Norris argues:

> By telling these stories from the imagined animal vantage, the animal degradation and victimization is … transformed into a judgment of a humanity that debases itself in its treatment of the animal. The animal 'eyes' and animal 'voice' in Kafka's fiction become mirrors in which the human is reflected back to itself in an oppressive and unflattering guise…the insect's disorientation is not only physiological and subjective but finally also ethical, as the story's shift from a human to an animal perspective reveals the human beings in the story—the parents, the sister, the boarders, the charwoman—as lacking compassion or sympathy. (Norris 20-21)

This demonization of Gregor's family, and thus the sympathetic representation of Gregor's plight, creates a space in which those experiences we generally consider human—concern for others, and anxieties and desires that extend beyond physiological

requirements—are located in the animal figure while peculiarly absent from the human characters.

That is not to say that "Metamorphosis" necessarily attributes these characteristics as a possible experience for non-human animals. Gregor is a human-animal hybrid rather than an animal outright, yet his psychological transition into animality is situated in his family's perception of his humanity. That is to say, as his family increasingly denies his humanity (when his mother's concern turns to revulsion and his sister's caretaking role diminishes), his experience becomes increasingly animalistic, as demonstrated in the aforementioned furniture scene. What, then, should we make of the function of the hybrid? Melissa De Bruyker argues that despite the fact that "Gregor is called a 'gigantic insect,' a form of animal life as far removed from human appearance as thinkable…the composed [hybrid] image shows how modifications of human characteristics are at the origin of the transformation" (De Bruyker 192). This is indicated, as well, by the initial disconnect between Gregor's mind and body. The difficulty that Gregor experiences in using his body stems from the human context in which he is accustomed to moving. There is a hybridity inherent, for example, in his inability to control his legs when he tries to get out of bed: he is working under a human context for leg mobility, which emphasizes that his transformation is couched in the "modification" of his pre-existing human legs.

Another example of this "modification" that Melissa De Bruyker notes is the notion of Gregor "waving" his legs: "'Waving'…presupposes the human capacity of clear vision and refers to a transitional phase in which the animality forced on Gregor is still mingled with his subjective will to distinguish according to internalized human

standards" (De Bruyker 193). Not only does the notion of "waving" imply normative human vision; it is also reminiscent of the human-constructed communicative mode of "waving" at another individual. This transitional phase is indicative of the hybrid construction that De Bruyker investigates across multiple Kafka texts: "Hybrids signal a crisis situation in which distinctions between human and animal, notions like subjectivity and humanity and modes of observation are at stake. Whenever Kafka's protagonists draw the attention to these hybrid constellations, they point out the questionable position of individuals in social life" (De Bruyker 191). In particular, the "individuals" in this "questionable position" are disabled individuals functioning in a normative human social sphere—and the questionability of that position stems from their dehumanized status.

Although Gregor's humanity gradually fades, this frees him from his family's (evidently unnecessary) reliance on him as a provider. Tahia Thaddeus Reynaga argues, "It is only through his metamorphosis into a scavenging vermin that he achieves what Gregor *qua* son could not: an escape from the bonds of family oppression" (Reynaga 70). According to Reynaga, this redeems Gregor, dissolving his need for salvation and his parents' perception of him as a failure: "In his lesser (animal) state of existence, he manages to slip through the yoke that harnessed him and kept him tethered to his father as a failed son. In throwing off his human form and assuming that of the vermin, he dies a tranquil and sweet death, not condemned because he no longer has any need of salvation" (Reynaga 70) While I would disagree that Gregor's death is "sweet," there is something valiant in his unwavering loyalty to his family despite their abandonment. Despite his seemingly full transition into animality by the end of the text, there remains a sense of hybridity in this ending: Gregor's dedication for his family, and his decision to die for

their convenience, indicates both a humanistic sense of love and devotion, and a primal instinct to act according to the evolutionary benefit of the pack.

Melissa De Bruyker also asserts the redemptive nature of Gregor's degeneration into full-fledged animality. She argues that Gregor's disembodiment—his eventual removal from human categorizations of the body—works alongside others of Kafka's texts to deconstruct our understanding of humanity and, by extension, the human/animal divide: "[Kafka's texts] show how the enlightened design of man has been reclaimed in several discourses over and over again. All that is left are hollow constructions, since the notion of humanity—meant to differentiate between human and animal—has become lost in conflicting discourses. The so-called body is disembodied" (De Bruyker 205). This is precisely the kind of deconstruction of the human/animal divide that we have seen, and will continue to see, in these texts.

A 'Gericatric' Utopia: "Trans-Species" Unity in *The Hearing Trumpet*

The Hearing Trumpet is a unique novel in its attention to both geriatric and animal life. Leonora Carrington's depiction of a post-apocalypse inhabited by a community of elderly humans and non-human animals suggests that there is a special relationship between these two marginalized, often forgotten, categories of life. Indeed, this novel attributes subjectivity to these otherwise voiceless lives, in a way that suggests a kind of welfare narrative for both disabled and animal life. Further, the text creates a symbiotic relationship between these groups in a way that blurs species lines. This relationship, which Cary Wolfe describes as a "trans-species being-in-the-world" (Wolfe

141), is represented by the way elderly characters regard animals overall, and embodied by Anubeth's wolf-human hybridity.

Marian, Carmella, and other elderly characters not only place a high value on animal life: they also seem to identify with animals in a way they do not, or perhaps cannot, identify with able-bodied human characters. Aging, itself, is represented as a disability. Marian expresses her distaste for her grandson Robert by stating that "even as a child [he] was unkind to cats," and her first concern when she finds out she is being sent to the institution is: "what will become of the cats?" (*HT* 3, 12). Carmella insists that "people under seventy and over seven are very unreliable if they are not cats," and that "all cats are psychic" and capable of sensing her sympathy toward them (*HT* 6, 52). Anna expresses a similar belief toward dogs: "After all no human beings are ever as nice as animals. For real understanding one can only depend on dogs" (*HT* 148). These characters not only relate to animals, they do so by criticizing humanity. Interestingly enough, they do not seem to place other geriatrics in the category of "humans," as evident in Carmella's exclusion of "people [over] seventy" and Anna's cooperation in the post-apocalyptic community despite her denunciation of "human beings."

