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卡夫卡的〈變形記〉和〈飢渴的藝術家〉中

自我監禁和隔離

Self-imprisonment and Alienation  
in Kafka's "Metamorphosis" and "A Hunger Artist"

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## Abstract

Kafka himself, like his characters Gregor Samsa (“The Metamorphosis”) and the Hunger Artist, was alienated from his society by his race and history, from his powerful and critical father, and from himself through his own hyper-sensitivity. Both Gregor and the artist imprison themselves in a small space (a room and a cage) where they remain isolated. Here I will argue that both characters are seeking an impossible freedom and that, although they remained alienated from others and even from themselves, they also gain a deeper understanding of themselves. I will use Marxist theory and a close reading approach to explore this issue.

In Chapter 1, I discuss Kafka’s social and cultural alienation as a Jew and also as an artist, as well as his alienation (as a sensitive artist-type) from his rough, practical, very powerful father. In Chapter 2, I discuss the possible meanings of the Law in Kafka’s parable “Before the Law,” and compare it Kafka’s long story “The Metamorphosis,” with Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour” and with Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” with regard to the meaning of the “room” and the concepts of imprisonment, alienation, the possibility of freedom and madness.

In Chapter 3, I discuss “The Metamorphosis” in terms of Gregor’s alienation from himself and from his family and society, from whom (locked in his room) he is now separated, his changing state of mind, the theme of classical music and other key images. In Chapter 4, I explore the artist’s self-alienated state of mind and spiritual quest in “The Hunger Artist,” the idealized figure of the artist and his relationship with the impresario and the spectators. In Chapter 5, I look at the growing unpopularity of the artist’s performance and the “benefits” of being an outcast, and the concepts of matter, spirit, and fraudulence in “The Hunger Artist.”

## Chinese Abstract (中文摘要)

卡夫卡，像他作品的角色葛若格及飢渴藝術家一樣，因為種族及歷史與他的社會隔離，與具權威性的爸爸與自己過度敏感的他隔離。他們兩個禁錮在自己的房間或籠子內，獨自享受孤寂。我主張他們在尋求那不可能的自由，雖然他們仍然使自己與他人，甚至與自己隔離，他們反而更深入了解自己。我將用馬克思主義及細讀研究這個議題。

第一章，我將從身為猶太人及藝術家及與實際又強硬派父親的疏離討論卡夫卡社會與文化隔離。

第二章，我將討論門、守門人及律在〈法律之前〉中的意義，絕對自由在〈一小時的故事〉中的意義，及門與瘋狂在〈黃色壁紙〉中的意義與變形記的比較。

第三章，我將從葛若格與自己跟家人及社會的隔離(疏離)討論〈變形記〉，卡夫卡到葛若格的心理狀態的改變，及古典音樂的意義與過度依賴愛的危險。

第四章，我將探索〈飢渴的藝術家〉中飢渴藝術家的自己疏離與精神追求與他自己的理想典範及他與管理員與觀眾的關係。

第五章，我將說明放逐者的好處、飢餓表演不再受歡迎的現象、物質與精神及欺騙。

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## Introduction

Kafka himself, like his characters Gregor Samsa (“The Metamorphosis”) and the Hunger Artist, was alienated from his society by his race and history, from his powerful and critical father, and from himself through his own hyper-sensitivity. Both Gregor and the artist imprison themselves in a small space (a room and a cage) where they remain isolated. Here I will argue that both characters are seeking an impossible freedom and that, although they remained alienated from others and even from themselves, they also gain a deeper understanding of themselves. I will use Marxist theory and a close reading approach to explore this issue.

In Chapter 1, I discuss the historical situation of the Jews and the difference between traditional artists, who have an important moral and spiritual meaning for the society, and modern artists who tend to be alienated from the society. Here I explore Kafka’s social and cultural alienation as a Jew and also as an artist, as well as his alienation (as a sensitive artist-type) from his rough, practical, very powerful father. In Chapter 2, I discuss the possible meanings of the Law in Kafka’s parable “Before the Law,” and compare it with Kafka’s long story “The Metamorphosis,” with Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour” and with Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” with regard to the meaning of the “room” and the concepts of imprisonment, alienation, and the possibilities of freedom and madness.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the themes of imprisonment and alienation in Kafka’s “Before the Law” and “The Metamorphosis” in relation to the theme of classical music and other key images—the door, the woman in fur, the parasite and host—as well as to the problem of the disorder of the family, and the danger of overdependence on love. In the story Gregor, trapped in his physical room and insect body, is cut off from his family: they communicate with one another only indirectly, through

“hearsay.” Also, the family seems to love Gregor’s money more than Gregor himself; his father fears Gregor’s inability to work so much that he attacks his son as a worthless insect. Maybe out of guilt, the parents avoid seeing Gregor. His family exploits Gregor’s labor, if we see it from a Marxist point of view, and deprives him of his human rights and individual human freedom from an existentialist point of view. His family has a I-it relationship with Gregor. It seems that if Gregor could continue to be a provider his family would be delighted, but if he wants to develop his needs and explore his true (increasingly non-human) self, they will be displeased and keep away from him. Thus Gregor’s alienation from his family deepens.

In Chapter 4, I explore the artist’s self- alienated state of mind and spiritual quest in “The Hunger Artist,” the idealized figure of the artist and his relationship with the impresario and the spectators. Here the impresario attempts to create an image of the hunger artist, but it is an image that the hunger artist dislikes. He therefore alienates himself from his own performance. When it turns out that the artist’s performance is no longer popular, the spectators and the manager begin to see him as less than human and place him in an animal cage. Still surviving, the hunger artist continues to perform but few come to watch him any more. However, he is eager to pursue his goal, his ideal of an “eternal fast.”

In Chapter 5, I explore the concepts of matter, spirit, and fraudulence, and the increasingly alienated state of mind (alienated from them and from himself) of the artist as the spectators cease to be interested in watching his “performance,” preferring that of the caged panther. Since, Kafka may be suggesting, people no longer really believe in God, the society values the material world above the spiritual one. The hunger artist’s show ends with his death, and a panther replaces him in the cage. This beast is happy to eat and when it roars, it seems its freedom is “hidden in his jaws.”



Unlike the thin and wasted hunger artist, the panther is beautiful, healthy, and strong. This shows the shift to a new, less spiritual and less “artistic” (in the old sense) age.

Both Gregor and the hunger artist nonetheless *seek*, though they cannot realize or grasp, a kind of absolute freedom in their respective shelters. In a sense, both of them only begin to approach their true selves and thus to approach freedom when they stop moving, stop living a human life. This is more obvious in the case of Gregor, who wakes up to find himself already transformed into a large beetle. Gradually he takes on more and more non-human qualities, and feels himself changing. Yet paradoxically he also reaches a new (and “more human”) understanding of himself as he progresses further into the non-human state.

For Gregor this is combined with a sense of deep pathos and compassion; especially after being hit with an apple thrown at him by his father he realizes he is dying, and resigns himself to his fate, to death. Because of the vulgar, bourgeois father’s power over his son, his rejection of his son’s sensitive, artistic, impractical personality, the father has already rendered the son non-human symbolically, indeed has already killed him symbolically, and “The Metamorphosis” can also be read as a working-out of this abnormal, inhumane father-son relationship. Although the story is told primarily from the increasingly non-human Gregor’s point of view, and we see him seeking a new kind of non-human freedom before he dies, ultimately his non-humanity and the freedom he seeks can also be seen as his alienation from his father, from the limited human law of the father.

If Gregor Samsa is imprisoned in his room and unable to go to work because he has become a giant insect, the hunger artist voluntarily imprisons himself in his cage in the manner of a fasting, meditating holy man or monk. He also moves deeper into himself, gains a deeper understanding of himself as he *seeks* to be completely free,

perhaps in the way of a meditating Jewish holy man or (Buddhist, Hindu, Christian) monk who fasts and meditates in order to transcend the merely material world and enter a more purely spiritual state of consciousness. However, ironically this purely spiritual self-alienation of the hunger artist cannot match the freedom of the healthy, roaring panther in his cage at the end of the story, that panther which “carries his freedom hidden within his jaws.”

The further ironies here are concerned with the nature of art. The hunger *artist* enjoys “performing” for a crowd of spectators at a circus, so he does after all still have an *ego*; indeed, he dreams of breaking the world fasting record, as an Olympic athlete dreams of breaking the world record in his or her event. The other irony is that once he dies (of starvation) he enters into the infinite fast that we all enter into when we die, so that we could also say that now he has broken all human records—and yet each person does so when he or she dies. Kafka also stresses the important role of the impresario who “promotes” the hunger artist to make money, just as in our contemporary society (Kafka increasingly felt) art in the old sense has given way to something more “popular” and thus more vulgar, more material, less truly spiritual.

Josef K in Kafka’s *The Trial* constantly tries in vain to discover what crime he has been convicted of—one of the interpretations involves the Old Testament concept of original sin—and near the end, just before he is executed by two men while walking in the street and “dies like a dog,” a priest tells him the parable of “Before the Law.” In it the “man from the country,” like Josef K, is constantly seeking justice, seeking the truth, seeking to enter the gateway of the Law, to know the Law that he has broken or, more likely, that would justify and exonerate him. This Law may also represent God as highest Law, the Law that transcends the human world which the hunger artist also wants to transcend in his circus cage; or it may represent the

ultimate “meaning of life” that we all seek. However, this quest must always be (in Kafka’s view) in vain; at the end, when the man is about to die of old age, the gatekeeper closes the gateway and tells him that this Law had been meant for him alone.

We might interpret this to mean that each man has his own law, that there is no absolute, general, common or universal law, thus that one’s man’s law may be “higher than” another’s, that e.g. the king or president may think he is “above the law (of other men).” If the Law is God, then to say that each man “has his own God” suggests again that there is no single, universal and absolute God. In this case it is not so clear that the man from the country is imprisoned here at the gateway, for he was free at any time to return home. Rather, his “imprisonment” is the need to keep waiting indefinitely, just as the hunger artist in his cage waits (fasts) indefinitely and then (after death) continues to “wait” infinitely.

Gregor waits indefinitely (again until his inevitable death) in his room, imprisoned by his physical room, non-human body and increasingly non-human mind. The man from the country also comes to understand his “situation” better through the course of a lifetime of waiting at the gateway, even though this means that he comes to know the utter futility and hopelessness, perhaps ultimately meaninglessness, of this situation—the impossibility of absolute freedom, which here would also mean eternal life of the soul in Heaven (the gate of Heaven shuts when he dies), absolute knowledge or realization of God, truth or justice. In all three cases there is a sense in which the protagonist comes to gain a certain kind of self-understanding in his endless and by definition hopeless quest for freedom, a quest which itself takes place within a wider, more encompassing space of self-imprisonment or self-alienation.

## Chapter 1: Kafka's Own Sense of Alienation due to Historical and Family

### Background

#### A. The Jewish Diaspora

The Jewish people were forced to migrate from the Middle East to Eastern Europe because they were persecuted and exiled for racial and economic as well as religious reasons. In the fourteenth century, the outbreak of the Black Death killed between one-third and one-half of the population of the Europe. Christians proclaimed that the Jews had put poison into the wells and thereby expanded the plague. Considered assassins, the Jews were therefore burned or permanently exiled. In the later Centuries, Christians even claimed that the Jews defiled the body of Jesus Christ but these accusations were fictitious.

Shakespeare also degrades the image of the Jews in his work The Merchant of Venice, in which Shylock, a Jewish person, loans money to others at a high rate of interest. The Jews traditionally excelled in earning money and thereby became natural targets. In the thirteenth century, England's King Edward I began to exile the Jews to get their property and business. From the twelfth to the fourteenth century, many a French king exiled the Jews, seizing their business and imposing heavy taxes on them. In the early twentieth century, Hitler reigned over Germany and used racial discrimination as an excuse to massacre all the Jews in the cities and towns. He also occupied the Czech Republic, where Kafka had lived two decades earlier. During both world wars Czechoslovakia was dismembered by many strong nations pursuing their own economic interests. Jews living in Czechoslovakia had to accept the Jewish, Czech and German cultures, especially the German insofar as this region was part of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire whose official language was German. Thus linguistically as well as culturally the Jews, whose original language had been Hebrew,

were colonized.

