



FIGURE 9. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Quackborg*. Pen and ink on paper, 15 in. × 11 in., 2015.

Menagerie

There was once a law concerning mermaids. My friend thinks it a wondrous thing—that the British Empire was so thorough it had invented a law for everything. And in this law it was decreed: were any to be found in their usual spots, showing off like dolphins, sunbathing on rocks—they would no longer belong to themselves. And maybe this is the problem with empires: how they have forced us to live in a world lacking in mermaids—mermaids who understood that they simply were, and did not need permission to exist or to be beautiful. The law concerning mermaids only caused mermaids to pass a law concerning man: that they would never again cross our boundaries of sand; never again lift their torsos up from the surf; never again wave at sailors, salt dripping from their curls; would never again enter our dry and stifling world.

—KEI MILLER, *THE LAW CONCERNING MERMAIDS*

HOW DID THE RABBIS organize the teeming plenitude of creaturely life? In the previous chapter we focused on the Sifra and the ways the exegetical encounter with scripture itself expanded the sparse Levitical bestiary. We treated the identificatory impulse of the tannaim and attended to cases in which likeness was used as both exegetical tool and as morphological multiplier, a proliferator of kinds. In this chapter we pursue other paths along which the rabbis sought to cluster and distinguish—again, via the mechanism of likeness and the rendering of difference. These approaches involve a device that I dub the “menagerie.”¹

The menagerie gained popularity in nineteenth-century Europe and North America and referred to collections of “wild” and “exotic” animals. Enclosed and exhibited, these exoticized creatures represented European imperial projects of capture, collection, and extraction. While the term “menagerie” itself was not deployed in earlier, or non-European contexts, it is—thanks to these resonances of imperial conquest, containment, and exoticization of animals—often used to describe a variety of imperial animal collections. Examples range from

mid-third-millennium BCE Egyptian Saqqara to the twelfth-century BCE emperor of Henan province, to the sixth-century BCE Achaemenid Persian dynasty, all the way to Rome in the first centuries CE.² Literary and material evidence points to the assembly of flora and fauna in gardens and parks in Rome sponsored by emperors and high status people, as well as to the display of creatures from across the empire in a variety of contexts from triumphs to spectacular fights between animals and gladiators.³ Depending on the context, menageries connect heterogeneous creatures and join them into assemblages.

In this chapter I focus on two sets of menageries both found in Mishnah and Tosefta Kilayim. Tracing the explicit frames within which the rabbis grouped certain kinds, I will argue that the human plays a blurry role in this mix of creaturely classification and territoriality, one that is exemplary of how the marking of difference fails to undo the seductive pull of resemblance. It is partly through the ways the human is troubled—and indeed, doubled—that we will see how, despite classificatory efforts to control and capture, the unruly animals escape the menagerie.

In the following pages, I will place the menagerie in multiple frames: the first is the classificatory will to lump and to split creatures along the lines of likeness and difference. This impulse may also be examined in light of the rabbis' positionality, both with respect to the objects of classification and beyond.⁴ Knowledge quests to organize animals in late antiquity were constrained by unequally distributed access (and bids) to power, control, and capture, and by the different ends for which such knowledge was extracted. It is no surprise that each motivation shapes knowledge a little differently—the demands of biblical exegesis may create a different outcome than the demands of ritual. The same goes for the form of commentary versus the constraints of topically arranged teachings. Rabbinic knowledge making and quests for classificatory control were shaped alongside other such enterprises in the late ancient Middle East and Mediterranean: these constitute the second avenue of our inquiry. These were expressed in multiple forms: philosophy and “natural history”; paradoxography; visual art and architecture; trade, consumption, display; and entertainment. Within such varied media and fora, animals, both local and distant, circulated through the empire.

We proceed as follows: after discussing ancient and modern classificatory lenses, I consider two sets of menageries in Mishnah Kilayim and Tosefta Kilayim. Focusing on the Tosefta, I probe the ways that its assemblage of prosaic and exoticized creatures aligns with the late Roman menagerie. Moving to the ways that Kilayim's menagerie works with different species that look alike, I analyze the tannaitic theory of territorial doubles, comparing it to both late Roman and early Christian variations. I conclude with an argument about how the contagious effects of likeness trouble the classificatory project of the rabbinic menagerie.

CLASSIFICATION

The menagerie offered an organizing frame through which the rabbis attempted to identify and differentiate among the multitudinous cohabitants of their world. Propelled by the search for likeness and difference, the menagerie captures creatures, conceptualizing them both together and apart in a concatenation of variegated groupings. Unlike the staggered, hierarchical cuts made by Linnaean taxonomy, in which creatures are pinned in fixed classificatory registers that still govern our thinking today, tannaitic creatures could be placed in multiple, noncontiguous sets.⁵ While the rabbis strained to fit creatures inside or outside these sets, they also acknowledged and grappled with creatures that resisted placement or that partook in multiple sets. The previous chapter followed the Sifra as it focused on and unfurled the Levitical bestiary. As we might expect in a commentarial genre tracking biblical verses, what results is a rather sustained engagement with a variety of lifeforms. Here we home in on the various, more succinct, menageries that pop up in the thematically organized Mishnah and Tosefta tractates of Kilayim.

One way in which likeness was a bivalent device in service of classification was in its double purposing. In chapter 1 we saw how likeness and its legibility were viewed as keys to establishing reproductive relationships: *like begets like*. However, we also investigated how these expectations were dashed. But there was another mystery. If, in the anticipated course of things, looking like someone indicated that you were related in some way to them, whether in terms of kinship or species, what of the ways that likeness is discerned *across* different species?⁶ What to make, for instance, of resemblances between the wolf and the dog, or between the monkey and the human? In the seventeenth century, the taxonomy of Linnaeus made sense of such likeness by organizing creatures along morphological lines into hierarchical ranks—species, genus, class, and so on. In the nineteenth century, Darwin's ideas of evolution and heredity solidified links between genealogy and likeness. But these ways of organizing the world's denizens were not yet thinkable in late antiquity.

It is no surprise that ancient writers and thinkers, the rabbis included, understood the variety of life-forms differently from us. And yet, it takes conscious effort to recognize and attempt to think beyond (or before) the creaturely classifications that we have, whether those we conventionally tag as bioscientific (e.g., following Linnaean taxa) or as religious (e.g., in accordance with contemporary classicizing understandings of rabbinic texts as grounding a “system” of “Jewish law,” or more particularly through the lens of “kashrut,” the kosher rules).⁷ The rabbis' zoology had a wholly different purpose from that of Linnaeus: its aim was not to establish a hierarchical taxonomy—with “species” as its *de minimus*, base unit—but to parse animals in their ritual contexts, within certain creative constraints. Likewise, Aristotle's aim was not that of Linnaeus: he sought to understand and describe the parts of animals and their functions, rather than creating a holistic and consistent

taxonomical system.⁸ As we have discussed, the rabbinic idea of “kind” or “species” (*min*) and Aristotle’s concepts of “species” (*eidos*) and “genus” (*genus*) were mobile—context-dependent rather than fixed. Aristotle’s usages depended on the frame within which he was collecting particular units (each entity an *eidos*) into a group (or *genus*). For instance, while occasionally Aristotle includes humans as part of the set of viviparous quadrupeds, he usually does not.⁹ His is a logical rather than essential or biological concept of species and genus. There are no graded chains of organization ranging from species to genus to family, and upward.¹⁰ Roughly the same is true for the rabbis.¹¹ As we’ve seen, the same creature can be an impure kind, a large animal (*behemah gasah*), and a domestic animal (*behemah*): the term *min* is used for each one of these classificatory groupings or registers.

Kenneth D. Bailey begins his introduction to classification with a warning against classifying according to “trivial dimensions.”¹² Warning that the classification of “four legs” might join a giraffe, a dining table, and a dancing couple, he asks, “is this what we really want?” The question is clearly intended rhetorically. Of course, it implies that we could never want such an unholy mess of juxtapositions. Bailey thereby reveals the ways in which *a priori* classes already govern his classificatory enterprise. But, we may argue, it is the very lack of fixity enabled by his suggested (and supposedly absurd) juxtapositions that exposes us to the unexpected, and that denaturalizes the world and its parts. Maybe this is *precisely* what we need (whether or not we want it). Such an apparently “trivial” approach allows us to undo fixed essentialisms around the categories and classifications that we naturalize and *think we already know or expect and wish to find*. It allows us to learn and to see the world with new eyes. This is partly what we gain when we look at the world of living beings through premodern eyes that see without our epistemic constraints.

Yet we cannot help the fact that we live in Linnaeus’s shadow. Our very language and ability to name animals has inevitably incorporated these taxonomic ways of thinking. Think of how the “biological” or “Latin” names of creatures rely on his binomial nomenclature (giving the species and genus names together). This difficulty is compounded by the fact that we tend to assume—or strain to identify—ancient nomenclature in contemporary technical terms. Naturally, we want, even need, to translate ancient Hebrew, Latin, or Greek into our own languages: we want, need, to know what our ancient sources are referencing. Yet, as is evident from conflicting historical and scholarly translations of animal terms in Leviticus, and even frank admissions about the difficulty or impossibility of translating many creatures’ names, there are real limits to what we can know; indeed, claiming otherwise is disingenuous. There are intertwined ethical, epistemological, and historical problems in identifying ancient creaturely nomenclature with contemporary classificatory terms. Here we can heed the wisdom of scholars of disability studies and crip theory when they caution us against adopting the medicalizing, pathologizing, and even stigmatizing gaze of “retrospective diagnosis.”

Normate scientific definitions of categories underpinned both zoology and medicine in modern Europe—for instance, in questioning or downgrading the species membership of certain people, whether in racialized or ableist terms.¹³ Adopting such criteria is to use one set of culturally instantiated classifications as benchmarks by which to identify another, particularly when undertaken within an uncritical scientific positivism. This is not to eschew research that uses such language, held lightly, in order to communicate to contemporary audiences—for example, in identifying paintings of sheep and cows, or in translating words (as I’ve tried to do with biblical and rabbinic texts). Or let us take another example of using terms like “reproduction” or “animal,” which had little purchase before the close of the eighteenth and sixteenth centuries, respectively, and which are incommensurate with ancient concepts or categories.¹⁴ Beyond these historical contexts of creaturely nomenclature, terminology is never neutral and inevitably smuggles in particular teleologies. Consider, further, that species concepts are contested by biologists themselves. Projects trying to map particular ancient terms onto modern taxa often engage in anachronistic evaluations of the correctness or fancifulness of the ancient “science” therein.¹⁵ Instead of such an approach, I am trying to hazard my way into rabbinic world making, not to measure their efforts against our own. Late ancient Palestine, Southwest Asia, North Africa, and beyond—all teemed with life-forms, some of whom entered rabbinic texts. What did it mean to live in that world?