Instead of categorizing geriatrics with humanity, Marian more readily categorizes them, or at least herself, with non-humanity. She claims that her maid, Rosina, "seems generally opposed to the rest of humanity," then states: "I do not believe that she puts me in a human category so our relationship is not disagreeable" (*HT* 2). Marian imposes this categorization on herself, even though it is Rosina who is supposedly categorizing; further, Marian does not refute this idea. Later, when she meets another version of herself, her doppelganger denies Marian's humanity and animalizes her by trying to eat

her; she orders Marian to "jump into the broth" she is cooking, as "meat is scarce this season" (*HT* 137). This moment of auto-cannibalism is doubly problematic. First, her doppelganger is both herself and not-herself, so this passage indicates both how she sees herself and how others see her. Second, Marian is a vegetarian, so this moment seems to suggest a difference between her and the animal, just as much as it suggests their similarity. What this passage does accomplish with certainty is emphasizing her flesh: whether human or non-human, she is an animal, and in particular, an animal that does not want to be eaten.

At moments such as the auto-cannibalism passage, the text glorifies vegetarianism and animal welfare. When Marian first introduces herself, she emphasizes that she "never eat[s] meat as [she thinks] it is wrong to deprive animals of their life" (*HT* 1-2). Her community is vegetarian, too: regarding the many animals who also survived the apocalypse, she states: "we did not consider hunting them. The New Ice Age should not be initiated with the slaughter of our fellow beings" (*HT* 142). Anna criticizes humans, if not for their omnivorism, for valuing their own lives over animal lives: "It really is a scandal the way people neglect their animals. There they are all thinking about saving their own necks and letting their poor faithful dogs run around in herds, starving" (*HT* 147). The animals cannot express their desire not to be eaten, which is emphasized in the aforementioned auto-cannibalism passage: when Marian eats herself (at this point she cannot distinguish between herself and her doppelganger) she is unable to protest. Although it is supposedly her "own decision" whether she is eaten, she does not speak out; instead, she uncontrollably "shuffle[s] crabwise nearer and nearer the pot" (*HT* 138).

This moment actualizes the vegetarian narrative; her experience mirrors and vocalizes the experience of animals killed for food.

This vegetarian narrative is important because it allows the geriatrics to enter a symbiotic relationship with the animals in one solidary community. This community comes about because of an idea Anna expresses: "all animals are friendly if treated unaggressively. One would initiate a very kind but cautious attitude towards them…Bit by bit they could be induced to allow themselves to be petted, and even sleep inside the bungalows" (*HT* 129). This actually does happen with a group of goats: "One day we saw some goats grazing…This happy event provided the cats and ourselves with fresh milk. We pulled branches off the trees to provide provender for the goats and they joined us later in the cavern" (*HT* 142). Although they consume the goat's milk, this relationship differs from conventional omnivorism because it is mutually beneficial. This is, essentially, the only type of relationship that Marian intends to have with non-human animals—presumably, because of her unique identification with them.

This special relationship between the disabled and non-human animals is something that Cary Wolfe considers in his essay "Learning From Temple Grandin." He refers to multiple "authors who claim that their condition has enabled for them a unique understanding of nonhuman animals and how they experience the world": Monty Roberts, the "horse whisperer" whose severe color blindness allows him to interpret horses' body language; Dawn Prince-Hughes, whose "experience with Asperger's syndrome enabled her to have an unusually keen understanding of the nuances of the social interactions and communications of a group of zoo gorillas"; and Temple Grandin, who "insists that her experience with autism and its specific characteristics…has given

her a special understanding of how nonhuman animals experience the world" (Wolfe 128). This is precisely the type of relationship Carrington portrays between geriatrics and animals. Similar to Prince-Hughes, whose experience with gorillas "was crucial for the evolution of her own self-understanding, enabling her to move from being 'a wild thing out of context,' living on the margins of society," Marian's relationship with animals is imperative to her recognition of her own subjectivity. This relationship is crucial because non-geriatric human characters, including her own family, consistently deny her subjectivity.

Although Cary Wolfe's essay focuses on Grandin's experience with autism, Marian's experience is remarkably similar. Individuals with autism are often denied subjectivity because of the idea that "there was no 'inside,' no inner life, in the autistic, or that if there was it would be forever denied access or expression," which is in turn a result of the idea: "where there is language, there is a subject" (Wolfe 129). This denial of the "inner life" applies to most, if not all, forms of disability; it holds true for geriatrics, especially those who have dementia and/or difficulty communicating. This certainly applies to Marian, who Robert claims "can hardly be classified as a human being" because "she's a drooling sack of decomposing flesh," and whose daughter-in-law believes that "old people do not have feelings" and that Marian "doesn't have any idea where she is" because she "is senile" (*HT* 10). It is because of this treatment from able-bodied humans that Marian turns to non-human animals for friendship and, indeed, why she is able to identify with animals in the first place.

Cary Wolfe points to a similar "enabling" in Temple Grandin's story. He states that "disability becomes the positive, indeed enabling, condition for a powerful

experience by Grandin that crosses the lines not only of species difference but also of the organic and inorganic, the biological and mechanical" (Wolfe 136). Grandin's experience crosses both "species" and "mechanical" lines because her highly visual experience is similar to how both animals and computers operate; her "visuality is implicated in what are, for humanism, two ontologically opposed registers, both of them radically inhuman or at least ahuman:...animal sensorium…[and] the opposed register of the technical and mechanical" (Wolfe 131). Marian's experience, too, crosses both species and mechanical lines: species because of her relationship with animals, mechanical because of her prosthesis, the hearing trumpet. Her relationship with the hearing trumpet—which slowly becomes less of a tool and more of an extension of her body—is symbiotic in the same way as her relationship with animals. Animals allow her to re-inscribe her subjectivity, denied to her because of her age, in the same way that her hearing trumpet allows her to overcome her hearing disability. In this way, she depends on animals in a "service animal"-type relationship.