The European Jews, then, had already wandered far away from their Middle Eastern homeland, and as the child of a semi-assimilated Jewish family in Czech- and German-speaking Prague Kafka naturally had trouble finding his cultural roots or unified ethnic identity; he knew only the identity of a Diaspora Jew (Loeb 237). Kafka presents himself through “split or multiple characters” not for the sake of art but due to his alienated personality. He has the “sensitivities of a Diaspora Jew” who identifies with all of the many strangers that exist in his consciousness (Loeb 209). Max Robert claims in Sara Loeb’s Franz Kafka: A Question of Jewish Identity: Two Perspectives that Kafka depicts all the Jews as being in a state of exile, and the individual Jew as having a split identity, reflecting the collective fragmentation (209). The more fragmented a character’s personality is, of course, the less freedom he/she will have and the worse will be his/her situation (Loeb 209). When the narrator is transformed into a dog or an insect, for example, he does not stop existing as a human being, just as when the ape of “Report to an Academy” partakes of human traits it never stops existing as an ape (Loeb 212). The protagonists have double identities, just as Kafka does.

## **B. Kafka as a Sensitive, Artistic Son of a Middle-class Jewish Family in Prague**

Bruce K Ward points out that Kafka, whose parents, middle-class, German-speaking Jews in late nineteenth-century Prague, longed to “assimilate to the secular world of industrializing Bohemia,” knew little about Judaism during his upbringing; by the age of 13 he declared himself an atheist. His best-known remarks about Judaism are “What do I have in common with the Jews? I don’t even have anything in common with myself.” However, through his contact with a Yiddish

theater troupe from Galicia, Kafka starts knowing about Judaism.

Besides, Kafka was alienated from his own siblings and parents, especially from his father. He describes his father as a tall, broad-shouldered, powerful man and in contrast depicts himself as a timid, small, powerless man (Haugen13). In the presence of his father, he feels inadequate; they interact only while having meals (Haugen 13). His father's tyrannical behavior often frustrated Kafka: his father decides where he works and who he dates (Haugen 14). It is his father that provides Kafka with the image of the tyrant that appears in his writings (Haugen 14). Kafka thus discovers a place his father cannot reach---literature—to accommodate himself (Haugen 14). His father's interference with his engagement is documented in "Letter to His Father;" and his negative role is condemned in his autobiographical pieces (Haugen 19). His father never really read his works; his mother even refused her son's request to give a collection of his stories to his father (Haugen 19).

From childhood, Kafka's entire soul was distorted by feelings of inadequacy, so he went through life "haunted by an endless and unendurable shame" (Friedman 115). His attempt to overcome this shame dominated his entire career (Friedman 115). Kafka in fact loved his father but his father gave him great pressure and even laughed at him for his lack of "achievements." In the book Letter to My Father, Kafka conveys his fear of his father:

[...] courage, resolution, confidence, joy in one thing or another never lasted if you were opposed it, or even if your opposition was only to be expected—and it was to be expected in nearly everything I did. In your presence—you are an excellent speaker in matters that concern you—I fell into a halting, stuttering way of speech. Even that was too much for you.

Finally I kept still, perhaps from stubbornness, at first; then because, facing you, I could neither think nor speak any more. And since you were the one who had really brought me up, this affected me in everything I did.

(Friedman 113)

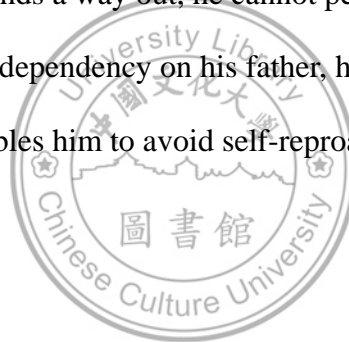
His father's way of raising him also resulted in Franz's loss of confidence and, beyond that, his sense of guilt (Friedman 113). For the rest of his life, Franz took pains to obliterate his father's influence and to reconstruct himself (Friedman 113). In Letter to My Father, Kafka depicts his love for his father:

[...] when I used to see you, tired out on those hot summer noons, taking a nap after lunch in your store, your elbow stemmed on the desk; or on Summer Sundays, when you arrived exhausted on a visit to your family in the country; or the time when mother was seriously ill, when you learned against the bookcase, shaking with sobs; or during my recent illness, when you came softly into my room, remaining on the threshold and stretching your neck to see me in bed, and then, out of consideration, greeting me only with a wave of your hand. At such times I would lie down and cry with happiness, and I am crying again while writing it down. (Friedman 120)

Kafka seems to say here that only by freeing himself from his love for his father can he overcome his fear. However, in his life he cannot actually gain such freedom, for he can never fully reject his father; in contrast, Gregor's family can reject Gregor (Friedman 121). In his letter, Kafka puts what he imagines as his words of reproach against the son in his father's mouth:

[...] You have simply made up your mind to live entirely on me. I admit that we are fighting each other, but there are two kinds of fight. There is the knightly battle, where equal opponents are pitted against each other, each for himself, each loses for himself or wins for himself. And there is the struggle of vermin, which not only stings, but at the same time preserves itself by sucking the other's blood [...]. Such are you. You are not fit for life, but in order to live in comfort, without worry or self-reproach, you prove that I have taken away your fitness for life and put it all into my pocket. (Friedman 121)

Although the young Kafka finds a way out, he cannot persuade himself to take it; although he longs to end his dependency on his father, he cannot stop loving the father. This enslaving love also enables him to avoid self-reproach for his own inadequacies (Friedman 121).



### **C. Marxist Interpretations of Kafka's Alienation**

Marx contends that under capitalism a laborer's work is external to him; it is no longer part of his nature, a natural extension of himself as in primitive societies where people grew their own food and made their own clothes (Marx 124-125). Consequently, under the capitalist system in which the product made by workers is sold and most of the profit goes to the factory owner or manager, the worker does not fulfill himself in his work but rather becomes alienated from himself. He has no chance to develop his mental and physical energies, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased (Marx 124-125). The worker, hence, feels at home only during his leisure time, while at work he feels homeless (Marx 124-125). His work is not



voluntary but imposed, forced labor (Marx 124-125). “It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs” (Marx 124-125).

Walter H. Sokel adopts Marxism to interpret Gregor’s case. Gregor’s (Kafka’s persona) transformation into a giant insect literally exhibits self-alienation (Sokel 74), that is, the process through which a human being becomes something other-than-himself, other-than-human. Insofar as the individual is isolated from his essential nature as a human being, he is isolated from himself (Sokel 75). This idea of the individual’s alienation from his own humanity, and/or of the individual’s loss of his membership in the human species (Sokel 75), also has important connections to the existentialism of Sartre, himself a Marxist, who distinguished the freedom of human consciousness from the mere objectification of the person as a thing or object, as for instance under the gaze of another person.

As a giant dung beetle in “The Metamorphosis” Gregor does maintain his free human consciousness until it gradually starts to change or deteriorate, in direct relation to the fact (or “facticity” as Sartre would say) of his embodied, objectified state, his non-human embodiment. We also see Kafka’s exultation of the free and creative human consciousness in “The Hunger Artist,” even though here the artist is alienated from society and from normal human life—in a way perhaps comparable to the situation of Gregor as a giant insect who is moreover trapped in a (in his own) room. Indeed, it is possible to interpret Kafka’s own perception of himself, and of his role, as a free-thinking, creative artist (creative writer) from the Marxist perspective introduced above.

For Marx, as we have seen, man’s condition as a worker in a factory under a capitalist system contrasts with his situation in early human societies. For in primitive societies humans “produced and reproduced their own life” by growing food, making

clothing, building shelters, as well as through sexual reproduction (Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*). As such they were not alienated from themselves: they were objects of their labor as well as the laboring subjects, just as spiders naturally spin webs out of themselves. Influenced deeply by German Idealism and German classical literature, the young Karl Marx refers to the essential nature of the human species, then, as consisting in freely productive activity (Sokel 75): it means that as producers of objects, humans engage in work for its own sake and for its intrinsic pleasure, not for extrinsic needs or at the command of others (Sokel 75). To be truly human, the individual must always be given free choices, rewards and satisfaction(s) (Sokel 75).

This freedom to choose work for its own sake, that is, for the joy it brings, distinguishes human productivity from animal productivity (Sokel 75). Animals embark on producing based on physical needs whereas humans embark on a producing that is not necessarily based on physical need (Sokel 75). Producing not for physical need(s), but for pleasure, however, really means creating creativity (Sokel 75). Driven by economic necessity, the worker is alienated from not just himself or herself but also his humanity (Sokel 76). This idea of self-alienation applies to factory work and to any kind of work which will bring the worker the wage or income (Sokel 76). Whenever the work fails to involve the creative urge and desire, the worker is dehumanized (Sokel 76).

Kafka was very aware of himself as being a modern artist (a writer), one who takes joy in the creative production of art for its own sake, but he is obviously also an artist who is in something like Marx's sense, self-alienated. Kafka was, after all, greatly affected or perhaps "stunted" by the modern capitalistic European society. As an artist he was also very aware of the traditional, even pre-capitalist and more spiritual role of artists that has (had) already been lost—hence the present problem of

the artist's self-alienation as an alienation from society. In the past, art and artists were held accountable for religion, morality, and society, according to Suzi Gablik; that is the spiritual meaning of art was also a fundamentally moral meaning. "Medieval society placed art at the service of religion," and artists created the dominant values of their societies; "Religion, ritual, and art" served to support the social order (Gablik). Today, however, due to the influence of capitalism with its this-worldly, practical, profit-oriented viewpoint and a computer-driven postmodern with its tendency to erase or flatten out the distinction between the real and the virtual, between popular arts and fine arts, people no longer trust "fine art" in the traditional sense as a locus or guarantor of morality, which they might rather seek in conventional religions or social and legal systems.

Thus, in our modern or (late) capitalist society "modern art" has lost the moral authority that it once had (Gablik). Beginning with the French symbolist poets (Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé) and English aesthetes (Wilde and the early Yeats) of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century we had the "religion of art" with its slogan, "art for art's sake": it was only by keeping a distance from society, and emphasizing its purely "aesthetic" rather than its "moral" sense, that art could maintain its purity: Gablik claims that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, "the phrase 'art for art's sake' is the best ideal a materialist age can attain, for it is an unconscious protest against materialism" (Gablik). Artists consider themselves to be aesthetic priests who "divine the interior soul or spirit" (Gablik) but this role is also inevitably a self-"alienated" one. In a sense we can see Kafka's hunger artist as a purely spiritual figure (a fasting monk or priest of some esoteric religion) and/or as a purely aesthetic one, more than as a "moral" figure since, after all, like Kafka himself he is quite anti-social, isolated by choice from society. (The case of Gregor-as-insect is different inasmuch as, on most interpretations, Gregor did not

choose to become an insect.)

Again we may view Kafka-as-isolated-artist *via* Malevich's contention that "Art no longer cares to serve the state and religion" and "It no longer wishes to illustrate the history of manners; it wants to have nothing to do with the object as such, and believes that it can exist, in and for itself, without things." (Gablik). Robert Motherwell writes in 1944:

So long as modern society is dominated by the love of property, the artist has no alternative to formalism. Until there is a radical revolution in the values of modern society, we may look for a highly formal art to continue [. . .]. Modern artists have had to replace other social values with the strictly aesthetic. (Gablik)

Modernism is "setting itself against the social order and seeking its own freedom and autonomy" (Gablik). Isolated artists and intellectuals alike thus choose to live in the marginalized region of society (Gablik).

All the arts in the past have their "social significance and obligation;" classical arts are "concrete but indentured" whereas modern arts are "free but abstract"—which suggests that the modern arts seek autonomy and individualism (Gablik). No longer forced to obey the collective purpose of society, modern artists must be armed with fabulous characteristics to show themselves. The liberation from all the rules and limitations indicates the isolation, that is, the alienation from society, a situation Kafka clearly presents (and perhaps parodies) in "The Hunger Artist." In the extreme case we might think the artist's extreme freedom has led him (and/or his art) to lapse into a narcissistic preoccupation with himself (itself).

A standard Marxist view will see artists' works as being not "useful" or "practical" (in the way that crafts, a chair for example, are practical). Indeed Marxists regard "pure" art or pure aesthetics with no useful (productive) function as being itself a form of spiritual corruption which represents the decline of the culture of late capitalism (Gablik). In the old days the moral and spiritual centrality of the artist may have made his work seem more "practical" in the society, but with modern art this ceases to be true. As the social function of art withers, artists consider art increasingly to be their own private activity (Gablik). Inasmuch as their products are not *considered* socially "useful," then, modern artists may tend to feel alienated not just from the society but also—in terms of the classical Marxist concept of the worker's self-alienation—from themselves.

