

King of the Universe) remembers his subject; in reminding the subject of his responsibility to receive the spiritual message; and in awakening consciousness of the spiritual sovereign that may enable the subject to realize His kingdom esoterically, in his heart, even in this world.

As well as being read on a level that represents an inner condition of the individual soul, Eine kaiserliche Botschaft may be interpreted as simultaneously showing a certain aspect of 'the world in which we live', the 'outer' counterpart of 'inner' reality. The approach to the story via the concept of remembrance throws this aspect into clear relief<sup>1</sup>.

Like Vor dem Gesetz, Eine kaiserliche Botschaft could be called a 'legend'. In the context of Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer it is introduced as 'eine Sage'. The phrase 'so heisst es', which prefaces the narrative, may be an indication of uncertainty or scepticism; but it also introduces a story or teaching in oral or written tradition, something that has been told and will continue to be retold throughout generations in a particular form. As a 'legend', Eine kaiserliche Botschaft itself, the introductory phrase implies, is being retold like a traditional parable; the use of the second person and the present tense further suggests transmission, from speaker to listener, of the paradoxical message that can never be delivered. This paradox represents the idea of tradition itself as 'hoffnungslos und hoffnungsvoll', just as it does the existential situation of the individual spirit; the story Eine kaiserliche Botschaft becomes a symbol of the tradition to which it belongs, just as it symbolizes the inner state of a person dreaming its message.

Regarding the theme of tradition, the story's spatial imagery may be interpreted in terms of reference to the dimension of time. Each successive

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1. The Jewish critic Walter Benjamin draws attention to the complementary theme of 'forgetting' in Kafka's work, and places it in a Jewish context. See Hannah Arendt (ed.): Walter Benjamin: Illuminations, Fontana, 1973, p.131ff.

human transmitter, as he passes on the tale to the next reader or listener, can be seen as yet another 'chamber' or 'courtyard' in the infinity through which the imperial messenger must pass. On this level, the messenger represents a tradition which transmits a spiritual message that can never be fully communicated or known. Thus the continuity of tradition is 'hoffnungslos', insofar as it can never fully communicate the message of which it speaks (i.e. spiritual truth), while its transmission through infinite repetition seems only to increase the infinite distance between the spiritual source it intimates, and the spirit of the individual to whom it is addressed. It is 'hoffnungsvoll', insofar as it implies that even if the emperor is everlastingly sending his message 'from his deathbed', he may not, as long as the tradition endures, actually have died. (Regarding this last point, however, it is true that Kafka refers to 'die Botschaft eines Toten'.)

Eine kaiserliche Botschaft thus presents religious tradition in an ambiguous light: as a source of enduring hope and a mnemonic of spiritual truth; and as a mediating force which paradoxically obscures truth by intervening between its spiritual source and the soul for which it is intended. Tradition may actually prevent the individual from having direct contact with the 'emperor', although (perhaps misleadingly) it implies the possibility of it. The individual's 'dream' is the closest he can come to personal experience of 'truth'; the only possibility of transcending the limitations imposed upon spiritual experience by the very tradition that is supposed to mediate it must lie along the inward way, whatever the spiritual poverty or impurity of the contemplative 'Du'.

Eine kaiserliche Botschaft, then, represents a certain aspect of 'the world in which we live', as well as indicating the necessity of realizing

the emperor's kingdom in the heart, and the near-impossibility of doing so. Historically, the story was above all relevant to the world in which Kafka lived, his perception of Jewish tradition from a historical point of view, and his acute consciousness of his own position, historical and spiritual, as a Western Jew detached from the tradition and the spiritual security which he so profoundly desired. However, the story does not depict the world of any particular time; as a quasi-traditional legend or parable it may apply to any person, in any age. Addressing the reader in a dimension of time that embraces the contemporary but transcends the merely historical, the story invites him to seek, within the limited possibilities available to him, knowledge of the emperor from whom the message comes. At this point the text of Eine kaiserliche Botschaft reaches towards a mystical depth.

The title does not merely refer to the story's 'content'; it defines the story itself. The story does not merely tell the tale of a message that cannot be delivered; it is, itself, that message. This becomes apparent in the capitalized 'Du', and in relation to the concept of tradition as discussed above: each retelling of the story (as 'recorded' in Kafka's text) can be seen as a progression of the 'imperial messenger' into yet another of the infinite enclosures which he has to pass; with each retelling, the message is passed on to yet another person in the chain of tradition, the reminder of the emperor transmitted to another spirit. Each recipient can pass on the message; but he can never know its secret. In this sense the imperial message can never be delivered, and in this sense it will be carried on ad infinitum.

Thus Eine kaiserliche Botschaft itself is the 'imperial message'. The text is the image or cipher of the spiritual truth which it conceals, but

can never disclose, indecipherable because its essence is a mystery that cannot be communicated in words; real - yet as unknowable as the reality represented by a figure 0. The undelivered message exists, but it 'is not there', like the hollow centre of an onion beneath its superimposed layers. To draw a kabbalistic analogy, at the heart of this text, which is the 'imperial message', there seems to lie a sacred nothing, just as there lies, at the heart of the symbolic labyrinth of palaces and staircases, the emperor upon his deathbed. The labyrinth may be the image of the text, just as the text reflects the inner self. At the heart of the maze (the text), which stands for the inner self, the emperor in death is converted, according to a kind of spiritual algebra, into a mysterious 'nothing'. If this interpretation is acceptable, it is permissible, indeed necessary, to push the kabbalistic analogy to its conclusion: the idea of the dying or dead emperor, the replacement of a 'positive' representation of the Absolute by a negative one, may engender in this story an equivalent to the concept of the holy Nothing known to the Kabbalists as En-Sof - the mystical source of truth which is concealed in written language, but which may perhaps be encountered within the infinite, labyrinthine space of the soul.

Whichever way one contemplates this story, it seems to become the image of an image, the reflection of a reflection. If the reader recognizes in it the image of the self, he can be led 'through the looking-glass' to conceive that image reflected in the 'Infinite', and the 'Infinite' reflected in himself. Although no message can be delivered (for it is an impenetrable mystery concealed hermetically within the text), the story intimates a way to transcendence of the very contradictions it contains, the possibility of an encounter with God at a level deeper than initially meets the interpreter's eye, beyond the text, and beyond intervening tradition. This possibility is indicated, paradoxically, in the image of the emperor on his

deathbed: in order for the spirit to meet 'God', an inner rebirth must occur, preceded by a 'death'. This may mean that the very concept of 'God' that tradition teaches must 'die' or be transcended. Then, perhaps, when even the 'Schein des unvergänglichlichen Feuers' has been discarded, as Kafka not long afterwards wrote in unmistakably mystical language, 'das Betreten des Allerheiligsten' may be possible. (H.104) This conclusion does, indeed, reach far beyond the text of Eine kaiserliche Botschaft; but the seeds of the interpretation are contained within the story, which, at the very least, points towards the more analytical statements on spiritual and mystical themes that Kafka wrote in 1917-18.

It is perhaps unnecessary to suppose that Kafka realized, at the time of writing, the kind of mathematics discernible in the story, or the conclusions that interpretation might reach. The above is not the obvious level on which to approach Eine kaiserliche Botschaft; but given that, not later than January 1922, Kafka saw his own work as 'eine Ansturm gegen die Grenze' with possibilities for the development of 'eine neue Geheimlehre' one must allow the possibility that he himself perceived in this story an image of the deus absconditus hidden in the depths of the self, withdrawn into the infinity of a 'Nothing' that presents no attributes only because it is so far beyond the reach of intellectual knowledge (cf. Scholem, M.T., p.25). Eine kaiserliche Botschaft, with its image of the labyrinth and the potential meanings elaborated above, might justifiably be seen as a literary cousin of a story told by the Baal Shem which Kafka had no doubt read. Its fundamental imagery and idea could have re-emerged from his mind in his own story:

Der Baalschem erzählte: Ein König baute einst einen grossen und herrlichen Palast mit zahllosen Gemächern, aber nur ein Tor war geöffnet. Und als der Bau vollendet war, wurde ver-

kündet, es sollten alle Fürsten erscheinen vor dem Könige, der in dem letzten der Gemächer throne. Aber als sie eintraten, sahen sie: da waren Türen offen nach allen Seiten, von denen führten gewundene Gänge in die Fernen, und da waren wieder Türen und wieder Gänge, und kein Ende stand vor dem verwirrten Auge. Da kam der Sohn des Königs und sah: eine Spiegelung war all die Irre, und sah seinen Vater sitzen in der Halle vor seinem Angesicht. (Buber: B.S., p.10f.)

Another example of the labyrinth in Hasidic imagery is provided by the story Der Irrgang:

Ein König liess zu seinem Schloss einen weiten und vielverschlungenen Irrgang errichten. Wer sein Angesicht schauen wollte, hatte keinen andern Weg als diesen, wo jeder Schritt in die unendliche Wirrnis verführen konnte...(Buber: G.M., p.184f.)

If this quotation is compared with H.117f., their similarity is all the more striking for the fact that Der grosse Maggid was published several years after Kafka wrote in the fourth octavo notebook:

Dein Wille ist frei, heisst: er war frei, als er die Wüste wollte, er ist frei, da er den Weg zu ihrer Durchquerung wählen kann, er ist frei, da er die Gangart wählen kann, er ist aber auch unfrei, da du durch die Wüste gehen musst, unfrei, da jeder Weg labyrinthisch jedes Fussbreit Wüste berührt. (H.117f.)

Not unlike the imagery of an endless maze of chambers and corridors is, thirdly, that of 'door within door' in a text from the Zohar:

Rabbi Judah began a discourse with the verse: 'Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.' ...

Rabbi Simeon said:

The 'gates' mentioned in this passage are the same as the gates in the passage, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates,' and refer to the supernal grades by and through which alone a knowledge of the Almighty is possible to man, and but for which man could not commune with God. Similarly, man's soul cannot be known directly, save through the members of the body, which are the grades forming the instruments of the soul. The soul is thus known and unknown. So it is with the Holy One, blessed be he, since he is the Soul of souls, the Spirit of spirits, covered and veiled from every one; nevertheless, through these gates, which are doors for the soul, the Holy One makes himself known.

For there is door within door, grade behind grade, through which the glory of the Holy One is made known. Hence here

the 'tent door' is the door of righteousness, referred to in the words, 'Open to me the gates of righteousness,' and this is the first entrance door: through this door a view is opened to all the other supernal doors. He who succeeds in entering this door is privileged to know both it and all the other doors, since they all repose on this one.

At the present time this door remains unknown because Israel is in exile; and therefore all the other doors are removed from them, so that they cannot know or commune; but when Israel will return from exile, all the supernal grades are destined to rest harmoniously upon this one. Then men will obtain a knowledge of the precious supernal wisdom of which hitherto they knew not, as it is written: 'And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' (Nahum N. Glatzer: A Jewish Reader, New York, 1969, pp.30-32.)

It would obviously be foolish to press any comparison between this text and Eine kaiserliche Botschaft too far. The kabbalistic text does, however, exemplify features of the mystical text<sup>1</sup> to bear in mind if Eine kaiserliche Botschaft is approached according to the suggestions in the foregoing pages. It gives, first of all, an example of mystical, allegorical exegesis of a sacred text; secondly, it is based on the idea of a God who is 'beyond all ken'; thirdly, it indicates that, insofar as Man is able to communicate indirectly with God, he must seek him through the 'gates' of his own body and soul; and fourthly, it rests upon the assumption that the text subjected to mystical exegesis may provide a key to the 'gates' of the soul, through which God makes himself known. Lastly, the text speaks of knowledge which it describes as unknown, a truth which is inaccessible because of Israel's separation from it in exile.

Eine kaiserliche Botschaft is a text apparently written with the traditional form of the parable in mind, and invites an exegetical reading; it is based on the idea of a God whose word (and being) are 'beyond all ken';

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1. See Scholem, quoted on p.258.

it implies that, if Man can possibly approach God, he must seek Him within himself; it is a text that provides clues to the 'gates' of the soul, if given an esoteric interpretation, for its spatial imagery provides a figurative representation of the spirit wherein lie infinite barriers to contact with God; and lastly, it speaks of a 'knowledge' (the imperial message) which is inaccessible because of the intended recipient's state of alienation or 'exile'. Thus far, it is possible to give a positive assessment of Eine kaiserliche Botschaft according to criteria that take account of the essential features of a Jewish mystical text.

Die Sorge des Hausvaters<sup>1</sup>

In the stories from Ein Landarzt examined so far, a recurring situation is that of persons involved in a state of disorder, or confronted by circumstances of which they fail to make sense. Unexpected or ominous events invade the 'normal' world and the mind adapted to it - ominous in the true sense of an infringement of the 'natural' order that points to a supernatural element behind the scene of the familiar world. The stories imply that the protagonists (albeit, perhaps, 'unabhängig von Schuld') are sinful: in a state of spiritual misunderstanding, their spiritual vision obscured by their own restricting psychological constitution and socialized habits of mind and action. Issued with an invitation, in the form of a confrontation with the ominous, to re-adjust their interpretation of reality, rise to a 'task' or perform a 'redeeming' act, they fail to recognize or use the opportunity to 'change their minds'. They themselves are obstacles on their own spiritual path.

Eine kaiserliche Botschaft presents a variation on this theme in a literary form which engages the reader directly, and somewhat differently from the other narratives, including - notwithstanding the parabolic element - Vor dem Gesetz; however, just as Josef K. in Der Prozess is presented with a parable situation in that story, so the reader, in 'real life', confronts in Eine kaiserliche Botschaft a situation which the narrative technique induces him to experience as his own. He is brought face to face in real life with the mystery or puzzle-message of which the story tells, and which it is. Its 'encapsulation' of the image of the message extends in two directions: inwards, into the heart of the literary structure, and outwards, into that of the reader. The distinction between inwards and outwards is,

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1. Published in the Selbstwehr for Hanukkah, 1919.

however, misleading: the heart of the text actually mirrors the reader's, and there is correspondence, not opposition, between them. The result is that as he interprets the text, the reader finds himself interpreting his own relationship with 'the emperor'.

It can be argued that Die Sorge des Hausvaters operates in a similar way to Eine kaiserliche Botschaft, through an image-based structure that extends both into the text and 'out' beyond it into the reader's situation, refracting onto a non-literary level the interpretation of the enigma at the heart of the text. In juxtaposing these two stories in Ein Landarzt, Kafka possibly intended to accentuate the subtle similarity between them. In both, the reader is presented with a puzzle to solve, or a mystery to contemplate; they themselves intrude into the scene of the 'normal' world, and impose upon the mind conditioned by its ways the exercise of seeking a new perspective. Not the 'Erkenntnis' of a protagonist, but the 'Erkenntnis' of the reader-interpreter is their point; his consciousness of his own situation has to change in reaction to the disturbing stimulus of these stories.

While a comparison between Eine kaiserliche Botschaft and Die Sorge des Hausvaters may illuminate the enigma of the latter- which is undeniably the more puzzling - the hypothesis stated above concerning the artistic intentions behind the two stories fundamentally agrees with the interpretation offered by J.M.S. Pasley:

Kafka wishes to place the reader in this baffling position... as a means of conducting an unusual - though not necessarily perverse - experiment...Is it not possible, he seems to have inquired, that the reader, rebuffed in his search for the objective references and the 'ultimate meaning' of the stories (as something lying beyond and behind them), might nevertheless

find, being thrown back on his private mental resources, some real bond and contact with the human experience embodied there? And if this were so, might it not also entail the conclusion that it was not, after all, disastrous that the 'objective references' of this confusing world (as present in the mind of its Maker) were incomprehensible even to the most carefully inquiring mind? (J.M.S. Pasley: 'Two Kafka Enigmas: Elf Söhne and Die Sorge des Hausvaters', in Modern Language Review, LIX/1, Jan. 1964, (pp. 73-81) p.80)

Pasley's discovery of the genesis of Kafka's semi-private puzzle-stories (Die Sorge des Hausvaters; Elf Söhne; Ein Besuch im Bergwerk) makes them appear possibly more, rather than less, baffling than before. Obviously, Kafka never intended and certainly can never have expected the 'objective references' of these tales to be discovered. He never intended the publication of the Jäger Gracchus fragments, which Pasley has identified as the components of Odradek; and apparently he deliberately concealed the tracks that connect Elf Söhne to eleven other stories (Pasley, ibid., p.75). The discovery of Kafka's secrets creates the problem of deciding whether or not

the reader has hitherto been confronted in these stories with something very like nonsense. They have worn the appearance of symbolic tales, of the kind to which Kafka elsewhere accustoms us, but they have failed to yield up a meaning. They are in effect private messages - or rather non-messages - in a code to which the key has been lacking. (J.M.S. Pasley: 'Franz Kafka: Ein Besuch im Bergwerk', in German Life and Letters XVII/1, Oct. 1974, (pp. 40-46) p.44.)

Faced with this problem it is safer, and logical, to consider that the hidden literal objects to which the imagery of the stories is attached do not indicate their symbolic meaning. Pinned down as the images are to concealed references, they are not necessarily subservient to them, and discovery of these references should not prevent an approach to the stories as symbolic tales. Significance is not necessarily defined by derivation, although this argument is often justifiably used by critics. It is important to define

the significance of the imagery from the artistic structure within which it functions, for its meaning lies as much, if not more, in its contribution to the whole as in its objective origins. If it is possible to achieve an accurate interpretation of Kafka's puzzle stories, it should be substantiated, as opposed to determined, by knowledge of their literary kinship. The following interpretation of Die Sorge des Hausvaters therefore uses facts that are known about the story, i.e. its reference to the Jäger Gracchus fragments, while approaching it in the light of its relationship to themes already distinguished in the Landarzt cycle. Finally, it will be shown that the story's unusual characteristics suggest another sphere of literary kinship - that of the Jewish mystical text.

