



# The Animal That Reframes Identity: Agency, Affect, and Performance in Virginia Woolf's *Flush*, Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, and Franz Kafka's "A Report to an Academy"

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**Abstract**— *Literary depiction of animals can disrupt anthropocentric conceptions of identity through foreshadowing non-human agency and experience. This paper contends that in *Flush: A Biography*, *Life of Pi*, and "A Report to an Academy", Virginia Woolf, Yann Martel, and Franz Kafka portray animal characters as not symbolic but as performers who inhabit the world cohesively through sense and emotion. Based on posthumanist criticisms of human exceptionalism (Agamben, Derrida, Deleuze, and Guattari), affect theory (Massumi), Umwelt theory (von Uexkull), and relational/multispecies thinking (Haraway, Kohn), this work illustrates the reorganization of agency and subjectivity by these narratives. The paper is mainly divided into three sections. In the first part, it represents that in *Flush*, the canine narrator of Woolf maps an olfactory world of sensuous sensibility ("the smell of Wimpole Street meant to Flush") that is beyond the understanding of human beings. This stresses an alternate sense of perception concerning non-human animals. Next, the primal fear and survival instincts experienced by Richard Parker in *Life of Pi*. Here, he embodies primal fear ("without Richard Parker, I wouldn't be alive today"), which demonstrates affective co-dependence. And in the third section, it foregrounds that the story "A Report to an Academy," written by Kafka, depicts the way Red Peter was turned into a performing human. This captures the concept that "identity is performance...It is not a static essence, a given, but a constantly reenacted self-representation" (Sokol 283). All these selected texts imply identity as a process of co-construction in which non-human animals practice agency through action and feeling, which forces humans to reconsider the boundary.*

**Keywords**— *Human-Animal Studies, Posthumanism, Exceptionalism, Affect Theory, Umwelt, Non-Human Animal Agency, Performance, Identity, Multispecies, Woolf, Martel, Kafka.*

## Introduction

Contemporary writing tends to assume a rigid separation between human subjects and objects of non-human animals. According to this anthropocentric paradigm, animals are only useful in the sense that they are reflections of human characteristics or human interests. However, according to Giorgio Agamben, the anthropological machine determines the category of "Man" that distinguishes humans from animals (Agamben 1). Similarly, Jacques Derrida argues that the gaze of the animal deconstructs our self-confidence when an animal gazes at us, "we are naked before it" which

means that we are vulnerable (Derrida 40). The modern critical theories of posthumanism to multispecies thinking oppose human exceptionalism by giving animals their own modes of agency and experience.

The issue is that conventional scholarship has been focusing mostly on the absence of agency on the part of literary animals. Animal characters are often seen by many critics as symbols or metaphors for human concerns, but not as actors who see and interact with the world. This creates a gap in the way these representations beckon us to reconsider identity itself. Non-human animals in literature can be seen

as performers who co-create meaning and thereby destabilize fixed subject identities.

Such as, *Flush* by Woolf, *Life of Pi* by Martel, and "A Report to an Academy" by Kafka put anthropocentric agency and identity in question by using animal performance, perception, and affect. These writings redefine animals as active participants, whose embodied lives and senses and emotion that demonstrate the identity to be a relational and fluid process. Instead of being the passive creatures, Flush and Richard Parker, as well as Red Peter, perform acts of presence and change that rewrite the demarcation between human and animal. The article utilizes the Posthumanist theory (Deleuze and Guattari on becoming-animal, Agamben and Derrida) to draw its argument that literary animals perform reality in a manner that requires a more open, more-than-human understanding of identity.

This paper has two novel contributions. First, it incorporates the recent scholarship of animal studies into literary analysis, interpreting primary texts in the context of Posthumanist and multispecies observation, as opposed to allegory. Second, it emphasises the concept of identity being performative and processual. It is found in Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha's ideologies, which were utilized in the human/animal interface. Assuming that Bhabha demonstrates that identity is created via power and exclusion, and that Hall demonstrates that identity is always "in process" (Hall 222). This reflects that animal agency can be reconstituted in cross-species lines, and identity may be reconstituted. Briefly, through the registration of animals' performance and affect, these selected narratives show that even the identity of humans can be redefined into a form of relations and dynamics.