On the other hand the true (modern) artist does after all take joy in his/his own creativity; an artist does see his poem or piece of music as being directly spun out of himself, just as a spider spins its web—and in this sense there is no self-alienation. In "The Hunger Artist" the artist is freely choosing to fast and this is fully an "expression" of himself, of his own will and his own body, even though he feels increasingly alienated from the impresario (who only wants to use him to make money) and from the spectators (who cease to take any interest in his "art"). In the story, then, Kafka plays with this duality or contradiction between the individual artist's (or self's) joyous self-expression and a self-alienation that is largely influenced by the world outside of the self. The artist's self-chosen cage may even serve to help him forget about the latter, so that he can just concentrate on the former.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As Marx and Benjamin as well as Marcuse have pointed out, modern western society refers to art as a commodity that can be exchanged for money, prestige, and power. Benjamin in "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction" claims, of course, that works of art (his models are sculpture and painting) have lost their traditional *aura* or sense of the "other-worldly" and now are mere commodities, capable of being copied many times over. Here we see the move beyond the traditional idea that an artwork is essentially a type of gift, not a type of commodity.

**Chapter 2: Themes of Imprisonment, Temporal Suspension and the Hopeless Quest for Freedom in Kafka's "Before the Law," Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" and Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"**

**A. Imprisonment in "Before the Law"**

The furthest-out of many doorkeepers stands at the furthest-out gateway to the law, which is situated or hidden at the center of a labyrinth of successive gateways. A man from the country comes forward to ask for permission to "enter the gateway of the law." However, even though the man from the country waits patiently and even bribes the doorkeeper, the doorkeeper always says no to him. He also tells him that even if he lets him enter, he remains the least powerful among doorkeepers. When the man from the country becomes very old and is dying, he asks the doorkeeper why only he has come there to ask for admission, since after all everyone searches for—or searches to know—the law. The doorkeeper replies that "This door is only for you, and when you die it will be closed."

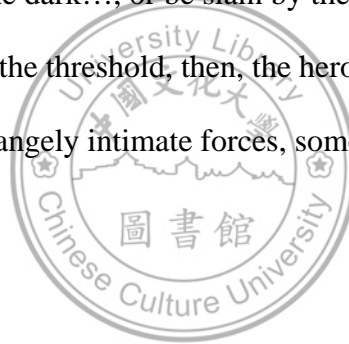
This Law could mean God or the meaning of life, which everyone seeks (to know). But then what would it mean that each man has his own God or meaning of life? Or what would it mean that the gateway to (the *possibility* of) knowing this God or Meaning closes when we die? If we take this to mean (a) "legal" law in the normal sense, then if each man has his own law the Law (or Justice) is not, as by definition it should be, equal for all: for example, it would now appear justified that kings (or rich or powerful people) would be "above" the law, or would (perhaps through large enough bribes) have a special access to the Law.

Perhaps the doorkeeper may also symbolize Kafka's father, a force for preventing Kafka from entering into marriage; or maybe this door is simply the door to a meaningless death which is itself Nothingness (no eternal life), the gateway to the

grave which the man from the country (Kafka) has in effect already passed through at the beginning of the parable.

There could be a traditional mythic-heroic reading as well. Erwin R. Steinberg cites Joseph Campbell's remarks in The Hero with a Thousand Faces, where he starts to discuss the adventure in mythology:

The Mythological hero, setting forth from his common day hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark..., or be slain by the opponent and descend in death.... Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which give magical aid. (Steinberg 130)



Steinberg holds that the man from the country, nonetheless, never enters the passage, nor crosses the threshold; he cannot embrace a test that would “earn him his reward” (Steinberg 130). That indicates nothing venture, nothing gain. Next, Steinberg cites Northrop Frye's remarks in Anatomy of Criticism when Frye analyzes the “quest theme in literature”:

The reward of the quest usually is or includes a bride. This bride-[figure] is ambiguous: her psychological connection with the mother in an Oedipus fantasy is more insistent than in comedy. She is often to be found in a perilous, forbidden, or tabooed place, like Brunnhilde's wall of fire or the

sleeping beauty's wall of thorns, and she is, of course, often rescued from the unwelcome embraces of another and generally older male, or from giants or bandits or other usurpers. The removal of some stigma from the heroine figures prominently in romance as in comedy, and ranges from the "loathly lady" theme of Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale to the forgiven harlot of the Book of Hosea. The "black but comely" bride of the Song of Songs belongs in the same complex. (Steinberg 130-131)

Steinberg pinpoints that not any bride explicitly appears in the parable of "Before the Law" but "the open door and the many halls within" can be considered symbols of the absent bride (131). Steinberg proposes that Freud in "The interpretation of Dreams" offers a source for such an interpretation:

A room in a dream generally represents a woman; the description of its various entrances and exits is scarcely calculated to make us doubt this interpretation. The interest as to whether the room is "open" or "locked" will be readily understood in this connection.... The dream of walking through suite of rooms signifies a brothel or harem. But, as H Sachs has shown by an admirable example, it is also employed to represent marriage. (Steinberg 131)

Steinberg infers that "Kafka uses imagery in connection with himself and Felice," his fear of connection with his fiancée (132). Additionally, Steinberg quotes the remarks of H. Clay Trumbull, in his The Threshold Covenant, in which he spends five pages of appendix describing "woman as door" this idea:



In different language and among peoples there is... an apparent connection between the terms, and the corresponding ideas, of “woman” and “door,” that would seem confirmation of the fact that earliest altar was at the threshold of the woman, and of the door. (132)

That indicates Kafka cannot enter into woman world. The doorkeeper could stand for Kafka’s father (Steinberg 133). His father might have disapproved “either of the engagement or of Kafka’s acting possessively toward Felice” (Steinberg 135). The doorkeeper could also stand for the part of Kafka which resists marriage because Kafka has ever explained in the letters to Felice and to his father that he cannot be a candidate for a husband and in the Letter to His Father he outlines the obstacles to marriage and the illness and despair Felice and his father lead to (Steinberg 135). The failure to enter the open door implies Kafka’s fear of the physical relationship in marriage (Steinberg 137).

“Before the Law” appears near the end of The Trial, in which because of being accused of a crime Josef K. seeks to find what his crime is but never finds out. Being accused of a crime is perhaps due to original sin or due to being slandered. At the end of the story, the priest in cathedral tells Joseph K. the parable of “Before the Law,” which contains a theme in quest of what is “The Law;” however, Law is sometimes not equal for all. Ward says that Jewish critic Walter Benjamin quotes Kafka’s famous remark that “there is an infinite amount of hope, but not for us.” This infinite hope is hidden in the “radiance that streams from the door of the Law” but this radiance is not for the man from the country, nor is it for Joseph K. Ward contends that in Benjamin’s view, “there is no redemption, no hope effective for use in

this world.” Kafka and Benjamin both present pessimistic views for the world in which they live.

The function of law in “Before the Law” is to “define and deconstruct the human relationships between the man from the country, the doorkeeper, and Joseph K” (“Kafka’s The Trial” 39). “The law is master; the doorkeeper servant” (“Kafka’s The Trial” 39). The man from the country pursues the will of the law by making an array of free choices (“Kafka’s The Trial” 39). The doorkeeper seems to be immortal; the man from the country mortal (“Kafka’s The Trial” 40). In The Trial, Joseph K. plays the roles of both the man from the country and the doorkeeper: like the man from the country, K. seeks to be allowed by the Law; like the doorkeeper, he unwittingly refuses to be permitted by protesting his innocence (“Kafka’s The Trial” 40). Only by committing the crime can Joseph K. be “saved” by the law, a big irony (“Kafka’s The Trial” 40).

I hold that law can be God or truth or self-actualization which tops the pyramid of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs or freedom. Law can be God because we humans in the whole life cannot cross the line between God and human; maybe afterlife we can return to the heaven, becoming angles beyond humans. Law can be truth, because we who live on earth cannot see the truth all the time; we easily lose the principle of what is right or wrong; we are readily agitated by others or those who intend to manipulate the situations or scenarios. Law can be self-actualization, the highest needs hardly fulfilled among humans. At the bottom of the hierarchy of needs lie the physiological and then safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. A person can donate something for charity or save others’ skin to be self-actualized and also can transcend himself or herself like the hunger artist but the hunger artist dies for transcendence, a borderline between human and god. God lives forever without

eating but humans cannot live without eating. Law can be freedom, because we humans come to this world, and seldom seclude from others and therefore tend to be subject to others, especially relatives. We can hardly spend time with ourselves so we long to have our own small room to rest and relax but in reality the door is always knocked by others to urge you to do something. When born, you lose the freedom, therefore.

Jurgen Born asserts from the perspective of depth psychology that the doorkeeper is a father image who keeps his son from entering gate of life (Born 159). The man from the country gazes at and devotes himself to the doorkeeper for many years (Born 159). The observation of someone for many years is mentioned in Kafka's "Letter to His Father" (Born 159). Besides, the letter paradoxically presents Kafka's attempt to escape from his father (Born 159) and his attempt to please his father: "if I had obeyed you less, I am sure you would have been much better please with me" (Born 160). The same paradox appears in "Before the Law:" "if the man from the country [follows] the doorkeeper less, if he [enters] into the Law without permission, he [will do] what [is] right" and then the doorkeeper will be less anger at him and more pleased with him (Born 160). Kafka remarks that "[he] who seeks does not find, but who does not seek, will be found;" Block in The Trial holds that "waiting is not useless, [...] the only useless thing is to take action independently" (Born 161). The doorkeeper symbolizes all those powers which can bar that man's way to a life of independence and personal responsibility and which consist of his domineering father and the specific powers of the city of Prague (Born162).

Dennis McCort asserts from the perspective of Buddhism that mind is its foundation and no-gate is its gate (199). The Law symbolizes Enlightenment, a most precise signifier of freedom from all limitations because a law is not limited to itself

(McCort 200). The freedom is what the man from the country finally seeks but he does not know at the beginning (McCort 200). If you long for something, you will stick to it and put your mind to it and then you would easily be fettered by it. That indicates if you want the Law, then you will not gain the Law. What the door closes on is delusion and real sufferings (McCort203). “Human mind is its own trap, its own impassible gate,” because mind is to separate us from things even if we use it to know them (McCort 206). McCort remarks that the man from the country, a persona of Kafka, is made timid by his delusive self-consciousness and in turn puts himself in thrall to the powerful other –the gatekeeper (207). No matter whether there is a gate, Kafka contends that using all the strategies is incapable of gaining spiritual enlightenment (McCort 208).

Wolf Kittler asserts that the man from the country comes to the doorkeeper as a symbol of the grave and sits waiting until he is going to die; he does not move when the doorkeeper closes the gate over him (Kittler 672). His interpretation indicates “[the man from the country] is already in his grave waiting for the door”—a gravestone—“to be shut over his dead body” (Kittler 673). Kittler pinpoints the differences between Christ and Kafka (or the man from the country): “Jesus is waiting for his resurrection” whereas “[Kafka] is already buried in his grave waiting to die” (673). That man does not dare to disregard the keeper’s warnings (Kittler 673) and quietly waits for a permit to the entrance of the Law as in K’s waiting for the admittance of the Castle in The Castle. That accentuates the hopeless waiting and the irresistibility of fate.

I render the doorkeeper the Fates; the man from the country an individual and no matter what a human being does, each has his or her own fate which cannot readily change. The Law symbolizes a humans’ ideal—salvation or freedom and humans

can use their free will to challenge the fatalism. I will take Achilles in The Iliad as an example. Achilles asks his mother Thetis to help him because Agamemnon deprives him of the gift from the wars so that Thetis turns to Zeus and asks for the failure of Greek army. Although Greek army fails, Achilles's close friend Patroclus thus dies on the battlefield, a thing Achilles never thinks of. Achilles's mother Thetis knows his son would die if he had killed Hector. She does not hope he returns back to the battle but Achilles respects Zeus and the Fates. Now that his intimate friend dies for Achilles's revenge to Agamemnon, he'd rather die in a war than survive on earth. This case fits what is mentioned above: Achilles (the man from the country) is mortal and the Fates (the doorkeeper) are immortal. One of the Fates Clotho spins the thread of life; another Lachesis assigns his destiny to each man and the other Atropos cuts the thread at death (Hamilton 44). The doorkeeper distributes what the man's destiny is and when the man is going to die, the doorkeeper is "cutting his thread" (shutting the door).