In his essay, Cary Wolfe criticizes Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's interpretation of service animals. Garland-Thomson argues that a magazine cover of a model with a service dog "forces the viewer to reconfigure assumptions about what constitutes the attractive, the desirable, the livable life" (qtd. in Wolfe 140). Wolfe argues that this interpretation functions "at the expense of doing to nonhuman "differents" what "normates" have traditionally done to the disabled"; essentially, her interpretation only de-marginalizes disability by marginalizing non-human animals (Wolfe 140). Wolfe offers an alternative solution:

> Instead of seeing the nonhuman animal as merely a prop or tool for allowing the disabled to be mainstreamed into liberal society and its values, wouldn't we do better to imagine this example as an irreducibly different and unique form of subjectivity…neither 'disabled' nor 'normal,' but something else altogether, a shared trans-species being-in-the-world constituted by complex relations of trust, respect, dependence, and communication[?] (Wolfe 140-1)

His solution introduces a kind of mutually beneficial inter-species unity, much like the unity of natural body and prosthesis that we see with Marian and her hearing trumpet. If Marian depends on animals to overcome her disability in the same way she depends on her hearing trumpet, then we can think of her relationship—and that of the other geriatrics—with animals as this "trans-species being-in-the-world."

In the culminating pages of the novel, Anubeth serves as a physical manifestation of this "trans-species being." She is a "wolf-headed woman" who is, "apart from the head, entirely human" (*HT* 151). She is part human and part non-human animal, a condition that makes her "a cripple," according to her brother (*HT* 21). If we attempt to identify her disability, it is that she cannot function fully as a human or an animal. However, the unity of her two halves—the animal head and the human body—grants her physical functionality. She is granted social functionality, too, post-apocalypse: once the earth is inhabited only by geriatric humans and non-human animals, she ceases to seclude herself. Instead, she populates the world with wolflets (*HT* 155). The earth will then become "peopled with cats, werewolves, bees and goats," which everyone in the community "fervently hope[s]…will be an improvement on humanity" (*HT* 158). Since

the geriatrics cannot reproduce, the humanity passed down through Anubeth's hybrid genealogy will be the only remaining human trace. This anti-human view of the future supports the novel's animal welfare narrative, but it also suggests that this "trans-species being" is the only way humanity can persist.

Conclusion

In "The Metamorphosis" and *The Hearing Trumpet*, we see two polarized, yet equally provocative, examples of embodied human-animal hybridity: Gregor's insect body is grounds for his extermination, while Anubeth's wolf-human being works as a symbol for the "trans-species unity" of *Hearing Trumpet*'s particular utopic apocalypse. While these hybrids may differ in perspective—Gregor's death as pessimistic and the geriatric/animal utopia as optimistic—we can parse out a similar message regarding the status of disability, animality, and otherness. Both narratives begin by suggesting that animality is shameful, indicated by Gregor's isolation and Marian's admission to a senior community. Interestingly, for both protagonists, that shame is cast onto them by their families, rather than a product of their own judgment: they are *shamed* by their families, not *ashamed* of themselves. Furthermore, the family members are the individuals actually represented as having shameful behavior: selfishness, callousness, and an apparent lack of love for the excluded individual.

I would even assert that "Metamorphosis" and *Hearing Trumpet* offer reversed means of producing the same message. What these texts "reverse" is who is killed versus who has their burden relieved: Gregor dies for the benefit of his selfish family, and most

of humanity dies for the benefit of the elderly and animals. Yet Gregor's death does not negate his redemption; rather, his death—which we might even consider a sacrificial suicide—produces his redemption. Although Marian's redemption is more overt and, indeed, more joyful, both characters are redeemed because their animalized character proves more benevolent than the normative humans of their world. While both texts begin with a seemingly marginalizing association between atypical embodiment and animality, this association works more to validate Gregor's and Marian's existence and criticize those who deny their humanity.

Chapter IV

The Racial Animal: Fluctuating Beastliness of Slaves and Black Folk in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

In the United States, perhaps the most familiar (and often, the most unsettling) narrative of animalized humans comes from the slave-holding South. Slaves were not normally recognized as human, and even when they were, they were considered fundamentally animalistic: lacking proper reason and self-control, among other disparaging characteristics. This rationale justified the institution of slavery: blacks simultaneously needed to be tamed, and had the capacity for performing labor. Slaves were not simply lower class; they were expelled entirely from the human social sphere. Nor were blacks granted humanity after the abolition of slavery: scientific racism, miscegenation laws, and countless other means of institutionalized segregation aimed to reinforce the inferiority of the black race. Thus, the animalization of blackness is both common and contentious. But the precarious nature of this association is precisely what makes it, when used critically, such a powerful literary device. In their 1930's texts, William Faulkner and Zora Neale Hurston both use this association in unlikely ways: in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner animalizes black, white, and mixed raced individuals to complicate the purely racial notion of human animality; and in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston repeatedly sets up, and consequently reverses, expected racialized (and gendered) stereotypes of animality.

(De-)Racializing the Man-Beast: Depicting Racial Animality in *Absalom, Absalom!*

In both rac*ial* and rac*ist* discourse, it is not uncommon to see animalistic language used to describe the racial other, particularly the slave. The slave, who functions as a tool or machine, exhibits a space between humanity and non-humanity (either object or animal). Literature that places the slave alongside the animal, or describes the slave in animalistic language, thus signifies this dehumanization. Literature of the "Plantation," a system that relied on both slave and animal labor, often—intentionally or not—draws some connection between the slave and the animal because of their shared role as laborers. William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* is one of many Plantation narratives that emphasize the cohabitation of slaves and animals within a social sphere of exclusion. Faulkner uses zoomorphism throughout the text, but most deliberately in his depiction of Thomas Sutpen's "wild negroes." Just as *Absalom, Absalom!* is not a typical Plantation narrative—Faulkner forgoes the narrative of nostalgia for a criticism of plantation values—the text's animalistic imagery extends beyond the usual slave-animal paradigm. In fact, Faulkner's animalization of human characters works to complicate this very association. Through his depictions of Sutpen, his "wild negroes," Clytie, and Jim Bond, Faulkner both racializes and de-racializes the animal, crushing the liminal space between non-human and subhuman and disorienting any strict relationship between race and animality.

