Jasna Koteska

THE SEXUAL STRATEGY
OF THE SON IN KAFKA:
TERRORISM AND EXILE

Infantilism

We are all neotenic
Julia Kristeva,
Tales of Love

In this essay, I will not delve broadly and exclusively into the issue of the sexuality of the Son in Kafka, but particularly into one of its aspects - sexual strategy. I would like to present and elaborate on two complementary structures, because I consider two of Kafka's posthumously published short stories commonly entitled Sons, The Metamorphosis and The Judgment, to be a joint representation of the two archaic resolutions of the Son's sexual drives.

The first structure is that of the Son becoming a terrorist of the Symbolic Order/Father, since terrorism - begotten by the sadism of the Symbolic Order - can be seen as a quasi-form of sadism. The opposite structure obtained by the Son's need to marry the Symbolic Order, i.e. the Father, arrives from the masochistic pleasure to devastate the Symbolic Order by swallowing it. The last structure includes the secondary production of the Other, which unfolds in the Son, since the exile, as we will try to explain later, can be analyzed as a utopian version of terrorism. The resolutions involved - murder in the first story, and suicide in the latest - are dependent, both on the utopian/
non-utopian character of the chosen sexual strategies, and on the male or female nature of the Son’s sexuality within the Symbolic Order.

As Shakespeare points out, with the greatest insight, in the relation to the Other, hatred is more archaic and primordial than love. *My only love sprung from my only hate!* says Juliet immediately after meeting Romeo. Therefore, the Son’s love towards the Father, just like hatred, in Kafka, is also directed towards the devastation of the Symbolic Order. The issue most attractive to me is the significance of the two strategic solutions chosen: terrorism and exile. But, before I venture into any analysis, I would like to distance myself from the issue whether the Symbolic Order can be so easily equalised to the Father. This is not only because of the limited scope of this essay, but primarily due to the position of the Son in Kafka. The Son is not always in a love-hate relationship with the Father, but with the Symbolic Order that he sees represented in the Father. Therefore, I shall divert the main attention to the more essential question: what is the relation between the Subject (here, the Son as a Subject) and the Symbolic Order? How does the Son, bearer of sexuality, position himself in relation to the Order? I would like to quote a sentence from the book *Tales of Love* by Julia Kristeva, where she says:
"We are all perverts, we are neotenic, incapable of subsisting solely within the symbolic order, constantly driven to seek the animal sources of a passion that defies the Name to the advantage of loss of self in the flood of pleasure."

Kristeva positions the subject as the one who always seeks crisis. Precisely, every subject is defined as being close to madness, always perverted and criminal regarding the Symbolic Order. This is because the Symbolic Order in which we sojourn is ambivalent, and its contradiction affects us so that we never fully abide by its rules and we always seek for a word that will oblige us to nothing. However, there is no such word and the Language becomes a place where everyone begins a battle. Kristeva says, the Subject confronts the Language. With all my passion, I want to defeat the Name, lose the Language, so I can fully enjoy the pleasure. For, the Language, as well as the Symbolic Order, is made of ambiguity. Therefore, the criminal, perverse subject can be defined as an eternally infantile subject.

The key word in Kristeva’s quote is neotenic. Neoteny is a quality or ability of the adult to retain the memory of its immature, juvenile characteristics. Therefore, the adult has a built-in capacity of being a non-adult, and can use this potential as needs arise - and there are always needs. The most significant post-Freudian psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, describes this extensively in his text “The Symbolic Order.” I shall present here one of his examples of neoteny.

It is a famous case of a charming patient of Dr. Baliant, who was a talk-talk-talk-say-nothing type of person. On one of the sèances, after an entire hour of “sick babble,” Baliant gently touched the spot that didn’t want to be disclosed. She received a recommendation letter, which stated that she is “a trustworthy person.” The breaking point was that she did not want to be seen as trustworthy. For the word is bond, and she will be obliged to stop talking and start working. And work has its laws,
Jasna Koteska

THE SEXUAL STRATEGY OF THE SON IN KAFKA: TERRORISM AND EXILE

taa не сака да биде доживеана како поверлива, оти зборот обврзува, и тaa ќе биде приморана да престане да зборува и да поче да работи. А работата има закони, правила, работни часови. Работата значи почитување на Симболен поредок, затоа тaa, вели Лакан, прибегнува кон детскиот говор. Таа интуитивно сфатила дека детето има говор што, и тогаш кога е профетски и полн со небесна мудрост, и тогаш кога ги открива големите вистини на универзумот, се уште не го обврзува детето на ништо.