## **B. Hopeless Quest for Freedom in "The Story of an Hour"**

Lawrence I. Berkove contends that for a married woman self-assertion is eliminated, the characteristic of which is incompatible within marriage (Berkove 154). Marriage accentuates "shared goals and mutual commitment" (Berkove 154). Louise's description of his "kind, tender hands and his face" she never looks at implies that she loves him sometimes (Berkove 154). She often represses her feeling in the presence of her husband (Berkove 155). If she can openly communicate about her feelings, he would know what she needs and what she does (Berkove 155). Partly because of Louise's strange view of love, her husband's persistence fails

(Berkove 155). Louise describes her husband's intention and actions as a "crime;" every wife in marriage will suffer from the husband in that "they believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature" (Chopin 450). The word "impose" this verb indicates to put the pressure from a high position to a lower position and implies who is at the advantage and disadvantage within marriage. Berkove contends that "believing love a crime cannot be considered a normal attitude, much less an emotionally healthy one" (155). Indeed, she uses the principle of law to judge what her husband does for her and considers her husband wrong only if he violates the law of her own. Rather, where do people not impose their ideas and "conditions on us that limit our freedom? Only two places on earth: an uninhabited spot or the grave," (Berkove 155) "in which there are no expectations or obligations on anyone" (Berkove 156). Marriage restricts freedom inevitably; whoever marries, or even loves, forsakes large areas of freedom—"usually willingly" (Berkove 156). Although Brently her husband loves her, her attitude toward imposition suggests that she is agitated by her husband's "display of affection" and regards it as a loss of freedom (Berkove 156). Her husband's friend Richards hurries to tell Louise the news of her husband's death, "to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message" (Berkove 156). Finally, Richards fails to screen Brently from the view of his wife. "Are these loving acts of kind intentions crimes?" (Berkove 156). For Louise, "anything her husband does is not only wrong, but also a crime against her absolute freedom" (Berkove 156).

Alone in her room, when she "abandons" herself, whispered words escape her lips: free, free, free! (Chopin 450). Aristotle states that "whosoever is delighted in solitude, is either a wild beast or a god," and if Louise takes the joy at the thought of absolute possession in upcoming years, the joy may qualify as "monstrous" (Berkove

157). With her fancy running riot, she is going to lose control of her mind; with her husband's unexpected reappearance, she suddenly terminates the delusion of "a monstrous joy" (Berkove 158). The way Louise reaches absolute freedom, possible only for a divinity, is through death (Berkove 158).

I agree with Berkove's views and attempt to supplement what he does not say. When Mrs. Mallard receives the news of her husband's death, she pretends to feel exhausted physically and after she imprisons herself in her room, sitting on an armchair, and staring at the view outside the window, she grows more and more delighted. Is looking into the sky helpful to recover her real self? She depicts the treetop is full of new spring life, the rain in the air is so delicious, a peddler below is crying his wares, a distant song reaches her ears, sparrows are chirping in the eaves, patches of blue sky are shown through the clouds (Chopin 450). "New spring life" indicates that she begins to live a new life; "delicious" she is in good mood to eat food; "a peddler and a distant song as well as chirping sparrows" she is "prospering" in her new life. "Patches of blue sky" indicates that she regains a small part of self and now inner self is not obviously presented. Before her husband's death, she always hides her ideas behind and gives priority to her husband; the clouds symbolize her husband, the patches of sky her.

### **C. The End of Madness in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and the Beginning of Metamorphosis in Kafka's "Metamorphosis"**

Catherine Golden asserts that the narrator expresses herself through the wallpaper which functions as a text and is perceived as a palimpsest (193). The dominant text consists of "the hallucinations and dramatic actions of tearing the

wallpaper and creeping on the floor” (Golden 193). The subject of her sentences is John, her husband, who “scoffs and laughs” at her and sometimes loses patience with her (Golden 194).

The narrator places her in a lower position and questions John’s authority: “You see he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do?” (Golden 195). The word “one” occurs three times in close proximity (Golden 195). Such an expression “what is one to do” reveals the narrator’s helplessness and perceived inability to alter her uncomfortable condition; besides, the repetition of “one” produces “a haunting echo of anonymity” in order to avoid self-confrontation (Golden 195). The more she writes, the more madly she acts: she starts to tear the wallpaper from the walls to release the part of her trapped by her own social condition (Golden 196). Her identification lets the narrator to free herself from the restrictive pattern of her society and this liberation can be found on paper through her pronoun choice (Golden 197).

Janice Haney-Peritz proposes many explanations about the house in which the narrator lodges. The narrator refers to the place as both a colonial mansion and a hereditary estate, but she believes this house is haunted (Haney-Peritz 96). Her desire for such a literary kind of architecture may have something to do with her longing for writing and with her interest in the wallpaper (Haney-Peritz 96). This “colonial mansion,” however, is defined by the non-discursive social relations between masters and slaves (Haney-Peritz 98).

The writing of the narrator contains the discourse of John’s prescription and the descriptions of binary oppositions such as “sick and well, the real and the fanciful, order and anarchy, self and other, and male and female” (Haney-Peritz 97). Although the narrator asserts that writing does her good, she at the same time says that it takes a lot out of her (Haney-Peritz 97). When she is writing, she tells herself



well enough to write (Haney-Peritz 97). Such contradictions betray her dependence on the oppressive discursive structure Haney-Peritz associates with John and reveal why she jumps from one thing to another to change the subject (Haney-Peritz 97).

The self the narrator realizes is not her real self but a self produced by John's demands and desires (Haney-Peritz 100). She seems to be a child John requires her to be and crawls around the perimeter of the master bedroom, with the bars behind the windows for keeping the child from falling (Haney-Peritz 100). Through identifying herself with wallpaper's shadow women, the narrator places herself into an imaginary realm (Haney-Peritz 101). Jean Kennard claims in her 1981 essay entitled "Convention Coverage or How to Read Your Own Life" that a new feminist set of interpretive conventions will agree on the following notions:

That the oppressive use of power by a male is an instance of patriarchy; that a patriarchal culture's socialization of women makes them ill; that a woman's discomfort in ancestral halls indicates a healthy desire for a room of her own (Haney-Peritz 102)

Women's first step is quest for identity under an oppressive patriarchal culture and then seek to liberate by identification (Haney-Peritz 102).

Mary Jacobus argues that if women go mad, man cannot understand it, Doctor John, for instance, cannot dream of madness. Besides, the family or home is the place of repression which subsumes strangeness and enslavement as Engels explains in The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State that the word "family" stems from *famulus* or household slave (Jacobus 235). Additionally, wallpaper's color is yellow, a color of sickness, and of decay and "repellent, almost

revolting” (Jacobus 232). Interestingly, the word “creepy” recurs in the story; “creepy and creep” are respectively a response and an action of subjection of women and the body (Jacobus 236). When the narrator acts like a creeping figure, she is on the brink of being hysterical (Jacobus 236). Such a woman on all fours is like Bertha Mason in Jane Eyre and embodies the animality of woman not subverted by “masculine” reason (Jacobus 237). The hysteric female disposes of her thoughts onto her body (Jacobus 237).

Elaine R. Hedges contends that patriarchal society expects women to do what men require for women and in turn women cannot choose their way to deal with the things that happen to them. Although Doctor John prescribes total rest and total emptiness of mind, the standard treatment for women in a patriarchal society, the narrator likes intellectual stimulation and activity, and even conveys her wish for “advice and companionship in her work” (Hedges 42). She implores her husband for taking her away from this house but is refused. Instead her husband chooses this house for her and a room in the house for her, whose windows barred can keep small children from falling; however, the narrator prefers a room downstairs (Hedges 43). Unfortunately, this is 1890 so that there is no choice of “a room of one’s own” for this wife (Hedges 43).

In the presence of her husband John, the narrator always poses and reveals no true self as she says that “makes me very tired” (Hedges 43). Living in a big mansion, she gradually focuses her eyes on the wallpaper and identifies herself with the paper which symbolizes her situation. Imprisoned in a room, she contemplates on the figure of a woman behind the paper barred attempting to get free (Hedges 43). Slowly, many women behind the bars all attempt to get free (Hedges 44). Nonetheless, the narrator does and does not identify with the creeping women who

approach her “in her hallucinations”, the women creeping out of the wallpaper and through the arbors and lanes and along the roads outside the house (Hedges 44). The narrator is eager to strangle the [women] behind the paper, for by rejecting [those women], she might release the other, imprisoned woman within herself (Hedges 44). Nevertheless, the only rejection is suicidal and thus “she descends into madness:” “madness is her only freedom” (Hedges 44). The narrator knows “women must creep;” however, in the first place she fights against creeping, and on her last day in the house, as she tears out yards and yards of wallpaper and creeps onto the floor, she is defeated and joins in “their creeping activities,” completely mad (Hedges 44).

The scene in which the narrator gnaws with her teeth at the bed in her room proves her sense of imprisonment, Hedges pinpoints (44). Woman may be as prisoner, as child or cripple, or as a fungus growth when the narrator depicts the women she fancies behind the wallpaper as “strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths” (Hedges 44). If they are images men have of women, and women have of themselves, it is no doubt that madness and suicide abound in the work of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century female writers (Hedges 44). Hedges also mentions Emily Dickinson’s remarks “Much madness is divinest sense...Much sense the starkest madness,” and her way to resist patriarchal society (Hedges 44). Dickinson chooses spinsterhood as one way of refusing society’s requirements as to woman’s role as wife (Hedges 45). Women imposed on social pressures in the 19<sup>th</sup> century cannot attend college but their brothers can ; they are expected to devote themselves, their lives, to aging and ailing parents; they are treated as toys or children and lacking in self-confidence (Hedges 45).

Greg Johnson puts “The Yellow Wallpaper” into a category of Gothic Allegory and focuses on rage and regression (Johnson 521). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar

in The Madwoman in the Attic examine the methods where 19<sup>th</sup>-century women writers convey forbidden emotions (Johnson 521). In Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason may be read as a raging alter ego of Eyre because she burns out Thornfield Hall to show Jane's forbidden anger; however, Jane cannot burst into anger in that society so that she exercises only her reason to face what is given to her (Johnson 521). The narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" can be allowed to release their fear, leading to her triumph over her husband. She identifies herself with her double she finds locked in the wallpaper, raging (Johnson 522).

The narrator at the story's beginning forsakes her own social responsibility of motherhood; the treatment her husband proposes is to rest (Johnson 523). His tyrannically controlling her in the name of protectiveness suffocates her and hinders her defiance (Johnson 523). He asserts that his wife's nervous illness is associated with imaginative power so that he is attempting to repress that imaginative power (Johnson 524). Since the narrator sleeps in daylight; awake observing the wallpaper at night, day and night in the story may present the narrator's inner struggle from consciously resisting to the daylight world to unconsciously being immersed in the nocturnal world (Johnson 525). By daylight, the pattern of the paper is a continuously irritant to a normal mind; by moonlight the pattern becomes bars and the women behind it is clear (Johnson 525).

The narrator's mentioning the Fourth of July indicates her longing for independence but the society in which she lives expects the women to be dependent on her husband (Johnson 526). As the holiday is around the corner, she implores her husband to invite her cousins Henry and Julia, who may support her writing, to visit her, but he rejects because those people may stimulate his lovely wife (Johnson 526).

Richard Feldstein contends that as a patriarchal physician, John's diagnosis of

her slightly hysterical tendency imprisons his wife within the prescription, which means rest cure and discourages work and separates the patient from society (Feldstein 308). Contrary to expectation, after she stops writing and grows obsessed with the wallpaper, her condition deteriorates (Feldstein 309). John undermines the narrator's confidence in her intuitive understanding of her illness (Feldstein 313).

Evans Lansing Smith suggests that the story presents “women imprisoned in a labyrinthine underworld” which stands for “the threat of madness” (227). The narrator grows imprisoned in an attempt to liberate a mysterious woman (Smith 231). When her husband is going to depart, the narrator says “I have locked the door,” and when her husband comes back and breaks the door, she already crawls on the floor, totally mad (Smith 231). The story thus emphasizes the creation of a new identity (Smith 232).

Denise D. Knight mentions one of the most features of patriarchal society: treat women as an inanimate thing. As a symbol of patriarchal authority, John unwittingly regards his wife as an inanimate thing, an object lifeless, dull, and free of the fancies whereas his wife strives to articulate her feelings John strives to suppress (Knight 81). John prefers to consider women passive and obedient while his wife constantly registers her desire to express (Knight 81). Knight proposes an interpretation about the door which John intends to break down with an ax: the door can be seen as symbolic so much that the narrator behind it can be secluded there to sink into the imaginary world and stop the sexual servitude which is defined as the role of wife in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Knight 83). The narrator in her journal articulates how much tired and sick she of the “pattern,” which implies patriarchal authority, and how much disempowered she is (Knight 84).