The association between blackness and animality is historically situated in the nineteenth century as a justification for slavery. Christopher Peterson argues that creationism, despite its anti-evolutionary foundations, is a primary basis for this

association: he points to "one strain of creationism dating back to the late nineteenth century," which "holds that Genesis Chapter I describes the creation of blacks as part of the 'beast creation,' whereas Genesis Chapter 2 describes the creation of the white Adamic race" (Peterson 4). This is not to say that Christianity or creationism is inherently racist; however, this strain of creationism provides a context in which the animalization of blackness, for some, stems from their understanding of the origins of life itself. Following this interpretation of creationism, the "white Adamic race" would be divinely positioned to rule over the black "beasts," in addition to naming them along with the other "beasts." Adam's divine authority to name the animals is thus extended to the white man's authority to name the slaves. This Adamic "power of naming permits the human to establish itself as separate from and superior to the nonhuman," thereby "authoriz[ing] humans to assert their mastery over … 'the animal'" (Peterson 2-3). When a white slave-owner names his slaves, he is not only asserting his "mastery," but also the position of the slave as "animal." If naming is an assertion of mastery, then it is significant that Sutpen does not assign names to his "wild negroes." Even more significantly, they are always his "negroes," rather than his "slaves": to refer to them as his slaves would allow Sutpen to utilize his position as master/human and reinforce the "negroes"' position as animal/inhuman.

Why does the master/slave dynamic rely so heavily on the master reinforcing the animality of the slave? According to Christopher Peterson, this is because dehumanizing blackness in turn validates the humanity of whiteness. He states that "to stress the animality of all humans is … [to suggest] that what names itself human does so precisely by suppressing the animality that conditions its emergence" (Peterson 2). Humanity relies

on animal alterity to define itself, and therefore must "suppress" animality in order to be human. Thus, the objective in dehumanizing blackness is to ensure a white sense of humanity, much in the same way that disability is dehumanized to affirm one's own normalcy: "Indeed, the portrayal of blacks as 'not yet human' works to deny the inhumanity of whites: both the specific historical brutality of racial violence and the inherent animality of all humans" (Peterson 4). This process of dehumanization is, in fact, a circular justification. Blackness is animalized to justify past "racial violence," which is in turn perpetuated by this animalization.

Yet the social position of the slave is not as simple as this slave-as-animal concept. Christopher Peterson points to "the shifting ontology of the slave, which, according to a juridical imperative dating back to Roman law, occupies the status of inert 'thing'" (Peterson 62). This "shifting ontology of the slave" positions the slave somewhere between human, animal, and object/machine; the slave is more often a man-beast hybrid than a beast alone. This "shifting ontology of the slave" is not, in fact, limited to the slave, but applies to blackness more generally. As Michael Lundblad notes, the "myth of the black male rapist" that infiltrates nineteenth century America evokes images of "animality," but even more so images of "savagery": "animality" implies an "animal instinct" that would too easily excuse one's crime (Lundblad 132). Thus, even a complete animalization of blackness is problematic for achieving racist aims, and blackness cannot be situated in one ontological category (human-animal-object).

This "shifting ontology" is the same kind of hybridity that we see in depictions of both Sutpen and his "negroes" as "beasts." When Sutpen is first introduced as a character, his appearance into Yoknapatawpha is described as such: "Out of quiet thunderclap he

would abrupt (man-horse-demon) upon a scene peaceful and decorous…with grouped behind him his band of wild niggers like beasts half tamed to walk upright like men, in attitudes wild and reposed" (*Absalom* 4). The most glaring image here is of his "wild negroes" portrayed as "beasts," who are "half tamed to walk upright like men." They are tamed to walk *like* men, indicating that they are not, in fact, human. Instead, they are "beasts," a term which implies "both a devilish impulse and a 'real' animal in the jungle" (Lundblad 132). Sutpen's "negroes" are almost always referred to as "wild," in the same way one might refer to a "wild" or "feral" animal. This consistently animalistic portrayal of his "negroes" is indicative of the archetypal representation of the slave-as-animal. However, this is not a simple perpetuation of this archetype.

The more compelling image in the above excerpt is that of Sutpen as a "man-horse-demon." Here Sutpen is animalized alongside his "negroes," just as he works alongside them. Sutpen's relationship to his "negroes" hinges between master and equal, and is complicated by this parallel animalization. Christopher Peterson acknowledges a similar phenomenon present in the Uncle Remus stories, which portray a master/slave relationship through Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit: "casting both masters and slaves as animals upsets the human/animal hierarchy by which the institution of slavery renders blacks as subhuman" (Peterson 54). His relationship to his "negroes" upsets both the master/slave and human/animal dynamic.

The human-animal hybridization of the slave can be somewhat reconciled by a distinction between the terms "person" and "human" as they apply to humanism. Christopher Peterson demonstrates how Locke "distinguish[es] between the 'person' (a reasoning being that knows itself as itself) and the 'human' (a living being with the body

of the species *homo sapiens*, whether rational or not)"; by these definitions, "a talking parrot could be considered a person, but it could not be considered human" (Peterson 65). It follows that, if slaves lack reasoning and rationality, they can be "human" without being "persons." This split deconstructs itself, however, when one asks what constitutes "reasoning" or "rationality." The talking parrot example seems incongruous with this rationality argument, if mimicry is not considered rational awareness. Mimicry is, in fact, one reason for the animalization of non-slave blacks: "The historical association of blacks with animality is linked to a number of stereotypes, including … intellectual inferiority. This … characterization lends itself to the damaging assertion that black cultural production can be reduced to clever yet vacuous mimicry" (Peterson 65). This person/human distinction appears to explain humanist racism, but it is ultimately unclear what is being denied of blackness: personhood, humanity, or both?

Jim Bond, the mixed race heir to the Sutpen property, troubles the white-master-human and black-slave-animal dynamic because of this troublesome person/human distinction. Bond is portrayed as an "idiot," described during the house fire as "a hulking young light-colored negro man in clean faded overalls and shirt, his arms dangling, no surprise, no nothing in the saddle-colored and slack-mouthed idiot face" (*Absalom* 296). His skin is described as "saddle-colored," which conflates his own flesh with that of an animal. More significant, perhaps, is his depiction as an "idiot": if the human is distinguished from animals by their capacity for reason, as indicated by humanist philosophy, then it stands that an "idiot," an intellectually inferior person, would be cast somewhere between human and animal. Much like Sutpen, Clytie, and blackness in general, Bond inhabits a space of human-animal hybridity. Because of the supposed

"intellectual inferiority" and "mimicry" that deems blackness as sub-human, Bond's position as an "idiot" places him in the same framework as the slave-animal, although he is not a slave. While the "idiot" is considered sub-human for the same reasons as the slave, idiocy and blackness are not mutually inclusive. That is, Bond could be a white idiot and still exhibit a similar sub-human position. However, in the same sentence that refers to him as an "idiot," he is referred to as "negro" and "saddle-faced." His idiocy is, then, necessarily racialized.