KILAYIM’S MENAGERIES

Menageries pop up across tannaitic literature. We can find them in Tractate Bava Kamma and Tractate ‘Avodah Zarah, which consider the breeding, hunting, or trade of various species, and in locations like Tractates Kelim and Bekhorot, which treat purity-related matters and reproductive zoology.¹⁶ Here, we will chiefly focus on the tractate of Kilayim (“mixed kinds”) as a prime location for working out questions of species classification.¹⁷ This tractate seeks to delineate the contours of the following biblical prohibitions:

My statutes you shall observe. Your animals you shall not mate with different kinds (*kilayim*). Your fields you shall not sow with different kinds (*kilayim*). And a garment of different kinds (*kilayim*) of mixed fabric (*shaatnez*) shall not be worn by you. (Leviticus 19:19)

You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds (*kilayim*); lest you render forbidden the fullness of the seed that you sow and the yield of the vineyard. You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. You shall not wear mixed fabric (*shaatnez*), wool and linen together. (Deuteronomy 22:9–11)

In their biblical settings, these strictures do not appear in the context of the purity classifications outlining various creaturely kinds (Lev 11 and Deut 14). However, the tannaitic tractate of Kilayim does bring in classificatory schema: it does so to parse species and thereby to determine what constitutes “mixing kinds” (*kilayim*).

TABLE 2

Mishnah Kilayim 1:5–6	Tosefta Kilayim 1:1, 7–8
5. Radishes and rapeseed, ^a mustard and wild mustard, Greek gourd and Egyptian gourd or bitter gourds, ^b even though they resemble (<i>domin</i>) one another, they are <i>kilayim</i> one with another.	1. All the pairs that the sages designated as a species with its own species are not <i>kilayim</i> with one another...
6. The wolf and the dog, the village dog and the fox, ^c goats and deer, ^d mountain goats and ewes, the horse and the mule, the mule and the donkey, the donkey and the wild donkey (<i>arod</i>), even they resemble (<i>domin</i>) one another, they are <i>kilayim</i> with one another.	7. The peacock and the pheasant, even though they resemble (<i>domin</i>) one another, they are <i>kilayim</i> with one another...
	8. The ox and the wild ox (<i>shor habar</i>), the donkey and the wild donkey, ^e the pig and the wild pig, even though they resemble (<i>domin</i>) one another, they are <i>kilayim</i> with one another.

^a Following Feliks, *Mixed Seeds*, 74 and 79.

^b The Hebrew is *remutsa*, which Feliks (*Tractate Kil'ayim* 44) identifies as a bitter-tasting Egyptian gourd.

^c Feliks (*Tractate Kil'ayim*, 117) translates *shu'al* as jackal (*tan*).

^d Feliks (*Masekhet Kil'ayim*, 117) translates gazelle.

^e *Hamor habar*.

The rabbinic elaboration of *kilayim* necessitates and consolidates classification itself. The tannaim extrapolate *kilayim* from the spare biblical articulation to variously staggered combinations and permutations: “a domesticated animal with a domesticated animal and a wild animal with a wild animal, domesticated with wild and wild with domesticated, impure with impure and pure with pure, impure with pure and pure with impure, are forbidden to plow, pull, and lead” (mKilayim 8:2). The prohibition includes combining animals designated as distinct species together for human purposes—plowing, pulling, leading, and also mating them. Crucially, in this chapter’s context, in its effort to sort animals, the tractate deals not only with the problems of likeness and difference but also with entities that straddle groupings or that are not easily placed into one grouping.

The first menagerie we encounter in *Kilayim* appears early in the tractate and directly confronts the problem of misleading similarities among creatures ostensibly of different kinds. It presents various pairings of animals (and plants) in order to differentiate them. What follows, placed side by side, are the relevant passages in the Mishnah and its companion volume, the Tosefta. These passages are parallel in that they connect, both substantively and structurally. Scholars have long read the Mishnah and Tosefta together, arguing that the latter is a slightly later collection and commentary on the former, or that the former in fact knows a version of the latter, or making case-by-case determinations based on individual comparisons.

Both sources seek to know which creatures, when combined, constitute “different kinds (*kilayim*) with one another.” The tannaim observe that certain species “resemble one another” (*domin zeh lazeh*), but also that resemblance proves to

be a false friend in terms of species designation, because it links what are in fact distinct kinds, which thus may not be planted, worked, or mated together. For instance, despite their resemblance and even their shared names, the pig (*hazir*) and the wild pig (*hazir ha-bar*) are distinct kinds. This detail poses a broader question: why were the rabbis even issuing such edicts about an animal with which they were unlikely to interact?¹⁸ By contrast, creatures like the donkey and goat were far more widespread in Palestine, and therefore, were in greater contact with rabbis. The pig prescriptions are further evidence of the ways in which rabbinic knowledge making goes beyond the need-to-know, into the pursuit of knowledge for itself. That the rabbis are considering creatures, like pigs, so clearly outside their own zones of hands-on expertise (and perhaps not within the domain of potential adherents either) points to the ambition of their epistemic enterprise, something that we emphasized in the previous chapter.¹⁹ If pragmatism were the sole driver for knowledge making, it cannot explain their interest in forbidden human interference in wild/domesticated pig mating.

It seems unlikely that the rabbis contemplated that other Palestinian Jews were breeders of these creatures (or combinations thereof), whether domesticated and wild pigs—or, for that matter, dogs and foxes.²⁰ But this does not make the pairings fanciful per se. Galen discusses several of these same combinations in his treatment of hybrids.²¹ As we will see in the next chapter, hybridity was a generative source of both intellectual inquiry and material experimentation. There was a great deal of intervention in and investigation of animal breeding across the Southwest Asia and North Africa from earlier antiquity to late antiquity. People bred undomesticated creatures with domesticated varieties or grafted wild shoots onto domesticated scions. There was concomitant movement of animals along the various routes of trade and imperial expansions. Thus, in assessing the material and intellectual conditions of rabbinic knowledge making, it is not necessary to succumb to the false choice of seeing the rabbis as constructing highly theoretical flights of fancy versus presenting them as generating earnest considerations of a purely pragmatic nature or ritually (*halakhic*) driven realia. The problem in such binary thinking is that it proceeds from a priori decisions about what counts as fanciful versus empirical in the first place, as if such distinctions are transhistorical.

A closer look at the above pairings reveals no single or uniform organizing logic. There are animals that are linked by an ostensible shared name and hence an identification, like pig/wild pig and ox/wild ox. Then there are pairings that seem to join what to us seem to be distinct kinds—that is, wolf/dog, village dog/fox, goat/deer, mountain goat/ewe, and peacock/pheasant. (As always, this assumes that the Hebrew is correctly translated; there is some dispute about “village dog.”)²² Of these, some pairs might seem to us to be related or overlap in some way—that is, the wolf/dog and village dog/fox, and also goat/deer and mountain goat/ewes. Finally, three of the pairs they name—horse/mule, mule/donkey, and donkey/wild donkey—are related (at least for us, given our understandings of classification and

genetics). While what exactly the rabbis thought of the relationship between their present-day donkey and wild donkey—or other domesticated versus wild creatures—is unclear, it is certain that they understood the horse, mule, and donkey to be reproductively related. Regardless, the mule stands out among the collection of creatures in Kilayim precisely because it is itself a product of kilayim (i.e., the prohibition). The two pairings of mule/donkey and mule/horse are in effect efforts to figure out the relationship of the mule to its parents' species: the finding is that they are all distinct.²³ I have run through these three sets of groupings/logics to show their multiplicity and overlap (aside from their resemblance). They are: pairs sharing a name (unmarked creatures e.g., an ox and wild versions thereof e.g., a wild ox); similar looking but differently named creatures; and reproductively related creatures.²⁴

Many of these pairings conform to what modern biological taxonomy would designate as relations between genus, species, families, and orders: but we should be wary of importing such ideas to our ancient authors. In modern zoology, the wolf (*canis lupus* in its binomial designation) and dog (*canis familiaris*) are understood as species that share membership in the *canis* genus, which includes coyotes and jackals. Similarly, but at a higher classificatory register, the mountain goat (*oreamnos*) is a genus that is a member of the subfamily *caprinae* (including goats and sheep), which is itself a member of the *bovidae* family (which would include “goats and deer”). However, the mule—again, the hybrid offspring of the horse and the donkey—is excluded in many (but not all) modern biological definitions of species, because it cannot reproduce. For those taxonomies that would exclude it, the mule is a taxonomical “anomaly,” given its derivation from the horse (itself a species of the genus *equus*) and from the donkey (*equus africanus asinus*, considered a subspecies of the African wild ass, *equus africanus* of the *equus* genus). While this tells us something about the limits of modern taxonomy in and of itself, the point about not assuming such ideas for late ancient writers remains.