John S. Bak says that when S. Weir Mitchell diagnoses Charlotte Perkins Gilman

with nervous prostration or neurasthenia, Mitchell's rest cure locks Gilman in his Philadelphia sanitarium for a month, limits intellectual stimulation to two hours a day, and forbids her to touch pen, pencil, or paintbrush because Mitchell asserts that work and companionship do any harm to his patient's health. Bak, however, uses Jeremy Bentham's panopticon to interpret the reason the narrator's condition worsens. The wallpaper in her room reduces an artistic and articulate woman to an inarticulate animal or a beast deprived of sanity and humanity as well as crawling around the room, her room similar to that depicted by Michel Foucault in Discipline and Punish. The Panopticon may seem like a cage that it misjudges human reaction to surveillance. It, a means of power of observation, furnishes the interned with a relatively clean, pleasant environment and the warden with the most effective method of control. Any observed person can be monitored from the central tower so that way can decrease a big workforce. Besides, the prisoner has no way of countering surveillance because he does not tell when he or she is observed. The paranoia stemming from constant surveillance influences the inmate's psychological health. The Panopticism can be used as a machine to train and correct individual's behavior. The narrator supports Foucault's assertion that anyone feels more ill by the surveillance of the Panopticon than by the unhealthy or unpleasant milieu of prison, Bak says. Bak says this argument does not conform to the views of critic Hedge "she never does get free" and "have been defeated," and even "destroyed". The Yellow wallpaper is the object of surveillance and with the scrutiny of two bulbous eyes in the wallpaper, the narrator proceeds from concern to paranoia to madness. Aware of the 'unblinking eyes,' the narrator believes that a kind of sub-pattern lurks behind the paper and gradually consumes and corner her to madness. A figure who shakes the bars is the narrator, stuck inside a Panopticon. That figure's freedom is of

capital importance because that reflects what the narrator wants. Bak asserts that the narrator or patient or prisoner finally transcends consciousness, denies the Panopticon's reality, and extinguishes its control, the result a far cry from Hedge's.

Carol Margaret Davison cites the remarks of Elaine Showalter:

it seems clear that it is an abandoned private mental hospital. The barred windows are not to protect children, but to prevent inmates from jumping out. The walls and the bed have been gouged and gnawed by other prisoners. The women she sees creeping in the hedges are perhaps the ghosts of former patients. (59)

This interpretation acknowledges that the narrator does not fancy and create those women and if anyone who stays in there, he or she may have the same experience as the narrator and then why John and Jennie do not feel that. Jennie, the domestic ideal, remains "a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper...[who hopes] for no better profession" and believes that the narrator's writing leads to her illness. Not believing that his wife feels ill unusually, John seeks to repress the feelings she has and limits her activities while she attempts to break through her trouble but often get exhausted by being a child in front of her husband. I contend that women behind the pattern is created by the narrator and by virtue of those women she can convey her agitation, and anxieties and give up the role of wife whose duty is assigned by men.

"The Yellow Wallpaper" and "Jane Eyre" have some elements in common: such as yellow room and red room (Delashmit 32). Both rooms are located in the upper regions (Delashmit 32). John expresses his tenderness and care while John Reed exhibits his tyranny (Delashmit 32). For female protagonists, both are patriarchal authority (Delashmit 32). John assigns his wife to stay in an upper room with hideous yellow paper on the wall whereas John Reed orders Jane to be imprisoned in

a red room against her will (Delashmit 32). Jane doubts whether the red room is haunted; the narrator feels that the house may be “haunted” (Delashmit 32). Jane looks into a mirror, seeing her image floating to her; the narrator sees her image emerging from the wallpaper, the image a part of denied self (Delashmit 32). Jane escapes from madness but the narrator gets in madness.

Jeannette King and Pam Morris propose that the power to name and to establish a reality can be expressed in the doctor/patient relationship (26). Men have more fundamental power to judge what is sickness and health, abnormal and normal (27). Through language men sustain their power; through language men defines and controls experience. John talks to his wife she is “unreasonably angry,” and “he knows there is no reason to suffer” (King 27). The word such as “irrational” or “unreasonable” is unacceptable and invalid so that John uses his knowledge to impose his version of reality on his wife (King 27).

Elizabeth Boe compares “The Metamorphosis” with “The Yellow Wallpaper” in enclosure in a room and crawling doubles (121). The wife’s room in “wallpaper” is associated with its barred windows and metal rings and the stairs blocked by a gate and limits the perceived madwoman in her attic, a nursery where the child is not protected by parents, but the wife or mother is imprisoned by her husband (Boa122). The prison/nursery signifies the imprisonment of women in the social roles of wife or mother, the infantilization of women in bourgeois, and the representation of patriarchal power contended by means of psychiatric medicine (Boa 122). The attic room and its inhabitant imply a woman’s body imprisoned in a subjectivity shaped by oppressive social conditions; that room (the wife’s prison) is ever transformed into the territory of the wallpaper-woman (Boa 122). The room changes from a prison to a narrating I’s room of her own, the realm visualized by Virginia Woolf, where is



secluded from hostile milieus (Boa 122). In contrast, Gregor's room shifts from his own room to a prison. Besides, the wife is imprisoned in middle-class femininity—being denied social intercourse and work while Gregor intends to free himself from the burdens of petty-bourgeois masculinity (Boa 122). Since Gregor chooses the apartment, pays the bill, locks his door at night, the room is his, also a shelter from oppressive work in a public sphere. Unlike Gregor, the wife is at the beginning not in her own room and is not allowed to lock the door (Boa 122). On the other hand, on stopping paying the bill, Gregor loses the power to lock his door and his room flings open to endless penetrations (Boa 123). Boe contends that “The Metamorphosis” starts where “The Yellow Wallpaper” stops and continues to explore the territory beyond metamorphosis. Gregor connects liberty from the timetable of work with femininity, comparing travelers; his transformation indicates demasculinization (Boa 123). The room presents how material circumstances and social relations help to shape subjectivity; its meanings from beginning to end vary: initially, it signifies exclusion from work and society in “Wallpaper,” shelter from work and society in “Metamorphosis” and finally, it reveals a form of liberation in “Wallpaper,” but deadly isolation in “Metamorphosis” (Boa 124). Besides, both texts have their definitions of society: in “Wallpaper,” it represents the male-dominated regulations of marriage, medicine, finance, and actual husbands and doctors while in “Metamorphosis,” it does competitive capitalism and the patriarch (Boa 125). The wife longs to reject sex and to work; in contrast, Gregor is dying to reject work and to have sex (Boa128). The crawling of the wallpaper women remains powerless and when the wife joins their activity (crawling), they are all along regarded as mad from outside the world (Boa 130). Only when the social meanings of gender are transformed is it meaningful that an individual transforms (Boa 130).

Gregor as an insect turns into being semi-feminized and loses his social status and because he is not masculine he cannot creep over toward the outside world and remains isolated (Boa 130).

I agree with Boa that the wife is imprisoned by her heritage husband, but she gradually grows self-imprisoned in the mansion as her own room to prevent patriarchal authority from breaking; Gregor is always self-imprisoned in the room, and isolated from others and in that way he eludes other's disturbance and when he as a beetle becomes semi-feminized and loses the social status as women do.



### Chapter 3: Imprisonment, Transformation, and the Hopelessness of Escape in “The Metamorphosis”

#### A. Self-Imprisonment and Transformation

Thomas F. Barry contends that tuberculosis with which Kafka is diagnosed symbolizes (1) his inner spiritual illness and (2) his relationship to Felice and (3) to his father (46). Michel Carrouges says in “Physical Destruction” that “Kafka [declares] that Gregor [is stricken] with smallpox or leprosy” and that “sickness is the bitterest and the most sordid of concrete images of reality” (54). The imaginary bed still prefigures ill omen if it does not mirror Kafka’s bed in which he dies of tuberculosis (Carrouges 54).

According to deconstructionist J. Hillis Miller, the word parasite has its plentiful associations (Barry 46). The parasitical implies the paradox, for in search of its food, the parasite at last devastates its host and itself (Barry 46). The word parasite also registers “a relationship of proximity and distance, similarity and difference” and contains “associations of both host and guest, alien invader and friendly presence, sacrificial victim and sacrificing master, a benevolent or malevolent ghost” and besides, can be the alien Other within the self (Barry 46). In works such as “The Metamorphosis” and “Jackals and Arabs” as well as “Wedding Preparations in the Country,” Kafka depicts the parasite that lives off others (Barry 46). Greek prefix “para-“ expresses the concept of wrongly resembling something else and harmfully existing beside as such a description of Gregor the insect parasite that wrongly resembles a human being and harmfully lives near his family (Barry 46). With “the consciousness of man” and “the body of a vermin”, Gregor threatens the well-being of all (Barry 46).

Barry contends that Gregor’s physical transformation symbolizes an inner

conflict that cannot express openly (46-47). As a traveling salesman, he seems like a guest in his own family and like a guest in a strange hotel, he gets into the habit of locking the door at night as does Kafka in his parent's apartment (Barry 47). He seems very satisfied with that habit of locking the door at night during travels and even at home (Barry 47). The locked door indicates that he is "an alien, an invading host or army" in his family (Barry 47). Meanwhile, it represents his desire to isolate himself from others or his fear to be disturbed. Although he serves as provider and host of his parents and sister for five years, he for a short time becomes a "ghost that haunts his family" (Barry 47). Mysteriously, Gregor is not a typical guest in terms of this word parasite—"one who eats the host's food but never returns any," for he does not eat up his family's provisions (Barry 47).

Leonard Moss regards Gregor's resolution through death as spiritual progression embodied by his constant allusion to doors (50). The open door may permit a person to contact another; the locked door may stop others from one's private place (Moss 50). Referring to the open or closed doors one hundred times, the story establishes a situation in which a character is separated from life and others cannot cross the wall of communicating, thereby producing misunderstanding and resentment (Moss51).

Part I presents his family's emotion from tolerance to antipathy (Moss51). A "warm" tap at Gregor's and his parents' bedrooms comes together with his mother's gentle voice conveying her concern about his son. Opposite the room, his sister seeks to reach her brother by closed door while the father at another door articulates his paradoxical voice (Moss51). That father assumes that his son grows lazy enough to take on his job supporting the family and selfishly, he is given a chance to catch his son's absence as he is approaching his son, knocking at the door "gently, yet with his fist" (Moss51). Due to his monstrous appearance, he initially refutes to

open the door and instead thanks himself for having the habit of locking the door during the travels and even at home (Moss51). Anxieties occupies his mind so much that he cannot leave his bed but later realizes that he must ask for assistance from two “strong men” such as his father and the servant girl (Moss51). The entrance of his superior, the chief clerk, impels Gregor to reenter the family area and resume his position in the world (Moss51-52). He, however, has stayed at home in the previous eight days and refused to unlock the door and continuously felt shame at his own repulsiveness instead of anger at the clerk’s contempt (Moss 52). Before he willingly opens the door, his father sends a doctor and a locksmith to help him but he decides to open it by himself (Moss 52). Ironically, the person who encourages Gregor to turn the key is his clerk, another outsider, not his family (Moss 52). The door of his bedroom opened, Gregor not immediately enters the living room, a public space at home but instead leans against the inside of the door looking out “his bedroom window and through the open hall and front doors;” however, neither a window nor an outside door offers him an exit from the confrontation (Moss 52). After his transformation, his sister becomes his intimate ally to help him handle everything for a short time but his father misunderstands him and drives him back to his bedroom (Moss 53). Part II exhibits the transition from his family tentative tolerance to aversion when Gregor twice is driven into his room for fatally wounded by his father who does not accept despised vermin as his son (Moss 53). The hope of Gregor’s re-entering his family diminishes but he is allowed to exist and eavesdrops what his family talk about through the unlocked door (Moss 53). He occasionally looks out the window as if the window gave him a sense of freedom but soon he “curtails this pastime” (Moss53).

Martin Greenberg argues that the picture in the little frame shows a woman in

furs stretching out to the spectator a huge fur muff into which her forearm vanishes; the picture is the second object at which Gregor gazes when he searches his room on waking (Greenberg 64). Later, when his sister and mother remove the furniture out of his room, he defends his “human past” through stepping onto this picture and pressing himself to the glass (Greenberg 64). James M. Mcglathery states that the woman signifies what American soldiers in World War II are to call a pin-up, a beloved dream in which one has no hope of meeting, much less marrying the girl and that the function of the picture is to maintain his self-delusion (127-28). Most critics tends to interpret the woman in fur as sexual desire, which I agree on, for young adult man Gregor constantly concentrates on his job for at least 5 years and loses chances to develop his needs: emotional support, sexual satisfaction, firm friendship, and social activities.

His father’s business failure five years ago leads to his son’s rising to power in his family, threatening his father’s position. This situation reverses until Gregor’s metamorphosis. Before that, his father remains a parasite, one of the losers by which the winner Gregor is gradually and financially exploited; after that, Gregor becomes that parasite, the loser by which the winners his father, his sister and his mother are spiritually exploited. Now it is the father, not Gregor, who needs to get up at six to go to work; it is Grete his sister (or Meg), not his mother, who looks after Gregor.