It is noteworthy that Bond, an "idiot," is the heir to the Sutpen property. His inheritance reinforces his connection to Sutpen blood, even if his last name has changed. His new last name references the "bond" between white and black of the mixed race individual, but also the "bond" between human and animal that is exhibited in his idiocy and race. That Jim Bond is both a Sutpen and an "idiot" affirms the idea that Sutpen blood is inherently animalistic, and by extension, so is Thomas Sutpen himself. As the final Sutpen, Bond proves that animality, in the realm of this text, is both racialized and de-racialized. That is, the Sutpen family both avows and disavows the association between animality and blackness.

Sutpen is portrayed as animalistic alongside not only his "negroes," but also his mixed race daughter, Clytie. In her narration, Rosa refers to Clytie as "free, yet incapable of freedom who had never once called herself a slave, holding fidelity to none like the indolent and solitary wolf or bear (yes, wild: half untamed black, half Sutpen blood: and if 'untamed' be synonymous with 'wild,' then 'Sutpen' is the silent unsleeping viciousness of the tamer's lash)" (*Absalom* 126). Once again, the most striking image is the animalization of the black character: Rosa compares Clytie to a "wolf or bear,"

"wild" and "half untamed" despite never having been a slave. Her "wildness" is implied simply by her partial blackness.

The more problematic image in this excerpt is that of Sutpen as "the silent unsleeping viciousness of the tamer's lash." Sutpen at once embodies "viciousness" and a taming force, which seem to contradict each other. "Viciousness" implies an animalistic ferocity, while being "the tamer's lash" would mean Sutpen is a tool used to subdue the animal. He expresses his own animality while attempting to suppress his daughter's. More importantly, he attempts to suppress his daughter's animality while withstanding that of his "negroes." One explanation for this discrepancy is that Sutpen accepts his "negroes" as animals, but refuses to accept his half-white daughter as an "animal." However, this explanation ignores the previous conflation between master/slave and human/animal as well as the fact that his daughter would be considered black despite her white ancestry. More likely, Clytie is "wild" not only because of her blackness, but also because of her Sutpen blood. That is, Sutpen wishes to tame Clytie because she embodies his own wildness.

Later, in Shreve's retelling of Quentin's story, Clytie is again depicted as an animal. He describes Sutpen looking upon Clytie as "some delicate talonless and fangless wild beast crouched in its cage in some hopeless and desperate similitude of ferocity" (*Absalom* 160-1). At this moment, her animality is again racialized. Her wildness poses a direct threat to Sutpen in this retelling, as Shreve depicts Clytie as preparing Sutpen's food with "savageness," or "scrubb[ing] him with harsh rags … with repressed fury as if she were trying to wash the smooth faint olive tinge from his skin" (*Absalom* 161). When she tries to remove the "olive tinge" from his skin, she is essentially accusing him of

being non-white, and by extension, partially wild. This image is a reversal of the previous: first Sutpen tries to tame Clytie; then Clytie tries to tame Sutpen. This further supports the idea that Sutpen blood is inherently wild, even if this animality manifests itself through familial, rather than racial, lines.

This text, as well as the association between race and animality more generally, poses the philosophical question: why is the animalization of the human problematic? Christopher Peterson addresses this question, stating that "the equation of blacks with animals is based on prior negative ideas about nonhuman animals" (Peterson 2). He quotes Spiegel asking, "why is it an insult for anyone to be compared to an animal?" and responds by claiming that "the dismissal of nonhuman sentience conditions the reduction of some human others to the status of 'mere' animal life. Speciesism engenders the bestialization of social and political others" (Peterson 2). I draw from this that racialized animalization is racist, but simultaneously speciesist. That is, racism works within a larger framework that is already, itself, speciesist; therefore, the notion of the racialized man-beast emphasizes the exclusion of both the racial other and the non-human other. *Absalom, Absalom!* complicates these humanist distinctions between the master/slave and human/animal in ways that trouble not only classic racism, but speciesism as well. By deconstructing the racism of animalization, Faulkner effectively criticizes speciesism, subverting both racial and human/animal hierarchy.

Mules and Mad Dogs: The Animalized 'Other' in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

While escaping the hurricane, Janie and Tea Cake encounter a troubling scene: "They passed a dead man in a sitting position on a hummock, entirely surrounded by wild animals and snakes. Common danger made common friends. Nothing sought a conquest over the other" (*TEWWG* 243). This moment is troubling not only because of the death and destruction of the storm, but also because the storm has threatened something larger: the perceived boundaries of nature and culture. The storm does not discriminate, but endangers humans and animals equally: in this disparity, humanity cannot seek triumph over the animal. What this scene illustrates, instead, is a cohabitation that challenges the traditional human/non-human animal hierarchy.

If we understand this scene as a moment when hierarchy cannot exist, where conquest is impossible and meaningless, then the text necessarily challenges a traditional reading of zoomorphism of human characters. Zoomorphism is prevalent throughout the text: people are referred to as mules, gators, cats, dogs, hogs, and chickens, to name a few. The most striking moment of zoomorphism occurs in the penultimate chapter, when Tea Cake morphs into a "mad dog" and attacks Janie. Traditional readings of zoomorphism emphasize dehumanization: that is, zoomorphic descriptions deny humanity, thus implying that the character is sub-human.

Considering historical perceptions of black, especially female, life as more animalistic than human[1], this interpretation is not too off-base. However, this narrative of sub-humanity relies on the implicit acceptance of a human/animal hierarchy. If, as I have suggested, the text challenges this hierarchy, then we must reinterpret the purpose of

Hurston's zoomorphism. Through an analysis of the animalistic language in the text, with particular attention to the figure of the mule and Tea Cake's transformation into a "mad dog," I argue that zoomorphism actually works to subvert—rather than reinscribe—the narratives of subhumanity that are historically associated with race and gender.

Hurston uses animal imagery to depict Janie's and Jody's class difference from other blacks in their community. She writes, "It was bad enough for white people, but when one of your own color could be so different it put you on a wonder. It was like seeing your sister turn into a 'gator. A familiar strangeness. You keep seeing your sister in the 'gator and the 'gator in your sister, and you'd rather not" (*TEWWG* 76). The alligator is an apt choice for representing Janie's class difference because of the danger underneath its deceptively lifeless appearance. That is to say, the upper class black woman is a troubling figure precisely because she initially appears non-threatening, despite an underlying potential to exert power over others.