### **Posthumanism and the Animal Question**

The human/animal dichotomy has been widely criticized by contemporary theory. *The Open: Man and Animal* by Agamben talks about the "anthropological machine" in Western thought, which divided man from animal as an act of power (Agamben 8). Within this reasoning, animals are pushed into a state of "bare life," outside of politics and language, and subjecthood. *The Animal That Therefore I Am* by Derrida intrudes to deconstruct "the animal" as a category. He also notoriously describes his encounter with the indifferent gaze of a cat that challenges human beings with their own vulnerability, "The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it" (Derrida 40). So, the animal gaze is redefined by Derrida not as passive, but as a reciprocal relation. This is a moment of exposure where human beings are compelled to acknowledge the subjectivity of the animal.

Deleuze and Guattari also provide the means to redefine non-human animals' agency. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they suggest "becoming-animal" as a method to fixed identities, "Becoming is not an imitation...nor is it an identification" but a transformative movement (Deleuze and Guattari 272). Although it will not form abstract conglomerates, their understanding of human identity as constituted by relations and flux is the basis of how humans approach. Similarly, the posthumanist animal studies suggested by Cary Wolfe demand attention to animal voices and alternate perspectives. Collectively, posthuman criticisms claim that animals should be viewed as performing agents in their own way of existing.

### **Affect Theory and Relational Agency**

Moreover, an important element of rethinking agency comprises affect. It is the pre-conscious intensities that circulate between bodies. Brian Massumi describes affect as "autonomous" forces, which do not require representation (Massumi 27). In narrative, animals tend to use their power, not through speech but through affective force. Such as with their presence, companionship, emotions of fear, acts of care, excitement, etc. It is visible in the actions of Pi, who is ordered by palpable fear and urgency, which is emanated by Martel through his tiger Richard Parker. This raw affect, in its turn, forms human and animal identity as a response of the body. Therefore, affect theory highlights a non-symbolic aspect of animal-human interaction which is usually neglected in literary analysis.

Likewise, the relationality of Donna Haraway also refocuses on shared worlds and not discrete subjects. Species, according to Haraway, do not pre-exist their encounters; instead, "becomings do not pre-exist their becomings" in a continual interaction (Haraway 17). Human and animal identities coemerge in relation to each other. Recognizing this mutuality means letting go of human centrality. This point of view is expanded by multispecies thinkers, such as Eduardo Kohn and Anna Tsing, who claim that even human knowledge is intertwined with other forms of life. Overall, the paradigm of affect and relationality assumes that agency may be shared among species, such as animals, who "act" by co-affecting humans and vice versa.

### **Multispecies Perception and Umwelt**

Also, the concept of Umwelt, the subjective world of perception of each organism, by Jakob von Uexküll, is essential to animal performance. According to Uexküll, "Every animal is surrounded by its own unique world," determined by its senses (Uexküll 43). In literature, an animal narrator like Flush affords readers a glimpse of this distinct Umwelt. To Flush, the world is composed of smells and sounds that are totally alien to human experience.

Highlighting Uexküll's idea alerts us to the fact that animals live in worlds not transparently accessible to humans. This blows any assumption that animal behavior is merely a cipher for human meaning. Every species creates its own mode of world-making, and literature helps to invite readers into that mode.

This also echoes with existentialist theory, which is not frequently combined with animal studies. In the case of Red Peter in the Kafka text, "A Report to an Academy", the decision of the former to abandon his ape identity and act instead like a human being can be interpreted through a Sartrean prism that identity is not something bestowed, but a project, one that is constantly put into practice. Red Peter has to decide about life, and the role of human performer is the one he chooses to survive. The emphasis of this framing is that even an ape is capable of practicing the existential freedom (and burden) of creating a self, which erases the distinction between human and animal subjectivity.

### **The Politics of Identity**

Eventually, the study foregrounds the analysis of cultural theory. Homi K. Bhabha and Stuart Hall will remind us that identity is never natural or fixed. It is created in the course of history, power, and representation. Bhabha demonstrates that identity is formed within the "third space" of cultural difference (Bhabha 56), which is usually characterized by the formation of an inside and an outside. Centuries after centuries, non-human animals were outside. Hall notoriously states that identity is "not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead, it is better thought of as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process" (Hall 222). Merging these insights, it is implied that in the event of inclusion of animals within the field of agency, the human identity will have to be restructured. The following passages will illustrate how each text contributes to this reconfiguration through depicting animals in performative, affective, and perceptual roles.