Kimberly Sparks proposes that the conditions of Gregor are paralleled with those of the three lodgers. The three lodgers occupy the seats at dinner table Gregor, his father, and his mother use to take (Sparks 98). When the three lodgers are seated, the mother and sister are busily bringing the food to them for testing.

The food steamed with a thick vapor. The lodgers bent over the food set

before them as if to “scrutinize” it before eating, in fact the man in the middle, who seemed to pass for an authority with the other two, cut a piece of meat as it lay on the dish, obviously to discover if it were tender or should be sent back to the kitchen. (Sparks 98)

The word “scrutinize” reveals the lodgers’s seeking to examine the food and exhibits their fastidious habit, this fastidious behavior paralleled with that of Gregor as a beetle (Sparks 98). Anyone who is seated at the head of table has the power to read the newspaper, which serves as a ceremonial object (Sparks 99). Before Gregor’s metamorphosis, he used to sit at the table reading the newspaper; his father used to reading the newspaper aloud to his wife and sometimes to Grete. Now the reading of the newspaper grows the rights of the lodgers:

The lodgers had already finished their supper, the one in the middle had brought out a newspaper and given the other two a page apiece, now they were leaning back at ease reading and smoking. (Spark 99)

Reading, together with dispensing, the newspaper remains a sign of authority (Spark 99). I, however, regard reading the newspaper not as an emblem of authority, but as a window on the world. Anyone reads the newspaper for absorbing new information and understanding what has happens recently in the society. Besides, the music displeases the lodger as did Gregor as a human being. Realizing that an insect lives in their house, the lodgers claim that they do not pay a penny during their stay in here; in contrast, even knowing his family’s real financial condition, Gregor willingly brings money back home.

## B. Disorder and the Dysfunctional Family

Moss asserts that ethically and psychologically, Gregor puts his life energies into a familial arena and he supports his family by working (56). Shouldering his father's duty measures the extent of his manliness; protecting his mother and sister measures the extent of his gentleness (Moss 56).

Moss also argues that Gregor's losing concern for others accompanies his losing concern for himself; he gradually grows indifference to everything except for his sister's violin playing which inspires his cravings for unknown nourishments (55). I contend that as a salesperson, Gregor has so little time to take care of himself and after the transformation, he instead increases time to get wrapped up in his family, though not contact directly, and in his pastime. His cravings for music, however, lead him to forget about his monstrous appearance, not indicating that he abandons taking care of himself.

Greenberg suggests that concealment, mistrust and denial feature the Samsa family (65). As Gregor listens at his bedroom door, he is surprised to hear that his father has saved some money from his failed business before and he never thinks that his father saves money more than he expects (Greenberg 65). The sum is constantly accumulated by his father from the residue of Gregor's earnings; however, Gregor keeps only a few dollars for himself (Greenberg 66). Gregor's generosity is contrasted with his father's selfishness. He swallows the rage at the evidence of the needlessness of his self-sacrifice, always concealing his real feelings. His parents take his sacrifice for granted, believing he settles down in this firm (Greenberg 66). Gregor, nevertheless, seems to cooperate with them to deny himself when his parents show that he does not need to sacrifice after his metamorphosis and thereby deception



and self-deception, denial and self-denial horribly end (Greenberg 66).

After Gregor's transformation, his father gains his dignity while his son loses it (Moss 53). His father greatly changes from a feeble, aging dependent to a family leader in blue uniform (Moss 53-54). His father joins with his wife to compel Gregor back to his room. After hurling apples at Gregor, the father says "family duty required the suppression of disgust and the exercise of patience, nothing but patience," but ironically their patience remains few months.

One of the decisive figures in the family for Gregor is his father, a combination of strength and weakness. His father is powerful and petulant, whose shoe soles seems titanic to his son at an angle of an insect due to many things in the story seen from Gregor's point of view (Greenberg 66). His father's strength is ordinary but is temporarily dimmed by his business failure and his son's "unnatural" ascendancy as a breadwinner (Greenberg 66). No battle between Gregor and his father because Gregor is small enough to risk his life to stand up to him. Something unnatural in the family corrects itself: Gregor's unnaturally ascending to a breadwinner is replaced by Gregor's unnaturally transforming into an insect (Greenberg 66). I contend that the event only corrects who possesses the power. Gregor may have been neglected and belittled by his father before he willingly pays off the debts. When Gregor knows his parents' financial crises, he willingly comes forward to bear the debts and besides, he grows a young adult and needs a job while his father grows old and fails in business. I disagree that Gregor's ascending to a breadwinner is unnatural and unusual. Any young adult son can support the family to pay off the debts and to become a breadwinner. Most unnaturally, the father knows sufficient money to pay off the debts quickly but still has his son work unpleasantly for that company. Gregor's metamorphosis is caused by his long-term exhausting traveling job, no

comfortable quilt to cover, no delicious, nutrient food to eat, no friendly and intimate individuals to touch. Gregor's considerateness is contrasted with the family's relatively coldness and utilitarianism.

As the son's life declines, the family revives, specifically the father, a "blustering, energetic, and ridiculous" man—a regular Kafka papa (Greenberg 67). Gregor's father at the beginning of the story brutally deals with his son: "from the very first day of his new life...his father believed only the severest measures suitable for dealing with him," and indeed, the father coerces his life: he shoos Gregor back to his room with a fatal blow the first time; since then he wounds Gregor the second time, Gregor never recuperates (Greenberg 67). Greenberg argues that Gregor's exclusion from the human circle is not punished by his father (67). The father does not confront his son as the lord and judge of his life; he stands by the wife and his daughter to affirm the judgment on Gregor that he is "unfit for life," this judgment not from the father, but from Gregor (Greenberg 67). Before the metamorphosis, he remains locked in his room or his hotel room and seldom communicates with his family or travelers (Greenberg 67). In other words, Gregor locks himself to express his unfit for the real life and his father merely substantiates his idea. If the milieu remains comfortable, almost anyone can adapt it but if it remains uncomfortable, almost anyone can hardly adapt it. His father does not travel for business so he should not say that and if he were in Gregor's shoes, he would not say that. Gregor indeed cannot adjust himself to the milieu, nor can anyone, for the big milieu worsens and the order of world is tweaked into capitalist's views. Capitalism incorporates the value of the existence of the person into a hierarchical company and a person exists for an organization. The family is the smallest unit in a society and a member (Gregor) of the family works for the entire family but the other members exploit the

worker's efforts just as Marxists says that other members (employers) exploit the worker's (employee) efforts.

His mother stands by his husband against his son after the metamorphosis. Although she pities his unfortunate son, she no longer sees him personally and usually hears about him from hearsay by her daughter Grete (Meg). She understands his plight as illness, and sends the daughter for the doctor while his husband sends the maid for locksmith but she is overwhelmed by Gregor's horror. While Grete and her mother are removing the furniture, Mrs. Samsa decides not to remove her son's familiar furniture or that looks as if they gave up a ray of hope that Gregor will turn out to be better. If the communication of family stems from hearsay, not direct contact, the function of family may seriously fail. Gregor is not Frankenstein's monster, not an android, or a ghost; he is a beetle insect. Ordinary parents do not fear an insect like that and even if this insect is their son, they should not be afraid of seeing him directly. Is it possible that his family sympathizes with him so much that they cannot bear seeing him suffering? No. Maybe those who live not very well in spirit or in material cannot condone and sympathize with others who suffer but instead strive to get rid of any troubles. If their parents love Gregor so, then when Gregor becomes an ugly insect, they willingly take care of and accompany him to the last moment of his life. Even if an insect attacks on a human being, a human being can easily beat and kill it and being stung is the maximum damage. Unless their family owes Gregor so much, they would not be scared half to death just as they see a ghost of Gregor to avenge himself. They feel so guilty for Gregor that their parents avoid the sight of him. They even justify their behavior by saying Gregor is lazy to help themselves eliminate all the guilt. Gregor has ever complained of his parent's neglecting him but he grows used to living in his dirty room and enjoys himself.

When Grete proposes Gregor be got rid of, the mother acquiesces in her daughter's decision. Gregor is still consumed with love and forgiveness for his family and does what his family wants him to do—kill himself. Maybe Gregor has been sick for so long that he cannot observe that his family does not care so much about him and love him any longer. His sister's attitude toward Gregor remains dramatic: Grete takes care of him and gradually loses sight of him and finally expects Gregor to die. Gregor at last still hopes that he can accumulate sufficient money to send Grete to study music. Maybe he loves this position—a position that can offer others money and that also can give Gregor glory and dignity and when he cannot be that role, he comes to terms with his fate.

Although her old brother Gregor cherishes his sister, she gradually reveals her attitude toward her brother. After her brother's metamorphosis, Grete grows aware of his needs; Gregor gratifies her. He, however, notices that she avoids anything he touches and realized how much hatefully she catches sight of him.

As soon as she had stepped over the threshold, and without even pausing to shut the door, for all her usual concern to spare everyone the sight of Gregory's room, she ran straight to the window, tore it open with fumbling hands as if she were on the point of suffocating, and stood by it for a while, no matter how cold the weather, taking deep breaths. (J. A. 1982)

She hates staying in the Gregor's room for so long, and fears she will be contaminated by Gregor's illness. In essence, she is not so much afraid of others' seeing Gregor as afraid of being infected by Gregor. At length, she articulates her thought about Gregor; in contrast, when Gregor becomes an insect, she remains unexpressive. She

states that “if this were Gregor, he would have realized long ago that human being can’t live with such a creature...” (Greenberg 72). First, Grete still knows that Gregor remains considerate and by no means lets his family get into trouble and that now insect Gregor becomes a big burden of family so that insect is not her brother Gregor. Grete uses this approach to persuade herself and her father to believe it. She says human cannot live with creature but as far as I am concerned, human can live with pet, a small creature. Humans usually raise pets for fear of lonely or for guarding their home. The Samsas, swamped with work, tend to judge objects and persons pragmatically and when objects and persons are useful, they keep them or else abandon them. That may reflect the reality in society, specifically in a capitalist-dominated society where the majority decides the minority’s fate. The Samsas family seems to lack profound affections; when Gregor risks his life to work outside, they may take it for granted; when Gregor have long stayed in bad milieu and grown sick, they totally abandon him and even kick him wounded; when Gregor commits suicide, they do not feel dismayed but instead feel happier than before.

The servant keeps the kitchen door locked and even Grete slams the door shut (Moss 53). As soon as the door of Gregor is opened, Gregor must disappear at once to live up to their expectations (Moss 53). They are seized with fear of seeing ugly Gregor. The servant, however, is braver than the relatives of Gregor; she friendly treats Gregor. She is either a wise woman or an insensitive woman. After the tough old charwoman spares the Samsas of the trouble of getting rid of the insect, they unreasonably fire her as a reward. Ironically, why have the family not seen Gregor until he dies? To make sure that Gregor authentically dies, the one by whom the family is distracted. Their crying seems pretentious. Most unreasonably, the condemnation for his family turns into that for Gregor himself. For his family, it is

Gregor who cause the family catastrophic.

In failure, his father leaves his family to a world where “the exploitation of man by man holds infernal sway,” the world dominated by the principles of capitalist economics. In this world, the family stops to be a family in the original and ideal sense of community where the bonds of blood and natural affection prevail. In the medieval ages, the birth decides on who you are and the status cannot change all in life; in the 18th century, the birth no longer evaluates who you are although the status cannot change. Rising in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, bourgeois can buy the power. In other words, having power no longer relies on the bonds of aristocratic blood; having power relies on money. After Gregor’s stopping earning money, his father who is accumulating a small amount of money cannot live on its interest and original bourgeois life comes to the stop. The family’s proletarianization reaches its nadir when the deciding power of the Samsas is handled by three lodgers (Sokol 82). The world will follow the principle that by paying power, the three lodgers displace the natural, traditional head such as Gregor’s father (Sokol 82). I agree on Sokel’s statement that Kafka’s plots conform to Marx’s observation of the historic change from blood kinship to money as the deciding elements of human relationship and that “The Metamorphosis” exhibits how the basis of power slips from blood, age, sex to money which let the unrelated strangers dominate Gregor’s family, forfeiting its autonomy (82). The elder Samsa, however, reasserts his domestic authority by evicting the three lodgers having power over his family. Initially, the family plans to move into a relatively small house for reducing the expenses but since they cannot deal with Gregor’s affair, they decide to lease one of several rooms in their house for earning money to deal with the expenses of their current relatively big house. Until Gregor’s death, Gregor’s father immediately recovers his authoritative voice to evict

the three lodgers, for they can realized their dream—moving into a small house to live in.