Hurston evokes the uncanny with this notion of "familiar strangeness," and the convergence of the sister and the gator illustrates the conflation of the known and the "other." Remarkably, the "otherness" that the gator symbolizes is that of superiority, not inferiority; Janie and Jody are "other" to their community because of their affluence. Hurston overturns the notions of racialized otherness and otherness as subhuman by constructing this uncanny, and even carnivalesque, moment where the "known" is black folk culture and the "other" is affluence. This instance of subverting the "known" predicates my reading of Hurston's project: utilizing zoomorphism satirically in order to undermine the racist and sexist stereotypes historically associated with animalistic representations of race and gender. Brian Roberts refers to this endeavor as "Hurston

camouflag[ing] criticism of dominant discourses by embedding critiques of these discourses in animal and human interaction" (Roberts 39), and Rachel Stein refers to this as "breaching colonial class and color lines by refiguring the negative association of black women and nature as a promising cyborgian interpenetration that disturbs racial and sexual hierarchy" (Stein 34). Repeatedly, we will see this sort of reversal at the center of Hurston's zoomorphic representations of historically situated stereotypes.

One such historically situated representation is the image of the black woman as mule, which Nanny presents early in the text. Hurston first introduces the idea of gendered animality with Nanny's claim that "de nigger woman is de mule uh de world" (*TEWWG* 29). This representation of the black woman as mule stems from the "Caribbean social relations" that envisioned "black woman as sexual beast and beast of burden," which Hurston undoubtedly encountered while writing *Their Eyes* in Haiti (Stein 31). According to Rachel Stein, the purpose of this representation is such that "[Caribbean black women's] sufferings can be dismissed as inevitable, and the social pyramid which rests upon their backs can be justified as only natural" (Stein 29). Yet, the mere identification of the black woman as a mule already pushes back against this social order by acknowledging the monumental responsibility and burden inherent in such a position.

From the moment Nanny links the black woman to the mule, a variety of gender roles are portrayed through animal symbolism, suggesting not so much the woman as "beast of burden," but rather, as "the Weak…helpless animals" that Brian Roberts describes as representative of (specifically white) women (Roberts 42). When Jody speaks for Janie, he justifies this by saying, "Somebody got to think for women and

chillun and chickens and cows. I god, they sho don't think none theirselves" (*TEWWG* 110). Tony Robinson claims he does not beat his wife because "beatin' women is just like steppin' on baby chickens" (*TEWWG* 116). The equation of women to farm animals suggests that women have undergone domestication; that is to say, women have been subdued into docility for the pleasure and advantage of carnal desire, in much the way that cows and chicken have been domesticated for the food industry.

The narrator describes Janie's negative experiences with men as having "been whipped like a cur dog," and Tea Cake describes Janie's hair as "jus' lak underneath uh dove's wing" (*TEWWG* 138, 157). In these examples, femininity is represented through fragile prey animals, emphasizing the vulnerability of the feminine. Tony Robinson's wife is described as a cat when she shows her interest in Jody: "Mrs. Tony was so eager she sometimes stepped on Joe's heels, sometimes she was a little before him. Something like a hungry cat when somebody approaches her pan with meat. Running a little, caressing a little and all the time making little urging-on cries" (*TEWWG* 114). This particular example indicates not only feminine fragility, but also a need for, and reliance on, masculine authority.

In turn, Hurston portrays masculinity as predatory: male characters are repeatedly described as "ferocious," particularly when asserting dominance over the feminine. However, there is not a stable predator/prey dynamic between the masculine and the feminine: although the feminine is certainly victimized, the image of the predatory male is often ridiculed and belittled. When Tea Cake makes two men "kiss and make up" after a fight, "both of them spit and gagged and wiped their mouths with the back of their hands. One went outside and chewed a little grass like a sick dog": this threat to his

masculinity robs the man of his humanity and transforms him into a sick, domesticated creature (*TEWWG* 185). Janie notes that the men who pine after her are "sitting around grinning at her like a pack of chessy cats," suggesting that they are both naturally predatory (they watch and wait for an opportunity to make an advance) and ultimately nonthreatening, as cats only prey on small rodents and are more often themselves prey to larger predators (*TEWWG* 140).

Pheoby describes young men who might want to take advantage of Janie for her money when she says, "Most of de time dey's after whut dey kin git, then dey's gone lak uh turkey through de corn" (*TEWWG* 170). Again, the male is committing a predatory act—preying on Janie for her money—but he is described as a turkey for doing so. These images of the men as turkeys and cats work to ridicule and delegitimize the idea of masculine power. In Janie's final argument with Jody, "something stood like an oxen's foot on her tongue, and then too, Jody, no Joe, gave her a ferocious look" (*TEWWG* 130). Janie is rendered silent by Jody's dominance, which is represented by the ox's foot. Although large and powerful, an ox—much like a mule or horse—is a work animal known for its use-value as a tool for human ends. Therefore, even though Jody is the one attempting to manipulate and utilize Janie, it is Jody who is envisaged as a tool.

Moments later, Jody gives "a deep-growling sound like a hog dying down in the swamp and trying to drive off disturbance," just before he dies (*TEWWG* 131). Once again, Jody is described as a ferocious creature—a hog—yet this moment is the height of his weakness. This ironic juxtaposition of ferocity and weakness further indicates his ultimate powerlessness, further mocking and overturning the predator/prey gender dynamic. Brian Roberts claims that Hurston "de-animaliz[es] her black male characters,

elid[es] references to their predation of weak animals, [and] reveal[s] enmity between black men and predatory animals," though his notion of de-animalization ignores these comparisons to less threatening animals (Roberts 42). I might suggest, rather, that Hurston de-predatorizes her black males, which is further supported by this lack of "predation of weak animals" and "enmity between black men and predatory animals."