It is better to consider a more historically sensitive possibility for the choice of pairings in these Kilayim passages. Might they express the ancient (rabbinic) dichotomy of domesticated (*behemah*) versus wild animals (*hayah*): for example, the dog and the wolf, the village dog and the fox, the goat and the deer, the donkey and the wild donkey (*arod*), the ox and the wild ox, and the pig and the wild pig? That explanation initially seems promising, and yet this logic of domesticated/wild ultimately fails to unify all these pairings. We will soon see that many of the animals in this first chapter of Kilayim (in both the Mishnah and the Tosefta) recur later in the tractate among a list of animals whose designations as wild/domesticated are unexpected or in dispute. In other words, several of the above creatures do not necessarily line up as the complementary domesticated or wild counterpart to their partners in this first chapter. Take the pairing of dog and wolf in mKilayim 1:6: our later passage determines that the dog is, like the wolf, wild.²⁵ As we will see, the parallel Tosefta (tKilayim 1:9) and the second menagerie (mKilayim 8:6)

TABLE 3

mKilayim 8:5–6	tKilayim 5:7–10
[5] the field human (<i>adne ha-sadeh</i>) is a wild animal. Rabbi Yose says: they convey tent impurity like a human. The hedgehog ^a and the marten: ^b wild animal. The marten: Rabbi Yose says: Bet Shammai says, an olive's worth [of carcass] renders a person carrying it unclean, and a lentil's worth renders a person touching it unclean.	[7] The dog is a wild animal kind. Rabbi Meir says: the domesticated animal kind . . . The village dog is a wild animal kind.
[6] The wild ox is a domesticated animal kind. Rabbi Yose says: it is a wild animal kind. The dog is the wild animal kind. Rabbi Meir says: the domesticated animal kind. The pig is a domesticated animal kind. The wild donkey is a wild animal kind. The elephant and the monkey are wild animals. And the human is permitted to pull, plow, and lead <i>any of them</i> .	[8] The <i>yerodin</i> and the <i>na'amit</i> , behold they are like birds in all respects.
	[9] For an impure animal does not give birth to a pure kind, and a pure one to an impure one, neither a large domesticated animal kind to a small domesticated animal kind, nor a small one to a large kind, and no human from <i>any of them</i> , nor to any of them a human. ^c
	[10] Everything that there is in the settlement, there is in the wilderness; but there are many in the desert that are not in the settlement. Everything that there is on dry land there is in the sea; many are in the sea that are not on dry land. There is no sea marten.

^a Or "porcupine."^b Or "stone marten" in Dor, *Animals in the Era of the Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud*, 73.^c par. tBekhorot 5:9.

presents a dispute about whether the wild ox is in fact wild or domesticated. Regardless, this logic does not even uniformly organize the pairings; such consistency is, as we already noted, frustrated by other motivations for coupling. Thus, to enter this group, pairs of like creatures must satisfy polythetic (multiple, nonexhaustive, and overlapping rather than necessarily commonly held) criteria rather than monothetic (a set of singular, necessary and sufficient) criteria. In their lack of consistency, the selection logics for these pairings—aside from physical resemblance itself—make for a set of "family resemblances." These alternate conceptions of likeness make this curated coterie structurally inconsistent.

In sum, there are multiple logics that connect the pairings in the first chapter of Kilayim in both the Tosefta and the Mishnah, even as all pairs' members are linked by the common connection of morphological resemblance. We may also note that most pairs include at least one prosaic or ubiquitous "domesticated" creature. As collections, these lists fall short of systematic taxonomy (in the strict sense of hierarchical and fixed classification). This twinning of inconsistency (or difference) among these juxtapositions of difference with the commonality of morphological likeness will become important later in the chapter when we treat the slipperiness of likeness as an organizational principle of classification.

In mKilayim 8:5–6 and tKilayim 5:7–10, also parallel passages, we find a second menagerie that, taken together, amounts to sixteen creatures (ten in the Mishnah, six in the Tosefta). Here are the two passages presented side by side.

The seeming concern of these passages is to place a variety of kinds (at the level of what we might dub as “species”) into groups or classes, many of which are binary—for example, domesticated versus wild animal, wild animal versus creeping animal (*sherets*), bird versus wild animal, and human versus wild animal. The Tosefta’s invocation of the long-form generation principle adds more classificatory registers: pure/impure kind, small domesticated animal/large domesticated animal, and human/nonhuman. I will suggest that the tannaim gather and curate these particular creatures—nonhuman kinds that were thought of as *prosaica* and *exotica*—not just for ritual purposes alone but also as a display of knowledge in the form of the menagerie. I will further argue that in these parallel passages we find another case of likeness playing an uneasy, multivalent role, which in this instance blurs classifications by dint of its proliferative, sticky properties. This is the reason, we will see, that the Tosefta’s commentary and complement to the Mishnah cites the expanded principle of generation (that we encountered in chapter 1), together with a theory of territorial doubles. These two—principle and theory—amount to an attempt to limit the fuzzy and fusing properties of likeness, one in which the human itself is caught.

Reading these two passages together, we discern substantive parallels (both treat the human, the dog, and the marten), formal echoes (both sort animals into classes), and complementarities (different species). It is apparent that the Tosefta supplies linked commentary, the clearest instance of which concerns the dog.²⁶ While Saul Lieberman points out that tKilayim 5:10 comments on mKilayim 8:5, we see that both tKilayim 5:9 and 5:10 comment on both mKilayim 8:5 and mKilayim 8:6 (especially the final phrase of mKilayim 8:6).²⁷ As a whole, the Tosefta responds to and comments on our Mishnah passage (or a version thereof). In other words, the animals that it supplies are additions to the Mishnah’s already existent catalog. As we will see, the human occupies a place that is at once peculiar and unexceptional in both passages.

What is the organizing logic, if any, that brings all these creatures together? Again, we can discern multiple logics. The Mishnah gathers the curious case of the field human(s) (*adne ha-sade*), the hedgehog and the marten, the wild ox, the dog, the pig, the wild donkey, the elephant and the monkey, humans, and “all of them.”²⁸ The Tosefta assembles the dog, the village dog, *yerodin* and *na’amit*, the expanded reproduction principle including humans and “all of them,” a theory of territorial doubles, and the sea-marten. We can posit individual reasons for why each listed creature needs clarification: its seemingly potentially anomalous or multiple status, its surprising or unexpected classification, or its apparent unusualness. We can also discern two sorts of creatures: the “prosaic” and the “exotic.”

Let's recall that—as in the previous chapter—while the rabbis themselves do not use terms like “prosaic” and “exotic,” my usage of these terms is not to imply my contemporary evaluation of creatures as this or that. Rather, it is to get at the way that something of the aura of distance and/or rarity attached to certain creatures in the Roman Empire as opposed to others that were viewed as relatively ubiquitous or ordinary.

We might dub creatures like the hedgehog, the marten, the wild ox, the dog, and the pig as more locally ubiquitous or prosaic animals. As noted, the wild ox, the dog, and the wild donkey (mKilayim 8:6 and tKilayim 5:7) are also members of the earlier pairings in mKilayim 1:5–6 and tKilayim 1:7–8 that were deemed distinctive species despite their resemblances to their partners (the ox, the wolf, and the donkey). These animals all elicit the need for clarification. We might think that the *wild* ox is wild. Yet, as has been indicated previously, the Mishnah here, and the Tosefta earlier (tKilayim 1:9), present different views about the wild ox, despite its being called “wild.” The anonymous view in the Mishnah declares the wild ox to be a domesticated animal (*behemah*), while Rabbi Yose pronounces it a wild animal (*hayah*). The Tosefta, not only elaborates the discrepant ritual implications of the different views that the Mishnah presents, but also describes the wild ox as being “like” a domesticated or wild animal “in all respects.” Further, it adds that R. Yose identifies the wild ox as the biblical *te'ò* (Deut 14:5).²⁹ Finally, the Tosefta closes with the sages disagreeing with R. Yose and distinguishing between the wild ox and the *te'ò*: each is a “creature (*briyah*) unto themselves.”³⁰

Similarly, we might have thought of the dog, paired earlier with the wolf, as a classic instance of a domesticated creature. Indeed, it is nearly always classified as such in Greek and Roman sources. This explains why both the Mishnah and the Tosefta discuss it, as a subject of disagreement among the rabbis, but with the majority view tagging it as wild animal. The Mishnah follows the dog with the pig—a pairing whose logic is explicit in tBava Kamma 8:17, which prohibits or restrict the breeding of both by Jews—and indeed, adhering to this logic of joining, one might think that if the dog is wild, the quintessentially impure pig would be as well.³¹ The Mishnah elucidates that im/purity classifications need not map onto wild/domestic classification; the pig is, in fact, domesticated. Conversely, the Mishnah clarifies the wild donkey as wild. We might have thought otherwise since the *wild* ox is classified as *domesticated*.

What of the hedgehog (*kipod*) and the marten (*huldat hasenaim*)? Like the preceding creatures, these are animals that the rabbis considered to be nonhuman cohabitants of residential and adjacent spheres.³² While they may not have been “domesticated” in the ways that oxen, donkeys, and dogs were, people in antiquity kept and even bred these creatures.³³ Like the aforementioned examples, the classification of the hedgehog and the marten is in need of clarification and is in dispute. Given their size and manner of locomotion, one might have thought that the marten and the hedgehog were creeping creatures (*sherets*). The anonymous Mishnah corrects for this, instead classifying the marten as a wild animal (*hayah*). Rabbi

Yose—who also offers contradictory views in two other classifications—disagrees. Instead, he ascribes to the *huldat hasenaim* two forms of minimal ritual impurity stringencies: both that which pertains to the wild animal (*hayah*) and that which applies to the creeping creature (*sherets*).³⁴ The nature of the dispute allows us to see what is at stake: this is a creature whose species designation as a wild animal or creeping creature is unclear. That the minority view adheres to the requirements for both classifications points to its singularity yet multiplicity—with respect to basic creaturely groupings.