Alexander Taylor contends that the father's wearing his bank messenger's uniform at home indicates the dehumanized world, and that uniform's looking dirty symbolizes that the world of order brought home by the father devastates the possibility of true human love (132). He explains that Gregor longs to establish I-thou relationships in a world of I-it or I-she or I-he relationship (132). I-thou relationship represents true human affection; I-it reveals that I uses the person or object as a tool to reach my goals (Taylor 132). The people around Gregor experience no warm love and no authentic communication but view one another as objects, useful or used (Taylor 132). Because his father intends to hide amounts of money not to pay off the debts, but has Gregor work to pay back, Gregor's relationship to his family prior to the metamorphosis remains an I-it relationship (Taylor 133). Ironically, his unconscious desire to be his self demolishes his relationship to his mother and sister (Taylor 133). Gregor's metamorphosis yearns for freedom and escapes from the established order he does not belong to (Taylor 133). The beetle represents his revolt; however, the world of order cannot endure the "monstrosity" (Taylor 133).

### **C. Psychology from Kafka to Gregor**

Jean Jofen suggests that the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious interpret "The Metamorphosis" (105). The conscious includes the relationship of Kafka to his father and to his family as well as his attitude to political, social, and religious issues; the preconscious consist of "the fear of an upcoming illness and

eventual death from tuberculosis;” the unconscious portrays the unconscious desires stemming from Kafka’s deep love for his mother (or sister), with the sequent fear of and hatred of the father (Jofen 105-06). The relation of Kafka to his father is emblemized by the cruel executioner in “The Penal Colony” (Jofen 106). Kafka’s father wears the uniform even when sleeping; the father figure in Kafka’s work exhibits a shocking double face: “a mixture of authority, power and dignity on the one hand and senility, weakness and absurdity on the other hand” (Jofen 106). Jofen argues that in Kafka’s work, he charges his father with complete neglect of the child as I put it in an analysis of “The Metamorphosis” (106). The authoritarian figure (the chief clerk) in “The Metamorphosis” is hard of hearing and neither the father nor anyone else can understand what Gregor is saying (Jofen 106). The father hurries him away not with words but with a hissing sound (Jofen 106). To gain recognition, the son feels that he needs to perform superhuman feats (“The Hunger Artist, The Trapeze Artist”) but these gain him no recognition in essence (Jofen 106). In an attempt to gain his father’s approval in real life, Kafka starts working the day after he finishes the internship as lawyer and on his first job, he needs to work 8-10 hours daily, which allows him no time to write (Jofen 106). If a son refers to a father as powerful, he must view himself as relatively small in relation to him (Jofen 106). Gregor Samsa in “The Metamorphosis” considers himself not bigger than a mouse Josephine in “Josephine and the Mice Folk” Kafka identifies with (Jofen 107). A mouse loves cheese; Gregor as a beetle refuses the milk and loves cheese best (Jofen 107). Gregor shows himself “always when the father is present (Jofen 107). He inconveniences the family by scaring away the cook and appears before the chief clerk and before the lodgers (Jofen 107). Jofen states that Gregor’s small size makes him powerless (107). His small size, however, cannot scare away his father but can



scare away other individuals, including authoritarian figures such as the chief clerk and the lodgers. Paradoxically, though he is small, his monstrous countenance can scare away other persons. In other words, Gregor fears his father most and similarly, Kafka fears his father most so that the son will enlarge the image of his father, like a shadow the son cannot get rid of. Powerless son, thus, is contrasted with powerful father.

Jofen holds that if the all-powerful father is translated into a political side of fighting the “Establishment,” Kafka by his works criticizes the capitalistic system (107). If Gregor were to come late, he would immediately lose his job, this idea almost by intuition of the employee, and if the employee delays even an hour, the employee (Gregor) only thinks of being accused of feigning ill.

The preconscious thought is Kafka’s fear of growing sick and dying of tuberculosis (Jofen 108). Kafka contracts tuberculosis in 1921 and that “Metamorphosis” is written in 1913 (Jofen 108). Jofen states that Gregor directly charges his father with causing his sickness due to supporting the family (108). The other conscious symbol of sickness is the hospital: Gregor’s rejection to have the furniture removed registers that he refuses to turn his room into a hospital room (Jofen 109). Kafka writes in the letter of July 1922 to Max Brod his closed friend: “This causes a terrible fear of death, which must not necessarily express itself as fear of death but can also appear as fear of any change” (Jofen 109). Gregor’s family constantly reveals the fear of contamination of tuberculosis: as the sister enters his room, she always opens the window first; she gives Gregor an exclusive bowl and deals with the food Gregor leaves with a broom; when he dies, the housekeeper uses a stick to push his body (Jofen 109). The animal has an armor-plated back and its cough does not sound like human’s and it is hard of breathing, all this the symptoms

of tuberculosis (Jofen 109). Jofen infers that Gregor's crawling to the ceiling for the eagerness to breathe easier and gain purer air and that Gregor's illness is later on diagnosed (109). The three lodgers represent the Jewish doctors who diagnose Gregor and who are amused by him (Jofen 109).

On the level of the unconscious, in his life, Kafka falls in love with the forbidden: Milena (a married woman and not Jewish) and a Swiss girl (also not Jewish) (Jofen 111).

Some critics connect the apple thrown by the father with the forbidden fruit—the apple in Paradise signifying the forbidden (Jofen 111). In Kafka's Parables and Paradoxes, he tells of "Paradise":

We were fashioned to live in Paradise, and Paradise was destined to serve us [...]. We were expelled from Paradise, but Paradise was not destroyed. In a sense our expulsion from Paradise was a stroke of luck, for had we not been expelled, Paradise would have had to be destroyed. (Jofen 111)

When we regard Paradise as The Mother, Gregor's longing to re-enter Paradise establishes the Oedipus complex.

James M. McGlathery cites Sokel's remarks that "in Gregor's case the love relationship with women is primarily a weapon in the hero's struggle with the man in authority (126). He contends that when Samsa S. fails in business, Gregor's sexual rivalry with the father causes Gregor to actively bear the role of provider and that the family materially relies on him; Gregor emotionally on the family (McGlathery 127).

#### **D. Impossible Dream of Freedom**

Barry mentions that Kafka is so much attracted to Schopenhauer's The World as

Will and Idea, in which art and music are major concepts: music is the perfect art form because it imitates the will (47). That indicates music is the most directly expressing approach beyond language. Music inspires not only Gregor's desire for unknown nourishment but just his erotic phantasy with his sister, whom he wants to lock away in his room (Barry 48). The parasite intends to merge with its host in the sexualized act and in doing so, devastate itself: Gregor thus presents the erotic death like a vampire parasite when he fancies he kisses his sister Grete on the neck as if attempting to unite (Barry 48). He deprives his family not of money and food, but of the blood of their psychic-erotic energy (Barry 48). Women are the major hosts in Kafka's stories; Grete plays a host role and refuses Gregor to stay in the family (Barry 48). Gregor initially longs to search for erotic union with his mother, but fails and later seeks his sister and still fails (Barry 48). I argue that Gregor longs for music and family love, but his family does not love him so much. I disagree that Gregor is like a vampire parasite as Barry put it. He unintentionally depletes his family members' energy in psyche and he does not diminish their strength because they are exhausted by their work, not by him. Besides, the idea of his erotic union with his sister does not destroy the host Grete and the parasite Gregor himself. He just fancies his sister saves him just like the princes in the fairytales can be saved by the princesses but unluckily he cannot find a princess willingly to save him just as the hope is not prepared for him, but anyone else. Barry contends that the parasite-host relationship is that of power and struggle as the host organism seeks to refuse the invader sometimes in success and sometimes not (49). I contend that parasite-host relationship is related to life and death of host and parasite so that they struggle between each other. Gregor, however, is a family member who loves his family more than himself, not a parasite nor an invader who intends to engage in sabotage.

When his family gets into trouble, he willingly bears his family's pains and sacrifices himself for his family and when he long suffers in an uncomfortable milieu and even gets sick, nobody in the family willingly waits for him too long and even tends to abandon him. When the host becomes the parasite and the original parasites becomes current hosts, the event that the original parasites are brutal to original host indicate people are dehumanized or people cannot offer reward to the benefactor and morality is depraved. Barry argues that Gregor's father/host battles with his son/parasite besides the battle of Gregor with his sister in "The Metamorphosis" (49). The father and the chief clerk represent the forces of the body/society that encounters the alien interloper and the sickness (Barry 49). When Gregor as an insect whose jaws are snapping, approaches his mother, his father protects the other members from the diseased son (Barry 49).

Kafka utilizes the Romantic idea that music conveys the inexpressible, which touches a hidden sphere of spiritual power and meaning (Greenberg 70). Curiously, Gregor as human does not appreciate music; Gregor as insect appreciates music. Gregor understands the wellbeing of being an insect: he asks himself "Am I less sensitive now?" after surprised with his recuperative power as a bug (Greenberg 71). These remarks indicate that when you are a lower creature, your ability of recovery is higher and implies that he reproaches himself for less concern for others. "Could he really be an animal, if music affected him so deeply?" the narrator says but music is not associated with bestiality (Greenberg 71). "His metamorphosis is a path to the spiritual instead of the bestial;" the violin note that touches him establishes a way by his death to the salvation that he blindly longs for (Greenberg 71).

Norman Friedman states that the need for family love and its dangers are of critical significance (116). Kafka believes in love and simultaneously in freedom

from love (Friedman 117). The Samsas take in the lodgers for increasing money, but the presence of this “monster” remains a cause of discomfort and despair so that his sister at last declaims to get rid of the beetle constantly spoiling their lives (Friedman 118). The family has been Gregor’s parasite; he becomes theirs: the dependent one grows weak while the independent strong one gets stuck in his responsibilities toward the weak one (Friedman 119). Before his change, Gregor loses his own normal life; his growth is as blocked as theirs (Friedman 119). After his change, he grows dependent; the family hopelessly takes care of him (Friedman 119). Love is provisional and when a person grows so excessively dependent on the love of another, he or she curbs the other’s growth and himself or herself (Friedman 119). As the Samsas are parasites, they cannot exercise their capacities; as Gregor is a parasite, he grows less than himself (Friedman 119). Through this involuntary exchange of roles, Gregor redeems them (Friedman 119). I want to supplement this statement that Gregor as a parasite grows losing himself (his past self). At the same time, he is transformed into a small animal so that his behavior is gradually like an animal’s. He is long suppressed so much that an infant-like beetle can release inner self suppressed for a long time and thereby the self presented differs completely from the self before his metamorphosis.

Friedman explains that someone disapprovals of you, causing you inadequate usually on conditions that you want his approval and care about his opinion, this wanting and caring driven by your fear of him or love for him or a mixture of both (122). When he has power over you, you feel fearful; when he shows his tenderness to you, you feel beloved, this situation usually occurring in the parent-child relationship (Friedman 122). Kafka’s love-fear relation to his father comes as no surprise to me, but Gregor family’s relation to Gregor comes as a surprise to me—a

dysfunctional family. If you did not care about his approval, you would not feel he takes responsibility when you find you a failure (Friedman 122). Because of love your whole emotional life remains attached to him and because of love the failure or frustration permits you to hold him responsible in the first place (Friedman 122).

The dependent love may prevent you from growing so that you must keep away from this love for becoming yourself (Friedman 122). Friedman states that in seeing their family as parasites, Gregor decides to exchange roles to help them grow and that once they do not regard that insect as their son and brother, Gregor's family thus stops caring about Gregor and begins to grow and prosper for themselves (123). Friedman says that Gregor is afraid of his family to be lazy so that Gregor voluntarily becomes a parasite to save his family, but I render this idea too ridiculous. Gregor's metamorphosis is forced by exterior milieu and accumulated by long sufferings; he grows sick and exhausted. His body affects his mind; his mind his body.

I hold that Gregor's family does not love Gregor so much and after the metamorphosis, Gregor gradually loses "the power" or "influence" over them. Initially, his sister takes a variety of food for Gregor to select but later on she feels exhausted and leaves no food for him but dust. Does the family care about the feeling of Gregor? Never. When the clerk visits Gregor's home, Gregor is locked lying in his room in the morning while his parents are concerned about whether his absence causes troubles and when they know Gregor cannot work, the father begins to push Gregor back violently. The father's emotion does not stem from loving Gregor, but from raging at him. He accuses Gregor of torpor but he does not consider Gregor's body's condition and ironically he deceives Gregor about family financial condition. If he loves Gregor, he will not let Gregor continue to work for debts even if he is already ill. Gregor's love for his family indeed curbs both their growth and

his but he is more human than his family anyone else. Cruelly, the family hopes that the son can die earlier and instead hopes that they can take care of the remaining life of Gregor until he dies. Besides, Friedman argues that the parasite, dependent, can rebel when the host it is feeding on begins feeding on it (123). I agree with that: Gregor's father rebels against Gregor as a parasite. Maybe that is a psychological mindset: someone at the beginning helps you but at the end stops helping and you are instead angrier at him/her than at the beginning not helping you.