Hurston's reference to the black woman as mule emphasizes the way in which black women are objectified, utilized, and perhaps even enslaved by black men. The mule is fitting to represent the enslaved, since it is historically one of the most common work animals. Appropriately, mules appear frequently throughout the text, and Janie has an opportunity to reminisce on the plight of the mule: "Everybody was having fun at the mule-baiting. All but Janie… 'They oughta be shamed uh theyselves! Teasin' dat poor brute beast lak they is! Done been worked tuh death; done had his disposition ruint wid mistreatment, and now they got tuh finish devilin' 'im tuh death" (*TEWWG* 89). Here, the mule acts as a thinly veiled symbol for Janie herself, and the black woman more generally: worked to death, mistreated, and mocked by both whites and black men[2].

This same mule reappears later, when the town gives him a lengthy mock funeral: "they made great ceremony over the mule. They mocked everything human in death" (*TEWWG* 95). This scene is obviously anthropomorphic rather than zoomorphic: Jody speaks of the mule as a citizen and Sam refers to him as a schoolteacher and an angel in "mule-heaven" (*TEWWG* 95-96). However, since we have already established that the mule is symbolic of the black woman, this moment of anthropomorphism turns in on itself and becomes zoomorphic as well: simultaneously, the mule is anthropomorphized, and the black woman is evoked zoomorphically. Jody literally stands on the mule the

same way he figuratively stands on Janie. He mocks them both for his own gratification. He even leaves the mule to the buzzards the same way he might have done with Janie if he had not died first.

The more curious—and indeed, subversive—part of this scene occurs just then, when the mule is "left to the already impatient buzzards" (*TEWWG* 96). Then, there is an anthropomorphic second funeral commenced by the buzzards. The first funeral suggests that the mule represents Janie, but the second suggests that he instead represents Jody. The mule's death foreshadows Jody's, and he dies for a similar reason: the buzzards claim it was "bare, bare fat" that "killed this man," while Jody dies from kidney failure shortly thereafter (*TEWWG* 97, 129). When the person the mule represents shifts from Janie to Jody, Hurston rejects and reverses the image of the black woman as mule.

This reversal reappears later, when Tea Cake runs off with Janie's money: "But don't care how firm your determination is, you can't keep turning round in one place like a horse grinding sugar cane" (*TEWWG* 177). Although the horse here is not the mule proper, it evokes the same image of a work animal and, more importantly, Janie's refusal to be reduced to such. This subversion of the initial representation of black-woman-as-mule is crucial: in restructuring the symbolic register of the mule, "Hurston attacks the prevailing assumption that black women are innately subhuman, and she demonstrates that social stigma, rather than divine intent, is responsible for their miserable condition" (Stein 32). Further, Janie's rejection of the mule/horse position indicates that she is aware of the expected response—that she will fret over Tea Cake's disappearance until he returns—and deliberately, perhaps even spitefully, refuses to fall into that category of dogged devotion.

The most powerfully zoomorphic scene occurs when Tea Cake is suffering from rabies: he figuratively—and almost literally—transforms into a "mad dog" and attacks Janie. During this transformation, "He almost snarled…He gave her a look full of blank ferocity and gurgled in his throat. She saw him sitting up in bed and moving about so that he could watch her every move" (*TEWWG* 269-270). His "suffering brain was urging him on to kill," and he has a "ferocious look in his eyes" (*TEWWG* 272). He does not simply adopt dog-like characteristics but becomes permanently entangled with the beast: "Tea Cake couldn't come back to himself until he had got rid of that mad dog that was in him and he couldn't get rid of the dog and live. He had to die to get rid of the dog" (*TEWWG* 278).

We might read this scene as the final evidence that Tea Cake is no improvement from Janie's previous husbands, proof that masculinity is not redeemable. More significant is the vision of masculinity that we get here: ferocious and bestial. However, much like the earlier examples of animalized masculinity, Tea Cake's ferocity becomes quickly dismantled in a moment that conflates weakness and predation (Roberts 47). The manifestation of his animality—the moment he bites her—occurs chronologically *after* he is shot (*TEWWG* 273). Moreover, he spends his final moments in a doubly weakened state: he is both physically weakened from the gunshot, and figuratively weakened by Janie's motherly response. She becomes "her sacrificing self with Tea Cake's head in her lap," and "h[olds] his head tightly to her breast and we[eps] and thank[s] him wordlessly for giving her the chance of loving service" (*TEWWG* 273).

Tea Cake is simultaneously maimed and reduced to infantile submission; he is stripped of all masculine power immediately after reaching the height of his ferocity.

Brian Roberts posits that this scene "portray[s] Tea Cake as both helpless and vicious," while Janie "simultaneously exist[s] as Weak, Predator, and Hyper-Predator as she kills Tea Cake," effectively overturning the "stereotyped roles of white America's cultural animal tale" that envisions black masculinity as predatory, white masculinity as "hyper-predator[y]," and white femininity as weak (Roberts 47). This scene effectively dissolves these categories and, with them, the expected predator/prey relationship so often superimposed on black sexuality.

Hurston's depiction of animalized "otherness"—in particular, the racial and gendered "other"—does not properly align with a traditional reading of zoomorphism that emphasizes the dehumanization of the zoomorphic other. Rather, in each of the examples I have presented, she begins by evoking this traditional reading and consequently undermining it. Through the town's casual commentary that likens women to "baby chickens" and men to "turkeys," through the gender-shifting representation of the mule, and through Tea Cake's loss of power when he transforms into a "mad dog," Hurston creates an unstable dynamic that repeatedly subverts expected dialogues of animalized otherness. In particular, she robs male characters of their authority when they become most animalistic, when their power becomes predatory or otherwise ferocious. I would not go so far as to suggest that Hurston was directly engaging with philosophical issues surrounding the existence of a human/non-human animal divide; indeed, as Brian Roberts argues, her compliance in representing a "system of human-animal interaction in *Their Eyes*" that coincides with racial and gendered animality "is incontingent on her intent or acknowledgement" (Roberts 48). That is to say, according to Hurston's own

account, the folk representations of the black bestiary are so deeply entrenched in her cultural upbringing as to arise in her works, intentionally or otherwise.[3]

Conclusion

These two texts, published only a year apart, illustrate two entirely different perspectives on black subjectivity, contextualized in two different historical moments. By this I mean, *Absalom, Absalom!* works within the frame of a slave narrative, where there is no space for black subjectivity, while the narrative of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* functions only within that space. It is because of this key difference that the two texts must take different approaches to the notion of black animality. William Faulkner utilizes stereotypes of black animality, but juxtaposes these stereotypes with examples of white animality and black agency in a way that dismantles the ties between blackness and the animal; Zora Neale Hurston never lets these stereotypes come to full fruition, as she sets up parallels between black femininity/masculinity and animality, but does not let the expected parallel become fully realized. Both achieve—through these different means—a narrative that brings the problem of black animality to the forefront, and uses it for an advantage: to break down socially constructed divides between races, genders, and human/non-human animals.