As intimated above, the term “exoticized creatures” (or “exotica”) refers to the culturally freighted othering of certain beings by fetishizing and often exploiting them in imperial or colonial contexts.³⁵ This othering is very much related to the naming and supposed “discovery” of “strange” or “wondrous” peoples and animals—and quasi-human, quasi-animal peoples of “faraway” places—as objectified agents of often deadly conquest, knowledge, extraction, and display.³⁶ This interest—which often involves a fusing of ethnography and zoology—was a staple of Greek and Roman writing from Herodotus to Pliny. As scholars have shown, animality (or species) and nature (or natural history) are intertwined to produce racialized difference. This also works in reverse, with ethnoracialized difference being mapped onto species variation. Referring to the contemporary United States, Claire Kim argues that “the antiblack social order that props up the ‘human’ is also a zoological order, or what we might call a zoologo-racial order.”³⁷

While there are significant differences between ancient and modern ways of ordering race, species, and the “human,” there is also considerable variation across the ancient Levant. As we will see, tannaitic textuality and genres do not express the kinds of explicit ethnographic intertwining of zoology and racialization in Greek and Latin writings about the so-called “monstrous races.” In the latter variation expresses not only difference; it is also marked as other on a broader scale. The creatures discussed in Tosefta and Mishnah Kilayim—the elephant, monkey, *adan ha-sadeh*, *naʿamit*, and *yerodin*—were likely perceived as either distant or at least as hailing from distant places, often in the context of historic (for the rabbis) and ongoing imperial routes of conquest, import, and trade.³⁸ They were clearly unusual and scarcely encountered in person, unlike the other more ubiquitous creatures in this menagerie. Significantly, as we’ll see, the rabbis did not mark the former as uncommon, and merely juxtaposed them with more quotidian kinds.³⁹

Let us delve further into some of these “exotica.” The first pair, the elephant and the monkey, are simply declared to be wild animals (*hayah*). That declaration may seem unsurprising since “wildness,” by now, may seem to be so obviously synonymous with “distance.” While elephants and monkeys were known to the inhabitants of the ancient Mediterranean—through the (often coerced) movement of people and animals and through literary and visual media—they were understood to hail from Africa and Asia. These regions—often fused in earlier through late ancient Greek and Roman geographic and ethnographic imaginary—continued to be exoticized.⁴⁰ At the same time, recall that technical term *hayah* was also

applied by the rabbis to creatures close by, as was the case with dogs. This may not negate potential spatial valences of the term “wild animal”—indeed, the labeling of ubiquitous local animals as wild in some cases conveys their stigmatized associations with “out of placeness.” I elaborate these geographic resonances of animal classification below in my treatment of tKilayim’s territorial theory of creaturely life.

The monkey can also be seen as near-human. Indeed, the Mishnah immediately follows the mention of the monkey with its closing statement about the human (*adam*). I would argue that this literary proximity is no accident: the rabbis, like others, understood the monkey to be close to human. As Catherine Connors puts it, monkeys “enter into the Greek and Roman world as exotic strangers whose resemblance to men seems more uncanny than natural.”⁴¹ Pliny describes “kinds (*species*) of apes also which are closest to the human shape.”⁴² It is thus that the monkey may follow the elephant and be paired with the latter in their exoticization as “foreign,” while also being a “double” to the human and thus a companion to the field human (*adne ha-sadeh*) mentioned earlier in this coterie.

Besides *looking* like humans, monkeys were viewed as capable of imitating them. This behavioral resemblance, however, was often understood both as a mark of monkey intelligence (and thus as a *similarity* to humans) and also as difference (mere imitation or even dissimulation). Aelian talks of Indian monkeys with “human intelligence”; this is a quality that he also ascribes to elephants, among other Indian animals.⁴³ That the rabbis considered the monkey as near-human in this regard can be discerned in two cases in tannaitic literature in which they consider ritual acts (ablution and slaughter) performed by them.⁴⁴ In these cases, the humanlike acts of a monkey are juxtaposed with those of people with disabilities, various Jews, and Jew-adjacent people (e.g., Samaritans, uncircumcised Jewish men, heretics), and gentiles. Scholars debate the degree to which “racism” is an appropriate or anachronistic way to consider ancient Greek and Roman ethnographic designations for non-Greek or non-Roman peoples. While it is true that ancient ethnographers considered such animalized peoples in various ways, Clara Bosak-Schroeder warns us against anachronistically assuming a certain kind of post-Darwinian, scientific racism in the occasional linkages of nonhuman primates with “barbarian” peoples (such as the Gorillai, the focus of their study).⁴⁵ One can find denigration of peoples who are not Jewish in tannaitic sources, though their fullest animalization awaits amoraic sources.⁴⁶ But tannaitic literature does not present anything quite like the Latin and Greek traditions (ethnographic, paradoxographical, and natural historical) in which faraway people (non-Romans) are tagged as animal-like, as animal/human hybrids, or as “monstrous” or “wondrous” in other ways.⁴⁷

The Tosefta’s *yerod* and the *na’amit* should be understood as complements to the Mishnah’s elephant and monkey. Like the words for the hedgehog (*kipod*) and the marten (*huldat ha-senaim*)—and indeed so many animal names—the meaning of these terms is unstable and thus contested by readers and scholars.

One might add that this only contributes to the difficulties of shoring up fuzzy or unstable classifications.⁴⁸ The *yerod* (sometimes *yeror*) is thought by some to be an ostrich, whereas the *na'amit* is considered to be a jackal. But there are alternate theories according to which they are sirens, satyrs, or even "liliths."⁴⁹ Besides these exoticized overtones, the *yerod* and the *na'amit* confound classificatory norms. The Tosefta declares that they are "like birds in all respects." This implies simultaneous resemblance and difference. If the *na'amit* is understood to be what we think of as an ostrich, we have a creature that other ancient thinkers considered to be in between categories, one that looked like a bird but that did not adhere to bird locomotion (flying). Pliny describes the ostrich as "almost an animal" (*paene bestiarum generis*). In their exoticization, and even mythification, these birdlike creatures align with the monkey and the elephant. In their slippage between the categories of "bird" and "wild animal", they resemble the hedgehog and the marten who move between wild animal and reptile.⁵⁰ Their species multiplicity and polythetic classification, as we will see, is like that of the *adne ha-sadeh* or field human(s), who vacillates between the categories of wild animal and human.

The *adne ha-sadeh* are literally "humans of the field" (where *adan* is *adam*).⁵¹ Let us consider the discussion about their classification in the Mishnah. The sages put these field humans in the category of wild animal, whereas Rabbi Yose rather startlingly suggested that their corpses convey a kind of impurity that is uniquely human. In the previous chapter we noted that the siren's dead body instigated something similar.⁵² It is unclear whether we should read Rabbi Yose as directly disputing the sages and saying that the *adne ha-sadeh* is completely human (with corpse impurity being determinative) or whether Rabbi Yose's opinion is simply additive (i.e., for most purposes the category of *adne ha-sadeh* is *hayah* except in the case of death).⁵³ Regardless, for Rabbi Yose, the corpse is treated "like a human" (*ke-adam*) and transmits that uniquely human and potent "tent" (*ohel*) impurity. This powerful source of impurity means that being in the same covered space as the corpse contaminates: no contact is even necessary, and its severity makes it more onerous to shake off ritually.⁵⁴

The Palestinian Talmud reports a tradition that translates *adne ha-sadeh* as *bar-nash de-tur* ("human of the field") and describes it as one who "lives from the fields."⁵⁵ We may conclude that Palestinian tannaim and Amoraim understood that there were other creatures that resembled humans: this is perhaps surprising given all the fuss about the image of God. As we will soon see, this reading is reinforced by the Tosefta's theory of creaturely correspondences. Saul Lieberman compares the *adne ha-sadeh* to the siren (*sironit*), recalling that the Sifra discusses both creatures in its elaborations of the im/pure kinds of Leviticus.⁵⁶ As Galit Hasan Rokem has highlighted, the Sifra extracts the inclusion of the siren from the word *nefesh* out of the phrase *nefesh ha'hayah* (Lev 11:10) among those sea creatures without fins and scales that are forbidden for eating (according to Lev 11:9, 11).⁵⁷ Poignantly, we may recall that, as with *adne ha-sadeh*, the Sifra goes on

to ask whether the siren emits the human corpse type of tent impurity. The answer is in the negative, adducing Numbers 19:14: “this is the instruction (*torah*): when a human (*adam*) dies in a tent, all who come into the tent and all who are in the tent shall be impure for seven days.” This contrasts the siren with the *met* (human dead body, Numbers 19:13) and instead aligns her with impure fish kinds, making her corpse a *nevelah* (animal dead body, Leviticus 11:11).⁵⁸

In Jamaican poet Kei Miller’s postcolonial ode to the mermaid, his friend considers how “the British Empire was so thorough it had invented a law for everything.” Under the empire’s aegis, mermaids “would no longer belong to themselves.” The latter also references the enslavement of Afro-Jamaicans. British colonialism was extractive of indigenous resources: human bodies, labor, and lives, nonhuman animals, and crops. It produced knowledge by arranging indigenous beings according to its classificatory regimes.⁵⁹ By fiat, it took ownership, exoticized, and consigned to mythical status. At stake is the mermaid’s very being: they “understood that they simply were, and did not need permission to exist.” Here the mermaids counter with *their* law concerning *humans*: they retreat entirely. Miller ties colonial rapacity to a form of species extinction: “a world lacking in mermaids.” It is not possible to compare Afro-Caribbean experiences of British enslavement and extraction with those of the territories that endured successive centuries of Roman imperialism. Yet scholars have noted that Greek and Roman catalogs of “marvelous” faraway peoples included humanlike sea creatures, images that European colonizers projected onto the seascapes of the Americas.⁶⁰ What Miller’s poem lays out so devastatingly are the limitations of an analysis that centers European projects, when Afro-Caribbean people had their own forms of ecological knowledge that included part human, part fish sea creatures.⁶¹ The violence of European colonialism consisted also in this forced loss of local knowledge: as the mermaids absent themselves, they also leave their knowers.

Dan El Padilla Peralta urges us to take the twinned epistemic and ecological impacts of Roman brutality to heart. He admits of exceptions, including Jewish and Celtic communities that pursued strategies of “hybridity and creolization,” arguing that those “that did not pursue textualization as a strategy for the codification and transmission of their cultural identities almost invariably disappeared from the record.”⁶² This is one way to think about the cultural productions of the rabbis. One of the challenging aspects of rabbinic menageries, aside from parsing the ways that nonhumans enter into human endeavors like classification, is the rabbis’ own sociopolitical location. How, in particular, do we situate the relationship between rabbis, Romans, the field humans, sirens, and the other creatures they collate in *Kilayim*?⁶³ The tannaim were Palestinian locals with strong affective, theological, and narrative ties to Judea and the Galilee and the demolished Jerusalem Temple. They lived in the wake of Roman devastation and upheaval following two (or three) Jewish revolts.⁶⁴ Even with the difficulties involved in divining the precise contours and shifts of this collective’s spirits and ideologies

from multiauthored and cumulatively transmitted and redacted sources, we can acknowledge that these circumstances conditioned their ventures. Whether we characterize the tannaim as resistant, accommodating, mimicking, indifferent, or otherwise in the face of Roman rule, we can minimally acknowledge that their cultural creations were shaped in its shadow. How then, do we understand the tannaitic traffic in animals? I will suggest that in fact, nonhuman beings, including animals and plants, played significant parts not only in Roman imperial material and epistemic extraction (and introduction into Palestine) but also in tannaitic provincial “zoology.” The latter, of course, was not solely a response to or appropriation of Roman zoological activities but a complex of local knowledges (including scriptural “textualizations”) that were themselves products of longer and broader Eurasian human-animal histories.