Neoteny necessarily reminds us of the capital investment Freud made in the realm of sexual theory. By investing in the awakening of the neglected infantilism and infantile amnesia, Freud’s theory re-evaluates the infantile subject and its capacity for sexuality, and one of his key works is titled exactly “Infantile Sexuality.” This amnesia is created where the sexual drives have been cast away. This means that culture itself seeks neoteny, due to the subject’s need to be included in the Symbolic Order. Though conservative in its descriptive capacity, Freud’s cultural theory has proven to be prescriptive, as well. I think that exactly the renewal of the amnesic sexual drive brought forth the restructuring of the Modernity.

Here I would like to introduce my definition of the Modernity as a project led by the Son. As several mystical and unorthodox traditions stated, the Modern period, or new era, is dominated by the Son. I claim that the cultural sympathy, energy and concentration on the Son in the 20th century\(^2\), is due to his released, amnestied neoteny.

While I was writing this essay, I read a column in a Macedonian daily, where the author stated that “a juvenile is an entire nation” (there: the Macedonian nation) and that “our adolescence has its advantages.”
The solutions of the spirit are nothing but requests, different precisely because of the different composition of the bodies.

Spinoza, Ethics

The advantage here is, in fact, the advantage of the terrorist. Regarding the aforementioned column, it is appealing how in the diplomatic rhetoric, a terrorist from a foreign place is often referred to as a rebel. This shift, for example, is often present in journalist reports on the terrorist crisis in Macedonia and Southeast Europe. It is my opinion that the cultural sympathy towards the Son has somehow influenced the shift of these two phenomena. Infancy calls out for a need to defeat the Name, or at least, restructure it. In this process of Naming, we are witnessing the diplomatisation of the cultural sympathy towards the Son, organized on the basis of imaginary enchantment in the idealized gaze (albeit, an effect of the essentially, naive gaze) of oneself as the Son in the foreign Symbolic Order. The subject here is the Western European or the American, who gazes at oneself as the Son of the Southeastern European Symbolic Order.

The same mechanism, however, is at work, when the reader identifies with Kafka's hero, Gregor Samsa, in The Metamorphosis (1912, first published in 1915). The story of a Son, who becomes a terrorist, opens our first theoretical category, which I will refer to as animalism. The main character in this story, Gregor Samsa, works hard as a traveling salesman, in order to financially support his parents and his younger sister. One morning, he wakes up in his bed, transformed into a giant vermin. At first, practical issues worry him: how to get up from the bed and walk with his many legs. Soon enough, his abilities, tastes and interests change - he climbs the walls and eats from the floor. Nobody can understand his new language, the language of a bug. Terrified by this metamorphosis, his family locks him up in his room and refuses communication with him. When
Gregor, on one occasion, tries to leave the room, his father starts to throw apples at him, trying to scare him off. One of the apples is stuck in his back and causes an infection. Gregor grows weaker and weaker and soon he dies. The cleaning maid collects his remnants and throws them in the garbage.

There are many texts in literary criticism, which, although not showing ill will towards the body, have little understanding for its secrets. They see the metamorphosis of Gregor Samsa from human to bug through the economy and logic of the gaze. These texts say that a **gaze** at Samsa recognizes a bug in the, heretofore, traveling salesman, son and brother. The gaze of the never innocent beholder (the family gaze: the father, the mother and the sister; and the non-family: the tenants, a procurer and the maid) wants to see a **bug** in Samsa. Gregor has not become a bug, but, rather, like a bug to them.

This reasoning is fundamentally wrong, not only because its logic stems from the moralism of the Modern (which refuses to bereave itself from the luxury of the human non-reducibility to the animal), but, above all, because Kafka elegantly evades the problem of the spectator and the laws of spectatorship. The **first eyes** to recognize the bug in the, until then, traveling salesman Gregor Samsa are the very eyes of Samsa. Here is how Gregor faces his new nature at the beginning of the story:

"He was lying on his hard, as it were armor-plated, back and when he lifted his head a little he could see his domellike brown belly divided into stiff arched segments on top of which the bed quilt could hardly stay in place and was about to slide off completely. His numerous legs, which were pitifully thin compared to the rest of his bulk, waved helplessly before his eyes."