### **Canine Perception in *Flush***

*Flush* by Virginia Woolf (1933) is subtitled a "Biography", yet its true innovation lies in giving narrative centrality to a dog's experience. Flush, a cocker spaniel, is tied to his mistress through loyalty. Virginia Woolf in *Flush* uses the dog not as a domesticated animal but as an active creature whose identity is formed in the process of reflection, restraint, emotional reaction, and embodied expression. Flush continually acts in a manner that goes beyond instinct. He is taught to resign, to master, to repress his urges, and prefers to stay beside Miss Barrett.

"To resign, to control, to suppress the most violent instincts of his nature—that was the prime lesson of the bedroom school, and it was one of such

portentous difficulty that many scholars have learnt Greek with less—many battles have been won that cost their generals not half such pain. But then, Miss Barrett was the teacher. Between them, Flush felt more and more strongly, as the weeks wore on, was a bond, an uncomfortable yet thrilling tightness; so that if his pleasure was her pain, then his pleasure was pleasure no longer but three parts pain...Somebody opened the door and whistled him to come. Why should he not go out? He longed for air and exercise; his limbs were cramped with lying on the sofa. He had never grown altogether used to the smell of eau de cologne. But no—though the door stood open, he would not leave Miss Barrett. He hesitated halfway to the door and then went back to the sofa" (Woolf 42-43).

At the surface, the sentence above signifies Flush, a dog who is being trained to stay with Miss Barrett rather than run as per his instinct to do. But at a deeper level, it is not freedom that makes Flush what he is, but rather learning to restrain himself in inter-species companionship. The sentence, to resign, to control, to suppress form a flow of internal actions. They are not external commands of the body, but are internalized disciplines. Flush is not only kept back, but he is taught to rule himself. So, it is not merely about domination. Miss Barrett is not tyrannical, but is the teacher/co-partner. The bond that they form is through playing together. Their inter-species relationship is not a pure oppression, nor a pure affection. It is both. Flush as something that can affectively transference, be ethically responsive, and recalibrate emotions. His desire is now not individual, but it is relational. He feels through another. On the other hand, Miss Barrett understands his difficulties when she says that many scholars have learnt Greek with less, and many battles have been won. This raises the plight of Flush to the sphere of intellectual effort and struggle. By so doing, she humanizes his difficulty without erasing his animality.

The story does not merely anthropomorphize the dog. It imagines canine inwardness through conflict, hesitation, and embodied decision. Woolf provides Flush with a kind of selfhood that is neither human nor instinctual. His consciousness is manifested in the tension between nature and nurture, desire and duty, body and bond. Flush subjectivity emerges through attachment. The reason why he is conscious is not that he is reasoning like a human philosopher, but that he is in conflict with instinct and emotional obligation.

Woolf also extends this subjectivity by giving him a reflective interiority, when it comes to questioning the

problem of selfhood itself, "But what is 'oneself'? Is it the thing? Or is it the thing one is? So, Flush pondered that question too, and, unable to solve the problem of reality..." (Woolf 55). These occasions place Flush in a situation of self-conscious living being that was typically the domain of human characters. His running off after the mockery of Miss Barrett is described as an "answer", a physical assertion of being rejected and hurt emotionally. Flush behaves in a manner that represents inwardness, and his behaviors define him as an existing self whose emotional, sensory, and relational selfhood makes a definite assertion of identity in the human world.

Furthermore, Woolf introduces readers to the world of sensations of the dog. The Umwelt of Flush is not so visual as linguistic, but rather olfactory and tactile. The narrator reflects on the fact that "[t]o describe his simplest experience with the daily chop or biscuit is beyond our power," immediately highlighting the inaccessibility of canine perception (Woolf 138). Moreover, Woolf recounts that "Not even Mr. Swinburne could have said what the smell of Wimpole Street meant to Flush on a hot afternoon in June" (Woolf 138). This expressly recognizes that the human language (even the poetic) cannot explain the experience of the dog. Positioning the scent of the streets through the nostrils of Flush, Woolf beckons a subjective mode of thinking that is based on smell and sensation.