KILAYIM AND THE IMPERIAL MENAGERIE

The rabbis were not alone in their efforts to collect, capture, classify, and display creatures. Menageries can be traced across Southwest Asia, North Africa and beyond—in physical form, in literary sources, and in artistic representations. Composed from the fifth century BCE to the third century CE and onward, literary menageries ranged across Herodotus’s *Histories*, Aristotle’s *Generation of Animals*, Pseudo-Aristotle’s *On Marvelous Things Heard*, Diodorus Siculus’s *Library of History*, Pliny’s *Natural History*, Phlegon of Tralles’s *On Wondrous Things*, and Aelian’s *On the Nature of Animals*. Scholars have shown the value of reading these authors’ works, at least in part, in their political contexts, drawing our attention to their varying rhetorical strategies and forms.⁶⁵ Whether couched as ethnography, paradoxography, philosophy (or natural history),⁶⁶ medicine, or otherwise, such writings were inevitably—in part or in combination—enabled by, criticisms of, or apologies for Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, or other imperial powers. Menageries emerged in such written works at a variety of scales and genres, as foci or as “digressions.” Clara Bosak Schroeder has shown the various and complex ways by which zoological, ethnographic, and racial thinking came together in antiquity from Herodotus to Diodorus Siculus.⁶⁷ Certain non-Greek or non-Roman peoples were viewed as beastly, animal-like, or as straddling the nonhuman and the human. The species classification of other(ed) peoples could be questioned; they could be likened to nonhumans; or they could be thought of as overlapping with nonhumans—that is, possessing bodily or behavioral characteristics of nonhuman creatures (e.g., hairiness, wildness, cannibalism, etc.): for example, the dog-head peoples of Libya (*kunocephaloi*; cf. Herodotus, 4.198). Conversely, the ethnographic gazes that rendered “monstrous” peoples bestial and marvelous also othered (as we have outlined) faraway animals as wondrous, monstrous, multi-form (i.e., as possessing features or characteristics of multiple species, including humans). It was through natural history—in the form of the confounding, over-

lapping, and mutually refracting lenses of zoology and ethnography—that features of difference and sameness were inscribed across the world of beings. In this scheme, the more distant, the more susceptible to the sorts of exoticization in which wildness, animality, and racialization converged.⁶⁸

Besides historical and ethnographic texts in which human, nonhuman, and overlapping menageries were collected, and besides philosophical texts entirely aimed at understanding creaturely life-forms like Aristotle's *Generation of Animals* and *History of Animals*, certain works like pseudo-Aristotle's *On Marvelous Things Heard* (third century BCE) and Phlegon of Tralles's *Mirabilia* (second century CE Asia Minor) were entirely dedicated to wondrous beings (*thaumata*). These were designed to arouse the reader's affective response to the various human and nonhuman phenomena or the events described therein.⁶⁹ Other texts, like Pliny's *Natural History*, defy genre: this capacious, multivolume work ranges across contents that might be dubbed geographic, ethnographic, cosmological, zoological, paradoxographical, and medical. Pliny spends a good deal of effort in detailing animal kinds, physiologies, and reproductive modes across the world.⁷⁰ Pliny's writings range across humans and animals in ways similar to the rabbinic menagerie, though on a far larger scale. Aelian's early third century CE *On the Nature of Animals* and the second- through fourth-century *Physiologus*, on the other hand, collect and explicate animals for explicitly moralizing purposes.⁷¹ The *Physiologus* assembles an array of entities, primarily animals (and some plants and minerals), and recounts their attributes, "natures," and moral (Christianizing) import. This tradition of moralized natural history enjoyed a prolific afterlife in medieval bestiary and natural history writings. By contrast, tannaitic zoological texts did not engage in this sort of allegorical or moralizing discourse.

While the Sifra's commentary was highly elaborative of the list of Levitical life-forms there, it did not use animals as an occasion for ethics. Others, like Philo of Alexandria, did interpret the Levitical scheme allegorically.⁷² For Christian authors such moralizing interpretations also became occasions to berate Jews for wrongly insisting on literal, carnal practices vis-à-vis Levitical creatures. Let us take, for instance, the hyena, whom they exploited as a locus for ethnography, animality, and morality. For the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, as for many late ancient writers (e.g., Ovid, Aelian, Oppian, Pliny, though not the still influential Aristotle), hyenas transitioned periodically between male and female. Their prohibition in the Bible stood for the command to avoid becoming "an adulterer or seducer or becoming like them (*homoiōthēsē*)."⁷³ Clement of Alexandria's hyena is so highly sexed that they possess an extra sex orifice that goes nowhere. They have nonprocreative and same-sex sex, which is in turn linked to idolatry.⁷⁴ Citing "you shall not eat the hyena and whatever resembles it," the second-fourth-century *Physiologus* makes resemblance do the work of warning against imitating bad behavior.⁷⁵ Recall, conversely, how, in the previous chapter, the Sifra used resemblance thinking to extrapolate additional creatures. The hyena for the *Physiologus* has dual sex and also transitions from time to time between male and female. This the

Physiologus likens to the “double-minded” person, such as those who come into church “in the form of men,” but who leave in the “habits of women.”⁷⁶ The *Physiologus* was written in Greek, being translated into various languages, including Latin around the fourth century. The earliest copy of the Latin translation (Bern, cod. 233 or *Physiologus* B) instead states that Jews are considered “like it” the hyena because at first, they served God, but later, “given over to pleasure and lust, they adored idols.”⁷⁷ In this way, a transgender animal serves to castigate genderqueer Christians while simultaneously standing for false-dealing Jews. This should be compared with the Palestinian Talmud, in which God “changes the world every seven years.” This includes God transforming various creatures from one species to another, as well as God’s switching the hyena from “male to female.”⁷⁸

The ancient interest in organizing, curating, and displaying nonhuman creatures did not express itself solely in literary contexts. Textual and material sources (including zooarchaeological evidence and artistic depictions) attest to global shifts in patterns of movement of nonhuman beings in the context of capture, enslavement, and trade. Roughly contemporaries, Josephus and Suetonius recount the ostentatious exhibition of human, animal, and plant life, alongside material plunder, in Roman victory celebrations.⁷⁹ Such conspicuous displays represented the subjugation of colonized peoples, animals, plants, and lands. Related to this were parks, hunting grounds, and also stylized hunts and battles between humans and animals: the latter were staged for entertainment both in Rome and beyond.⁸⁰

Josephus describes the ceremonial procession and wondrous spectacle of the triumph of Vespasian and Titus, whose conquests included Judea.

It is impossible adequately to describe the multitude of those spectacles and their magnificence under every conceivable aspect, whether in works of art or diversity of riches or natural rarities . . . the wonderful and precious productions of various nations—by their collective exhibition on that day displayed the majesty of the Roman empire . . . Then, too, there were carried images of their gods, of marvelous size and no mean craftsmanship, and of these not one but was of some rich material. Beasts of many species (*zōōn* . . . *pollai phuseis*) were led along all caparisoned with appropriate trappings. The numerous attendants conducting each group of animals were decked in garments of true purple dye, interwoven with gold . . .⁸¹

He recounts how not only gods, objects, animals, and plants, but also subjugated peoples, were processed in Roman triumphal celebrations.⁸² Similarly, Roman coinage displayed humans, plants, and animals as emblems of conquest and capture. *Judea capta* (Judea captured) coins included those upon which Judea is depicted and personified as a despondent, weeping woman, seated under a palm tree (also a personification of Judea), with a Roman soldier or a trophy composed of Roman arms standing over them.⁸³ *Aegyptio capta* (Egypt captured) coins displayed a crocodile below those words.⁸⁴ Not coincidentally, in both Jewish revolts in the first and second centuries, Jews struck (or overstruck Roman) coins including those depicting the palm fronds (*lulav*) and a palm tree.⁸⁵ Palm fronds

certainly invoke victory or, when depicted with a citron, the ritual “four species” of the Sukkot festival. But such valences do not exclude additional connotations and associations with Judea. The later revolt coins can be read as efforts to “recapture” or to relocalize what had been “captured” both physically—Judean people and plant life—and visually in imperial iconography.

E. A. Pollard distinguishes between the “colonial botany” of Rome, or “the process by which this imperial power collected and transported plants for study (i.e., the natural historical impulse) and what she terms Roman “botanical imperialism”—that is, “the ideological and practical constructs and claims of cultural hegemony and military power that develop out of that transplantation and study.”⁸⁶ A vivid instance of the former is the Judean balsam tree, which surfaces precisely as an object of natural historical in Pliny’s writings. Surely their content, describing the tree that “now serves (*servit*) [as subject] of Rome, and pays tribute together with the people (*gente*) to which it belongs,” expresses botanical imperialism.⁸⁷ The balsam, like the palm tree, as a nonhuman member of the Judean people, was captured along with Jews and subject to the same power. To Pollard’s “botanical imperialism” I would add “zoological imperialism.” While the analysis of Pollard and others is focused on Roman capture, display, and knowledge-making projects, our focus is on Palestine and what we might call “zoological provincialism.”