This is different from the economy of gaze, a key factor to understanding Mary Shelley’s "Frankenstein" monster, which faces his identity not in the laboratory but after his first encounter
 lucrative, to the first contact. He becomes cognizant of his monstrous identity, monstrous because different, regarding theirs. Following this logic, every gaze is product of society, and visibility is a category of the cognitive - we see what we think. Samsa’s problem is obviously not in the gaze of the Other, but is a true determination of the body, which has taken on the line of the animalistic. The entire story bears witness to his human understanding with the animalistic. While the weak will of the spirit tries to forget, his body informs itself of the existence, tolerance and maneuvering of the other body - the animal, which begins to live within him. The other body inscribes itself in his. His body frees itself faster than his spirit from the naive belief that it is one, solitary and human body.

Here we need to recall and think of the capital investment that Deleuze and Guattari made in the realm of the mechanisms of the body’s animalization. They showed that the bodies, just like the ideas, do not die, but turn into archaisms. In the book “A Thousand Plateaus,” Deleuze and Guattari analyze animalism and the new philosophical formula born out of it - becoming an animal.

One can immediately perceive the exclusion of the word “like”. It is an act of elimination of the mediator, or, an act of the evasion of the metaphor. The cultural duress pursues mankind into seeing relations in the correspondence of the elements in nature: A is to B like C is to D. The effect from the operation of metaphor leads to an essential misunderstanding of the laws of nature and the secrets of the body, say Deleuze and Guattari. This release from the mimesis is, in fact, an act of confrontation with the Language. The symbolic epithet is lost so that the body might surrender itself to the joy of being, of becoming one with nature. Today’s thought makes culture which is permeated with rationalization and non-affection privileged. A man cannot say: “I am a bull, I am a wolf,” because then he greets the animalistic within. The Modern forces man to say: “I am to the woman what the bull is to the cow, or I am to another man what the wolf is to
Becoming an animal is a task of being a neighbor, of being adjacent to the animalistic, as a real production. Deleuze and Guattari's suspicion - they say we know very little of the inseparability of the human and the animalistic - is justified. I would like to remind of a recent discovery of two twin girls, aged 10, in a forest in Africa. At the time when they were found, living with a flock of sheep, although two, they had not developed any language, any system of signs and symbols. This shows that the body feels neighborliness with other bodies and has the ability of self-production. The cognizance of the body depends on this production and it will oftentimes work on directives given out by the body itself. The body, by the very laws of its nature, is capable of many feats - and even the spirit finds it magnificent. Samsa makes such a rehabilitation of the animalistic, which is, in fact, an archaic memory of the body. It is an inhuman agreement to the animalistic. It is a principle of approaching, without any analogy, to the neighborliness of animalism. The principle question is: why does Samsa's body decide to coexist with the animal?

To answer this question, we have to glance at yet another, hidden metamorphosis in the story - the one of the Father. Since Gregor takes on the financial care for the family, the Father declines and retreats; after Gregor turns into a bug, the Father activates again, working and "holding himself very erect."

It is the Father-Son rotation around the capitalist idea: never be idle. More precisely, in this pair, one is always prostituting the idea of work in the Symbolic Order, and the other is gaining erected energy to fight its prostitution. This libidinal charge and discharge is helping to establish the identities in the body of the Patriarchy.
In terrorism, as well as in sadism, the themes of the Father and the patriarch dominate. However, the subjects of terrorism and sadism are different. Deleuze writes that the sadistic theme resides, after all, on the theme of the Father who destroys his family. In sadism, the picture of the woman is created in such a way that she explodes, since the sadistic Father is the one who disbands the family and prostitutes its members: in an indicative scene in the story, Samsa's sister plays the piano for the tenants, who are, figuratively, a deaf audience, since they are blind to any aestheticism. Playing the piano is an order of the Father for the prostitution of his daughter, while the tenants are the symptom of the disbanding of the family.

This is where terrorism positions itself close to sadism. I think that terrorism, which resides on the theme of the Son and his restlessness regarding the system, has very similar effects on the body of the Patriarchy. The Son's terrorist strategy, which can be referred to as bodily terrorism, the terrorism of the body, effects what is crucial for the Patriarchy - and, doubtless, that is the Body itself. In the explosion, which comes after the metamorphosis, by living close to the animalistic, the Son renders any further procreation - impossible! And verily, this is terrorism's final goal: making procreation impossible and, in effect, actively nullifying the Mother. The main paradox leading into terrorism can be brought down to what Lacan called *lady's refusal*, in fact, an infantile denial to be tied up to a contract. Or, as Kristeva says, the neotenic capacity of the Subject to be confronted with the Name. In the hazy mixture of joy and humiliation - he who gives the orders to the body simultaneously, together with the witnesses, shows deep solidarity - Samsa, in fact, renders the idea of existence outside the Symbolic Order possible. The punishment for this im/possible existence is a murder, and the Father is the prosecutor, so that he can then rehabilitate the family structure and restore the Order.