In Die Sorge des Hausvaters, Kafka again takes up the theme of 'disorder', which is objectified in the baffling form of Odradek. The creature is so remote from any familiar order or category that even his name defies definition, although it admirably reflects his inscrutable essence. Among the meanings attributed to it - on etymological grounds which, the narrator explicitly warns, are fruitless - one is 'kleines Wesen ausserhalb der Ordnung', derived from the Czech prefix od- (- 'von', 'weg', 'ab') and Czech řád (- 'Ordnung', 'Reglement'); to which Czech řad, řádek (- 'Reihe', 'Zeile') adds the meaning of something that cannot be fixed in writing, or that eludes the text. (G. Backenköhler: 'Neues zum 'Sorgenkind' Odradek', in Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie 89, 1970, pp. 269ff.) The name exists; its etymology can be traced; but it sheds no light on the creature. It is

noteworthy that Kafka depicts the enigma as being of public concern, a subject of general controversy. What is significant about Odradek's name is that people in the 'real' world do exactly what the author says they try to do in the story: they think, and say, that the name is of Slavic derivation, and 'auf Grund dessen' try to prove Odradek's nature in etymological terms. Here is an indication of how the story encapsulates a reality external to its textual boundary, and, indeed, of how the text makes reality of fiction: a 'fact' given in the story is realized through the action of readers in the world 'outside'. Through Odradek's name and the narrator's comment upon attempts to decipher it, Kafka points out, besides, that Odradek's 'meaning' lies outside the sphere of objective references, which are uncertain and a subject of constant disagreement. Adducing the Jäger Gracchus relationship, however, we may consider Odradek, via the literary reference, a cipher for Kafka - a supposition which is supported by etymological evidence, the equivalence of the Italian gracchio and Czech kavka (- 'jackdaw'). The 'Wandering Jew' connotations of the hunter favour the suggestions that Odradek's indefinable essence, inaccessible to Slavic- or German-based readings of the name, parallels the problematic and unresolved character of Kafka's Jewish self.

Odradek, then, represents the intrusion of disorder into the psychological 'order' of the house. One may safely suppose that the 'house' is an image of the self as the abode of the spirit, much as the courtyards in Vor dem Gesetz and the infinite spaces of the imperial city in Eine kaiserliche Botschaft can be taken as replicas of the 'labyrinth' of the self. The narrator's house is a more modest version of that inner space; 'das menschliche Leben hat viele Stockwerke' wrote Kafka to Felice (F.263) in 1913; 'jeder Mensch trägt ein Zimmer in sich', begins a fragment (H.55) of

January 1917. The architectural image is not unaccustomed: 'Manches Buch wirkt wie ein Schlüssel zu fremden Sälen des eigenen Schlosses' Kafka had written in 1903; and as the country doctor learned to his cost: 'Man weiss nicht, was man im eigenen Hause vorrätig hat.' The situation in Die Sorge des Hausvaters is perfectly described in this quotation from the title-piece of the collection. Being of much smaller size than the fearsome horses in Ein Landarzt, Odradek is a less powerful or frightening omen of 'the other side' than they; but nevertheless, he is ominous in proportion to his size. He is comparable with the horses in terms of something that is beyond the control of the master of the house; he cannot, like them, carry a person off; but he can confront him as a particle of a self that is spiritually unwhole, an element in the personality that escapes a person in the sense that it is beyond his understanding.

On the level of literary reference, then, Odradek represents the fragmentary story-child (Der Jäger Gracchus) that haunts the literary father's 'house', returning from time to time as successive attempts are made to re-write or complete it. On the level of the recurring 'Erkenntnis' theme of the Landarzt cycle, Odradek belongs to the 'disorder' genus - a visitor whose mere existence hints of a realm beyond the natural and phenomenal world, with which an uncomprehended, uncontrolled and even alien force in the self has mysterious contact. The uncontrolled aspect of Odradek is linked with his homelessness, just as the country doctor's inability to control his horses symbolizes a state in which he can never 'get home.' The theme of inability to die, signifying failure to find salvation (cf. Der Jäger Gracchus), echoes Ein Landarzt too; and as the Hausvater's question, 'Kann er denn sterben?' applies to a creature that apparently represents an unknown part of himself, it may be read as querying his own hopes of redemption and, of course, Kafka's own.

Thus it is clear that knowledge of the relationship between Die Sorge des Hausvaters and Der Jäger Gracchus substantiates conclusions that can be drawn from an interpretation of the story in association with symbolic patterns and themes expressed in Ein Landarzt. Die Sorge des Hausvaters is open to meaningful interpretation independently of its allusion to the Gracchus fragments, and so Kafka must have considered... Knowledge of its partial derivation from the latter adds a new facet to a story which, can, like Odradek, stand upon its own legs as a piece of symbolic writing.

Another theme implicit in the Hausvater's contemplation of Odradek is that of how to describe him. The problem of describing the spiritual world and conveying spiritual truth was one upon which Kafka pondered in the Oktavhefte. The substance of these later reflections is expressed artistically in Die Sorge des Hausvaters; to Kafka the writer, this problem would be an additional level of 'worry' in the story, besides difficulties posed by the Gracchus fragments, and besides the metaphysical implications of the symbolism examined so far, in both stories. Clearly, Odradek's existence points towards a realm where things are possible that are ridiculous in the physical world (cf. H.71f.), a sphere of thought and being beyond the Hausvater's psychological and spiritual reach. Therefore, Odradek can only be approximately and imperfectly described; is he 'er' or 'es', being or thing? It is hard to say accurately even what he seems to be like. The language in which the narrator sets about doing so is correspondingly tentative; definite statements are conspicuously absent, except for negative ones. All that can really be said is,

das Ganze erscheint zwar sinnlos, aber in seiner Art abgeschlossen. Näheres lässt sich übrigens nicht darüber sagen, da Odradek ausserordentlich beweglich und nicht zu fangen ist. (E.145)

This elusiveness may be an allusion to the butterfly which the hunter

Gracchus has become; the butterfly itself may be another ~~image~~ for the soul that is constantly, tantalizingly, beyond reach; but it would be a mistake to see Odradek as a cipher simply for the Gracchus fragments, when he clearly represents the text of Die Sorge des Hausvaters itself. It is hinted here that although the story appears nonsensical, it is also self-contained, or 'sealed up'. The hint may be taken in a positive or a negative sense, dismissed as uninformative, or taken to indicate what this story is: one that does, despite appearances, have a meaning, but one hermetically sealed within a text that apparently defies explanation. Once again, the reference to Der Jäger Gracchus adds a new facet to interpretation of Die Sorge des Hausvaters, without necessarily yielding the meaning of the story. On the contrary, it may even create an illusion of greater meaninglessness: Odradek cannot be 'explained' in terms of Der Jäger Gracchus; his appearance and habits may be illuminated by it, but his meaning cannot. He is more than, and different from, Der Jäger Gracchus, existing on his own terms and in his own right; he is the image of the story that describes him, just as the message in Eine kaiserliche Botschaft represents the text that bears the title. The meaning of Die Sorge des Hausvaters, Odradek symbolically shows, defies the application of extraneous information; it must be perceived through the text itself.

Words cannot describe or identify Odradek. His answers to questions bring no enlightenment. Words yield no wisdom, since truth eludes them. Die Sorge des Hausvaters points to a mystery beyond the reach of language. The Hausvater fails to penetrate Odradek's secret by verbal means, partly, perhaps, because his patronizing attitude engenders an approach and a type of question that are inappropriate to the unknown reality. His paternal role restricts his communications with Odradek, since he sees himself and the intruder according to psychological categories that cannot possibly contain this arch-defier of human construct or conceit. Odradek's defiance of

classification is expressed in his capricious tone and frequent 'wood-like' muteness. He is obedient to the rule of the realm to which he belongs; there, '...hast du die Schwelle überschritten, ist alles gut. Eine andere Welt, und du musst nicht reden.' (T.400)<sup>1</sup>

Die Sorge des Hausvaters, then, is 'mute': it betrays nothing. Sealed up in itself, it points however, beyond itself. Just as Eine kaiserliche Botschaft is the 'message of a message', its meaning concealed in silence at the heart of the text (which corresponds to the heart of the reader), so Die Sorge des Hausvaters is the 'story of a story' which encapsulates a meaning in silence at the heart of both text and reader. As indicated above, the situation described in the text is projected outward into the real-life situation of the reader, who finds his own image reflected back to him from the 'Ich' of the narrator. As in Eine kaiserliche Botschaft, he then finds himself looking into an image of the soul, which is likewise reflected as his own at the point where his vision and that of the Hausvater coincide. He is thus confronted with a mystery that is hidden in his own 'house'.

This casts new light on Odradek's peripatetic habits:

Manchmal ist er monatelang nicht zu sehen; da ist er wohl in andere Häuser übersiedelt; doch kehrt er dann unweigerlich in unser Haus zurück. (E.145)

Literally, this may refer to the return of the Gracchus fragments and theme to Kafka's mind in successive attempts to fashion them into an acceptable whole<sup>2</sup>. In terms of the text as a mirror through which the reader passes to perceive a new dimension in it and in himself, Odradek's migration to other houses represents transference of spiritual reality through the text into the hearts of others. While not in evidence in one location, Odradek will be present elsewhere - but he will always return to 'our' house. The collective indicated in 'unser' may be significant in the following sense:

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1. cf. B.340: Stummheit gehört zu den Attributen der Vollkommenheit.  
H.91: Der Himmel ist stumm...

2. J.M.S. Pasley: 'Die Sorge des Hausvaters' in Akzente XIII/4, 1966, (pp.303-309) p.306.

although the individual (e.g. the Hausvater in the context of the story) experiences periods of apparent abandonment by the dimly sensed spiritual core within him, this will never be final: 'das Unzerstörbare', which is essentially one in all human beings, may be hidden from individual sight and experience for a time, but is still alive in others, and will be restored to the 'house' of the individual, which could be called 'unser Haus' in the sense that it is a microcosmic replica of a communal, macrocosmic spiritual being. (cf. H.96f.)

There is an additional implication in the idea of 'moving house', related to the story's encapsulating structure and what may be called 'reduplication' of the image of the father contemplating the child. This encapsulation and reduplication become complicated, almost labyrinthine in effect, as one level of reference proves to be the reflection of another; the story's imagery is projected 'outward' to embrace the non-literary reality of life, or 'inward' to probe the spiritual reality of the soul, which is reflected at the deepest level and core of the text. Once again, a key may perhaps be found with the Baal Shem:

'...eine Spiegelung war all die Irre, und er sah seinen Vater sitzen in der Halle vor seinem Angesicht.' (Buber: B.S., p.11)

The effect, in Die Sorge des Hausvaters, can be explained as follows.

1) The first-person narrator contemplating Odradek in the story represents, literally, Kafka, the writer-father, observing his story-child. While this 'child' can arguably be identified as Der Jäger Gracchus, Odradek, 'standing on his own two feet' symbolizes Die Sorge des Hausvaters itself. As well as representing Kafka, the first-person narrator functions as a device to place the reader, as it were, in Kafka's shoes. The reader's confrontation by a mystery parallels Kafka's own. 'The reader', obviously, is

a generic term: any reader stands for the community of others occupied with the text. In the context of the Selbstwehr, the text presented its enigma not simply to a community of readers, but to a Jewish community; this must indicate that a Jewish key may fit its lock.

2) Through the eyes of the Hausvater, the line of perspective is extended, and the imagery reduplicated: Kafka was originally reflected in Der Jäger Gracchus, which is now reflected in Odradek. Odradek thus stands not only for his own text, but encapsulates the intermediate text, which had itself encapsulated an image of Kafka. Elements of Kafka are contained both in the Hausvater and in his alter ego, Odradek. In the symbol of Odradek, both text and person are combined. Apparent differentiation is the manifestation of unity; the imagery, subdivided, fuses different references into one. Parallel with its symbolization of Kafka contemplating his work, the story shows him contemplating the mystery of himself; parallel with both images of Kafka, it reflects the reader contemplating the puzzle text and, through it, the mystery of the self.

3) Beyond the almost self-generating chain of meanings that emerges from the imagery of Die Sorge des Hausvaters there lies an indefinable, ultimate core of mystery, which may be equated with the ultimate, indefinable core of the self - the soul, the object of desired Selbsterkenntnis, and increasingly the subject of Kafka's pre-occupation at the time of writing Die Sorge des Hausvaters. The superimposition of levels of symbolic meaning has a mystifying effect, placing the unknown at many removes from the observer, beyond his understanding, or at least his critical ingenuity.

4) If only for the sake of consistency with previous stages of interpretation, the question now arises: who can be the 'father', the 'next of kin' to the soul, in which the mystery comes as close as possible to human experience and observation? As in Eine kaiserliche Botschaft, the story's

central image has been raised to a power where it borders on the infinite. The Hausvater could be the father of the 'House of Israel', and suggest to a Jewish readership the figure of Abraham, apocryphally used as in examples of Jewish legend; but beyond even that, he may be the 'Father' of the House of God, the Master of the Universe. At each successive level, the image of the child observed by the father is repeated; this implies that the reader, as the 'child', is being looked at. He is reminded thus that he stands in the presence of the ultimate Father, and that that mystery, no less, is reflected in his own soul.

The superimposition of meanings in the story's imagery is reflected in the image of the staircase which Odradek haunts. It echoes the 'grosse Freitreppe, die hinaufführt', upon which Gracchus wanders constantly up and down. Here too, the description of 'Odradek' corresponds to a feature of the text. The image may also be interpreted as the spiritual ladder (cf. Jacob's ladder) leading from this world to the divine sphere (cf. the 'ladder' in the imagery of the Kabbalah)<sup>1</sup>, upon which the soul at any moment may be high or low.

Wistfully, at the end of the story, the Hausvater reflects about Odradek:

Sollte er also einstmals etwa noch vor den Füßen meiner Kinder und Kindeskinde mit nachschleifendem Zwirnsfaden die Treppe hinunterkollern? Er schadet ja offenbar niemandem; aber die Vorstellung, dass er mich auch noch überleben sollte, ist mir eine fast schmerzliche. (E.145)

Thus the story ends on a note of profound uncertainty, also seeming to touch on the question of whether Odradek's peregrinations can reach completion - that is, perhaps, salvation. If Kafka is here questioning the likelihood of salvation for himself as 'Wandering Jew' (cf. Gracchus), he is also questioning it on the universal level to which the symbol of Odradek applies.

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1. See p.98.

Besides the thought that the soul must eternally remain an unsolved mystery, the source could also be the thought that the individual's, and humanity's, spiritual imperfection may continue without end.

To sum up: While Die Sorge des Hausvaters is concerned with the theme of a truth withheld from human knowledge, a mystery which the contemplator can approach up to a certain point, but beyond which he will be excluded, it is nevertheless 'hoffnungsvoll' as well as 'hoffnungslos' in a way comparable with Eine kaiserliche Botschaft. Through symbolism that rises far beyond the level of literal reference, to that where the Hausvater and the reader himself represent Everyman, it succeeds in communicating the sense of a fundamental human bond established through the spiritual mystery which is the ultimate and universal reality of human existence. As a literary 'game' it operates on the level of the 'excellent joke' of which Kafka wrote in 1902: 'das Allerheiligste eines Fremden können wir niemals haben, nur das eigene.' (Br.12) In 1917, however, the humour is transposed into a different, more positive perspective:

Das Unzerstörbare ist eines; jeder einzelne Mensch ist es und gleichzeitig ist es allen gemeinsam, daher die beispiellos untrennbare Verbindung der Menschen. (H.96f.)

Die Sorge des Hausvaters can, therefore, be seen as a literary harbinger of the reflections Kafka began to record in his notebooks only months after it was written, and during the period that elapsed until publication of the Landarzt cycle in 1919. As a literary experiment, it is profoundly related to themes which Kafka pursued in his quest for clarification of 'die letzten Dinge' as a Western Jew. Through the form and imagery in which he depicts his own situation, Kafka reaches out in Die Sorge des Hausvaters to the 'family' of humanity<sup>1</sup>. Profoundly Jewish is that vision of existence which

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1. cf. B.295...Ihm ist, als lebe und denke er unter der Nötigung einer Familie, die zwar selbst überreich an Lebens- und Denkkraft ist, für die er aber nach irgendeinem ihm unbekanntem Gesetz eine formelle Notwendigkeit bedeutet...

sees the situation and destiny of individual and community reflected in each other. In this extraordinary story we have the artistic realization of 'Schreiben als Form des Gebetes' (H.348), where prayer ('gleichzeitig Anbetung und festeste Verbindung' - H.53) is a form of communication through which one individual enters into a relationship with others before the uniting mystery that defies human speech. (H.53)

Thus Die Sorge des Hausvaters has communicated, in the similitude of nonsense, profound intimations of the truth that eludes human thought and speech. Our knowledge of its kinship with Der Jäger Gracchus has not been the key to its meaning, for the vital clues to that meaning are contained within the text itself. In providing clues to the story's literal reference, however, the discovery of the Gracchus fragments as a literary source gives substance to an interpretation of Die Sorge des Hausvaters as a symbolic tale. Most important of all, it indicates not only the literal 'object' but the personal experience from which the later story sprang: an experience of rebuff in the literary quest for Selbsterkenntnis and spiritual truth, which are many times removed from the would-be observer of the soul and sealed away, beyond the veil of art and language, in a part of the 'house' to which he has no direct access. (cf. H.93)

There is a Hasidic story which beautifully indicates a niche in Jewish tradition for a text like Die Sorge des Hausvaters or Eine kaiserliche Botschaft. Entitled Der Weg zur Vollendung, it suggests a line of comparison which clearly indicates Kabbalistic affinities in the texts of these two stories:

Einmal wurde der Jehudi ersucht, den dreizehnjährigen Henoch,

seinen nachmaligen Schüler, in der Gemara zu prüfen. Der Knabe musste die ihm aufgegebene Stelle eine Stunde lang besinnen, ehe er sie erklären konnte. Danach legte der Zaddik seine Hand um Henochs Wange und sagte: 'Als ich dreizehn war, erschlossen sich mir schwerere Stellen als diese im Nu, und als ich achtzehn war, galt ich als 'ein Grosser in der Thora'. Aber es ging mir auf, dass ein Mensch mit dem Lernen allein nicht zur Vollendung kommen kann. Ich verstand, was von unserm Vater Abraham erzählt ist: wie er Sonne, Mond und Sterne erforschte und nirgends Gott fand, und wie sich ihm im Nichtfinden die Gegenwart Gottes offenbarte. Mit dieser Einsicht trug ich mich drei Monate. Dann forschte ich so lange, bis auch ich zur Wahrheit des Nichtfindens kam.' (Buber: G.M., p.164f.)