Of course, imperial conditions do not make for unidirectional, static, top-down or active-passive dynamics between metropole and province. Roman rule did not only enable the extraction and exploitation of human, animal, and plant life, though this it did aplenty. It also facilitated the transport, trade, and circulation thereof. Thus, colonial botany and zoology entailed not only extraction from Palestine to Rome in order to undergird imperial botany and zoology but also the circulation and influx of materials and animals to Palestine, which, in turn, fueled local collections and provincial knowledge making.⁸⁸ Take, for instance, Nile scenes in mosaics or frescos that were hugely popular across the empire, including in Palestine.⁸⁹ Caitlin Barrett shows how, alongside the inevitable exoticization that these scenes excited, such Nilotic iconography enabled people to “participate in the ongoing creation and negotiation of a Roman-controlled but pan-Mediterranean, cultural koine.” On the trade front, the Mishnah cites Rabbi Theodoros “the physician” declaring that “no cow or pig leaves Alexandria without its uterus removed, so that it does not give birth.”⁹⁰ Here the Mishnah speaks not only to breeding practices but also to a violent form of patent that made it impossible for importers to instigate the reproduction of these animals. Both the Mishnah and the zooarchaeological record testify to this flow of animals, plants, and people. But this was not inaugurated with Roman rule: the intertwining of trade and successive imperial presences meant that Palestine was not exempted from the connectivity and movement of humans and nonhumans across the Middle East and the Mediterranean over the previous centuries.⁹¹

Roman roadworks in Palestine demonstrate that so-called “beasts of burden”—camel, mules, horses, and donkeys—traversed them.⁹² Palestine witnessed the building of theaters and other centers for games and entertainment, from Herod onward.⁹³ These constructions enjoyed continued use and ongoing development, with the erection of additional theaters, amphitheaters, and hippodromes, from the late first century onward (including in Tiberias, Jericho, Samaria, Gerasa, Gedara, Caesarea, Scythopolis, Ascalon, Neapolis, Eleutheropolis, Hammat Gader, and Dor).⁹⁴ At the turn of the second and during the first part of the third century, there was “a veritable flourish both in the construction of new buildings and the expansion and renovation of existing structures.”⁹⁵ The entertainments housed in such buildings included parades of exotic animals, displays of animals trained to perform tricks, staged hunts (*venationes*), combat between animals and people, or animals pitted against each other.

Artistic depictions of menageries abounded, from the second through the sixth centuries, in mosaics and frescoes, on pottery, glassware, and silverware, throughout the Mediterranean and in North Africa.⁹⁶ Collections of animals appear in hunting scenes,⁹⁷ Nilotic scenes celebrating faunal and vegetal fertility around the Nile,⁹⁸ “animal combat” scenes,⁹⁹ “zoo” or “display” scenes, scenes of mythical or biblical figures (“Noah,” “Orpheus,” “Adam,” or “David”) surrounded by animals, or nested in so-called medallion carpet designs in Roman Palestine and beyond.¹⁰⁰

Besides mosaics in Palestine, we find wall paintings in the amphitheater in Caesarea (second century), Neapolis, and fragments from Eleutheropolis and Scythopolis,¹⁰¹ depicting local animals in combination with exoticized creatures such as the elephant, the leopard, and the lion.¹⁰² A particularly rich example of the menagerie that juxtaposes exotica with prosaica is the third- or fourth-century Lod mosaic, which depicts pigeons, doves, cows, chickens, horses, as well as elephants, giraffes, rhinoceroses, and sea life, the latter including “fantastic” creatures.¹⁰³ Similar assortments of natural life populate the third- through sixth-century mosaics in Sepphoris and Bet Shean, which also juxtapose animal, human, and part-human/part-animal iconography.¹⁰⁴

I run through these various menageries, whether artistic depictions, embodied spectacles, or literary catalogs, to summon a world in which elites were heavily engaged in the traffic, collection, and deployment of animals as forms of economic and political capital, and in which nonelites were also exposed to displays thereof. I suggest that the peculiar concatenation of menageries in the tractate of Kilayim, and elsewhere in tannaitic sources, can in part be understood as taking up this curatorial impulse. The tannaim were engaged in a conspicuous display of knowledge making, albeit on a far more modest scale than what we find in Aristotle’s classificatory enterprise or Pliny’s zooethnography.¹⁰⁵ While Aristotle’s concern was the function of animal parts and behavior, and Pliny’s efforts conveniently showcased the extractive potentials of the imperium, rabbinic classification entailed its own peculiar aims and consequences. While the framing of

ritual purity may render rabbinic sources atypical after a fashion, pragmatic entailments fail to account for the inclusion of all the creatures discussed, particularly the “exotica.” I will now suggest that the Kilayim menagerie itself fails, or at least points to a creaturely excess that renders the menagerie—both as a frame and classificatory project—precarious. I will do so by attending to the (para)human bookends of the Mishnah’s catalog, and to the theory of territorial doubles that punctuates the Tosefta.

UNRAVELING DIFFERENCE

Creatures strained against and even exceeded the menagerie’s attempt to capture and classify them. The key to the slips in the menagerie’s attempt to contain lies in the doubling effect of likeness, and the fugitive excess to which this gives rise. We can see this most clearly when we focus on the troubling double of the *adam*—the human. The human forms a literary and substantive Archimedean point. It bookends mKilayim 8:5–6 and makes an entrance in the Tosefta. By this I mean that the human, in the form of the ambiguous field human (*adne hasadeh*), inaugurates the Mishnah’s list of animals in mKilayim 8:5 who defy easy classification, which is tailed by the monkey (literarily and literally human adjacent). The human (*adam*) closes the passage in mKilayim 8:6, being juxtaposed with the aforementioned creatures, or “any of them.” This juxtaposition is echoed in the generation principle in tKilayim 5:8, according to which the human is contrasted with nonhuman creatures using the *adam* versus “any of them” phrasing.

It is worth dwelling on the Mishnah’s coda: the human, or the human proper, is permitted “to pull, plow with, and lead” any of the aforementioned animals. To reiterate, the prohibition that ostensibly motivates the whole classificatory enterprise of this tractate demands the separation of different species. This is in terms of sex and in the realm of labor. Thus, a cow and an ox may neither mate nor pull at the same plow. This line reminds us, however, that the human *does not count as a species* for the purposes of this prohibition and may work with and oversee an animal of any kind. The phrasing emphatically sets the human apart from and yet thereby also *together with* “any of these.” Having raised the specter of the double, and, in particular, the human double, the passage implicates the human *among* animal kinds. This final line seemingly restores the singularity of the human amid all the messy questions of species distinctions and resemblance. The human is not only over and above the project of animal-animal difference. It cosponsors that project. The human is outside *kilayim*’s economies: it can interact uninhibited with all the creatures. Rather than being subject to the strictures of *kilayim*, the human manages and enforces the concomitant knowledge enterprise. Yet the figure of the *adne ha-sadeh* lingers, troubling this seemingly easy distinction. Moreover, the human’s vaunted singularity here is perhaps undermined by its fungibility.¹⁰⁶ The human’s uniqueness lies in its ability to pair with “any of these”: it can be a

companion to all species. While the pairing is envisioned in the realm of labor rather than that of reproduction, what nonetheless emerges is a theory of species boundaries over which the human can happily step.

This fungibility of the human versus “any of them” is echoed in the extended generation principle of tKilayim 5:9.¹⁰⁷ Here, too, at first blush, it may seem as if the principle sets humans apart from other creatures. However, closer inspection reveals that it folds them within itself. This principle, as we saw in chapter 1, is a variation on the Aristotelian commonplace “human begets *human*,” paraphrased in Pseudo-Aristotle’s *Problems* as “if from a horse, a horse, if from a human, a human.”¹⁰⁸ As discussed previously, this principle not only limits the possibilities of offspring ensuing from cross-species sex, it also underpins Aristotle’s insistence that any seeming such “monstrosities” are “appearances only.” In addition to this he admits that species-nonconforming offspring are generated, including among humans. It is this phenomenon of humans appearing to deliver nonhuman kinds, and even vice versa, that the tannaitic extended generation principle concedes.¹⁰⁹ It is thereby that the human is included among, rather than distinguished from, other species.

The generation principle therefore upholds the idea that the field human, for instance, is genealogically *unrelated* to the human. The human and animal cannot produce offspring. But to what end does the Tosefta include the sentences that follow? I contend that those statements constitute a “theory of territorial doubles” that explains resemblances among species. Further, the theory undergirds the generation principle, explaining why those cases of resemblances are “appearances only.” In other words, the existence of territorial doubles explains why the dog and the wolf are not the products of shared ancestry. We now turn to that theory to see how it interacts with the menagerie of Kilayim.

Territorial Doubles and Creaturely Excess

The theory of territorial doubles embedded in the zoological passage in Tosefta Kilayim—and, I would argue, commenting on Mishnah Kilayim—bears repetition:¹¹⁰

Every [creature] that there is in the settlement (*yishuv*) there is in the wild (*midbar*), whereas many [creatures] that are in the wilderness do not exist in the settlement.

Every [creature] that is on dry land (*yabashah*) there is in the sea (*yam*), whereas many [creatures] that are in the sea are not on dry land. But there is no marten of the sea (*huldat hayam*). (tKilayim 5:10)¹¹¹

Here is a striking explanation for the phenomena of likeness and difference that pepper Tractate Kilayim and rabbinic zoology broadly speaking. It serves as an interpretive key to the broader Tosefta passage as well as to the parallel Mishnah passage. It also partly justifies our heuristic groupings of Kilayim’s catalog into prosaica and exotica. The theory affirms the generation principle: the idea that when resemblance occurs, it is *not the result of cross-species sex*. Instead, this

explanation posits something that has been intimated all along: species that “resemble one another” are distinct creatures. They are parallels without any genealogical or vertical intersection. The principle also acknowledges that humans, just like other kinds, *seem* to pop up in other contexts. What I am intimating here is that the *adam* creature emerges at the nexus of contradictions of sameness and difference.

How does the theory operate? It effectively sets up a series of geographic-zoological zones. First, it distinguishes between settled, human habitation, the *yishuv* or *oikoumenē*, and the wilderness—*midbar* or *erēmos*. Such a contrast maps onto Roman and earlier Hellenistic geographies.¹¹² Second, the theory joins together humanly settled territory and the wilderness as dry land (*yabasha*), which, in turn, is set against the sea (*yam*). This map of the settlement or *oikoumenē*, successively surrounded by wilderness or *erēmos*, and then a vast ocean, as well as the notion of exotic and fabulous creatures living in those contiguous distant lands and waterways, is found in many variations in ancient geographic, ethnographic, and zoo-ethnographic treatises.¹¹³ Altogether, this is a distinctively flat and horizontal topography: neither the heavens nor the deity feature. But what makes such absences even more significant, in this context, is how the human is caught up in the zoological frame of doubles. As we shall see, alternate theories of doubles do find ways to preserve theologically inflected, top-down orientations.