This sensuous attention performs the Uexküllian Umwelt, such as the city is re-portrayed as a foreign terrain of smells and haptic experiences. Indicatively, when Flush is stolen and confined, Woolf dwells on "infinitely sharp and clear" light and "pungent and unfamiliar smells" that dazzle his senses (Woolf 117). Flush, in contrast to Mrs. Browning, literally "sniffs" change. He notices the intense, almost overwhelming blend of new.

"For the first time he heard his nails click upon the hard paving-stones of London. For the first time the whole battery of a London street on a hot summer's day assaulted his nostrils. He smelt the swooning smells that lie in the gutters; the bitter smells that corrode iron railings; the fuming, heady smells that rise from basements—smells more complex, corrupt, violently contrasted and compounded than any he had smelt in the fields near Reading; smells that lay far beyond the range of the human nose" (Woolf 36-37).

The above lines are an indication that Flush is engaged in carrying out perception. He sniffs, tastes, and explores his surroundings. The storytelling point of view favours the sniffing of Flush, "...so that while the chair went on, he stopped, amazed; smelling, savouring, until a jerk at his

collar dragged him on" (Woolf 37). And it suggests the way in which the dog constructs meaning from olfactory inputs.

Notably, the performance of Flush redefines his identity as compared to humans. His perceptual orientation forms some agency. Even though he is unable to talk, the responses of Flush in the story drive the plot. He is afraid of being punished, he is happy when he sees his mistress, and he is in pain because she is sick (when he refuses to leave her side), "to whom the whole world was free," choosing instead to "forfeit all the smells of Wimpole Street" to stay with her (Woolf 43). In the scene, Flush uses the bodily refusal as a sign of loyalty. Woolf employs descriptive orders to indicate that Flush is not passive, but active, through the use of descriptive commands, of which he sighed, stood amazed, smelled, and savoured. His identity is manifested through his perceptual and affective behavior, which Woolf interprets, but not completely translates.

Eventually, *Flush* offers a model of animal agency by highlighting perception and interspecific connection. The subjectivity of the dog questions the human-oriented narration. There are fidelities and vexations he goes through wholly through the canine world of smells, as Maitzen puts it in the book "Across the Widest Gulf: Nonhuman Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf's *Flush*". The impossibility to speak canine sensibility as a whole is reflected in the style of Woolf, which is sometimes lyrical, sometimes whimsical. However, by allowing Flush to have a sort of voice (the very concept of a "biography" from the dog's POV), Woolf is pointing towards a multispecies relationality. But Flush does not merely symbolize human Brownings, but he redefines them. His reactions are peripheral to Elizabeth, and her moods, for example, are filtered through his peripheral reactions, "It leapt and jerked. It stopped and leapt again. Flush had never heard that sound in Miss Barrett's voice before—that vigour, that excitement. Her cheeks were bright as he had never seen them bright; her great eyes blazed as he had never seen them blaze" (Woolf 64). The devotion and sorrow of Flush become as central to Barrett's love story as her own feelings. Thereby, the animal's enactments co-constitute the human drama.

*Flush* by Woolf, therefore, implies that there is no need to erase the otherness of an animal to understand it. Instead, we need to change our frame of perception. Olfactory senses encourage the readers to accept that humans inhabit but one Umwelt. This canine perspective, according to Craig Smith, "destroys the human perspective as authority" (Smith 73). Finally, when readers get sucked into the world of Flush and his sensational and subjective experiences, Woolf emphasizes the non-human animals' modes of perception as a legitimate form of agency that enriches their identity across all characters.

### Affective Survival in *Life of Pi*

*Life of Pi* (2001) by Yann Martel also depicts a central non-human animal character, a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker, whose existence reshapes the human protagonist. Stranded on a lifeboat in the Pacific, the teenage narrator Pi Patel has to coexist with the tiger to survive. This scene is a vivid dramatization of the expression of animal agency using affective power. From the first moment Pi realizes "That tide of food, water, and rest that flowed through my weakened system, bringing me a new lease on life, also brought me the strength to see how desperate my situation was. I awoke to the reality of Richard Parker. There was a tiger in my lifeboat" (Martel 80), his entire identity as a survivor is turned inside out. The impact of fear turns into a living entity that determines the new reality of Pi.