Possibly Die Sorge des Hausvaters actually plays upon the search for the 'Master of the House' by Abraham, 'Erzvater' of the House of Israel; the story is told by M.J. bin Gorgion in Sagen der Juden, II: Die Erzväter, which Kafka probably knew besides the first volume: it is entitled Wer ist der Herr des Hauses? (See the later edition, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1962, p.192f.)

The idea of 'die Wahrheit des Nichtfindens' is relevant to the linguistic problem that Kafka confronted as a writer seeking spiritual truth by means of an instrument that could not disclose it - language. (H.92) He recognized the 'truth' of the soul as impenetrable:

Der Beobachter der Seele kann in die Seele nicht eindringen, wohl aber gibt es einen Randstrich, an dem er sich mit ihr berührt. Die Erkenntnis dieser Berührung ist, dass auch die Seele von sich selbst nicht weiss. Sie muss also unbekannt bleiben. Das wäre nur dann traurig, wenn es etwas anderes ausser der Seele gäbe, aber es gibt nichts anderes. (H.93)

To this he adds: 'Nicht jeder kann die Wahrheit sehn, aber sein.' (H.94)

This distinction between 'seeing' and 'being' the truth is a reminder of the verdict Kafka gave on the Wunderrabbi of Belz in 1916:

Man sieht aber nur aller kleinste Kleinigkeiten und das allerdings ist bezeichnend, meiner Meinung nach. Es spricht für Wahrhaftigkeit auch gegenüber dem Blödesten. Mehr als Kleinigkeiten kann man mit blossem Auge dort, wo Wahrheit ist, nicht sehn. (Br.141f.)

Langer sucht oder ahnt in allem tieferen Sinn, ich glaube, der tiefe Sinn ist der, dass ein solcher fehlt, und das ist meiner Meinung nach wohl genügend. Es ist durchaus Gottesgnadentum,

ohne die Lächerlichkeit, die es bei nicht genügendem Unterbau erhalten müsste. (Br.145)

Truth cannot be found; and precisely the impossibility of finding it confirms 'grace' - that gift of the spirit which spans the gap between man's limited knowledge and being, and the infinity of 'die geistige Welt', enabling him to experience the 'redeeming' influence of a power beyond his grasp. If this conclusion is transferred from the rabbi to a written text, the text's refusal to yield ultimate 'meaning' might lead to a corresponding recognition of grace. This is fundamentally related to the attitude with which the mystic approaches a sacred text:

What happens when a mystic encounters the holy scriptures of his tradition is briefly this: the sacred text is smelted down and a new dimension is discovered in it...The question of meaning becomes paramount. The mystic transforms the holy text, the crux of this metamorphosis being that the...word of revelation is filled with infinite meaning. The word which claims the highest authority is opened up, as it were, to receive the mystic's experience. It clears the way to an infinite inwardness, where ever new layers of meaning are disclosed...

The holiness of the texts resides precisely in their capacity for such metamorphosis. The word of God must be infinite, or... the absolute word is as such meaningless, but it is pregnant with meaning. Under human eyes it enters into significant finite embodiments which mark innumerable layers of meaning. Thus mystical exegesis, this new revelation imparted to the mystic, has the character of a key. The key itself may be lost, but an immense desire to look for it remains alive. In a day when such mystical impulses seem to have dwindled to the vanishing point they still retain a tremendous force in the books of Franz Kafka. And the same situation prevailed seventeen centuries ago among the Talmudic mystics, one of whom left us an impressive formulation of it. In his commentary on the Psalms, Origen quotes a Hebrew scholar, presumably a member of the Rabbinic Academy in Caesarea, as saying that the Holy Scriptures are like a large house with many, many rooms, and that outside each door lies a key - but it is not the right one. To find the right keys that will open the doors - that is the great and arduous task. This story, dating from the height of the Talmudic era, may give an idea of Kafka's deep roots in the tradition of Jewish mysticism. (Scholem; K.S., p.11f.)

The right key, if it could be found, would unlock the secrets of the soul and of the universe.

The image of the key, not surprisingly, is one Kafka used in reference to the writings of Meister Eckhardt. (Br.20) It recurs in 1917, in a little

poem which could well stand as a commentary upon Die Sorge des Hausvaters:

Ich kenne den Inhalt nicht,  
 ich habe den Schlüssel nicht,  
 ich glaube Gerüchten nicht,  
 alles verständlich,  
 denn ich bin es selbst (H.88, 24.11.1917).

What cannot be denied is that Eine kaiserliche Botschaft and Die Sorge des Hausvaters are literary objects of considerable plasticity, capable of opening to receive the interpreter's experience at a profound level of inwardness that is enclosed by numerous superimposed layers of meaning. One might justifiably go so far as to say that they are meaningless - just as Odradek 'erscheint zwar sinnlos'; yet at the same time they are, to use Scholem's term, 'pregnant with meaning'. There is nothing to which they can be compared unless a text which demands mystical exegesis.

Both stories (perhaps Eine kaiserliche Botschaft especially) could be described in terms of

'die Entfaltung des Etwas aus dem Nichts, das Hinabsteigen des Oberen in das Untere.' (Buber: B.S., p.9)

The actual process of writing them could then be considered akin to the work of Creation in which the mystic participates in the divine plan as God's collaborator. (cf. T.225) Kafka saw writing, by 1920, as a form of prayer, a possible means to salvation for himself and redemption for 'the world'; language was thus for him, as for the Kabbalists, a potential source of healing and sanctifying power; and the two stories considered here exemplify how close Kafka's artistic techniques and religious impulses enabled him to approach, on his own ground, to ideas and images of Jewish mystical tradition as he knew it from literary sources. Eine kaiserliche Botschaft and Die Sorge des Hausvaters may reflect the impression made upon Kafka by, for example, 'die Buchstaben sind Kammern des Heiligen, ... durch die Er sein Licht strömen lässt.' (S.A. Horodezky: 'Vom Gemeinschaftsleben der Chassidim,' in Der Jude I 1916-17, p.650),

and

Des Menschen Denken ist sein Sein: wer an die obere Welt denkt, ist in ihr...In Wahrheit ist die obere Welt kein Aussen, sondern ein Innen; es ist 'die Welt des Gedankens'. (Buber: P.N., p.16)

One cannot dismiss the probability that Kafka's experiment with technique in these two stories was related to the sense of spiritual calling to a healing mission, which is a major theme - albeit depicted in characteristically ambiguous light - in the story Ein Landarzt. Since the cycle as a whole bears this particular title, it could be seen as Kafka's response to that sense of 'calling' and responsibility for a spiritual task. In these two 'parables' he adapts a traditional genre to his mode of artistic expression and instructive purposes. After the manner of those teaching stories that baffled the Hasidim, Kafka has contrived - most obviously in Die Sorge des Hausvaters - a form of 'holy nonsense', through which a spark of new understanding (possibly even 'grace') might enter the reader's consciousness and raise it to higher spiritual awareness. If they do present the reader with apparent non-messages, perhaps the real meaning of this is that 'the most sublime mysteries of all' reside in that which is not - and cannot be - written but 'lies submerged in the undefined sea of whiteness which surrounds the letters on all sides'. (Jiří Langer: Nine Gates, p.86)

Since Kafka came to see in his writing the possibility of 'a new secret doctrine', it is fitting to conclude the discussion of these last two stories by quoting in translation a passage from the 13th. century Zohar:

(The Torah) is like unto a beautiful and stately maiden who is hidden in a secluded chamber of a palace and has a lover of whom no one knows but she. For love of her he constantly passes her gate, turning his eyes to all sides to find her. She knows that he is always haunting the palace, and what does she do? She opens a little door in her hidden chamber, for a moment discloses her face to her lover, then swiftly hides it again...

It is the same with the Torah, which reveals her hidden secrets only to those who love her. She knows that he who is

wise of heart daily haunts the gates of her house. What does she do? She shows her face to him from her palace, making a sign of love to him, and straightway returns to her hiding place again. No one understands her message save he alone, and he is drawn to her with his heart and soul and all his being. Thus the Torah reveals herself for a moment in love to her lovers, in order to awaken fresh love in them.

Now this is the way of the Torah. At first, when she begins to reveal herself to a man, she makes signs to him. If he understands, well and good, but if not, she sends for him and calls him 'simpleton'. When he comes to her she begins to speak to him, first from the curtain that she has spread before her words so that they may be suitable to his mode of understanding, so that he may progress little by little. This is called derasha. Then she speaks to him from behind a thin veil of a finer mesh, speaking in riddles and parables, which go by the name of haggadah. When at last he is familiar with her, she shows herself to him face to face and converses with him concerning all her hidden mysteries and all the mysterious ways that have been secreted in her heart from time immemorial. Then such a man is a true adept in the Torah, a 'master of the house', since she has revealed to him all her mysteries, withholding and hiding nothing. She says to him: 'Do you see the sign, the hint, that I gave you at first, how many mysteries it contains?'... (N.N. Glatzer: A Jewish Reader, p.133f.)

Der neue Advokat

The brevity of this story permits it to stand as a preface or prelude to the Landarzt cycle, a function for which it is well suited, since it discreetly suggests the autobiographical and contemporary historical background to the collection, with its accompanying spiritual implications. In Dr. Bucephalus and his association with the illustrious but now non-existent Alexander, Kafka depicts aspects of his own predicament 'bei der heutigen Gesellschaftsordnung', mildly satirizing his own resigned choice of the legal profession, and dropping a comment about his own relationship with his father: 'vielen ist Macedonien zu eng, so dass sie Philipp, den Vater, verfluchen'. In the present day, alas, there is no leader to replace Alexander: 'niemand, niemand, kann nach Indien führen.' No details of Bucephalus' legendary mettle and heroic past are painted; but the contrast between the age of his glory and his drab present is all the more poignant for the story's tone of evocative nostalgia. Disguised under allusions to the Macedonian hero lies Kafka's ironical comment on the theme that was one of his life's chief pre-occupations: the disintegration of Jewish tradition, and his own sense of disorientation as a Western Jew. The new 'solicitor' in his incongruous environment embodies Kafka's sense of cultural and spiritual dislocation, and stands as a symbol of existence in a world that has lost contact with the 'mythical' level of reality:

Vielleicht ist es deshalb wirklich das Beste, sich, wie es Bucephalus getan hat, in die Gesetzbücher zu versenken. Frei, unbedrückt die Seiten von den Lenden des Reiters, bei stiller Lampe, fern dem Getöse der Alexanderschlacht, liest und wendet er die Blätter unserer alten Bücher. (E.125)

'Unsere alten Bücher', the written form of the 'law', must refer on the literal level to the juridical literature with which Kafka was professionally concerned; symbolically, it must refer to the written traditions of Judaism. This dual reference eloquently and ironically evokes the discontinuity be-

tween the religious vitality of the past, and a secular present that is in spiritual decline. The implications of this discontinuity are elaborated in the pronouncedly Judaic context of Ein altes Blatt<sup>1</sup>, towards which the words 'die Blätter unserer alten Bücher' could almost intentionally point; and the allusion of Der neue Advokat to ancient legends about Alexander anticipates Kafka's use of the idea of tradition and legend as part of the theme of spiritual loss and confusion in Ein altes Blatt and Eine kaiserliche Botschaft<sup>2</sup>.

Although Der neue Advokat was apparently influenced by, among other sources, Michael Kusmin's Taten des grossen Alexander (Munich, 1910)<sup>3</sup>, specifically Jewish antecedents exist in the Alexander legends collected by M.J. bin Gorion in Sagen der Juden, I (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1913) which Kafka possessed, and Der Born Judas, III (Leipzig, 1918). Among the many places to which Alexander's journeys brought him were the gates of Paradise<sup>4</sup>. Although Kafka's story does not directly allude to this occasion, it is possible that it disguises the gates of Paradise as the 'gates of India'. This is suggested by what Kafka has to say about them:

Schon damals waren Indiens Tore unerreikbaar, aber ihre Richtung war durch das Königsschwert bezeichnet. Heute sind die Tore ganz anderswohin und weiter und höher vertragen; niemand zeigt die Richtung... (E.125)

The understanding of 'Paradise' under 'India' is certainly consistent with a Jewish reading of the story. It also corresponds with the 'Paradise' theme in the concluding story of the Landarzt cycle, Ein Bericht für eine Akademie<sup>5</sup>;

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1. See p. 204.
  2. See pp.196-198, p.204f., p.235f
  3. Hartmut Binder: Motiv und Gestaltung bei Franz Kafka, p.51.
  4. M.J. bin Gorion: Der Born Judas III, p.154. It is quite possible that the material concerned was separately published by the time Der neue Advokat was written (winter, 1916-17).
  5. See p.278, p.281, p.285f. N.B. 'das ganze riesengrosse Tor'.

and since examination of the manuscript of the latter story proves Kafka's deliberate concealment of this theme in the published version, he would hardly have allowed any reference to Paradise to stand in Der neue Advokat. The inaccessibility of the 'Tore Indiens' (even in Alexander's day) corresponds with Kafka's repeated depiction of the 'Volksführer' whose task is beyond him. It may thus place Alexander alongside Napoleon, the prophets and Abraham as a literary companion of Kafka's circumspect approach to the messianic task. The apparently messianic connotations attached to the image of Alexander on H.87 have been indicated previously<sup>1</sup>; Alexander's reappearance in the Oktavhefte, several months after the story was written, places him in an obviously spiritual context, in which the theme of Paradise is a major one. This may support the view that spiritual matters of a similar kind are introduced into Der neue Advokat, to be treated in greater depth elsewhere in the Landarzt cycle.

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1. See p. 147f.

Schakale und Araber

Schakale und Araber was the first of Kafka's 'Zwei Tiergeschichten' to be published in Der Jude. It appeared in the October issue of Vol. II, 1917-1918, pp. 488-490. The context of the Jewish periodical obviously invites the reading of a Jewish meaning into the story; indeed, Schakale und Araber quite probably originated from Kafka's reading, in Jewish publications such as Der Jude and the Selbstwehr, of articles like some to which the story became a companion: contributions to the cultural and political debate on Zionism, or reports from pioneering settlers in Palestine. The October number of Der Jude for 1917 included, for example, articles entitled 'Die Kleinen Nationen'; 'Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung des Zionismus für die Türkei'; 'Aus einem Jerusalemer Tagebuch'; 'Graetz und das Nationale Judentum', and 'Der Kulturwert des Judentums'. The first-mentioned article, published under the initials M.R. (pp.433-437), makes some points that may be associated with the message of Schakale und Araber, concerning the danger, especially in 'small nations', of 'convictions' being merely a disguise for a nationalistic self-interest which jeopardizes the humanity of others:

Tatsache aber ist, dass uns das einzige...Mittel, irgendeine nationale Frage ohne immanente Lösung aus der Welt zu schaffen, nicht mehr zur Verfügung steht: das ist die Ausrottung des betreffenden Volkes. Bleibt somit nur die Alternative einer Unterdrückung - was zu einer Verkümmern der betreffenden Volksgenossen führt, die sie zu Mitgliedern einer 'Menschheit' ungeeignet macht...(p.435f.)

...Aber in jedem Nationalitätenstaate tritt dies klar hervor: der Staat als Interessenverband ist die treibende Kraft.

An tausend Einzelheiten ist dies zu merken. Am elementarsten bei jenen, deren engere Heimat etwa vom Gegner besetzt ist. Unmittelbar wird dieser dadurch zum 'Feind'. (p.436)

Und dies ist das grösste Hindernis auf dem Wege zur Menschheit: die Überzeugung, dass der Mensch dazu da sei, um seine, wenn auch sogar seine eigenen Interessen zu vertreten. Seine Interessen und nicht Wahrheit, Gerechtigkeit und Liebe, oder wie man auch sagen kann: Gott. (p.437)

If Martin Buber deliberately placed this article and Schakale und Araber in the same issue of Der Jude, it was perhaps because both are to some extent concerned with depicting certain less attractive features of national psychology that were relevant to the contemporary discussion of Zionism. The characteristics of Kafka's jackals suggest that they are a satirical caricature of aspects of national consciousness that came into play in the young Jewish nationalist movement, particularly where re-colonization of Arab Palestine was concerned.

If this is so, Kafka's choice of narrative perspective reflects his own aloofness from Zionist politics: the traveller from the north, through whose eyes the story is told in the first person, is in foreign parts; there is no suggestion of a commitment to either Arabs or jackals, although the latter make resistance difficult, fawning upon the traveller and pinning him down by his coat; if anything, the fact that he is human places him closer to the Arabs, the jackals being an unflattering representation of the Jewish side as unattractive, non-human beings. The narrator is not one of them, any more than Kafka felt himself to be a Zionist<sup>1</sup>; the story is an account by a disinterested observer, and his disinterest throws the jackals' prejudiced motives into clear relief.