A closer look at what is implied about life-forms themselves reveals a theory of parallel realms that moves laterally, from the interior and outward. All creatures that dwell in settled habitation, including even, or especially, the human—after all, what says “settlement” more than humans?—have analogs or doubles in the wild. So too, does everything on dry land have its counterpart in the water.¹¹⁴ But, just as crucially, the principle of territorial doubles acknowledges an *excess* of life-forms in successive beyonds. It declares that there are many creatures in the wild that have no analog in the settlement, just as there are many unique sea creatures that do not have land-based counterparts. Outside human habitation lives a creaturely surplus, including life-forms that do not mirror our own. If nature is always interlocked with culture, then the rabbis highlight that both those animals and humans that live together are embedded within a much larger domain, being only a fraction of “nature.” That which is supposedly outside nature (*the* human, *yishuv*, or “culture”) is in fact already (the smallest) part of it. Here we have a potent sense of the unpredictable and unknowable qualities of the wild.¹¹⁵

The rabbinic classification of *behemah/hayah*, usually translated as domesticated and wild, roughly maps onto the distinction between creatures of the settlement and of the wilderness, although, as we saw earlier, this does not always pan out in expected ways. Sometimes a creature is called “wild” (*bar*) but its classification as such is in dispute. Above we noted the case of the wild ox (*shor bar*, mKilayim 8:6), whose status is debated as domesticated (anonymous voice) or wild (Rabbi Yose) in tKilayim 1:9.¹¹⁶ Commenting on this debate, the Yerushalmi explains the dispute in these terms: the sages say “it was from here (settled

territory) and escaped to there (the wilderness),” whereas Rabbi Yose—the same sage who attributes a human-type impurity to the *adne ha-sadeh*—reasons that, “its roots are from there.”¹¹⁷ In this debate about the origins of the “wild” ox, we get a sense of the etiology and territoriality involved in classification (“here” and “there”), as well as the understanding that animals could move from one region to another. This understanding, while attributed to the tannaitic rabbis (including second-century Rabbi Yose), is potentially a later (amoraic) reconstruction of what was at stake in the Mishnah’s debate. Clearly drawing in part on the principle of territorial doubles (which it records elsewhere), the Talmud continues with a discussion about whether geese of different regions—the goose and the desert goose (*avaz midbar*)” and the “sea goose”—constitute distinct kinds (*kilayim*).¹¹⁸

Aside from the examples in Tractate Kilayim, rabbinic literature is scattered with references to “wild” or “field” or “sea” versions of animals, not to mention “fantastic” creatures which (according to the theory of territorial doubles) do not correspond to any tame or dry land equivalent. These include the sea dog, the sea mouse, the sea goat, and the sea crow.¹¹⁹ As for the excess of species found beyond settled (*yishuv*) and dry land (*yabashah*): sources refer to the *had keren* (unicorn) or *taḥash*, the *koy*, the *teo*, the *re’emim*, the *behemot*, the *leviyatan*, the salamander, dragonlike creatures, and various “fantastic” sea creatures.¹²⁰

As stated, the words for “living creature” (*ḥayah*) and “animal” (*behemah*) are drawn from the Bible; their usage, as terms of art for wild as opposed to domesticated animal, respectively, is a rabbinic innovation.¹²¹ It is one that matches Greek distinctions between tame (*hēmeros*) and wild (*agrios*). Relying on this distinction, Aristotle proposes that “any kind of animal which is tame exists also in a wild state, e.g., horses, oxen, swine, humans, sheep, goats, dogs.”¹²² Pliny similarly states that “in all animals as well whenever there is any tame variety of a genus there is also found a wild one of the same genus, inasmuch as even in the case of the human an equal number of savage peoples have been predicted to exist.”¹²³ We thus have other ancient versions of “anything that is found in the settlement is found in the wilderness,” which also explicitly include variations of parahumans.¹²⁴

That wild zones beyond the *oikoumenē* were populated with wild and exotic human varieties, and even animal-like humans or chimeras, were key to ancient Greek and Roman zooethnographic and geographic traditions.¹²⁵ Daniel Sperber suggests that there are similar ethno-racializing overtones to the humanlike creatures of the wild and of the sea referenced by the tannaim.¹²⁶ It is true that later rabbinic sources animalize “idol worshippers,” identifying religioracialization as “a question of species.”¹²⁷ Christian writers such as the authors of the Epistle of Barnabas (late first or early second century) and the *Physiologus* animalized Jews themselves, comparing them to hyenas.¹²⁸ However, while there are tannaitic discussions of field humans and sirens, as well as a concomitant territorial theory that might explain these wild and sea-based humanlike creatures, there is no suggestion that these are linked to ethno-racialized ideas of animality and species.

We will focus on this more in the next chapter on hybridity. However, this does not mean that the tannaim were “innocent of this more generalized context.”¹²⁹ And the uncanny echoes of the theory of territorial doubles, coupled with ethno-racialized explications in both Aristotle and Pliny, make it harder to deny this possibility. At the very least, Sperber’s suggestion raises crucial questions about the relationships between rabbinic provincial zoology and imperial zoologies.

While we cannot know whether the works of Aristotle circulated in some fashion among the rabbis, or whether first- and late second-century tannaim knew of the first-century Pliny, we find here, as elsewhere in rabbinic “scientific” sources, a curious confluence of ideas and concepts.¹³⁰ In this instance, it is significant that Pliny uses virtually the same language as the rabbis, as he reports about “the common opinion that everything born in any department of nature exists also in the sea, as well as a number of things never found elsewhere.”¹³¹ Note that he not only echoes the idea in tKilayim 5:10 of “everything that is on dry land, there is in the sea,” but also the concept of creaturely excess, such that “many entities that are in the sea are not on dry land.”

While I have not found the principle formulated in this way beyond the tannaim and Pliny, it is significant that Pliny refers to it as “common opinion,” giving us the sense that this was a widely held belief (not necessarily a point in its favor for the erudite audience Pliny has in mind).¹³² Pliny proceeds to refine this belief, observing that the sea “contains likenesses of things and not of animals only,” going on to list a variety of creatures that resemble objects and vegetables (e.g., swordfish and sea cucumber), and noting that this “makes it less surprising that in marine snails that are so tiny there are horses’ heads projecting.”¹³³ In this same section, Pliny details a selection of humanlike sea creatures alongside other sea animal creatures.¹³⁴

Pliny describes an assortment of sea creatures with human features in various parts of India, as well as sightings closer to Rome, including Nereids, Tritons, and “aquatic monsters,” such as the “man of the sea.” Nereids, he suggests, have bodies “bristling with hair even in the parts where they have human shape.” The Tritons, he claims, citing eyewitness accounts, bear a “complete resemblance to a human being in every part of his body.”¹³⁵ Saul Lieberman glosses the Sifra’s siren as “a human being dwelling in the water,” while tying it to the field human and to the theory of territorial doubles.¹³⁶ In artistic depictions, the siren features the upper body of a woman and the lower body of a bird: the sixth-century House of Leontis mosaic in Bet Shean arguably follows this convention, though much of the lower body is missing.¹³⁷ But the scene also includes a nereid (or “sea nymph”) riding an ichthyocentaur (not a late ancient term), the latter a creature whose upper body is human, with horse forelegs, and a fishlike lower body with tail.¹³⁸ This artistic depiction, later than Pliny and the Mishnah and Tosefta, manifests the *excess* that these texts signal: “there are many [kinds] in the sea that are not on dry land.”



FIGURE 10. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Untitled (or, Modest Proposal for World Making)*. Watercolor and on paper, 9.5" × 12.5". 2019.

It bears reiterating that the expanded generation principle powerfully forecloses the possibility that creatures like the siren are offspring of cross-species unions. They are not hybrids. Rather, and in accordance with the territoriality theory, they are each a *sui generis* likeness, or double, without any genealogical or reproductive relation to the earth-settled human. With humanlike creatures in particular—the siren and the field human—we encounter the troubling thought that humans, despite their vaunted legibility and singularity as images of God, are not so unique after all. We now turn to how this kind of doubling concords with our earlier observations about Kilayim's flattened zoological map and lack of heavens or deity.

Horizontal versus Vertical Doubling

The horizontal theory of territorial doubles subsumes the human among its denizens. This, and its notable lack of a divine figure, contrasts sharply to Origen's mid-third century-theory of creaturely correspondences, as laid out in his commentary on the Song of Songs.¹³⁹

The apostle Paul teaches us that the invisible things of God may be known through the visible, and things which are not seen may be contemplated by reason of and likeness to those things which are seen. He thus shows by this that this visible world

teaches us about that which is invisible and that this earthly scene contains certain patterns of things heavenly. Thus it is possible for us to mount up from things below to things above, and to perceive and understand from the things we see on earth the things that belong to heaven. On the pattern of these the Creator gave to His creatures on earth a certain likeness to these, so that their great diversity might be more easily deduced and understood. And perhaps just as God made man to his own image and likeness, so also did He create the other creatures after the likeness of some other heavenly patterns. And perhaps the correspondence between all things on earth and their celestial prototypes goes so far, that even the grain of mustard seed . . . has something in heaven whose likeness and image it bears . . .

In the same way, therefore, it is possible that other seeds too that are in the earth may have a likeness and relationship to something found in heaven. And, if this is the case with seeds, it is doubtless the same with plants; and if with plants, undoubtedly with animals, whether they fly or creep or go on all fours.¹⁴⁰

What we find here is an altogether different theory of correspondences. Building on a combination of Pauline thought and a related idea of the *imago dei*, Origen extrapolates more broadly to all creation: from the human to the humble mustard seed, and from the plant to the four-footed animal. He suggests that every facet of nature has its origins in a heavenly prototype. On the one hand, this potentially deexceptionalizes humanity's divine, mimetic status as described in Genesis 1:26–27. On the other hand, the “last and final use” of nonhumans “is to serve the bodily needs of men . . . yet they also have the shapes and likeness of incorporeal things; and thus by them the soul may be instructed and taught how to contemplate those other things that are invisible and heavenly.”¹⁴¹

Patricia Cox Miller takes this Origenian theory of correspondences, especially as taken up in the *Physiologus* bestiary, to be sponsoring a “fantastical” rather than literal “bestial poetics” that corresponds “imaginally” rather than “literally.”¹⁴² Pressing on Origen's ideas of the pedagogical value of earthly creatures as pointing upward toward heavenly patterns, Cox Miller reads the *Physiologus* as a spiritual healing science that draws from the Greek and Roman natural history traditions. Certainly, Origen's text moves away from earthy literalism in the reorientation from the terrestrial realm of seeds, plants, and animals, to gazing upward at the heavens. The potential radicalism of seeing all the world, including nonhumans, as “in the image,” is softened, given Origen's insistence that it is humans, uniquely set in God's image, who are tasked with “reading” (according to Cox Miller) the text of nature.¹⁴³

By contrast, Tosefta Kilayim's correspondence theory is not based in heavenly referents. Rather than offering a vertical and upwardly mobile hermeneutic that simultaneously renders all other creatures in service to humans as both sustenance and pedagogy, the zoological orientation of the *tannaim* is horizontal.¹⁴⁴ All creatures hold in common their doubling, just as all are subject to the same constraints of generation. This is not to deny the human-centric, or Jewish-centric, stresses of

the tannaim. Nor can we ignore the Adamic hierarchical posture adopted in the classificatory project as a whole, especially when tasked with ordering animals in terms of food permissibility and, to some extent, other utilitarian ends. Nonetheless, the tannaitic sources treated in this chapter here allow unexpected and contradictory configurations of species relations to emerge, ones that do not conform to a simplistic human/nonhuman binary or hierarchy and ones that are based on ideas of likeness and difference that challenge a purely exceptionalist account of the human.