The most explicit contribution is that of physical survival by Richard Parker, where Pi himself says it that "He pushed me to go on living. I hated him for it, yet at the same time I was grateful. I am grateful. It's the plain truth: without Richard Parker, I wouldn't be alive today to tell you my story" (Martel 88). This confession recognises the tiger as a co-actor in the fate of Pi. Symbolically, the rich character of Richard Parker embodies the instinctual currents that Pi has to struggle against, i.e., hunger, territory, and aggression. All these are done when Pi must catch fish and ration food with the constant threat of the tiger's needs. The hunger and restlessness of Richard Parker causes disciplines in Pi. The boy has to arrange a tiny ecosystem of the boat, a liminal more-than-human lifeworld, in line with the rhythms of the tiger. This makes Martel literalise the dictum of Deleuze and Guattari "becoming-animal." Pi is being reconfigured gradually in similarity to the nature of the tiger, just as an organism is being adapted to its Umwelt.

Affect saturates these scenes. To illustrate this, in case Pi awakens to despair, he writes, "I will tell you a secret: a part of me was glad about Richard Parker... If I still had the will to live, it was thanks to Richard Parker" (Martel 88). The presence of the tiger evokes a mixture of emotions, including terror and hatred, but gratitude and companionship. This ambivalent affect reflects the fact that emotions are powerful bodily intensities as expressed by Massumi. Pi is unable to utter these intensities completely, and he ends up narrating two accounts of his experience, although the story makes it clear that the silent stare of Richard Parker and prowling are what restrain the fear of Pi. The story mentions that Pi has always had a body that is on the lookout for Richard Parker in the thick darkness. His heart throbs fiercely to the slightest sound. Such instances of terror are not metaphors; on the contrary, they are *affective performances* that the tiger does by simply existing.

This concept of performance is also literal here. One can further find in the paper that Red Peter has been trained to play in a circus; by analogy, Richard Parker is already playing life itself. Martel goes so far as to make Pi believe that the name of the tiger (the anomalously human) and his appearance are included in the narrative of the performance at the conclusion. The two versions of the story of Pi (with animals, without) emphasize that Richard Parker can be seen as a narrative device, although in the story of Pi, the emotional truth is attached to the tiger. According to the Posthuman approach, Richard Parker is a non-human partner in meaning-making who constructs the story of Pi and, by extension, the meaning of the story. Agency in the case of Bruno Latour is dispersed in such a way that Richard Parker *acts* on Pi (and on readers) via signals and affects.

This joint performance situation compromises human control. In the boat, Pi loses his identity as a rational and urban-educated boy. He becomes, in Sartrean fashion, what he has to become to save himself: a creature of the body. His transition to survival mode came as an unmistakable indication to me of how low I had sunk the day I noticed, with a pinching of the heart, that I ate like an animal, that this noisy, frantic, unchewing wolfing-down of mine was exactly the way Richard Parker ate" (Martel 119). He would use his right hand to eat and his left hand to drink. He was unrecognizable, which suggests identity to be performative and situational. It is the raw vitality of the tiger that keeps Pi anchored in the world of the primitives. Just as the cat of Derrida encounters the human with the immediacy of mortality in the here and now. Richard Parker is such an immediacy in the case of Pi. The rapport of Pi to Richard Parker is a strong analogy of the cat in Derrida, since in both works the animal breaks the human illusion of distance and brings mortality nearer, corporeal, and real. The cat of Derrida is not significant as a symbol but a living being whose gaze challenges human sovereignty, "Before the cat that looks at me naked" (Derrida 5). The human is exposed to an encounter in which "anything can happen," where one may "die of shame or pleasure," (Derrida 9) and where shared vulnerability reveals that "Mortality resides there" (Derrida 27). The animal gaze, then, is not simply a look back but, to the contrary, it places the human in front of the limit of the human, before finitude itself.

In *Life of Pi*, Richard Parker plays a similar role, albeit in a more brutal survivalist register. The mortality of Pi occurs as soon as the tiger fully appears: "The hyena's end had come, and mine" (Martel 81). Henceforth, Richard Parker is not simply an external threat, but he is the living creature with whom Pi has to face death, fear, and his own animal frailty. However, as in the case of the cat of Derrida, Richard Parker is the agent who reconstructs the human subject under pressure. Pi eventually realizes that "We would live—

or we would die—together” and finally admits that “without Richard Parker, I wouldn't be alive today” (Martel 87–88). Richard Parker, therefore, is the reflection of the cat of Derrida as he transforms abstract philosophical truth into an immediate relation. Pi is observed, measured, threatened, and thus roused into a reduced state of consciousness of survival. The distinction lies in the fact that the cat of Derrida reveals the human being as ashamed and ontologically vulnerable, whereas Richard Parker reveals Pi as always in the threat of literal death. In either of the two, the animal encounter becomes the scene in which the human recognizes its finitude most intensely.