Notes

1. Rachel Stein points to the "Caribbean conception of black women as donkeys" as "only one instance of the historic representations of blacks, particularly black women, in

terms of animals," providing a historical account of animalized blackness: "European popular and scientific speculations about the relations between Africans and Europeans generally posed Africans as a questionable form of humanity, ranked along the Great Chain of Being between whites and apes, below fully intelligent life and suspiciously close to lower animals" (Stein 30).

Brian Roberts refers to this historical context with a specific focus on the predatory representation of black males:

"During an epoch when black men could 'assault' white women by accidentally brushing against them, Thomas Nelson Page's book The Negro: The Southerner's Problem (1904) discusses black male's propensity to attack…In response to this perceived black predation of 'white womanhood,' some white Americans adopted an unofficial policy similar to that signed into law by Hoover [to exterminate predatory wolves]. They lynched thousands of African American men from the end of the Civil War and well into the twentieth century." (Roberts 41)

2. According to Rachel Stein, in Tell My Horse, Hurston "emphasizes that black women's social disempowerment is rooted in their conflation with animals" (Stein 32). Hurston writes:

"If she is of no particular family, poor and black, she is in a bad way indeed in that man's world. She had better pray to the Lord to turn her into a donkey and be done with the thing. It is assumed that God made poor black females for beasts of burden, and nobody is going to interfere with providence. . . . It is just considered down here that God made two kinds of donkeys, one kind that can talk." (Hurston 58, qtd. in Stein 32)

3. In Mules and Men, Hurston states, “From the earliest rocking of my cradle, I had known about the capers Brer Rabbit is apt to cut and what Squinch owls says from the house top. But it was fitting me like tight chemise. I couldn’t see it for wearing it” (Hurston 1, qtd. in Roberts 48).

Chapter V

Conclusion: Subverting Otherness Through Zoomorphism

So far, we've considered the ways in which these texts represent certain categories of stigmatized identities—criminal, disabled, and black—emphasizing the perceived animalistic characteristics of those identities. These animalistic characteristics are attributed to the "other" for two reasons: the "other" fails to meet our expectations of human normativity because of a stigma, and the non-human animal is, as Cary Wolfe asserts in *Zoontologies*, "the most different difference" from normative humanity (Wolfe 23). However, all of these texts go beyond simply perpetuating the dehumanized status often attributed to these identities. Instead, these texts demonstrate that these associations between otherness and animality are arbitrary and insufficient: by portraying those characteristics we deem "non-human" as inherently human traits (as we see in Dostoevsky's texts and *Absalom, Absalom!*), by sympathizing with and asserting the value of the animalized human (such as in "The Metamorphosis" and *The Hearing Trumpet*), and by refusing to fulfill expected animal stereotypes (in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*), these texts break down the association between animality and otherness.

I'd like to consider the various ways in which these texts work to trouble this association. We see three different overarching types of zoomorphism. First we have language that describes objectively human characters as having animalistic qualities: this is the most common example because it does not require a fully developed metaphor, although this can certainly function as part of a larger metaphor. We see this, for example, in the description of members of the Sutpen family as "wild," "untamed," and

"vicious," and when Marian's family refers to her as "decomposing flesh." Next there is a transient, metaphoric representation involving the animal form, such as the horse in Raskolnikov's dream or Tea Cake's deterioration into a rabid "dog." Finally, we have actual human-to-animal transformation, which we see in Gregor's "metamorphosis" into an insect, and Anubeth's wolf-human body. These are, of course, not rigid categories, and there is liminal space between them: for example, we might consider Tea Cake's rabies as something resembling actual transformation, and Clytie's description as "some delicate talonless and fangless wild beast" both utilizes animalistic language and perpetuates an ongoing metaphor of animal embodiment. My purpose in outlining these different forms is not to suggest that they have different implications; rather, the varying extent of metaphor speaks to the strength of those implications.

I've considered a number of texts that illustrate a wide variety of metaphoric strength, which gives us a broader idea of how literary zoomorphism of otherness can occur. Of course, there are infinitely more possibilities, but the texts I have chosen demonstrate varying levels of metaphor, vastly different categories of stigma, and different means of applying that metaphor to stigma to achieve a certain result. These different means include those I mentioned earlier—emphasizing the animality of human nature, sympathizing with the animal, and undermining animalistic stereotypes—but these are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. We might also consider the inverted status of humanity and animality throughout all of these texts. *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* portray abused animals sympathetically, while portraying cruel and criminal humans through an animalistic guise. "The Metamorphosis" and *The Hearing Trumpet* also sympathize with "abused animals," though these abused animals

are metaphoric representations of disabled humans; rather than animalizing cruel humans, however, these two texts simply demonize the cruel normative humans of the text. *Absalom, Absalom!*, of all of the texts, most perpetuates animalistic stereotypes, but consequently undermines these stereotypes by attributing animality to humans more generally. Lastly, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* makes this same undermining a more overt concern by setting up similar stereotypes—the black woman mule and the predatory black male—but not allowing those stereotypes to come to fruition.

What these texts have in common, in terms of their zoomorphic representations, is the reversal of expectations. Animality, in these texts, does not work to dehumanize; rather, it works to point out this dehumanization as a phenomenon and criticize the fundamental principles upon which it rests. Further, these portrayals of animality, especially considering these reversals, underscore the arbitrariness and constructed-ness of the human/animal divide. This is especially true of manifestations of hybridity which, to varying extents, are present in all six texts. The hybrid creature is a reasonable representation of stigmatized identities, since individuals with stigma are, as Erving Goffman phrases it, "not quite human" (Goffman 5). The acknowledgment of the liminal space between human and animal, however, troubles what we otherwise consider a rigid boundary between the two. Most of all, these narratives that redeem this liminal space achieve a two-fold triumph: dismantling the human-animal hierarchy that belittles animal subjectivity, and validating the lives of those who have experienced systematic dehumanization.

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