CONCLUSION

Tractate Kilayim presents sets of creatures and their respective species designations in terms of wild animal, domesticated animal, creeping creature, or human. We investigated the play of likeness and difference across these sets through the frame of the menagerie. As we saw, the pairings of creatures that “resemble each other but are kilayim with one another” in the first menageries demonstrate that looks can be deceiving. Pairings of kinds were posed as different, frustrating the logics of resemblance as a classificatory identifier, much as our spontaneously variant offspring did in chapter 1. Our search for a unified organizing principle instead revealed multiple logics for how pairs were bound together.

In the second sets of menageries, we met creatures whose appearances or names could be deceptive. A creature living among humans might be “wild” (the dog); those in the wild could be considered domesticated (the wild ox). Some creatures are ambiguous: bird-“like,” they do not fly (*naʿamit* and *yerodin*). Others seem to cross categories: looking reptilian but treated as wild animals (the marten); appearing human but being wild animals and/or humans (the field human). Here, too, assignments of domesticated/wild did not exactly map onto what might be expected. Neither was there a singular or binary principle of organization; rather, categories moved across or between domesticated animal (*behemah*), wild animal (*hayah*), crawler (*sherets*), bird (*of*), and human (*adam*).

These menageries hardly constitute an “encyclopedic” or “ethnographic” zoological collection in the fashion of other ancient collections. Instead, like other menageries scattered across tannaitic literature, they pop up on a seemingly need to know basis. The ostensible motivation for this non exhaustive catalog is the kilayim prohibition and its ramified rabbinic elaborations. In other words, it is the need to know creaturely classifications so as to avoid forbidden juxtapositions. Animals thus circulate and cluster at particular locations. At each point we can see the obvious prompts: how to extrapolate additional creatures from the relatively sparse verses of Leviticus? How to exchange or trade animals with those who are not Jewish? What are the possibilities for raising or hunting various kinds of animals in Palestine? What are the distinctions between species’ reproductive periods and modes? What are the relationships across different species and how

ought similar kinds be classified in the light of the crossbreeding prohibition? Which animals are considered to be “attested,” such that, if they injure someone or cause damage, there is full liability? Thus a lengthy passage in tBava Kamma about animals permitted or forbidden for breeding and hunting constitutes a disquisition cataloging creatures of the “settlement” (*yishuv*) and of the “wilderness” (*midbar*).¹⁴⁵ As we saw in chapter 1, tBekhorot 1:10 is another instance, clustering dogs, cats, pigs, foxes, creeping creatures, wolves, lions, bears, panthers, leopards, elephants, baboons, monkeys, snakes, dolphins, humans, and fish, parsing their gestational times and their gestational modes (e.g., viviparous, etc.), ostensibly to classify pure/impure kinds. A group of creatures in mBava Kamma 1:4 is named as inherently “attested” dangers, making for full liability for damage or injury that they cause. These include the human (*adam*), the wolf, the lion, the bear, the leopard, the panther (*bardelas*), and the snake.¹⁴⁶ Rabbi Eleazar qualifies that, except for the snake, these creatures are not “attested” if they are “tamed (or bred, *tarbut*)”—that is, by humans.¹⁴⁷ As the Mishnah continues, it confirms that humans are (like snakes) always attested (mBava Kamma 1:6), whether aware or unaware.¹⁴⁸ The Mishnah also names the wolf, the lion, the bear, the leopard, the panther, and the snake as creatures (aside from the ox) who are tried, like humans, in a court of twenty-three judges for capital offenses.¹⁴⁹

These occasions for pop-up menageries, however, do not present the full picture. Because the answers or elaborations supplied to the above questions in many ways exceed their ostensibly pragmatic applicability. In this chapter I have sought to argue that the fact that such assemblages are at least in part introduced for ritually directed purposes does not negate their role as conspicuous displays of animal knowledge. The specificity, the clustered relationships, and repetitions of particular species, start to coalesce into patterns.¹⁵⁰ The tannaim formed these menageries into rabbinically inflected interventions into natural history. Such displays of zoological prowess were not, as I’ve suggested, without political resonance. In fact, we might think of them in terms similar to the Sifra’s staging of Moses as grasping each animal in Leviticus and displaying it to the Israelites (in the previous chapter).

Related to this chapter’s argument that the rabbis’ menageries are virtuoso spectacles of how the rabbis can capture and classify creatures, much in the way that powerful people across the empire sought to do in material ways, is their combination of “prosaica” and “exotica.” I have argued against approaching exoticized creatures as fanciful, mythical, or imaginary—a theme we return to in the next chapter. Similarly, I have refrained from correcting or interpreting the tannaim according to positivist zoological categories—by suggesting, for example, that the field human is an ape.¹⁵¹ Certainly, “wondrous” tales about “fabulous” creatures were a stock of storytelling and ethnography in antiquity.¹⁵² But the line between “fabulous,” because faraway and rarely, if ever, encountered, and incredible,

because a product of imagination or misapprehension, is not one we can make for ancient people. Similar problems beset our instinct to write off what we deem “fantastic” creatures by claiming that the rabbis were merely inventing whimsical liminal cases or legalistic hypotheticals with which to think.

An overly contemporary and narrow notion of pragmatic motivations for or positivist accounts of rabbinic knowledge making fails on two scores. First, it doesn’t account for the fact that this anachronistically conceived motivation is insufficient to explain all the listed animals. Second, it forces us to assume that “fabulous” exotica, and particularly creatures, like the siren, are merely playful theoretical postulates.¹⁵³ It is likely that rabbis would have encountered or heard tell of these exoticized animals (including ones that *we* might regard as fanciful), whether in stories or mosaics, or in the flesh. It is thus that I have sought to attend precisely to the *casual* concatenation and *unacknowledged* juxtaposition of the “prosaic” and the “exotic”: the unmarked inclusion of what *we* might see as fantastical. Furthermore, I have contended that these juxtapositions concord with a distinctive curatorial logic that we find in late ancient Mediterranean and Middle Eastern contexts: the menagerie.

I find myself in the position of arguing against both overly positivist accounts for the rabbis’ zoological interest, as well as comprehensive explanations based in pragmatism. The insufficiency of positivist explanations for the creatures in the rabbinic menagerie complements the sense that pragmatic motivations do not exhaust the logics of what is captured in (or what exceeds) their collections. This returns us to the point about how ritual interests shape knowledge formation but do not exhaust its attempted reach. To read these rabbinic texts is not the same as reading Pliny. Nor is it quite like looking at Nilotic scenes in Sepphoris nor those in Pompei. The dimension of rabbinic ritual, the thinking with, elaborating, and reinventing biblical rudiments, is what contours these menageries into a distinctively localized form. The rabbis took on the idiom of the menagerie—itsself marked as a form imperial domination—as a type of provincial cosmopolitanism or, one could say, “zoological localism.”

These various efforts to stake out claims by assembling animals also need to be considered as different attempts to pattern species, the human among them. In collecting a heterogenous sampling of creatures and in seeking to tame their unruliness through the control of classification and their display as knowledge, the rabbis cultivate, if not entirely exhaustively, a way of being human. In their words: “one who does not have Bible, Mishnah, and ways of the world (*derekh erets*) is not part of the settlement (*yishuv*).”¹⁵⁴ While they could in this instance be talking about “children of Israel” who do or do not have such knowledges and “ways,” this does not mean that the tannaim do not essentially extrapolate this to all peoples. In other words, all who do not engage in this “threefold cord” are wild. This is the perfect rebuke to those who thought of themselves as having dominion

of the *oikumenē* (or the *yishuv*)—Romans—and of their knowledge conquests as extensions of this control.¹⁵⁵

. . .

In Kilayim's menageries humans emerge at the joint of difference and sameness. While they supposedly enforce classification with consequences and stand outside the prohibition *as a species*, they also, like other animals, face several creaturely doubles. Likeness itself has a proliferative effect, implicating and connecting multiple creatures. For the field human likeness and difference are in dispute. On one reading, it seems the creature is classified as *both* alike (human) and different (nonhuman). In this sense, we might think of the human and its doubles as *multiple in themselves* (rather than as alike or different: recall Rabbi Hanina's approach to the human and animal as *sharing* features in tNiddah 4:5). This, in its own way, breaks down dichotomous divisions—or binary notions of difference—between humans and nonhumans via multiplicity.

The theory of territorial doubles accounts for this troubling effect of likeness but does so by dispersing it across concentric wild and watery realms. This is the reason that the Tosefta's commentary and complement to the Mishnah cites the expanded principle of generation (including the human) together with the theory of territorial parallels. These two statements—both principle and theory—are an attempt to put a stop to the fuzzy, (con)fusing, and contagious properties of likeness, one that captures the human as well. However, the creaturely excess outside human habitation (*yishuv*) also points to the ways that likeness as an organizing mechanism is proliferative (again, sweeping up the human). The sum of life-forms exceeds rabbinic attempts to capture their totality, their unruly abundance outpacing classification: recall the queer excess of creatures in the wild and in the sea, which do not double those found in human territory or on dry land. Furthermore, creaturely doubles are not *identical* to their dry land or settlement counterparts. They, together with their queerly excessive comrades, are reminders that the contagion of likeness need not create clones but rather ever more variation and multiplicity.