Another incident that Martel underlines is the irreducibility of the experience of Richard Parker. On one hand, Pi observes the reactions of the tiger in a moonlit sea where Richard Parker lives and co-exists. He reigned over it, yet didn't own it,

“I looked at him, full of fearful wonder. There being no immediate threat, my breath slowed down, my heart stopped knocking about in my chest, and I began to regain my senses. I had to tame him. It was at that moment that I realized this necessity. It was not a question of him or me, but of him and me. We were, literally and figuratively, in the same boat. We would live-or we would die together” (Martel 285).

Overall, *Life of Pi* is a dramatization of the animal agency through affect and cohabitation as a way of transforming identity. Richard Parker does not communicate in human language, but as he fears and attempts to survive, he performs a great act in the novel. In *Life of Pi*, Martel demonstrates that to feel respectful towards non-human animals is not just an ethical decision but an ontological change. Pi should recognize the tiger as his equal subject. This is similar to the concept by Eduardo Kohn that other species have different forms of thinking. To Richard Parker, the Pacific is a world of hunt and scent, not ship and salvation. By acknowledging the tiger's role, Pi's identity becomes fluid and dynamic, extending beyond the human.

### **Performing Humanity in Kafka's "A Report to an Academy"**

A mediation on performance and identity is perhaps most explicit in Franz Kafka's 1917 story by the title *Ein Bericht Für Eine Akademie* (translated as “A Report to an Academy”). Red Peter, an ape who was captured by hunters, narrates to a scientific audience how he was compelled to become “an able performer” in order to escape the confines of his cage (Kafka 1). To Red Peter, being human is not a choice but a necessity. His story implies that identity can be cast off and rebuilt like clothes.

The transformation of Red Peter revolves around imitation, as he learns to talk, walk on four feet, and to drink alcohol, all to survive. Notably, he points out that he did so not because he wanted to be a human being, but it is “the only way to get out of my predicament” (Kafka 1). He is experiencing human-like freedom under severe pressures, in existential terms. His identity is enacted, that one might say, “identity is performance”. In fact, Walter Herbert Sokel observes of this story that for the ape, “identity is performance. It is not a static essence...but a constantly reenacted self-presentation.” (Sokel 283). Such a quote might be the credo of Red Peter. Any gesture (the tiniest smile to indicate assent, the rigid pose of “humanity) is an artificial act of self-construction.

Kafka, therefore, satirizes human conceptions of fixed identity. Red Peter finds his role as a human being to be partial and artificial. He explains that he must have admitted the seeming absurdity of his predicament, but he diligently enacts it out to remain liberal. He, at one time, compares himself with a man in a cage who is being forced to play. He tells him that as a human being, he also has a family name, which is not his. “Once in the cheek; a scratch; but it left a bald red scar that got me the disgusting, and wholly unsuitable sobriquet really, it might have been invented by an ape - Red Peter, as if that red mark on the cheek were all that distinguished me from the recently deceased, uncertainly celebrated, trained ape known as Peter. This by the by” (Kafka 226-227). The political undertones of the story are that Kafka, himself being a Jew as an outsider, repeats the mimicking of societal rules that the oppressed must follow. The story of the ape can be interpreted as an allegory of colonial or racial pressures (Goodbody 2016), yet at a different level, it demonstrates that even species categories do not guarantee identity. It is possible that even a human being may turn into “ape-like” and vice versa.

In light of the performance theory, Red Peter is explicit when he decides to attend the Music Hall instead of the Zoo. Freedom implies being free to do and to appear in a show every night. Such a grotesque reversal (a monkey turned into a vaudevillian man) makes the Derridean knot of species (who is looking at whom) dramatic. When Red Peter says he is better off an ape in the music hall than an animal in a cage, “I was quick to realize that there were two possibilities open to me: zoo or variety theatre. I didn't hesitate. I told myself: do everything in your power to get into the variety theatre; that's your way out.” (Kafka 234). He constructs his identity in terms of relation. His “humanity” only makes sense as compared to being in prison. By doing that, he puts the human identity of the very academy under interrogation.