Many details in Kafka's portrayal of the jackals suggest that they are a satirical representation of Jews<sup>2</sup>. Their pack-instinct caricatures a sense of national consciousness, just as their appeal to the authority of 'unsere Alten' and 'unsere alte Lehre' caricatures uncritical acceptance of ancient tradition, and a corresponding self-righteousness. Their presump-

1. See p. 61f.

2. E. Torton Beck considers in Kafka and the Yiddish Theatre, p.176, the possibility that Kafka's choice of jackals was based on a pun between the Hebrew words tan- 'jackal' and tana- 'teacher of Mishnah'.

tuous sense of their own place in world history -

'Du bist wirklich ein Fremder,' sagte der Schakal, 'sonst wüsstest du, dass noch niemals in der Weltgeschichte ein Schakal einen Araber gefürchtet hat.' (E.137) -

and their appeal to the traveller as a saviour appointed to 'redeem' them from the Arabs -

'Herr, du sollst den Streit beenden, der die Welt entzweit. So wie du bist, haben unsere Alten den beschrieben, der es tun wird.' (E.138) -

undoubtedly cast an uncomplimentary light on the traditional Jewish expectation of a Messiah who will redeem Israel. The tone of their lament over their state of 'rejection' among the Arabs reads like a parody of the style of the Psalms describing the wicked:

- 'wie erträgst nur du es in dieser Welt, du edles Herz und süßes Eingeweide? Schmutz ist ihr Weiss; Schmutz ist ihr Schwarz; ein Grauen ist ihr Bart; speien muss man beim Anblick ihrer Augenwinkel; und heben sie den Arm, tut sich in der Achselhöhle die Hölle auf. Darum, o Herr, darum o teurer Herr, mit Hilfe deiner alles vermögenden Hände, mit Hilfe deiner alles vermögenden Hände schneide ihnen mit dieser Schere die Häse durch!' (E.139)

The evidence is supported by the jackals' fanatic desire for 'Reinheit', which seems to contradict their own 'unerträglichlicher Geruch' and disdain for any meat but carrion. This unmistakably satirizes Orthodox Judaism's regulation of ritual purity; it also provides a good example of self-interest disguised as a 'religious' value; for the jackals' ideal of 'Reinheit' simply justifies their appetites:

'ruhig soll alles Getier krepieren; ungestört soll es von uns leergetrunken und bis auf die Knochen gereinigt werden. Reinheit, nichts als Reinheit wollen wir.' (E.138)

It also supports their contempt and hatred for the Arabs, who slaughter animals for meat. The ethical dubiousness of the jackals' values is symbolized in the ridiculous ritual object that is produced in the course of their traditional 'Schauspiel' for Europeans, 'einε kleine, mit altem Rost bedeckte Nähschere' for the use of the 'messiah' who is to do the work of extermination for them: the object of their travesty of pious expectation is someone who

will enable them to remain 'pure' as they end the ancient feud by drinking their enemies' blood. Their scorn for the Arabs' alleged lack of intelligence is balanced by their blindness to the contradictions that are so obvious in their own thought and action, another example of which is their flight at the sight of an Arab with a whip, while claiming that never in the history of the world has a jackal feared one; similarly, while deploring the Arabs' foul ways, they cannot resist the carcass of the camel that they bring for them, and forget both their hatred and the whip in their lust for food.

Schakale und Araber is probably best understood as an allegorical exposé of unattractive features of nationalistic psychology in the context of the growth of political Zionism. Kafka caricatures elements of Jewish tradition, in particular the messianic idea and the laws of purity, as factors in a self-righteous group psychology expressed in the mindless chorus of jackals. The story also has a comment to make on the Arab-Jewish conflict, in the words of the traveller:

'Mag sein, mag sein,' sagte ich, 'ich masse mir kein Urteil an in Dingen, die mir so fern liegen; es scheint ein sehr alter Streit; liegt also wohl im Blut; wird also vielleicht erst mit dem Blute enden.' (E.137)

The jackals' attempts to enlist the assistance of any European who comes their way probably also carries political significance.

Kafka's reaction to the story's publication in Der Jude is recorded on H.71; it expresses a mixture of intense pleasure and considerable discomfort, which could well be provoked as much by the Zionist cause so frequently supported in Der Jude as by any feelings of authorial vanity:

...Die Orgie beim Lesen der Erzählung im 'Juden'. Wie ein Eichhörnchen im Käfig. Glückseligkeit der Bewegung, Verzweiflung der Enge, Verrücktheit der Ausdauer, Elendgefühl vor der Ruhe des Ausserhalb. Alles dieses sowohl gleichzeitig als abwechselnd, noch im Kot des Endes. (H.71)

Kafka describes almost a sense of disgust at his own pleasure, and frustration mingled with exhilaration. Possibly the publication of Schakale und Araber in such a respected Jewish organ flattered his insecure sense of Jewishness, but also provoked his determined sense of spiritual independence. Comparison with contemporary notes in the Oktavhefte leaves no doubt as to the distance that separated Kafka's solitary spiritual meditations, and his increasingly esoteric approach to the concepts of 'Kampf' and 'Aufgabe', from the mundaner political interests of Zionism. His recognition of the 'Sinnlosigkeit (zu starkes Wort) der Trennung des Eigenen und Fremden im geistigen Kampf' (H.70) would have made unquestioning allegiance to any partisan attitude an impossibility for him. Schakale und Araber correspondingly seems to be a story - and perhaps a warning, as well as a criticism - of Zionism, written from 'outside'.

Ein Bericht für eine Akademie

Two facts suggest that Ein Bericht für eine Akademie may fruitfully be approached from a point of view that gives priority to Kafka's relation to Judaism. First, the story's publication by Martin Buber in the November issue of Der Jude, 1917/18 (pp.559-565) naturally made it accessible to a Jewish interpretation. Secondly, the acceptability of this to Kafka is suggested by the fact that on 19th. December, 1917, two months after its appearance in Der Jude, the story was read by Max Brod's wife for the Klub jüdischer Frauen und Mädchen. Reviewing the occasion in the Selbstwehr (XII/1, 4.1.1918), Brod interpreted the story as an outstanding satire on Jewish assimilationism<sup>1</sup>.

The validity of this interpretation has subsequently been discussed, leading to contradictory conclusions<sup>2</sup>. The approach taken so far has been too superficial to produce really fruitful argument, for it overlooks the story's profounder aspects. Both occasions when the story was presented

1. H. Binder: 'Franz Kafka and the Weekly Paper 'Selbstwehr'', in LBIY XII, 1967, p.147.
2. W.C. Rubinstein in 'Franz Kafka's 'A Report to an Academy'', in MLQ 13, 1952, pp.372-6, and R. Kauf in 'Once again: Kafka's 'A Report'', in MLQ 15, 1954, pp. 359-65, both see it as a satirical allegory of Jewish assimilationism. This view has been repudiated by G. Schulz-Behrend: 'Kafka's 'Ein Bericht...': an interpretation' in Monatshefte LV/1, Jan. 1963, pp.1-6. Schulz-Behrend states that in answer to his inquiry, Buber wrote that works of artistic literature were not published in Der Jude on account of their Jewish content, 'sondern wenn es mir für meine Leser wichtig schien, sie zu kennen.' If Buber did not see the Jewish implications, can the less practised non-Jewish reader be expected to see them?' Schulz-Behrend adds (ibid., p.3). It may be argued that Buber's reply is ambiguous and non-committal. The fact that the original wording of the inquiry is not given further justifies moderate scepticism. Der Jude stated its policy in each issue:

Die Monatsschrift Der Jude ist ein unabhängiges Organ für Erkenntnis und Förderung des lebendigen Judentums. Ihre Beiträge sind nicht Kundgebungen einer Gruppe sondern Veröffentlichungen der persönlichen Meinung der Verfasser.

The monthly included contributions by non-Jewish authors.

to a Jewish audience belong to the period after September, 1917, when Kafka's illness had been diagnosed and he was setting about re-assessment of his attitude towards matters of life and death, as a Jew. The experience of reading the story in Der Jude<sup>1</sup> may well have encouraged him to let it be read to the Klub jüdischer Frauen und Mädchen. In any case, the story reveals strong thematic links with the private discussion of religious and meta-physical subject-matter pursued in the Oktavhefte during the winter of 1917/18. This is one of the most conclusive points to emerge from analysis of Ein Bericht, and clarifies its place in Kafka's work at this crucial period when his perspective on Judaism was beginning to have a decisive effect on his philosophy of art and choice of literary theme and technique.

An additional matter to bear in mind in approaching Ein Bericht is its relation to the Landarzt cycle within which it finally appeared. As the concluding piece in the collection, it occupies a significant position. It invites comparison and contrast with the story Ein Landarzt itself, and in its capacity as a summing-up of what has preceded it, it comments upon themes and ideas that recur throughout the cycle. An obvious clue to this relationship and function is the symbol of the scars, which invites comparison with the image of the wound in Ein Landarzt. In 'crossing the boundary' between the worlds of monkeys and men, the hero of Ein Bericht für eine Akademie has experienced in one respect a transition from a 'lower' to a 'higher' realm of existence or reality (or **such** would be the human view, at least), and this too invites comparison with the country doctor. The Fall from Paradise, the experience of 'Erkenntnis', and the limitations imposed upon it by socialization, the condition that demands a particular kind of 'Rettung' or 'Heilung' - all these themes connect the story with the title-piece of the collection,

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1. cf. Kafka's letter to Buber upon hearing that the story had been selected, together with Schakale und Araber, to appear in Der Jude (see p.292 ), and the rapture with which he read the latter in Der Jude in October, 1917. (H.71)

as will be elaborated in the following discussion.

The story demands analysis of the relationship between the ape and his audience, and what it represents in existential or metaphysical terms.

Evidently, Rotpeter's 'ascent' to human society invites reference to Darwinian evolutionary theory:

Die Affengeschichte Kafkas beruht auf gewissen darwinistischen Voraussetzungen, ohne die ihre Bildwelt unverständlich bleibt. Diese Voraussetzungen sind, dass wir Menschen nichts Göttliches, sondern besonders hochentwickelte Tiere sind, dass wir uns wahrscheinlich aus dem Affentum entwickelt haben, dass wir für unsere Menschwerdung und Zivilisation einen hohen Preis zahlen mussten - unsere primitive, instinkthafte Freiheit. Dieser Darwinismus steuert dem Bericht Schlüsselbilder und Bildnexus zu.

"Offen gesprochen, so gerne ich auch Bilder wähle für diese Dinge, offen gesprochen: Ihr Affentum, meine Herren, soferne Sie etwas derartiges hinter sich haben, kann ihnen nicht ferner sein als mir das meine."

(Sokel: Franz Kafka. Tragik und Ironie, p.342)

Despite the title of his book, Sokel fails here to indicate the full irony in this statement of Rotpeter's; it may be read as a cryptic suggestion that there is indeed in human nature, notwithstanding the facts of evolution, an element belonging to a level beyond the biological, and as an ironical allusion to Darwinist anthropology, a popular basis for denying a spiritual nucleus in man, according to 'scientific principles'<sup>1</sup>.

Clearly, Rotpeter's story indicates a certain hierarchy and evolution in the nature of things; but there are unmistakable signs that, in this story, neither relates to a merely biological nature of things; the evolu-

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1. It would thereby also be a dig at Kafka's own earlier enthusiasm for Darwinism - cf. Wagenbach: Franz Kafka. Eine Biographie seiner Jugend, p.60f.

tionary ladder of Ein Bericht refers to matters of spiritual ascent and descent. Were it not so, the story would be misplaced in the Landarzt collection, which is so decidedly concerned with themes of spiritual import. Kafka's play on popular, materialist assumptions derived from Darwin's theory throws the spiritual theme of Ein Bericht into subtle relief; for the story draws an implicit opposition between two vastly different levels of interpretation, and two vastly different aspects of human nature. Not only Darwinian associations, but also Biblical ones, are attached to Rotpeter's rise to quasi-humanity, and it will be seen that this combination states the profound ambiguity of the human predicament. Close examination of Rotpeter's story suggests that he occupies a place on the spiritual ladder comparable with that of the Jäger Gracchus,

immer auf der grossen Treppe, die hinaufführt. Auf dieser unendlich weiten Freitreppe treibe ich mich herum, bald oben, bald unten, bald rechts, bald links... (B.102)<sup>1</sup>

Like that of the country doctor, Rotpeter's narrative tells of the crossing of a boundary. His transition, like the doctor's, is marked by the symbol of the wound: while the latter is arrested by the intervention of a mysterious force into his 'normal' reality, and confronted, in his patient's wound, with the symbol of a complex spiritual task which he fails to fulfil, Rotpeter falls victim in comparable manner to hunters from a 'higher' (and, ironically, human) realm; his wounds, too, are associated with the intrusion of an alien force into his 'normal' reality, involuntary removal from the order of the ape world, and the necessity of coming to terms with the reality across the boundary. One vital difference between

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1. It may not be coincidence that Kafka wrote the final version of Ein Bericht just after attempting to revise Der Jäger Gracchus. An additional feature which the two share is the image of the hunt in a spiritual context. Possibly the sea-voyage which follows Rotpeter's capture (or 'fall') can be compared with the marine wanderings of Gracchus. The MS. of the final version of Ein Bericht is contained in the 'second' Oktavheft, after the Gracchus fragment B.334-9.

the two situations, however, is that the doctor, whisked away from the normal world, cannot get home, for all his desperate efforts, while Rotpeter, accepting the impossibility of return, no longer seeks to regain his lost ape-dom. In both stories, the protagonist's 'capture' and wound are linked to the necessity of 'Rettung' or 'salvation'; but another vital difference between them lies in the fact that Rotpeter's wounds have closed, in contrast to the opening up of that in Ein Landarzt. The latter narrates a failure, but Ein Bericht tells of a compromise, success according to one set of values, modified by loss or decline on another. The peculiarity of Ein Bericht is that it is ultimately impossible to say whether Rotpeter's loss of ape-dom represents spiritual loss or gain. Paradoxically, yet consistently with Kafka's observations on spiritual themes in the Oktavhefte, it seems to represent the simultaneity of both - and the simultaneity of a 'sinful' state and, possibly, spiritual growth. Even this conclusion, however, has to allow for the irony with which Kafka's imagery communicates religious ideas in this story.

The spiritual connotations of 'Rettung' in Ein Landarzt have been examined. The story of the ape's survival contains distinct hints of a similar, metaphysical level of reference, for example:

Die Affennatur raste, sich Überkugelnd, aus mir hinaus und weg, so dass mein erster Lehrer selbst davon fast äffisch wurde, bald ~~den~~ Unterricht aufgeben und in eine Heilanstalt gebracht werden musste. (E.163)

One might see in this 'cure' a reversal and parody of the situation in the Biblical story of the Gadarene swine, where unclean spirits are expelled, through Christ's miraculous healing, from man into beast. Here the success of human teaching brings advancement to the ape, but reduces the man to a sub-human condition. The human victim of Rotpeter's improvement is, admittedly, discharged from the 'Heilanstalt' to which he is taken; neverthe-

less, his plight contains an unmistakable hint that 'Affennatur' stands in this context for a condition from which **Man**, like Rotpeter himself, must be healed or 'redeemed'. The implicit irony upon the popular Darwinist theory contributes to this reading: the notion of a biological nature inherited by **Man** from the apes is subtly played upon so as to point towards the very concept that Darwinism helped to dislodge from Western thoughts: the Biblical concept of **Man's** inherited spiritual imperfection, and the consequent necessity of 'Heilung' or 'Heil' - redemption.

So far, Ein Landarzt and Ein Bericht are comparable as stories which use related categories of imagery to express related spiritual meanings. Variations on the common symbolism, however, help to indicate the latter story's different perspective on the basic theme.

The doctor fails to heal his patient's wound, and this symbolizes his failure to become 'whole' himself, associated with the impossibility of the divided personality's return to the state symbolized by the 'home' he strives to regain. Rotpeter's wound, on the other hand, has healed into a scar, of which he is openly proud, and is associated with the 'Ausweg' he has achieved: he has renounced all aspiration to return home or to preserve his 'Affennatur', has accepted the impossibility of freedom, and has been successful in the supposedly higher sphere (the human world) which he has entered. He seems to maintain a personality admirably well-balanced for one in his position. While the country doctor's story is that of a man who fails to be transformed spiritually, Rotpeter's is that of a surprisingly successful transformation - but it is ambiguous, and undeniably grotesque. It treats the theme of 'Erkenntnis' with precisely this ambiguity.

On the subject of Rotpeter's metamorphosis, it is possible to criticize

Sokel's interpretation:

Er ist ganz das, was er geworden ist, so dass er sich an das, was er einst war, nicht mehr erinnern kann. Seine Metamorphose war erfolgreich, weil sie ihn zu einem integrierten Ich, zu einem in jedem Sinne 'neuen Menschen' gemacht hat...Der Affe hat äußerlich dieselbe Gestalt wie vorher, aber innerlich ist er verwandelt, Angehöriger einer anderen Art und Gattung geworden. (Sokel: Tragik und Ironie, p.330f.)

Although Rotpeter stands as a particular symbol of Man or a human predicament, to suggest, like Sokel, that he is a 'new man' or a fully integrated personality, is to overlook the ambiguity of his condition on both literal and symbolic levels. He is neither fully ape, nor fully human. This ambiguity is apparent in his habit of removing his trousers to display the scar of which he is so proud. The vehemence of his reaction against the 'zehntausend Windhunde, die sich in den Zeitungen über mich auslassen: meine Affennatur sei noch nicht ganz unterdrückt', seems psychological evidence that his 'Affentum' has perhaps not been as perfectly repressed as he would like - or at least, that it has not been totally integrated into his 'higher', acquired human personality. His protest:

Ich, ich darf meine Hosen ausziehen, vor wem es mir beliebt. ...Würde dagegen jener Schreiber die Hosen ausziehen, wenn Besuch kommt, so hätte dies allerdings ein anderes Ansehen und ich will es als Zeichen der Vernunft gelten lassen, dass er es nicht tut (E.156f.) -

might be read as a justification of indisputably apish behaviour, and Rotpeter's claim that it is permissible in his case precisely because he is not a human being like others. This would be an unconscious contradiction of his claim to have overcome his 'Affennatur' completely; and insofar as 'Affennatur' symbolizes an inherited spiritual imperfection in human nature, the contradiction would add to the overall ambiguousness of Rotpeter's symbolic personality and situation. This quality will be explained in further discussion. '...kommt es auf Wahrheit an, wirft jeder Grossgesinnte die allerfeinsten Manieren ab,' (E.156) states Rotpeter by way of further self-justification. 'Wahrheit' is a theme that must be taken seriously.

Relating to a spiritual reality which the individual must recognize, the scar's association with 'truth' is comparable with the similar function of the wound symbol in Ein Landarzt. Yet the association here is no more straightforward than in the latter story. Rotpeter's uninhibited removal of his trousers may indeed suggest, conversely, the constraints imposed by civilization upon men's regard for higher truths. Nevertheless, it rates in human terms as indecent exposure, and bears the implication of guilt associated (as in the Genesis story) with the revelation of sexuality. This, too, echoes the Landarzt theme. It may be less evident, but is nonetheless present, in Ein Bericht, and is suggested again through the allusion to Rotpeter's relationship with his chimp mistress:

Komme ich spät nachts...nach Hause, erwartet mich eine kleine halbdressierte Schimpansin und ich lasse es mir nach Affenart bei ihr wohlgehen. (E.164)

Here the 'old Adam' in Rotpeter is betrayed: socially, he has become acceptable to the human world (as a show personality), but despite his remarkable advance he remains, beneath his clothes, physically an ape. His 'Rettung' is incomplete so far as sexual instincts are concerned. His displeasure with his mistress may be read, consistently with the previous instance, as psychological evidence of his failure to fully integrate his 'Affentum' (or his ape's body) with his superficially human personality (or mind):

Bei Tag will ich sie nicht sehen; sie hat nämlich den Irrsinn des verwirrten dressierten Tieres im Blick; das erkenne nur ich und ich kann es nicht ertragen. (E.164)

The sight of his mistress in daylight cuts too near the bone, she represents an aspect of Rotpeter that he has repressed and is unwilling to recognize. She reflects an image of himself as a 'confused, trained animal'. In essence if not degree, this is his condition, and he does not like to be confronted with the fact, any more than he likes the implications of his name ('förmlich von einem Affen erfunden'): that he differs only through the scar on his

cheek from 'dem unlängst krepiereten, hie und da bekannten, dressierten Affentier Peter.' Although it is difficult to reach a final judgment on this point, Rotpeter's perception of truth seems to have been affected as much as that of the average person by acquisition of the social refinements and mental habits of the human world; certainly, he is reluctant to see himself as he really is. He has been cut off from the 'truth' of ape-dom, and retains mainly a sense of its defects.