This is a vengeful murder but also an identity murder - only by killing the Father, one becomes a Father (again). On the
Татко. На теренот на твоето уништено тело, јас станувам енитет, единствен и целосен.

**Prigovstvo**

Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity...

Julija Kristeva,
Strangers to Ourselves

Идентичен исход - да станам еден таму каде што биле многу - се рафа кога Синот сака да го ожени, а не да го тероризира Поредокот. Во Пресуда, Кафка дава образец на хомосексуална, или инцестуозна љубов. Синот сака да ја надмине амбивалентноста на Поредокот/Таткото, така што проголтувајќи го истиот, ќе ја поврати изгубената првобитна хармонија. Тој халуцинира да се соедини со Целото. И овде објектот на љубовта треба да исчезне, но не преку уништување (и казната, убиството), туку преку проголтување (и казната, самоубиството). Главен јунак на Пресуда е Синот Георг Бендемен. Тој е на врвот на професионалниот и приватниот процут. По смртта на мајка му, таткото физички опага. Синот го презема татковиот бизнис, воведува новини и постапако станува богат, се свршува со богата наследничка. Се уште се двоуми околу идниот брак, бидејќи е несигурен како за тоа да го извести својот најинтимен пријател од младоста.

**Exile**

Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity...

Julia Kristeva,
Strangers to Ourselves

An identical outcome - to become one where there were many – takes place when the Son wants to marry instead of terrorize the Order. In *The Judgment* Kafka presents an ultimate pattern of a homosexual and/or incestuous love. The Son desires to overcome the ambivalence of the Symbolic Order/Father by swallowing it, and his intention is to restore the lost, initial harmony. He hallucinates of merging with the Whole. The object of love in this story is supposed to disappear as well, but not by destruction (with murder, as a punishment that follows), but by swallowing (with suicide, as a punishment that follows). The main character in *The Judgment* is the Son, Georg Bendemann. He is at his professional and private peak. After his mother’s death, his father physically deteriorates. The son takes over his father’s business, incorporates some innovations and after becoming rich, he affiances himself to a rich heiress. He is still hesitant about the future marriage, since he feels uneasy how to notify his most intimate friend from the youth about his future plan. Bendemann’s father, already on the deathbed, resists both, the fiancé - declaring her the reason for desecrating the memory of the mother, and the friend - declaring him a liar! He sentences the son to death and Bendemann leaves the house and commits suicide. The most dramatic and most mystic figure in the story, the friend from the youth, is a total opposite from Bendemann. After making nothing of his work, he immigrated to St. Petersburg and started a business there, failing again. He did not succeed in contacting the colony of his kinsmen there, and lost all connections to his country. Embittered by the world and the people, he rejects all objects and gifts, falls ill, and becomes a refugee, a foreigner, to be more accurate.
At this point, a rapid reminder of the production of the Other in me takes place. The Father declares the friend from St. Petersburg a Lie: "You have no friend in St. Petersburg. You've always been one for pulling people's legs and you haven't hesitated even when it comes to me." If the friend is false, then he does not live in St. Petersburg, but in the Son. That means the Son, who lives successfully in the Symbolic Order, has a need to create a qualitatively opposed Alter Ego, which exists completely unsuccessfully in the same Symbolic Order, in the same time. A question arises: Why does Bendemann feel the need to create a False I? Here we will recall the extraordinary discernment of the nature of self-cognizance in Slavoj Zizek's *Metastases of Enjoyment* (1994).

In the prologue of the book, Zizek tells the episode of Freud's visit to Shkofyan Caves in Slovenia. In his writings, Freud notes that while sight-seeing the fascinating world of underground caves, to his surprise, he suddenly met another visitor. This scene later helped him create the well-known metaphor of descending into the nether world of the subconscious. Freud met Vienna's mayor at that time, Dr Karl Lugger, a right wing, radical anti-Semite. The word-play with Mr. Logger's surname, the German for lie (die Lüge - a lie), brought him to the essential truth of his learning: when going deep into our personality, the thing we will discover there is - the Lie. This basic and primordial lie is a creation of the Subject, which creates phantasmagoric constructions with the aid of which it tries to cover up the ambivalence of the Symbolic Order in which we dwell. The embodied and visible Bendemann is successful by all norms of the Order, but he simultaneously fosters a hidden, fake Bendemann, who will testify of the essential failure of every Subject in the Order. There is a consciousness that resides inside Bendemann, one that says there is no such thing as the inherent ownership of the subject. His double says there is no territory that belongs to me.
I shall allow myself a game and turn this thesis around. If the Father is lying, then the Friend from Russia is a real one. This twisted thesis, as we shall see, not only brings us to the same results, but also helps answer the question: why does Bendaem kne commit suicide? After Bendaem admits that: “I can’t cut myself to another pattern that might make a more suitable friend for him”, his fiancée, Frieda, shows a fundamental resistance towards the friend from Russia. She feels that the absent foreigner is the most fundamental love of Bendaem, and that forces her to say: “If you have friends like that, Georg, you shouldn’t ever have gotten engaged at all.” In the Fatherly and patriarchal theme of The Judgment, the female figure of the
identities journal for politics, gender and culture, vol. I, no. 1, Summer 2001