The story of Red Peter also brings up the issue of language as a form of performance. He acknowledges that the most difficult lesson was learning to communicate, since it is much more difficult than learning to control his limbs. This highlights the fact that the human/animal barrier is as much linguistic as physical. Human language limitation is a theme that Kafka, like Woolf and Martel, exposes to as it is incapable of being able to capture the experience of non-human animals. But the twist that Kafka puts is that Red Peter uses the human language to articulate an animal's perspective. He does not speak for the animal, but he is the animal who speaks. At the end, Red Peter is not able to describe his feelings and experiences as an ape appropriately anymore, "And so, gentlemen, I learned...I have reached the level of cultivation of the average European. In and of itself, that might not mean anything, but it does mean something, because it got me out of my cage, and gave me this particular way out, this human way out. There is a wonderful German idiom: to light out; and that's what I've done, I've lit out. I had no other way open to me, always assuming that I wasn't going to choose freedom" (Kafka 234-235). This means that there is no stable self that he can describe.

More importantly, the ape Kafka depicts displays agency in rejection. He states that he will not be as free as the sea, and he will not portray a comedy performance. He will train himself or disguise to be the ape who wanted to be a man. His identity is created on stage and to report back. But the last irony is a sadness that all the physical and emotional suffering that Red Peter went through has been wiped away by his human identity. His true self, that of a wild ape, is fast obliterating as human affect takes over. In this regard, Kafka anticipates the central ideology that identity is created by performance and affect rather than essence.

Kafka makes his readers question how tenuous the human/animal distinction is by dramatizing an animal who intentionally performs humanity. The novel suggests that any identity (national, racial, species) might be a role that is learned to play. According to Axel Goodbody, Kafka's fiction "destabilises accepted notions of human distinctiveness" and "foreground[s] our animality" (Goodbody 1). The story of Red Peter reflects this in the sense that his humanity is a reflection of the human audience, if they, too, are mere performers within constraints.

### CONCLUSION

Throughout the study, animals are not merely objects to observe, but they are beings that look back, just as Derrida implies. Each of the three characters, Flush, Richard Parker, and Red Peter, enacts an animal gaze or presence that forces

the human characters to alter or modify their perception. By so doing, they implement new modalities of performance in identity. The Flush's dog-eye perspective is an invitation to Elizabeth Barrett Browning to look anew at her cocooned world, Pi, through the loving crucible of his journey, and Red Peter, in his oration, is a hilarious (and hideous) reflection of human pretences in the eyes of the Academy audience. They are more than human symbols in which they are agents whose acting embodies the workings of identity itself.

What is the implication of this to identity? According to Hall and Bhabha, identity is not a successful fact but one "in process" (Hall 222), "a negotiating power and difference" (Bhabha 56). Conventionally, the non-human animal was beyond that process, as a pure exterior. However, when animals are the agents, then human identity is compelled to be more-than-human. In other words, an identity now has to take into consideration the agency of others. Rather than human beings being defined in opposition to a passive animal, human beings need to regard themselves as interdependent in a network of performers.

In political terms, this advocates a radical "identity politics" of the non-human animals. According to Bhabha, the dominant identity is created by the powerful people, and they create boundaries around people who are considered human. However, when, in literature, non-human animals begin to act in the world, to act politically by being there, it breaks. The fact that Straut Hall conceived identity as being "constituted within representation" (Hall 222). This implies that human narratives about non-human animals constitute a part of that constitution. These authors make space in which identity can be rewritten, where animals narrate, influence, or co-shape outcomes.

To sum up, literary animal performances help us to redefine identity outside of anthropocentrism and exceptionalism. Performance highlights that identity is an ongoing action. Following Derrida, Wittgenstein, and others, it can be said that man is what he does. Here we observe that an animal is also what it does not only instinctively, but discursively. When Flush sniffs, when Pi shares the lifeboat with Richard Parker, when Red Peter speaks to the Academy, then the human identity is being challenged. Such accounts indicate that it is only when a human identity loses its monopoly that it can be fully comprehended. The Anthropocene and beyond, there is a world that humans share. The acknowledgment of the non-human animal agency by performance and affect enables identity to be relational and fluid. The identity is not a fortress but a tent where multi-species dwell and exist.

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