The theme of alienation from the 'truth' of one's nature, and simultaneous experience of its defects, implies the concept of guilt, and approaches the familiar Old Testament theme of the Fall, which is discreetly expressed at the heart of this story. Rotpeter's removal of his trousers, and the context in which attention is first drawn to his clothes, is perhaps related to this theme. His acquired habit of wearing clothes after entering the 'higher' human world suggests association with Adam and Eve's recognition and covering of their nakedness after eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The scar that he displays may, then, allude to man's sinful state, as brought about by partaking of that fruit. It is with particular emphasis that Kafka draws attention to the association with 'guilt' in the symbolic wound:

man wird dort nichts finden als einen wohlgepflegten Pelz und die Narbe nach einem - wählen wir hier zu einem bestimmten Zwecke ein bestimmtes Wort, das aber nicht missverstanden werden wolle - die Narbe nach einem frevelhaften Schuss. (E.156)

The 'bestimmter Zweck' of this choice of vocabulary is characteristically unexplained: it is left to the reader to detect. It is surely that of disguised allusion to the theme of the Fall as the background to Rotpeter's scar; 'Frevel' is Luther's biblical term for fallen Man's guilt, e.g. in 1 Mose, 6:11, 13. It is important that he himself was not responsible for the 'frevelhafter Schuss'; but its effect is to show him, in Kafka's latter phrase, as 'sündig..unabhängig von Schuld'. (H.101) This is consistent with the interpretation of the scar as a spiritual blemish, and with the depiction of Rotpeter's claim to have found 'Rettung' in a supremely ambiguous

light: the achievement of an 'Ausweg' and apparent integration into human society represent ascent on the human and social scale but, simultaneously, decline on the spiritual scale.

Bluma Goldstein, in 'A Study of the Wound in Stories by Franz Kafka', in Germanic Review 41, 1966, pp. 202-217, takes Kafka's analysis of his own 'wound' (T.379) as a clue to interpretation of the wound symbolism in his stories. She concludes that

the ability to commence on one's way would seemingly require the intention to attend to the world within, to one's interior sensibilities; and this may be accomplished by passing through that laceration...whose exterior is inflamed by contact with life and whose very depth is the justification of that existence. The wound is then a painful separation and coalescence of sense and soul, and, if there is to be any hope for vitalization, it seems that one would have to include both of these aspects in one's being and life. (p.203)

Rotpeter, she concludes,

has indeed by finding a 'way out' voided that break and separation in his whole existence which was symbolized in the wounds which caused this rupture. (p.205)

His scars symbolize the achievement of 'ein Ausweg' which, from one point of view, is a successful adaptation to necessity and the impossibility of return to the world of 'Affenwahrheit' and primaeval freedom. From another point of view, however, they symbolize the closing of the passage that originally connected that world with the scene of Rotpeter's present existence ~~across~~ 'the boundary':

Der Sturm, der mir aus meiner Vergangenheit nachblies, sänftigte sich; heute ist es nur ein Luftzug, der mir die Fersen kühlt; und das Loch in der Ferne, durch das er kommt und durch das ich einstmals kam, ist so klein geworden, dass ich, wenn überhaupt die Kräfte und der Wille hinreichen würden, um bis dorthin zurückzulaufen, das Fell vom Leib mir schinden müsste, um durchzukommen. (E.155)

The image of the hole too small to pass through parallels that of the closed wounds, and is reminiscent of the New Testament statement that it is

easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man (one with many material, social and cultural endowments, whose spiritual sense has become dulled by his acquisitions) to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Rotpeter's successful establishment in human society, his material well-being, his acquisition of language in particular, knowledge, habits of rational thought - in short, 'die Durchschnittsbildung eines Europäers' - have alienated him from the 'Affenwahrheit' in which he previously lived, but can no longer recall. Thus he fails to realize that his contempt for the performance of human acrobats as 'Verspottung der heiligen Natur' is equally applicable to himself in his role in the variety theatre. If the words are taken literally, they obviously refer to an offence committed against an essence in the being of man or ape that is truly 'heilig'.

On the human level, 'die Durchschnittsbildung eines Europäers' may be seen as contributing to 'die Enge des Bewusstseins' that society demands (B. 298), and to man's alienation from spiritual truth, debarring him from fulfilment of his spiritual task, and from 'salvation'. On one level, Rotpeter's scars represent the successful 'healing' achieved through his 'Ausweg', and the triumph of instinct for survival; on the other hand, they represent the sealing of the passage through which spiritual truth and 'Heil' could be sought, and a condition which precludes the necessary symbolic 'death' of the self and the fulfilment of 'Erkenntnis'.

Thus the wounds are associated, as Bluma Goldstein suggests, with the theme of the divided self - a division represented as an unresolved opposition of body and spirit. Ein Bericht depicts, in the simian body and human mentality of Rotpeter, the state of division that follows expulsion from the innocent existence of 'Paradise' or 'Affenwahrheit', and the

vanishing of primaeval knowledge of spiritual truth. This is the theme of the Fall, which is pondered so intensely in the Oktavhefte that were begun soon after the stories in the Landarzt collection (including Ein Bericht) were written. Rotpeter's condition, in its characteristically profound ambiguousness, is illuminated by H.101:

Wir sind nicht nur deshalb sündig, weil wir vom Baum der Erkenntnis gegessen haben, sondern auch deshalb, weil wir vom Baum des Lebens noch nicht gegessen haben. Sündig ist der Stand, in dem wir uns befinden, unabhängig von Schuld.

The idea of Rotpeter's 'sinfulness' is supported by two additional images in Ein Bericht. The first is that of the giant snakes which are among his travelling companions in the Hagenbeck steamer, perhaps symbolic, as in the Old Testament, of the temptation which is the prelude to the Fall. Rather than attempt to escape and choose the probability of death, Rotpeter, it is implied, is following an unavoidable temptation in choosing the alternative, denying his ape nature and seeking entry into the human world. Again, he can hardly be blamed for following his instinct to survive, and here, too, is surely 'unabhängig von Schuld'. The option he has chosen culminates in his mastery of the brandy-bottle. This development is significantly described in the account of Rotpeter observing his instructor:

er nickt, zufrieden mit mir, und setzt die Flasche an die Lippen; ich, entzückt von allmählicher Erkenntnis, kratze mich quietschend der Länge und Breite nach, wo es sich trifft; er freut sich, setzt die Flasche an und macht einen Schluck; ich, ungeduldig und verzweifelt, ihm nachzueifern, verunreinige mich in meinem Käfig, was wieder ihm grosse Genugtuung macht. (E.161; my underline.)

The sailor continues the work of temptation. Rotpeter's gradual understanding of what is happening, and his desire to emulate him, are described in terms of 'Erkenntnis' accompanied by pollution. This second image suggestive of 'sinfulness' hints of an association with the eating of the forbidden fruit of the 'Baum der Erkenntnis', which led to the expulsion from

Paradise. Rotpeter's sudden acquisition of speech marks his entry into the alien 'Denkkreis' symbolized in the liquor<sup>1</sup>, and his inevitable separation from the innocence of 'Affenwahrheit'. His inability to recall his 'Äffisches Vorleben', seen in connection with his acquisition of human language, indicates Kafka's now familiar theme of the inadequacy of language to convey spiritual reality, recognition of which it may even prevent. (cf. Ein Landarzt, Ein altes Blatt, Die Sorge des Hausvaters, H.72, H.92). Thus, instead of furnishing the information requested of him, Rotpeter can offer only an account of how he became human, the history of his socialized personality. To expect more is to demand explanation of a mystery that is hidden in an inaccessible past; the 'hohe Herren von der Akademie', like Rotpeter's first teacher - 'Er begriff mich nicht, er wollte das Rätsel meines Seins lösen' - receive no more enlightenment than a caricature of themselves in his person. Yet, Kafka hints in Rotpeter's words, if his audience read between the lines, they may find hints of something 'ausserhalb der sinnlichen Welt' shimmering through his speech, for example:

Offen gesprochen, so gerne ich auch Bilder wähle für diese Dinge, offen gesprochen: Ihr Affentum, meine Herren, soferne Sie etwas Derartiges hinter sich haben, kann Ihnen nicht ferner sein als mir das meine (E.155);

and 'In eingeschränktestem Sinn aber kann ich doch vielleicht Ihre Anfrage beantworten.' (E.155) Discreet ironies like these are hidden signposts to interpretation of Rotpeter's report, drawing attention to its expression 'in eingeschränktestem Sinn'<sup>2</sup> of a meaning that cannot be directly conveyed.

An extension of this irony lies in the story's title, and the play upon

1. cf. Ein Landarzt, E.128.
2. Kafka's attention to this phrase is evident from MS. alterations: see p. 286, para. 2. The stages by which he selected the superlative suggest his concern to hint precisely at the significance behind Rotpeter's report.

the concept of knowledge. The 'Kenntnisse' which Rotpeter is pleased to spread, and the 'Eindringen der Wissensstrahlen von allen Seiten ins erwachende Hirn' that gives him such satisfaction, pale into insignificance beside the 'hidden knowledge' that cannot be revealed. Possibly Kafka found a stimulus for the ironical treatment of 'knowledge' in the article by S.A. Horodezky in Der Jude, 1916/17:

Eine wahrhaft grosse Weisheit, eine grosse Kunst ist es, wie ein Tier zu sein, einfaltsvoll, ohne Klügelei (S.A. Horodezky: 'Vom Gemeinschaftsleben der Chassidim', in Der Jude I, 1916-17, p.655)

and in Rabbi Nachman's prayer:

Lass es mir vergönnt sein, dir in Wahrheit, in Einfalt und vollkommener Einfachheit ohne jegliches Wissen zu dienen. Hüte mich und verschone mich in deinem grossen Erbarmen vor Forschungen und fremden Wissenschaften (ibid., p.656).

Central to Ein Bericht is the question of the relationship between ape and Man. The element of satire on human society hardly requires emphasis; nor does that of caricature, which takes literally the idea of 'jemandem nachhaffen' in choosing the ape among men as its protagonist. The ironical reference to Darwinist ideas has been mentioned. Altogether, discussion so far has shown how Rotpeter's account of himself reveals, at a deeper level, an image of the existential situation contained in the Old Testament concept of the Fall.

The manuscript fragments of Ein Bericht have interesting evidence to offer concerning the relationship between Rotpeter and his readers.

The first fragment suggests that the initial plan for the story was associated with the imagery of Auf der Galerie and Erstes Leid, drawn from

the world of the circus and show-business. This imagery is retained in the final version insofar as Rotpeter's successes have been scored in the variety theatre; but it is subordinate to the cryptic theme of the Fall and 'Paradise lost'.

More significant is the gradual change of narrative perspective from the first fragment to the final version. The form of the story is altered from the first-person report of a human narrator who goes to interview Rotpeter, to Rotpeter's autobiographical statement. The chief result of this alteration is removal of the opposition between ape and human in the depiction of an encounter between them. Instead of seeing the ape as non-human, through the eyes of a fellow human, the reader perceives the reverse: the ape's angle on the non-ape world. The reader is thus confronted with the human situation from an unfamiliar point of view, and, in the humanized ape, with an unfamiliar reflection of human nature.

This presentation introduces sophisticated irony into the narrative, as Rotpeter no longer sees straightforwardly through ape's eyes, but as one who has become alienated from his 'sacred nature' to the point of claiming quasi-human identity and status. The opposition between man and ape is thus deliberately blurred, and the distinction between them placed in an ambiguous light. The reader is twice-removed from the secure, familiar reference-point of the normal human world, and drawn into the psyche of the ape, with its imperfectly resolved combination of ape and human manners and values. Through this reversal, Kafka achieves a curious bi-focal effect, in which both ape and man are presented in an ironical and ambiguous light, each reflecting the other, yet producing a conflict of perspectives.

As in Eine kaiserliche Botschaft and Die Sorge des Hausvaters, Kafka uses in Ein Bericht a 'mirror' technique, which induces in the reader recog-

nition of his own situation, reflected in the text. An obvious distinction between the two shorter stories and Ein Bericht lies in the latter's presentation of the existential theme in the guise of mild satire. All three examples, however, are similar insofar as their sphere of reference extends into the 'real' world of the reader, not merely in terms of thematic content, but in terms of the manner of presentation. The texts confront the reader as objects to be deciphered. Just as he is presented in Eine kaiserliche Botschaft with an actual 'message', rather than simply an image of one, and in Die Sorge des Hausvaters with a real riddle, rather than simply a story of one (and in Ein altes Blatt with an 'authentic' fragment of manuscript), so in Ein Bericht an 'authentic' document is submitted for his interpretation. Not only is the reader presented with the similitude of an authentic document; he is also made to ponder (as in the other stories mentioned) over something from 'outside' the natural and normal order, so that his attention is drawn to an incommunicable truth lying beyond it, a metaphysical truth about the human world and human nature.

It is interesting that passages in the preliminary fragments for Ein Bericht, which made the comparison and contrast between man and ape fairly explicit, were omitted from the final version, as if deliberately to veil the metaphysical theme and throw the reader back on his own interpretative resources (as well as to reduce opportunities for seeing himself as separate from his ape counterpart). These omissions include passages in the final manuscript draft that relate unmistakably to the theme of Paradise lost, and the need for an 'Ausweg' from the resulting situation. The relevant alterations are as follows<sup>1</sup>:

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1. The following quotations from MS. Bodleian, Heft D are made by kind permission of Schocken Books, New York. Words omitted from, or added to, the final version of the story in Kafka's amendments of the manuscript have been underlined.

- 1) War mir zuerst die Rückkehr, die geistige allerdings nur, freigestellt durch das ganze riesengrosse Tor, das der Himmel über der Erde bildet...

has been altered in the final version to:

War mir zuerst die Rückkehr, wenn die Menschen gewollt hätten, freigestellt durch das ganze Tor, das der Himmel über der Erde bildet...

- 2) In anderem, viel geringerem Sinne jedoch kann ich doch Ihre Anfrage beantworten

has been altered first to

in eingeschränkterem Sinne...

and in the final version to

In eingeschränktestem Sinn aber kann ich doch vielleicht Ihre Anfrage beantworten.

- 3) After

...auf welcher ein gewesener Affe in die Menschenwelt eingedrungen ist und sich dort festgesetzt hat

the final version omits the following sentence:

Ergibt sich dann vielleicht, dass alle vom Tore des Paradieses ab diesen Weg eingeschlagen haben, einer früher, einer später, desto besser, desto schlimmer dann: und wir liegen uns alle in den Armen.

- 4) After

...angedrückt an eine Kistenwand

the following sentences are omitted in the final version:

Menschen haben mehr Möglichkeiten als ein Affe. Wird ein Mensch eingesperrt, empfindet er es nicht einmal als unvergleichliche Veränderung, denn in seiner Wohnung hat er sich selbst schon alle Nächte seines Lebens eingesperrt, vor allem ~~aber hat~~ über die Auswege des Geistes, er schleicht sich auf dem geistigen Weg aus seiner Zelle. Der Affe hat nur den Ausweg, der durch das Fallgitter geht; sein Ausweg ist also nur einfach, viel bedeutungsvoller als der körperliche Ausweg des Menschen, der Affe ist vielmehr auf Ja und Nein gestellt als der Mensch, gelingt es ihm auszubrechen,...

These alterations contribute to the effect of bi-focal and conflicting perspectives in Ein Bericht, and the resulting ambiguity; they also help to

achieve closer integration of the ape's functions as, on the one hand, a caricature of social man and, on the other, an image of a human existential situation. By removing all explicit comment on the theme of Paradise lost, and leaving it for the reader to discover unprompted, Kafka allows the story's different themes, implications and levels of meaning to combine into an artistically balanced whole, each area of significance being both suggested and offset by the total context. Most important, he enables the effect of ambiguity to come into play. Rather than being presented with an allegory or parable, an extended metaphor or simile, the reader confronts, in Rotpeter, 'das Rätsel meines Seins', i.e. his own.

The riddle is such that it is impossible for the interpreter to decide quite where Rotpeter stands on the ladder of being - 'die grosse Treppe, die hinaufführt', in the words of Gracchus. (B.102) This feature owes much to Kafka's expression of the spiritual theme in Ein Bericht through caricature and ironical portrayal of human nature and society. From one point of view, Rotpeter is a relatively successful hero, who to a surprising degree overcomes the restrictions imposed by his circumstances. He must be credited with having transcended 'Eigensinn' in a way uncommon, if not unrepeated, in any other of Kafka's stories. Yet, on the other hand, he has - through no fault of his own - sacrificed the spiritual truth of 'Affenwahrheit' and primeval existence. If he has achieved the 'Ausweg' symbolically witnessed in his scars, he has not (and how could he?) overcome the 'Affennatur' which hints symbolically of spiritual imperfection. He, and, by analogy, we ourselves represent in our present life 'Verspottung der heiligen Natur'. Unfortunately, as Rotpeter illustrates, such mockery may be the only means to survival in the human world. While Rotpeter is successful in one respect, he is 'sinful' in another. While on the one hand he is a caricature of the 'average European' (or, according to Brod's interpretation, of the Western Jew assimilated into an

essentially alien society), he is also a more general, comic image of Man expelled from Paradise, sinful by his very nature, in the sense that he is alienated from the source of something holy in himself. According to conventional wisdom, Rotpeter's transition from the world of apes to that of men is an advance up the evolutionary ladder; but ironically superimposed upon his achievement (and Darwinist views of the relationship between Man and ape) is the symbolic image of man, alienated through socialization, mental habit, and verbal thought and communication from incommunicable spiritual truth. He represents Man, trapped without escape, between biological and social necessities on the one hand, and an inaccessible, metaphysical reality that he 'cannot remember' on the other.