absent fiancée, explodes more strongly. Both fathers in The Metamorphosis and in The Judgment prostitute the daughter, or the future daughter-in-Law. As the conveyer of sadism, the Father in The Judgment sentences the family to disbandment, when he exhibits primordial impatience towards the fiancée: Because she lifted up her skirts, because she lifted up her skirts like this, the revolting creature...you went after her, and in order to have your way with her undisturbed, you have disgraced our mother's memory, betrayed your friend, and stuck your father into bed so that he can't move. Whether or not the Friend is a lie, his position as mediator of love is unquestionable. Bendemann is tied to his father, in a sense that no female figure is welcomed. That way, a threesome, male love relation is structured among the Sadistic Father (Judge), the Son, and the Friend. Bendemann's primordial wish, in fact, is directed towards the ideal Father/Symbolic Order. Apart from its neotenity, this is a lawless love, more specifically, love for the Law, love greater than the Law. It presents not just the end of procreation, but the end of the Order, as well. Due to the collapse of values in the Patriarchal body, the one who stays - Samsa - is killed, and the one who leaves - Bendemann - commits suicide. In a way, Bendemann suicide is a female one, if we take into consideration Kristeva's distinction of female and male suicides. The male one is an expression of the antagonism towards the Father, and respectively, God, in terms of determination of the being. In a way, Samsa deliberately exposes himself to being murdered by his Father - that is how he expresses his antagonism towards the Symbolic Order. When it comes to Bendemann, it is about suicide as freeing from will or from identity - it is not so much an expression of antagonism, as it is an exit, similar to the exile. An exile from the Symbolic Order.

A Melancholic Remark: Strategy or Tactics?

Seven years after The Metamorphosis and The Judgment, Kafka wrote a long and painful Letter to Father. With
Co глабока меланхолија се исповедал за скршената волја на Синот пред прогибината природа на Таткото. Различно од Синовите на неговите раскази, Кафка премезал тактички, а не стратешки решенија. Разликата се состои во времето и планирањето: стратешкиот Субјект ја планира својата операција, тактичко, Субјект дејствува само кога се чувствува директно загрозен. Кафка, чие пишмо може да го читаме како напор на тактичарот, никогаш не го испратил писмото до татко му. Иако го сметал татко му за прагматичен патријарх и тиранин, и во своите возрасни години, одбрал да живее блиску до него. Целото негово творештво сведочи за амбивалентноста на Символен Поредок и за немањето стратешка позиција за одбрана од неа. Или за фундаменталната невозможност таа да се досегне.

Па сепак. Кафка го живеел животот свесно субвертирајќи го - денот го трошел на рутинска канцелариска работа, а ноќта во пишување. Зарем не е тоа едно од лицата на тероризмот на Синот против Символен Поредок? Пасивно-агресивно решение, налику на тоа на Самса. Пе-симистички одговор, сличен на пе-симизмот на неговите Синови. Кафка само еднаш го пробал рецептот на Бендемен - доброволниот прогон. Заминал во Берлин, за да биде далеку од паранталните врски, и за да се посвети на пишување. Тоа било во 1923, а почнал само една азилантска година подоцна.

Regardless, Kafka lead his life consciously subverting it - he spent his daytime doing routine office work, and his night writing. Is this not one of the facets of the Son’s terrorism against the Symbolic Order? A passive-aggressive solution, like that of Samsa, a pessimistic response, similar to the pessimism of his Sons. Kafka tried Bendemann’s recipe - exile, only once. He left for Berlin, to distance himself from the family ties and to dedicate himself to writing. This was in 1923, and he past away only one refugee year later.

NOTES

3 Here, I am thinking of the global movements for liberation and individualization.