Thus Ein Bericht für Akademie seems to be related to Der Jäger Gracchus through the idea of an indeterminate or unstable position on the spiritual ladder. Is Rotpeter's position high or low, or can it be defined at all? At home in the human world (or, at least, in the fringeworld of the variety theatre), he is captive in a position that is outside 'truth', whether the truth of 'Paradise' from which he was removed, or one that might, hypothetically, be found at whatever 'higher' level of existence supersedes the human.

Rotpeter's autobiographical account anticipates in narrative form and imagery the theme of some of Kafka's later reflections in the Oktavhefte, representing as it does a condition of sin that is 'unabhängig von Schuld'. The Oktavhefte offer suitable comment upon this condition, one in which, Rotpeter makes quite clear, 'freedom' is no option, and only an 'Ausweg' can be achieved:

Ein Ausweg läge darin, dass das Erkennen als solches Trost ist. Man könnte also wohl denken: Du musst dich beseitigen, und könnte sich doch ohne Fälschung dieser Erkenntnis aufrecht

erhalten, am Bewusstsein, es erkannt zu haben. Das heisst dann wirklich, an den eigenen Haaren sich aus dem Sumpf gezogen haben. Was in der körperlichen Welt lächerlich ist, ist in der geistigen möglich. (H.71f.)

Rotpeter deserves credit for realizing the need to 'overcome himself', ridiculous as it may make him look in some respects:

Ich hatte keinen Ausweg, musste mir ihn aber verschaffen, denn ohne ihn konnte ich nicht leben. Immer an dieser Kistenwand - ich wäre unweigerlich verreckt. Aber Affen gehören bei Hagenbeck an die Kistenwand - nun, so hörte ich auf, Affe zu sein. (E.158)

Taken as comment upon the somewhat grotesque figure and accomplishments of Rotpeter, the above passage from the Oktavhefte casts an appropriate ray of compassion and, indeed, modest hope, on what Rotpeter represents upon the human plane. He, who has preserved 'innere Ruhe' in the midst of his trials, and modesty in his sense of achievement, symbolizes a human situation to which one must be reconciled without complaint, even though it may be impossible to find full contentment. Above all, Rotpeter reminds us, he stands in a predicament upon which no-one, whatever his claims to knowledge, should presume to pass judgement:

Im Übrigen will ich keines Menschen Urteil, ich will nur Kenntnisse verbreiten, ich berichte nur, auch Ihnen, hohe Herren von der Akademie, habe ich nur berichtet. (E.164)

The final conclusion upon this story can be made by contrasting it once more with the title-piece of the cycle which it concludes. While Ein Landarzt depicts the initial, traumatic experience of Erkenntnis, and failure to respond adequately to it, Ein Bericht conveys wry acceptance of the limitations imposed upon man's spiritual being and experience by social conditioning, as well as by metaphysical factors beyond his control. While Ein Landarzt

\*shows a man's betrayal of his 'task' through inadequate reserves of spiritual strength, Ein Bericht, although not denying Man's responsibility, seems to accept that scope for action is limited. There may be implicit criticism in it of deterministic views such as might be established upon Darwinist principles; but in Rotpeter's words, Kafka presents a sceptical view of claims that might be made for any concept of absolute freedom or free will:

Oft habe ich...irgendein Künstlerpaar oben an der Decke an Trapezen hantieren sehen. Sie schwangen sich, sie schaukelten, sie sprangen, sie schwebten einander in die Arme, einer trug den anderen an den Haaren mit dem Gebiss. "Auch das ist Menschenfreiheit," dachte ich, "selbstherrliche Bewegung." Du Verspottung der heiligen Natur! Kein Bau würde standhalten vor dem Gelächter des Affentums bei diesem Anblick. (E.158)

It would be wrong to suggest that the conclusions derived from Ein Bericht should mitigate judgement of the country doctor's failure. The story offers a mildly humorous, if not optimistic finale to the collection, positive simply in acceptance of a human predicament too complex to be fully understood, and a mysterious reality in which even the defects of human nature and existence may be allowed their barely comprehensible place. The purpose of Rotpeter's life is no ambitious task; it is to 'make the best of it', and accept the cost. At least insofar as he succeeds in overcoming self-will, and to that extent achieves a certain transformation of self, he is a positive hero.

The connections of Ein Bericht with the Landarzt cycle and the reflections in the Oktavhefte help to show its link with Kafka's Jewish pre-occupations - not only the social and psychological tensions of Jewish assimilation, but an intense personal experience of a fundamental and profound Judaic theme expressed in the myth of the expulsion from Paradise. Ein Bericht für eine Akademie could hardly have a stronger claim to recognition of Jewish literary and spiritual kinship.

Appendices

Kafka and Martin Buber

Martin Buber had a strong link with the Prague Zionist and German-Jewish literary circle in Max Brod, who early began correspondence with him and became a frequent contributor to Der Jude. In his letters, Brod encouraged Buber to represent the best of contemporary Eastern and Western European Jewish literature in its pages<sup>1</sup>; Kafka and the interpretation of his work are a recurrent subject in their correspondence<sup>2</sup>. It was probably Brod who introduced Kafka to Buber in January, 1913.

Kafka's opinion of Buber on the basis of his reading hitherto had been unenthusiastic. The 'eingreifende Bearbeitungen' of the material retold in Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman and Die Legende des Baalschem made these collections, to Kafka's taste, 'unerträglich' (F.260); two days before actually meeting Buber, Kafka had not been eager to hear him speak at a Bar Kochba meeting on 'Der Mythos der Juden':<sup>3</sup>

nun Buber würde mich noch lange nicht aus meinem Zimmer treiben, ich habe ihn schon gehört, er macht auf mich einen öden Eindruck, allem, was er sagt, fehlt etwas. (F.252)

That Kafka had already heard Buber speak may indicate that he had attended one or more of the Reden über das Judentum; but of this there is no more conclusive evidence. He did attend the Bar Kochba evening, for the sake not of Buber, but of the actress Gertrud Eysoldt, who was to give a reading after Buber's lecture. He stayed behind afterwards, but seems to have been unimpressed by what he saw and heard. (F.253, 257). His meeting with Buber two days later was apparently an agreeable surprise; he found that Buber

persönlich frisch und einfach und bedeutend ist und nichts mit den lauwarmen Sachen zu tun zu haben scheint, die er geschrieben hat. (F.257)

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1. Buber: Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten I (ed. Grete Schaefer), Heidelberg, 1972, p. 429; p.461f.
  2. Buber: ibid. I, p. 473; II, p. 272ff.; p. 278; p. 565.
  3. Published in Vom Judentum, Leipzig, 1913, pp. 21-31.

In a hitherto unpublished letter of 25.5.1914 in the Martin Buber Archive of the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem (MS.Varia 11/344), Kafka thanks Buber for an invitation to meet again during his stay in Berlin at Whitsun of that year:

Ich bleibe in Berlin von Samstag abend bis Dienstag nachmittag, habe viel mit Familiensachen zu tun,..Ich werde mir erlauben am Pfingstsonntag vormittag telephonisch anzufragen, ob und wann Sie verehrter Herr Doktor für mich und meine Braut, die durch ihre Erzählungen äusserst begierig geworden ist, die Kinder zu sehn, ein Weilchen erübrigen können.

Mit ergebenen Grüßen

Ihr

The meeting apparently took place, for in a letter of 29.11.1915, having declined an invitation which was probably to collaborate on Der Jude<sup>1</sup> -

...ich bin - irgendeine Hoffnung sagt natürlich: noch - viel zu bedrückt und unsicher, als dass ich in dieser Gemeinschaft auch nur mit der geringsten Stimme reden dürfte

- Kafka thanks Buber most cordially for the pleasure of meeting him previously:

...jenes Beisammensein wird mir immer gleich gegenwärtig bleiben. Es bedeutet für mich die in jeder Hinsicht reinsten Erinnerung, die ich von Berlin habe, und sie war schon oft eine Art Zuflucht für mich, umso sicherer, da ich nicht gedankt hatte und deshalb niemand von diesem Besitz wusste<sup>2</sup>.

In September, 1916, Buber rejected Ein Traum - which Kafka had apparently expected to appear together with Brod's essay 'Unsere Literaten und die Gemeinschaft' in the October issue of Der Jude - but published it in Das jüdische Prag in December<sup>3</sup>. Buber selected 'Zwei Tiergeschichten' (Schakale und Araber and Bericht für eine Akademie) from the material of the subsequent Landarzt collection<sup>4</sup>. These appeared in Der Jude II, 1917-18 (on pp.488-90 and 559-65 respectively); '... So komme ich doch in den 'Juden' und habe es immer für unmöglich gehalten,' (Buber: Briefwechsel, I, p.494), was Kafka's response.

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1. As suggested to Buber by Brod on 17.11.1915 - see Buber: Briefwechsel I, p. 409, n. 1.
  2. Buber: Briefwechsel I, p. 409
  3. See F. 704f.
  4. See Buber: Briefwechsel I, p. 491f., where Kafka submits the material - later to be collected, he writes, under the title Verantwortung.

Three other unpublished letters to Buber in MS. Varia 11/344 of the Jerusalem Martin Buber Archive indicate the extent of Kafka's interest in Der Jude during 1917. The first, dated Prague, 28.6.1917, forwards to Buber, as 'wichtig' for Der Jude, four poems by Rudolf Fuchs, 'unter der Voraussetzung, dass Sie die Fortsetzung dichterischer Veröffentlichungen beabsichtigen,' and recommends Buber to write to Fuchs<sup>1</sup>.

The second letter, dated 20.7.1917, was written after Kafka's visit to Vienna and Budapest, during which he had spoken with Fuchs in Vienna. He encloses another small piece by the latter, and informs Buber that Fuchs will promptly send additional material. He continues:

In Budapest traf ich zufällig einen alten guten Bekannten, einen Jargonschauspieler. Wäre Ihnen etwas daran gelegen, für den Juden einen aus persönlichster Erfahrung kommenden Aufsatz über die Lage d.h. die Not d.h. die geistige Not die wirkliche Not nämlich, bricht sich fast schon an der Abhärtung der langen Jahre also die geistige Not der Jargonschauspielkunst zu bekommen? Mein Bekannter hätte vielleicht die Fähigkeit und jedenfalls grosse Lust einen solchen Aufsatz zu schreiben.

Mit ergebenen Grüßen  
herzlich Ihr

The third letter, dated Prague, 3.8.1917, encloses a 'Szene von Fuchs' and an introduction to Ernst Feigl (unknown to the latter) in the form of several poems:

Ich will Sie verehrter Herr Doktor wahrhaftig nicht bedrängen... auch ist er für ganz absehbare Zeit der letzte, den ich Ihnen vorstelle, aber Sie nahmen Fuchs so freundlich auf und da dachte ich, dieser wäre es auch wert.

Da Sie die Schauspielererinnerungen sehen wollen, werde ich mich bemühen, sie in möglichster Güte von meinem Bekannten, Isaac Lewy (sic) heisst er, zu bekommen. Allerdings ist er ein

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1. There is no indication of what the enclosures in any of these letters were. One poem by Fuchs, Kündigung. Mat Brod gewidmet, appears in Der Jude II, 1917-18, p.629.

unberechenbarer Mensch; fasst er seine Fähigkeiten vollständig zusammen, so kann meiner Meinung nach eine im Charakteristischen sehr reiche Arbeit entstehen; ebenso möglich ist es aber, dass sie wenig brauchbar wird oder vielleicht, trotz der Freude, die ihm der Plan in Budapest machte, gar nicht zustande kommt...Deshalb vor allem bitte ich Sie, verehrter Herr Doktor, Ihre Anordnungen für die nächsten Hefte durch die Erwartung dieser Arbeit nicht entscheidend beeinflussen zu lassen. Jedenfalls schreibe ich sofort, sobald ich etwas Näheres erfahre.

Mit herzlichen Grüßen,

Ihr sehr ergebener

Kafka informs Brod in a letter of September, 1917, of his receipt of the beginning of Lowy's article for Der Jude, which, apart from the need for 'eine kleine grammatikalische Bearbeitung', he considers 'sehr brauchbar'. (Br.173) Presumably it is this material which is reproduced, with grammatical corrections, on H.154-9.

Apart from a disgusted opinion of 'Bubers letzte Bücher. Abscheuliche, widerwärtige Bücher, alle drei zusammen' (Br.224)<sup>1</sup> in January, 1918, there is no further reference to Buber or Der Jude in Kafka's letters or diaries before 1922, when, in May, he read Buber's Der grosse Maggid und seine Nachfolge. Also, from a letter to Brod of 31.7.1922 (Br.402-5) it is apparent that there had been some suggestion of either Felix Weltsch's or Kafka's taking over editorship of Der Jude. Kafka has no doubt that Weltsch could and should be chosen;

Was mich betrifft, ist es leider nur Spass oder Halbschlaf-Einfall, bei der Vakanz des Juden an mich zu denken. Wie dürfte ich bei meiner grenzenlosen Unkenntnis der Dinge, völligen Beziehungslosigkeit zu Menschen, bei dem Mangel jedes festen jüdischen Bodens unter den Füßen an etwas derartiges denken? Nein, nein. (Br.403f.)

From the available evidence, Kafka's relationship with Buber rested on courteous respect and recognition of Buber's personal qualities, but

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1. Die jüdische Bewegung. Gesammelte Aufsätze und Ansprachen (2 vols.), Berlin, 1916; Vom Geist des Judentums: Reden und Geleitworte, Leipzig, 1916.

little enthusiasm for his literary manner, and no great affection for his ideas. One senses in Kafka's letters to him a tone of deference and circumspectness. He was clearly deeply impressed upon meeting him in Berlin; but one suspects that the impact of Buber's personality and the decisiveness of his Jewish views were too strong for Kafka to feel at ease with either. His reaction to Buber's 'abscheuliche Bücher' is expressed with a vehemence unusual in him, and in a mood which induces exaggeration - perhaps more distress than actual disgust:

Richtig und genau sind sie...mit allerspitzigster Feder geschrieben..., aber sie sind zum Verzweifeln und wenn man vor ihnen einmal, wie es bei gespanntem Lesen vorkommen kann, unbewusst das Gefühl hat, es seien die einzigen Bücher auf der Welt, muss auch der gesündesten Lunge fast der Atem ausgehn. Das würde natürlich ausführliche Erklärung verlangen, nur mein sonstiger Zustand erlaubt mir so zu sprechen. Es sind Bücher, die sowohl geschrieben als auch gelesen werden können nur in der Weise, dass man wenigstens eine Spur wirklicher Überlegenheit über sie hat. So aber wächst mir ihre Abscheulichkeit unter den Händen. (Br.224f.)

It seems likely that Buber, as a person and as a Jew, produced in Kafka a sense of threat, discomfort, and insecurity regarding his own 'Mangel jedes festen jüdischen Bodens unter den Füßen'; and that these were the real grounds for his antipathy.

Buber recalls a conversation with Kafka about Psalm 82, as reported by Werner Kraft in Gespräche mit Martin Buber (Munich, 1966)<sup>1</sup>:

Dieser habe alles eingesehen. Über die 'Sarim', die Zwischengötter. Über die Stelle in Buber's Deutung, wo er positiv schreibt, das Urteil gehe in die Vollstreckung über. Die Deutung bezieht sich auf den Psalm, nicht auf Kafka. (op.cit., p.111)

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1. The occasion of the conversation is unfortunately not indicated. It presumably occurred during Kafka's meeting with Buber in Berlin in 1914, which entitles us to apply Buber's recollection to interpretation of Der Prozess; but this, in view of Buber's evidence, hardly requires the absolute confirmation of a date.

Er kommt wieder auf das Gespräch mit Kafka über den 82. Psalm, wo Gott die Göttersöhne als ungerechte Richter bestraft<sup>1</sup>. Kafka stimmte dem Gedanken zu. (ibid., p.123)<sup>2</sup>

Buber's interpretation of Psalm 82 is to be found in 'Recht und Unrecht. Deutung einiger Psalmen', in his Schriften zur Bibel (Werke II, Munich, 1964), pp. 951-990. He defines its subject as

ins Mythische übertragen, die prophetische Forderung an die Könige von Israel und die prophetische Anklage dieser Könige, die hier aus Gottes Mund ertönt. . .

Wie den König über Israel, so hat Gott in unserem Psalm die Zwischenwesen, die hier Gotteswesen und anderswo 'Gottes-söhne' genannt werden, über die Völker der Erde gesetzt. . . In seiner ersten Rede klagt Gott sie an. (op. cit., p.968f.)

Buber concludes his interpretation with a reference to Kafka:

Ein jüdischer Mensch unserer Zeit, Franz Kafka, hat mit seinen Werken einen Kommentar zu den Voraussetzungen dieses Psalms verfasst. Ich sage: zu seinen Voraussetzungen, nicht zu ihm selber. Kafka beschreibt die Menschenwelt als eine den Zwischenwesen überantwortete, mit der sie ihr wüstes Spiel treiben. Von dem unbekannt Verbleibendem, der ihnen diese Welt in die unreinen Hände gab, dringt sich zu uns keine tröstende, keine verheissende Botschaft. Er ist, aber er ist nicht da.

Was in die Betrachtung Kafkas als des Menschen unserer Zeit nicht eingegangen ist, steht in diesem Psalm. (ibid., p.970)

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1. cf. Kafka's entry 'von den ungerechten Richtern' (T.343), which may refer to this psalm (not to the conversation with Buber).
  2. In addition, see Kraft,op.cit., p.162.

Appendix B  
Jiří Langer

Jiří (or, in Hebrew, Georg Mordechai) Langer was the brother of the Prague Czech writer, František Langer, who was also a friend of Kafka's. As a metaphorically colourful, if at one time black-garbed figure, he was to be seen for a period of his life walking 'als Rudiment des Mittelalters'<sup>1</sup> through Prague.

Langer came of a background similar to Kafka's, as a son of highly assimilated, middle-class Jews who had moved from the countryside to the capital; and he was pre-occupied throughout his life with problems similar to Kafka's concerning his relationship with his time and his tradition.

In 1913, while still a boy, Langer left Prague and travelled to join the Hasidic community of the Belzer Rebbe in Galicia. František Langer has described the family's consternation later that year when Jiří returned, clad in traditional Hasidic black, and with long side-locks, in the style of old Jews then still jeered by urchins in the streets of Prague; he came home as an apparition from the past which might well dismay an assimilated household.

Langer returned to Belz in 1914. There, when war broke out, he received his call-up papers - only to be sent home in 1915 after a spell in an army prison for refusing to handle a rifle or work on Sabbath. This was presumably the time when Kafka first met him. (cf. T.335) Following a mysterious call from the zaddik of Belz, who appeared to him in the kitchen, Langer returned to Galicia and remained there until the end of the war.

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1. See Brod: Der Prager Kreis, p. 156f.

In 1916, Kafka met Langer in Marienbad when the Belzer Rebbe came there for a cure. His visit with Langer to the Rebbe is described at length to Brod and mentioned to Felix Weltsch in Br. 141-6. Langer himself has described the journey with the Belzer Rebbe to Marienbad in terms that tally with Kafka's impressions:

...We are carrying him there along the paths through the forest. At other times he is separated from us by his secretaries and servants, as God is separated from our souls by myriads of spheres and worlds...All his words, however small, are to be understood metaphorically. The whole time his thoughts are concentrated exclusively on supernatural matters... (Nine Gates, p. 20.)

When Belz became part of Poland at the end of the war, Langer returned to Prague. He never went back to Galicia, but years later recorded his experience of Hasidic life and legend in Devět Bran (Prague, 1937; tr. Friedrich Thieberger: Neun Tore, München, 1959; tr. Stephen Jolly: Nine Gates, Plymouth, 1961). Friedrich Thieberger describes the book as being written

...mit der schlichten Liebe zum Zauberischen, mit der Freude am Zusammenspiel von Irdischem und Überirdischem und mit der Verantwortung gegenüber dem Ewigen im Alltäglichen. Die Grenzen innerhalb der sinnfälligen Welt sind aufgehoben, Raum und Zeit überwunden. Dabei wird das irdische Leben in seiner Gewöhnlichkeit, in seiner Enge, Härte und Leidenschaftlichkeit nicht verwischt; das ergibt gegenüber dem Hintergrund des Unendlichen, auf das sich alles bezieht, einen eigenartigen, geradezu religiösen Humor. Denn in all diesen Geschichten, die sich nicht scheuen, auch manches fremde Element in sich aufzunehmen, geht es um etwas Letztes in der Welt, um ein göttliches Gesetz, um Gott selbst. Darum sind sie kindlich und erhaben zugleich. (Neun Tore, introd.)

František Langer sums up an essential quality of the book:

...The author had combined deft naivety, which is the basis of all Jewish anecdotes, with that refined simplicity which is a characteristic gift of the greatest Jewish artists, such as Heine or Chagall. (Nine Gates, p. xxv)

Its content and style bring us probably as close as possible into the circle of Hasidic story-telling. Quite probably, the collection contains stories and information which Kafka heard from Langer directly, for

the two men used to go for walks together in Prague. Kafka

evidently found Jiří a kindred spirit; his diary contains several Chassidic myths and legends which he had heard from Jiří. (František Langer in Nine Gates, p.xxiiif)

Felix Weltsch and Kafka took private lessons in Hebrew from Langer. According to Brod, he was closely connected with the three friends' circle, and came to them with all his troubles<sup>1</sup>. His friendship with Langer must have had a deeper effect upon Kafka than can be documented; his diaries presumably record only part of the fund of Hasidic thought, legend and custom which Langer must have shared with him. Brod perhaps associated more frequently with Langer than did Kafka; he, too, took Hebrew lessons from him, and regarding his novel David Reubeni and his later work, Johannes Reuchlin, acknowledges indebtedness to him for

unendlich viel Belehrung in den kabbalistischen und in sonstigen jüdischen Wissensgebieten. (Der Prager Kreis, p.157)

It is likely that Kafka also sought information from Langer about Hasidism and Kabbalah when, as it appears, his interest in them became more serious. In a letter of 1920 (Br.273) he expresses great pleasure at news of Langer, and gratitude for some service he has done him; and on the basis of another reference to him on 20.10.1921 (T.392), we may speculate that the impulse received via Brod's work on David Reubeni was being pursued further in Langer's company - so that by January 1922, Kafka could well have acquired a knowledge of Kabbalah more extensive and profound than Brod admits<sup>2</sup>.

By the 1920s Langer had detached himself from the Hasidic world and become more pre-occupied with Freudian psycho-analysis and writing poetry. According to František Langer,

He began to use Freudian methods in analysing the essential meaning of the practices observed in Jewish ritual and in Jewish

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1. Brod: Der Prager Kreis, p.157

2. See p. 114 n.1.

cults, applying them to his search for the subconscious sources of Jewish mysticism and the actual origin of the religious idea... Like Freud he went so far as to ascribe an erotic derivation to the most spiritual laws and the supreme ethos of the Jewish faith. (Nine Gates, p.xxf.)

His homosexuality may have played a part in this pre-occupation, which was pursued, apparently, with an extremism comparable with his former devotion to Hasidism. The fruits of his studies were published in 1923 as Die Erotik der Kabbala, and subsequently in articles in the Freudian journal Imago<sup>1</sup>. The contents of the book might well give an indication of information that was possibly imparted to Kafka on the subject, although Kafka would probably have disagreed with Langer's theoretical basis.

In addition, Langer published articles on Jewish subjects in the Prague Jewish press, Selbstwehr and Der jüdische Almanach<sup>2</sup>. He became a teacher of Jewish religion in Czech schools, and was appointed to the Jewish College in Prague.

An extremely gifted linguist, Langer was completely at home in Hebrew

1. Langer: 'Zur Funktion der jüdischen Türpfostenrolle', in Imago XIV, 1928, pp.457-468; and 'Die jüdischen Gebetrienem', in Imago XVI, 1930, pp.435-485.

An excerpt from Die Erotik der Kabbala appeared in Selbstwehr No. 17/11 (16.3.1923), and a review of the book by Max Brod appeared in No. 17/17 (27.4.1923). Scholem's judgement on the book is that

the author has not advanced beyond the common catch-phrases which not a few adherents of the school unfortunately seem to regard as a sufficient answer to problems of this nature. (M.T., p. 228)

2. Articles published by Langer in Der jüdische Almanach were: 'Witz und Humor im Judentum', in 5686 (1925-26), pp. 154-168; 'Jüdische Rätsel', in 5687 (1926-27), pp. 151-173; 'Das jüdische Ideal der körperlichen Arbeit', in 5689 (1928-29), pp. 106-121; 'Der Satan und die Weisen des Talmuds', in 5694 (1933-34), pp. 87-103; 'Zionsliebe', in 5695 (1934-35), pp. 98-103; 'Leiden und Heilung in der Kabbala und im Chassidismus', in 5697 (1936-37), pp. 66-69; 'Bene Israel', in 5698 (1937-38), pp.62-66. In the Selbstwehr appeared 'Popularisierung der Agada', in 19/17 (24.4.1925); 'Drei Jahrtausende der Arbeit', in 19/25 (19.6.1925); 'Ist die Materie belebt?' in 20/26 (26.6.1926); 'Der Sohar, das heilige Buch der Kabbala', in 26/20 (13.5.1932). Unfortunately, I am unable to give particulars of any article by Langer which might have appeared before 1925.

and Yiddish, and had an excellent knowledge of other languages besides, of course, Czech and German. His slender volume of Hebrew poetry, Plyyutim ve Shirei Yedidot (Songs of Praise and Friendship) became, in 1929, the first Hebrew work to be printed in Prague for a century. He later published, in 1937, Zpěvy zavržených (Songs of the Rejected), a collection of Czech translations of Jewish poetry from 11th. century Spain to 19th. century Prague.

Having no knowledge of Hebrew, I cannot pursue the relationship between Langer and Kafka into the literary sphere, although I suspect, from the information that I have received, that it would yield evidence of shared attitudes towards an art which is, in both writers, coloured by a deep Jewish spirituality. Langer would have been particularly conscious, for example, of the fact that his Hebrew poetry was written in the sacred tongue, full of the mystical connotations of his own Hasidic period. A thorough investigation of Langer: M.G. Langer - the man and his poetry, has been written (in Hebrew) by Miriam Dror (M.A. thesis, Tel-Aviv University, Faculty of Humanities, Dept. of Hebrew Literature, 1969). This work pays very detailed attention to Langer's use of language in his Hebrew poetry, and its associations with Jewish biblical and other religious literature. Regrettably, I am able to do no more than reproduce Miriam Dror's conclusion: that Langer's life and work are the expression of a colourful, many-sided and exceptionally gifted personality seeking relief from his distress as a man and as a Jew against the background of his time; and that he conducted this search in various fields (Hasidic mysticism; Zionism; and through assimilation, in turning toward psychoanalysis and 'scientific' study of religion), without, however, finally identifying himself with any of them or succeeding in fully harmonizing the multiple impulses of his character. The only hints of a solution to his problem and the riddle of his existence are found,

she adds, in his creative work, mainly in his poems; in his own words,

and I my way will go alone  
 far away, far away,  
 since to myself I said:  
 'In the heart of my darkness  
 perhaps, a light is hidden'.

Pgisha (Meeting) (tr. M.Dror: op.cit.,p.225)

From these few translated lines of poetry it is possible to sense something of the extent to which Langer and Kafka may indeed have been kindred spirits.

Professor Dov Sadan (Jerusalem), a close friend of Langer's before the latter's death in Israel in 1941, has suggested to me that Kafka deeply admired Langer as the only member of the Prague Jewish circle whose mastery of Hebrew allowed him to use the language as an artistic medium; and that Langer represented in this respect a linguistic and artistic ambition of Kafka's own.

Langer, for his part, apparently held Kafka in tremendous esteem, which reached the degree of reverence for him as something like a saint (- or, to use the appropriate Jewish term, a zaddik?). Some curiously oblique reminiscences of Kafka, written by Langer for the Hebrew newspaper Hege (No. 256, 23.2.1941) leave the impression of a fleeting view of an almost sacred possession, reluctantly displayed to the public in a glimpse so rapid as to reveal disappointingly little. Parts of it, however, are worth quoting<sup>1</sup>:

...There is not one day when I do not recall his extraordinary personality. But I can remember no specific detail, nothing unusual about him! What can I compare this to? To the story of a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, who travelled around the world to tell the good name of his Rabbi to those far away. But after going so far, he had nothing to say. It is the same with myself and Franz Kafka. And this is connected with his personality, his own spirit. Kafka did not want to be seen. That is, he did, and he did not. He was, and he was not; he managed both, and that will become clearer later...

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1. I am grateful to my friend Lea Katz for the translation.

Kafka was an original person in an absolute sense. A poet - but his way in sacred matters was not to show his originality, as far as possible...

...I only know for certain that his influence on myself was very great, and I learned a great deal from him, and have very much to thank him for. From him I learned, for example, that one must read one poem every day. One, and not two...And when my first poems appeared...Kafka told me that they were a little like Chinese poetry...Yes, Kafka spoke Hebrew. We always spoke Hebrew in the last time we had together. He, who always repeated and vowed that he was not a Zionist, studied our language in his middle age, and studied it devotedly. And unlike the other Prague Zionists, he was soon speaking Hebrew fluently. This made him especially happy. I do not think I am exaggerating if I say that he was very proud of it. For example, we were in a tram talking about the aeroplanes that were flying in the sky of Prague at the time. The Czechs who were travelling with us, hearing the sounds of our speech, which were apparently pleasing to their ears, asked us what language we were speaking, and when we told them what language it was and what we were talking about, they were astonished that we could speak in Hebrew even about aeroplanes...How Kafka's face shone with joy and pride! In the same way, he relished every new Hebrew word that he learned from me, like someone finding a trophy...He was not a Zionist, but whatever happened in our country touched his heart. Things about the younger generation in Israel and their education interested him especially. And once he happened to see a letter from an Israeli boy printed in a newspaper, with a description of a trip in the desert, which is one of the beauties of our country. The description was not inspiring in any way. From it one learned only of the exhaustion, thirst and sweat of the desert, but Kafka seemed to like this fact, the presentation of the negative side...Well, he was a strange sort of person...

Once he told me that he would like to throw all his still unpublished writings into the fire. 'Then,' I asked him, 'why do you write and publish books?' - 'I am not sure,' said Kafka. 'There is something that compels me to leave some memorial behind, but...' But after that, he burned a large quantity of his writings. And it is a pity, a pity they are lost.

In addition, one of Langer's poems in Piyyutim ve Shirei Yedidot, entitled Lemot Hameshorer (On the death of the poet), was written in memoriam Kafka.

Although it is clearly untranslatable, I am grateful to Miriam Dror and

T. Carmi for helping to produce the following approximation:

The time has come, the package is falling apart<sup>1</sup>,  
the bundle of waves from the sea of the world -  
as if this parting were at the no-time and no-place  
of the point named En-Sof.

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1. Literal translation of a Hebrew idiom which describes the separation of a group of friends.



## מִּמּוֹת הַמְּשׁוֹרָר

(אחרי פרנץ קפקא)

אָבֵן הַתּוֹר הַגִּיעַ, הַחֲבִילָה מִתְּפָרֶדֶת.  
חֲבִילָה בַת-צִלִּים שֶׁל יַם-הָעוֹלָמוֹת;  
כִּאלוֹ פְּרוּד נִמְצָא בְּאֶפְסֵת-מָקוֹם  
שֶׁל נֶקֶדָה זֶה אֲשֶׁר אֵין-סוּף שָׁמָּה!

הֵן קֶצֶרָה זְרוּעָה לְחֶבֶק עֲפָרוֹת אֶרֶץ  
וְעַתָּה כְּתֵף עַד כּוֹכֵב אֲחֵרוֹן;  
חֶלֶשׁ קוֹל צְחוּקָה כְּאֶבֶלֶב לְהַבִּיעַ  
וְעַתָּה – תְּרוּעַת גִּיל סְעָרָה, יִבְכֶּה וַיִּלְלָה בְּכָל, כָּל.

כִּי הַלוּלָה הַיּוֹם בְּחִיק הַתּוֹלְדָה:  
עַל הַמְּבוּצַ מְמַנּוּ כְּאֶחָד חַיִּים וּמּוֹת אַחִים יֵצְאוּ,  
לְקוֹל מְנַגֵּינָה אֲשֶׁר יַפְּלִיאוּ סוּדוֹת הַשֶּׁבַע נֹצֵחַ לְהַשְׁמִיעַ  
שְׂפוּרִים מְזֻכְרוֹנוֹת עוֹלָמִים חֲשֵׁמְלוּנִים כְּבְגֵי-חֹרִין יִרְקְדוּ.

הַמִּים-אֲשֶׁר-אֵוִיר, הֵן שִׁצּוֹמֵת-דוֹמָם,  
מִתְרוֹעְעִים אִתִּי וְתָרוּ לִי עַד פֹּה;  
עַם כָּל לְשׁוֹן חֲבֵה יָדָם אֵלַי יִשְׁלַחוּ  
וַיִּלְשָׁפוּנִי-חֵן וְהִנֵּךְ בְּקֶרְבִּים!

וְהַדְּמָה-אֵם כְּאֵהָב לִי רוּמוֹת:  
הַנִּיחָה בֵּין שְׂדֵי אֵת כְּבֹד צֶלֶן נִפְעָה  
וְחֵלִים עֲצֻמוֹתֶיהָ בְּכֹר רִפִּי הַשְּׂפִיכָה!  
– וּמְלֶאָה חֲתִיקָה!

ר

in Me'at Seri. Poems, by M.G. Langer.

Tel Aviv, 1943.

Appendix C

The Jewish Family: its Religious Values<sup>1</sup>

The religious significance of Jewish family life is rarely appreciated by non-Jews; yet the sense of its significance was a powerful influence in Kafka's life.

As the central repository of Jewish values, an educational unit, and preserver and performer of religious rituals, the family is the nucleus of Jewish socio-religious life. The Jewish home is ideally a sanctuary where social, ritual and spiritual harmony is created and enjoyed by its members; it is the centre from which they go out and to which they return, affirming in knowledge, word and deed the essential oneness of human existence. The community must be such that through the solidarity of its members, both within and outside the family itself, each may fully serve his fellow-men, and all thereby fulfil their communal service to God. The purpose of earthly existence is to serve God's plan by the sanctification of life - Kiddush Hachayim - which is the way to sanctification of God's name - Kiddush Hashem<sup>2</sup>.

Some fundamental values of Jewish family life are:

1) 'the integrity of family life' (taharath hamishpohoh). This concerns chaste sexual relationships. The Jew sanctifies life by performing daily actions according to the commandments of his religion; and normal sexual relations are considered to be of the essence of life and practical

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1. See N.N. Glatzer: 'The Jewish Family and Humanistic Values', in Journal of Jewish Communal Service 36, 1969, pp. 269-273; Leon S. Lang: 'Jewish Values in Family Relationships', in Conservative Judaism I, 1945, pp.9-18; Benjamin Schlesinger (ed.): The Jewish Family, Toronto, 1971.

2. See Hugo Bergmann: 'Die Heiligung des Namens (Kiddush Haschem)', in Vom Judentum, Leipzig, 1913.

religious experience. The Jew is instructed to serve God with his whole being, with the good and evil inclinations (yetzer tov and yetzer hara) equally. The latter includes the urge for sexual gratification. There is a Talmudic saying that, were it not for the yetzer hara, the world itself would come to a standstill, for no man would desire a wife, home or family, upon which the sanctification of life depends. The Jewish teacher or religious functionary is unfit for service if unmarried, for his home is sanctified through his wife. Kafka knew, 'Auch im Talmud heisst es: ein Mann ohne Weib ist kein Mensch.' (T.124)

2) parental responsibility (gidul bonim uboneth). The child is the goal of marriage, and the guarantee of continuity towards Judaism's highest goals. The family must be a centre of Jewish teaching and learning, where children are brought up so that the values, aspirations and past experience of their culture become their second nature. One of Kafka's chief criticisms of his father in later life was his failure to provide this Jewish upbringing. (H.197-202)

3) filial responsibility (kibud av vo-em). The child must love and honour his parents all his life, respecting them as symbols of the continuity of human experience handed down through the generations. Jewish parents are authorities with religious sanction; the Talmud teaches that they are partners with God in the creation of Man. Through his parents, the child should feel the divine presence. This link seems to be expressed in Georg Bendemann's relationship with his father in Das Urteil<sup>1</sup>.

4) 'the wholeness (peace) of the household' (shalom bayith). This concerns the relationship, within the family, between individual fulfilment and communal service. The family community should foster a sense of

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1. See Erwin R. Steinberg: 'The Judgement in Kafka's "The Judgement"', in Modern Fiction Studies VIII, 1962, pp.175-179.

corporate responsibility and unity, each member being constantly mindful of the needs of others and the interests of the group. Thus Jewish faith in the unity of life, derived from the oneness of God, is expressed in the domestic environment.

5) cherishing the memory of the Jewish past. A primary function of the Jewish family is the performance of religious ritual and tradition. All holy days are observed within the home; events of the Jewish past are commemorated in domestic celebrations, to be re-lived and experienced by all. Remembrance of cultural and religious tradition is thus incorporated into each personality; the past becomes an everlasting present.

Inherent in the Jewish concept of holiness is the idea of separation. Tension between 'Jewish' and 'non-Jewish' is built into Jewish cosmology and life. For centuries separation, for Western Jewry, was ensured by the ghetto wall. The removal of this physical boundary, however, increased rather than diminished the psychological tension. Tension within the family, and the desire to escape the state of segregation that it represents, is a frequent Jewish syndrome. It is not easily resolved for the Jew, for he is inextricably bound to his native community:

His life (is) full and real only where the values to which he (is) accustomed (are) dominant...His character is constantly being re-created along the old pattern because his past experience has so indelibly impressed upon him the value of his heritage that he inevitably sets to work to shape his environment to conform to his accustomed pattern. (Louis Wirth: The Ghetto, Chicago, 1966, p.74)

This is the situation Kafka described in literary terms: the impossibility either of escaping Judaism, or of finding 'new ground' outside it. (Br.337)

Kafka's attitude toward the family was profoundly ambivalent. From the literary isolation of his room in the family house, he fought a battle against the family on two fronts: against his own family, and that which he himself would father if he married, the symbol of his independence and

succession to the patriarchal role. It was also a battle between the world of the spirit and the secular, bourgeois, lapsed Jewish life represented by Hermann Kafka. Although on the one hand he longed for a wife and family (cf. T.340, T.402) and acknowledged it as longing for a Jewish ideal (M.266), Kafka felt that marriage would be an obstacle between him and the spiritual ideals that he sought through the alternative of literature. His fathering of 'alternative' children (cf. T.402) in the form of his stories is striking and moving evidence of the degree to which the idea of the Jewish family influenced his personality and art.

Max Brod suggests a close link between Kafka's literary creativity and the idea of paternity in a reference to Elf Söhne and Kafka's statement:

"Die elf Söhne sind ganz einfach elf Geschichten, an denen ich jetzt gerade arbeite." Geschichten waren ja seine Kinder, im Schreiben leistete er auf entlegenem Gebiet, aber selbständig etwas, was der Schöpferkraft des Vaters (ich gebe hier Franzens, nicht meine Auffassung wieder) analog war und ihr an die Seite gestellt werden könnte. (Max Brod: Über Franz Kafka, p. 122)

This can be supported by instances where Kafka uses paternity or a related idea as an image in literary matters; for example, the description of the writing of Das Urteil as 'eine Geburt' (T.212); the comparison of a Novelle with an infant:

ebenso müssten Eltern vor dem Säugling verzweifeln, denn dieses elende und besonders lächerliche Wesen hatten sie nicht auf die Welt bringen wollen (T.322);

the description of German-Jewish literature as

eine Zigeunerliteratur, die das deutsche Kind aus der Wiege gestohlen und in grosser Eile irgendwie zugerichtet hatte (Br.338);

and of his own 'Aufgabe': 'es ist nicht einmal so viel Kind wie die Hoffnung einer Unfruchtbaren.' (T.402)

Appendix D

The Old Testament Concept of the Prophet

It is a commonplace to speak of Kafka as a 'prophet' of social and historical developments that occurred in the West after his death. This application of the term assumes that 'prophet' means simply 'one who foresees the future', and ignores the word's Judaic definition.

The Hebrew word for 'prophet', navi, means 'one who has been called', and is first applied to Abraham. Martin Buber, in his essay Abraham der Seher, contributes towards understanding of the idea of prophetic calling, and its relationship to Israel's messianic task. Essential to both is the idea of being 'set apart':

...das Ziel all der Absonderung ist eine künftige Verbundenheit.

Von diesem Ziel wissen die Propheten zu sagen. Aber die Erzählung vom Anfang des Weges, von der Herausholung Abrahams, entspricht auch in eigentümlicher Weise der entscheidenden Erfahrung des prophetischen Menschen, seinem eigenen Herausgeholtwerden aus seiner natürlichen Umgebung. Wenn Abraham zu Abimelekh sagt: "Als die Gottesmächte mich vom Haus meines Vaters abirren liessen", müssen wir daran denken, was Amos dem Priester antwortet: "Aber JHWH nahm mich von hinter der Herde weg"... Wohl, es ist seltsam, dass in dem gleichen Abschnitt, und nur in ihm, Abraham ein Kündler - d.h. ein redender Mittler zwischen Himmel und Erde - genannt wird... Und ohne die Erfahrung des Herausgeholtwerdens, d.h. ohne die Gewissheit eines Menschen der Urzeit, das, was er tut, ohne es zu wollen, tue er, weil der Gott es will, gäbe es den Glauben Israels nicht. (Werke II: Schriften zur Bibel, Heidelberg, 1963, p.880.)

Like Abraham, the prophet is singled out for a task not of his own choosing, but which he is irresistibly impelled to fulfil. His office is expressed in the Greek prophetas: 'one who speaks on behalf of, or for'. Rather than a foreteller, the prophet is a forthteller: an intermediary divinely appointed to transmit the message of Revelation. His task is founded on the event at Sinai; he is, as it were, a successor of Moses who,

as giver of the Law, was the greatest prophet. The prophet stands in God's presence (Jer. 15:1,19), privy to the divine council (Jer. 23:18; Amos 3:7); he is a prophet by virtue of the word he hears and transmits (and not by virtue of the spirit which envelops him to prepare him for its revelation).

At God's command, the prophet communicates his revelatory experience in the idiom of the people and in his own tone, exhorting the community to repent of its sinful ways and return to the Law and Covenant, and calling God's chosen to order on pain of chaos and destruction, with which He threatens those who neglect their appointed task.

The prophet has an additional function as spokesman before God on the people's behalf, as a mediator, defender and intercessor whose prayers seek to avert the catastrophe that awaits those who forget God's Law and do not 'know' Him. He was

to stand in the breach of the nation's wall, a breach caused by the sin of his people. He was to prevent God from entering; for entrance spelled doom and destruction. (Ezek. 22:30-31; Ps. 106:23.) (Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1973: Prophets and Prophecy.)

The prophet, as a chosen mediator and spokesman for both God and people, personifies the concepts of election and of Israel's participation in the historical process of Revelation. He strives to communicate the dynamics that link the Creator and Man, the recipient and instrument of His plan; and to remind his hearers that God is holy, different, and apart from all that exists. The message of God's holiness as 'otherness', as being 'set apart' from all that men can be or know, is linked to the idea of God's being beyond human understanding, 'knowable' only insofar as He may be sought through righteous living according to His Law. The prophet himself, as 'bridge'

between the hidden Holy One and the people (God's chosen, but also 'a people of unclean lips' (Isa. 6:5)), experiences his own mission and consequent 'apartness' as a burden and source of suffering. This may be linked with the profound ambiguity of his intermediary position, and with the experience of his office as involuntary communication with a source that is in every sense 'beyond' him.

Essential to prophecy is a particular historical awareness. The knowledge the prophet communicates is

not about God but from God concerning His actions in history. The prophet...delivers the word of God to His people in order to shape their future by reforming their present. (Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1973: Prophets and Prophecy.)

The prophetic attitude to time rests on an eschatological concept of history as the human dimension in which God's will must be realized through Israel's fulfilment of its covenantal mission. History, in the messianic view, will ultimately be consummated in the coming of God's Kingdom on earth and an age of universal peace, for which the redemption of Israel is a pre-condition. With this in mind, the prophet speaks to the present, the historical here and now in which his people must repent and take moral action toward their final salvation. He addresses the community always within a specific, contemporary situation, which has essentially religious significance, and always in the context of the eschatological process.

The prophet's role as moralist is fundamental. His message is always a moral one, a reminder of divinely decreed standards of holiness, and an exhortation to an immediate moral decision to return to the way of righteousness and truth. The fulfilment of Israel's historical destiny depends upon the righteousness of the entire community. The classical prophets' great contribution to the development of Judaic ethical monotheism was their emphasis on the supremacy of morality as the criterion for Israel's redemption

and the coming age of universal peace. They became radical moral critics, and preached an ethical code of behaviour which came from the heart and was binding upon one and all. Their denunciations and rebukes sought to rouse men from moral lethargy; the object of their warnings of catastrophe was precisely that it should not occur:

Der echte Prophet tut kein unabänderliches Verhängnis kund; er redet in die Entscheidungsmächtigkeit des Augenblicks hinein, und zwar so, dass gerade seine Unheilsbotschaft an diese Entscheidungsmächtigkeit rührt...An dieses entscheidungsmächtige Sichentscheiden des Menschen appelliert die prophetische Unheilsansage. (Buber: Werke II: Schriften zur Bibel, Heidelberg, 1963, p.345)

Despite its utopian promise, however, Jewish Messianism remains a doctrine of catastrophe. The catastrophic character of redemption may find expression

in apostasy and the desecration of God's name, in forgetting of the Torah and the upsetting of all moral order to the point of dissolving the laws of nature. (Scholem: M.I., p.12)

The Messiah will come 'only in an age that is either totally pure or totally guilty or corrupt.' (Scholem: ibid., p.13)

In keeping with the ambiguity of the messianic ideal, the tension between utopia and catastrophe, is the doctrine of the 'remnant' (Isa. 4:3-4; 8:16-17; 10:20-21; Jer. 31:31; Amos 9:8) which will survive the terrible Day of the Lord and become the prophetic nation that spreads God's teaching and the knowledge of His glory throughout humanity. This doctrine accommodates the frustration of the prophets' mission. Their pleadings, admonitions and threats cannot obtain universal repentance and redemption. It is therefore not illogical that the prophet Isaiah was appointed by God to the specific task of hardening the wayward people's hearts, thereby preventing their repentance, and hastening the catastrophic Day of the Lord (Isa. 6:9-10ff.): the essential principle of Revelation is rescinded as the prophet is commanded

to conceal God's word; the only remedy for obduracy is to intensify it until only a remnant of one in ten survives. At other times, God might punish the people, or the prophet himself, by making Himself inaccessible (Hos. 5:6; Amos. 8:11-12; Jer. 27:11; 42:7).

Suffering has a central function in relation to the messianic ideal. It has a double meaning of punishment for sin, and of atonement: expiation by the righteous for sins of which they repent, and for the unmitigated sins of the wicked who have not repented. The chosen may be 'set apart' by affliction; herein, partly, lies the ambiguousness of the prophet's position, as lamented by Jeremiah. To be 'cut off' or estranged from his people is both the sinner's punishment and the prophet's destiny. His position between God and men places him in a state between 'holiness' and 'guilt'. This ambiguity is evident in Isaiah's description of the 'suffering servant', who is described as unsightly and sick, the latter condition being traditionally considered a sign of impurity or sin; yet here the wounds of the one atone for the sins of the many. (Isa. 53:10ff.)

It is hence not surprising if the prophet receives his call with protest:

...the prophetic office was not easy to bear. The description of the prophet's emotional experience upon receiving a 'stern vision' is at times overwhelmingly frightening...(Isa. 21:3-4; Jer. 4:19; 6:11;15;17; Hab. 3:16.)...The life-story of a prophet is liable to be one of anguish, fear, rejection, ridicule and even imprisonment... Though the prophet weeps with his destined victims and takes up the cry of his compatriots, he is not understood by them. Great yet unbearable is the fate of one who claims that he was seduced, even forced into his role. (Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1973: Prophets and Prophecy)

The paradigm of this destiny is Jeremiah.

The opposition of God's chosen intermediaries to his call expresses the Judaic idea of revelation as confrontation between God and Man, but it also represents the frailty of the individual even in his service to the divine, the ideal and mission imposed on him. The prophet himself knows

that he stands before God as the human representative of a sinful people.  
(e.g. Isa. 6:5).

It is, further, part of the burden (and the ambiguity) of the prophet's task that he is 'set apart' from his people as a 'sign' to them: a reminder of their call to holiness, but also a living mirror of their impurity. Thus Hosea is commanded by God to marry a whore, symbolizing Israel's 'harlotry', and Ezekiel to bake his bread upon human dung as a token of the people's impurity (Hos. 1:2ff.; Ezek. 4:12ff.). Righteousness and guilt are ambiguously and inextricably combined in the prophet's mission as representative of his people, servant to Man and God, and moral standard-bearer.

Finally, in obeying their call, the prophets created a great and original literature. Although he is not the ultimate source of the message he delivers, the prophet is independently responsible for the style in which he conveys it:

The individuality of the prophet is never curtailed. No two prophets prophesied in the same style. Their unique literary styles, whether expressed in prayers, hymns, parables, indictments, sermons, dirges, letters, mocking and drinking songs, or legal pronouncements, bear the mark of independent creativity. The divine message is refracted through the human prism. This is dramatically brought out by the striking image of the prophets' receiving, literally eating, God's word and then bringing it forth (Jer. 15:16ff.; Ezek. 3:1ff). God speaks to the prophet and the prophet speaks out. (Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1973: Prophets and Prophecy)

## Conclusions

From a historical point of view which takes account of developments in Western Jewry following the emancipation of the Jews, Kafka's experience as a Jew was by no means exceptional, as may be shown by comparing it with that of others in fundamentally similar socio-historical circumstances during and after the nineteenth century.

Kafka's life also reflects some of the most significant aspects of early twentieth-century Jewish history. Associations with the Prague circle of German-Jewish writers involved him in contact and friendship with some of the leading Jewish figures of his generation, some of them in the forefront of the rising Zionist movement: Hugo Bergmann, Max Brod, Felix Weltsch and Martin Buber. Although Kafka did not fully share their Zionist outlook, he participated in the contemporary renaissance of Jewish consciousness insofar as he published several stories with Jewish import in significant issues of the Jewish press, including the important periodical, Der Jude. The early impact made upon him by the Yiddish theatre, and the later influence of Hasidism upon his ideas and writing, reflect Western Jewry's contemporary rediscovery of Eastern European Jewish tradition.

A peculiarity of Kafka's relation to Judaism may be seen in his inner conflict over the issue of marriage versus literature. His irrepressible longing to regain a sense of participation in Jewish tradition through marriage and family life and the Jewish values associated with them proved irreconcilable with his irresistible commitment to writing; but the spiritual aims he sought to fulfil through the latter were increasingly affected by

Jewish values, and seem in certain respects to have provided a substitute for the domestic ideal he failed to achieve. His conflict over the two is accentuated by evidence of a curiously ambiguous sense of prophetic consciousness, which becomes apparent in his letters and journals on several occasions when he discusses the problem of his relation to 'woman' and marriage.

After the crisis of 1917, when his disease was diagnosed and the final break with Felice Bauer made, Kafka's constant inclination toward intense introspection and spiritual search combined with a growing sense of moral and spiritual calling in relation to the contemporary world, which in certain respects invites comparison (and contrast) with prophetic antecedents. The literature through which these now interlinked aspects of his increasing concern for his relation to Judaism continued to develop received remarkable encouragement from the influence of Jewish mysticism, particularly Hasidism.

There is abundant evidence of Kafka's pre-occupation with esoteric and kabbalistic themes and imagery in the Okstavhefte and fragments written after the end of 1917. The stories from the Landarzt cycle examined in this thesis, approached in a corresponding light, strikingly illustrates themes identified in the Okstavhefte, which they directly precede. They refract many of Kafka's emotional and spiritual pre-occupations onto a level that transcends the specifically personal; some in particular challenge the reader to new perceptions of spiritual significance. They thus express aspects of Kafka's intensely private experience, but at the same time transpose it into a context which conveys his sense of the spiritual deficiencies of his time and serves his undertaking of a moral 'task' in relation to it. This aspect of Kafka's work may be illuminated by the recognition of Jewish antecedents that lie behind some of his stories: traditional Jewish and Hasidic legends, or themes and images derived from his reading of the Old Testament. Most

remarkable, perhaps, are those stories which seem to demand comparison with the structure and imagery of Jewish mystical texts. These Jewish elements in Kafka's writing are nowhere made open or explicit, but clues to them lie in the fact that several of the stories concerned were published in a Jewish context. In some cases the deliberate veiling of the text's meaning or outright mystification of the reader may be associated with a conscious theme of 'hidden meaning' or an esoteric element developing in Kafka's religious thinking and art.

By the end of his life, Kafka himself recognized, and acknowledged in his diary, a potential in his work for developing into a literature with affinities with Kabbalah, 'eine neue Geheimlehre'. Death put an end to further realization of this possibility. The ultimate conclusion to this study can therefore only be a speculative question as to how Kafka's relation to Jewish tradition might have evolved following the existing signs of a mystical tendency in his thought and art.

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Abbreviations

<u>AUMLA</u>	-	<u>AUMLA: A Journal of Literary Criticism, Philology and Linguistics.</u>
<u>DVjs</u>	-	<u>Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte.</u>
<u>FMLS</u>	-	<u>Forum of Modern Language Studies</u>
<u>GLL</u>	-	<u>German Life and Letters.</u>
<u>LBIY</u>	-	<u>Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook.</u>
<u>MLQ</u>	-	<u>Modern Language Quarterly.</u>
<u>MLR</u>	-	<u>Modern Language Review.</u>
<u>NR</u>	-	<u>Die neue Rundschau.</u>
<u>FMLA</u>	-	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America.</u>
<u>ZDP</u>	-	<u>Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie.</u>

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