There is hope for Gregor but paying off half of the debts, he already feels exhausted and very ill and approaches his death. The plot resembles that in "Before the Law." The protagonists' hopeless quest for freedom ends the story. The man from the country waits for permission but when he grows old, the doorkeeper instead closes the door. He never reaches the law he longs for just as Gregor never reaches his goal—the job he likes, the warm family love, the intimate friendship. When we who pursue our desire have obtained nothing, we will become unhappy and anxious, and suffer so much and when we acquire that, we can grow satisfied and happy. Even if we do our best all in the life to pursuing such wellbeing, we may readily feel frustrated because the wellbeing never comes to us just as Godot never comes to Gogo and Didi. All these reflect imperfection and dissatisfaction in life.

## Chapter 4: Imprisonment, Transformation and the Hopelessness of Escape in “The Hunger Artist”

### A. Self-imprisonment and the Art of Fasting

Gablik proposes that with the age of time, the function of art is transforming. The art in the past partakes of religion, morality, and society but modern art partakes of self-discovery, private activities, and commercials. Thinking patterns of the arts are based on consumption and so the art is measured by popular or non-popular. Besides, operating methods of the arts are based on hierarchy or bureaucratization along with advertisement and propaganda. Once adapting this way, the impresario and the artist both win and succeed just as the impresario and the hunger artist this pair do. Marx, however, holds that the supreme value of a work of art is determined in social, moral, religious aspects, which match the traditional art's function and feature and which reverse the modern art's features. The art gradually changes with the lifestyle of the inhabitants on earth. In capitalist-dominated society, the arts equal commodities, which exchange money, prestige, and power. Marx, nonetheless, objects that humans become commodities and are deprived of the right of a human being. Producing the products, the laborer alienates himself from his products because when the consumer buys the product, the manufacturer exploits some part of profits from the laborer whom the profit originally belongs to in an agriculture-based society. The impresario therefore exploits the hunger artist's profits, and he just speaks for the hunger artist, and does nothing, but the hunger artist needs to run out his energy to fast. The impresario becomes a necessary evil in the field of art. The artist who obeys this principle can gain temporarily reputation but when the show is fading, he loses the reputation and sinks into depression. Gablik say that if artists do not hire the impresarios, they will be



blamed by the audience but if do so, they will not. The description corresponds to the situation of the hunger artist.

Elizabeth Boa contends that both “First Sorrow” and “The Hunger Artist” have the impresarios different from the performers: in “First Sorrow,” the airborne trapeze artist takes interested only in his art while the impresario takes care of the artist’s lowly necessities and similarly in “The Hunger Artist,” the hunger artist’s success is attributed to the presentational skills of his impresario and when the show is fading, the impresario begins to depart (165). The impresario’s contribution to producing performances perceptible to public is pivotal (Boa 165). The impresario’s “smells of” what will be effective to get the message across but fails to express the artist’s major intentions, unclear so that in the lack of the impresario’s instruction, this performance loses its meaning and the artist grows isolated and inadequate (Boa 165). Boa cites Naomi Ritter’s remarks in Art as Spectacle that the circus has two sides: the human freak show through exaggeration presents human’s imprisonment in the flesh, permitting ordinary people to abate the anxiety and to affirm their own normality by laughing at the abnormal; in contrast, the surging ambition of acrobats, trapeze artists to transcend the human limitations agitates the wonder of ordinary people (Boa 165). “First Sorrow” classifies consciousness of human imitation yet ambition to transcendence as the impresario and the trapeze artist, the two as alter egos whereas “The Hunger Artist” divides the embodiment of expressive core and the rhetorical skills of persuading people to appreciate a piece of art (performance) between the hunger artist and the impresario (Boa 166-67). The impresario sets forty days the longest time for the artist to fast and the hunger strike is presented as an ordeal and when the artist stops fasting, his being served to eat a meal is climatic (Boa 167). This climax, however, remains incompatible with what the artist’s dying to do and

convey—fasting, fasting, and fasting (Boa 167): this climax for the audience instead denies his art for the artist (Boa 168). The ritual meal implies completion or fulfillment; nevertheless, the artist lacks the fulfillment, ignoring what may be gratified and the whole ceremony seems a sham: the medium conveys the wrong message (Boa 168). The impresario departs; the hero fails in some way but he can “fulfill” his dream—to be hungry endlessly (Boa 168). The impresario sees the artist as money, not a talented person and he knows how to utilize the artist. Maybe you would say the artist needs to depend on the impresario to succeed. Both have the relation of demand and supply and the impresario does not take advantage of the artist only for himself. According to Marxism, the employer and employee also have the relation of demand and supply and because he does not use his products, the employee is alienated from his products and because he does not engage in production, the employer indirectly exploits profits belonging to the employee. The impresario does not embark on the process of fasting but like a host, he obtains the outcome the artist creates and exploits the expressive core of the artist. The artist creates the “product” of fasting and then eating but this show is consumed not by him, but by the audience so that the cognitions about fasting between the artist and the audience have a distance. Paradoxically, the hunger artist seeks to fulfill the hunger, to turns no communication into a mode of communication, to changes isolation into contact, to reach others by being seated in a cage, to measure the measurable, to make meaninglessness mean (Boa 172).

## **B. Transformation on the Side of the Audience and on the Side of the Artist**

Alienations refer to any form of discomfort in the relationship between

individual and society. According to Marx, alienation appears in a specific stage in the development of capitalism. A German interpreter Benno von Wiese contends that the hunger artist has a tragic flaw, for he is fruitlessly working for fame instead of for creating beauty (Steinhauer 31). Originally, the hunger artist is an independent artist, and often is blamed by the audience, and he decides to seek the impresario to manage his art, that is, the art and consumption are combined. The commercialized art prevails at the time and the individual artists grow well-known through the hierarchal management and when the fasting show is already faded, the impresario immediately departs and the artist also retires or does something to cater to the audience; only the hunger artist this protagonist is still determined to fast in the circus's cage, next to the animals'.

The hunger artist himself seeks the ideal figure as young ladies go dieting and young ladies who suffer Anorexia Nervosa are inclined to be social isolation and perfectionist. Anorexia Nervosa predominately impacts adolescent girl and young adult women, for they tend to go on strict diets to accomplish an ideal figure, which forms a force of societal pressure to be thin found in advertising and the media and thus thinness turns into one of the many professional requirements ("About Metal Illness"). People with anorexia nervosa always feel they look fat, their nails and hair brittle, their skin dry and yellow, their depression common. They develop strange eating habits: refusing to eat before others, or prepare exquisite meals for others that they do not eat, just like the hunger artist sees the talkers eating up his breakfast ("About Metal Illness"). In the worst case, they starve themselves to death, as the hunger artist does.

Ronald E. McFarland seeks to make comparisons between Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil," Kafka's "The Hunger Artist," and Marquez's "A Very Old

Man with Enormous Wings. He holds that the community and audience play pivotal roles in the stories, for near the end of the story the narrator describes the reactions of the audience or spectators (McFarland 552). First, the differentness of three persons leads to separate themselves from their communities: Mr. Hooper wears a veil for a guilty of suppressed sin or for a lesson provided with the community; the hunger artist executes his peculiar art out of inner compulsion or necessity and only if he does not find the food he likes, he'd rather do nothing else in his life; the old man who happens to have wings is isolated from the community by different eating habits (McFarland 553). Second, the three stories are not so much concerned with the anomalous protagonists as with how the public react to their differentness (McFarland 544). The community in "The Minister's Black Veil" contains the sexton, old people, bright-faced children, their parents, spruce bachelors, and pretty maidens and at the beginning, the sexton views the black-veiled parson with astonishment, and later on doubts with others and at last they altogether estrange the minister (McFarland 555). The minister and the hunger artist as well as the old man are put on display for different purposes. Mr. Hooper is regarded as a very efficient clergyman for dying sinners; the hunger artist turns an artifact or a museum piece signifying what the phenomenon means in earlier years; the winged old man is defined as a freak of nature to whom some people are attracted in hopes of miraculous cures. The community or the audience can find a temporary use from the three anomalous citizens (McFarland 556). The hunger artist's spectators, together with Hooper's congregation at Milford, have no authentic interest in the person and his art, but in "amusement," and when the fad vanishes, they ignore him ((McFarland 557). The way communities (spectators) handle social undesirables is to treat them as less than human and the first step in the process of dehumanizing is to place the hunger artist in

a cage next to the animal cages in the circus (McFarland 557). The spectators are divided into different behavior patterns: one group stops and stares only for self-assertiveness, whom the artist dislikes more than others, who make a beeline for the animals; the rare fathers stop to explain the phenomenon to their children whom the artist projects some hope on (McFarland 557). The community embraces the definition of a neighbor woman who knows all about life and death and who tells them the winged old man is an angel (McFarland 558). Although the humans admit that man is an angel (a higher creature), they coop him up in a pen with the chickens and toss crumbs of food to him as if he were a lower animal (McFarland 558). The congregation at Milford overreacts; the spectators in “The Hunger Artist” underreact; the community in “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” does both (McFarland 558). None of the communities, however, experiences any epiphany (McFarland 559).

### **C. Hopelessness of the Quest for Freedom and/or Truth**

Lorna Martens proposes that the ape in “A Report to an Academy” mistakes art for freedom; however, art provides the audience with an illusion and deceives others about the true nature and motivations of the artist (192). The ape persuades the audience to release it from the cage and proves he is no longer an ape (he is free); such a transformation of the natural self is a self-deception (Martens 192). The apes changes itself into a man through being permitted, his greatest accomplishment, and the man-ape changes himself into an artist through drinking, this transition from freedom to captivity occurring when he is drinking (Martens 193). Unable to seek the object of his desire, he turns himself into an object of desire, an artist and a work

of art at the same time (Martens 194). The ape deceives others about its natural self and in turn loses its own identity (Martens 194). Art might indicate existential freedom for the artist but the freedom may involve deception and self-deception (Martens 196). Man, however, may fear freedom and responsibility so often build the bars around them and hide themselves behind them (Martens 197). The hunger artist differs from the ape in that he is a purist artist so that no one believes his art is a work of art—his art is natural (Martens 197). Besides, the hunger artist lives in a cage and the ape gets out of the cage; the hunger artist's art fights a battle against time and to the extreme, causes the artist's death while the ape's art caters to the audience's need and succeeds (Martens 198). In his diary entry, Kafka relates artist's success with trickery; in "A Report to an Academy," the successful art is connected with deceiving; in "The Hunger Artist, the artist is doomed to fail (Martens 199). The ape's urges for freedom trigger its pursuit of art whereas the artist' art is a necessary practice for himself (Martens 199). Tragically, neither two, however, gain freedom during the performances.

Stephen Dunn contends that this artist acts as if being an artist is his only choice and in the cage, he pursues his art safely and that his ambitiousness causes his demise (24). The painter Cezanne will not go to his wife's funeral because he is working on a painting, or Rilke will not attend his daughter's wedding because he is writing a poem (Dunn 24). Greatness is their rewards (Dunn 24).

Everyone except the hunger artists seems to need the shelter of entertainment and distraction (Dunn 25). Maybe the society teems with various consumptions the public originally does not need and the audience is stimulated by media and advertising to consume possible entertainments. One after another is arranged by them to cater to the stomach of the prospective (consumer)—old out and new in.

The hunger artist is the one who creates an entertainment under the control of the impresario and also the one who persists in his art that lasts for a short time. That implies he fights against the form of modern entertainments and paradoxically, he participates in and resists the mode of capitalist consumption.

The hunger artist lives only behind the bar, for he cannot break out of his artistic world into real life and art limits his ability to live. Complete spirituality by no means exists but he insists on living almost spiritually, causing his death. Behind that single bar, he pursues his own freedom. Paradoxically, the hunger artist sits in the cage fasting to his content but he is subjected to a human, who needs the food to maintain physical energy and the freedom causes him to die.

Although the hunger artist is no relatives, his impresario and the night watchers such as butchers torment the hunger artist most. The impresario limits how long he can last so he cannot fulfill his dreams and grows unhappy. Although he does not show the ability to fast for over 40 days, he already gains most audience's admiration and appreciation. The impresario's decision on the length of fasting is based on the effects of advertisement, and the attention of the audience, not based on safety. Even if he can fast over 40 days, few tends to let him do it and at least in terms of safety. If he gives up life for such a performance, no audience will see such a show again. The butchers proclaim that the hunger artist must cheat everybody but when they have chances to approach and monitor the artist, they intentionally lose sight of him and say that the hunger artist must nourish something in secrecy and when the artist sings to protest against the butchers' accusation, the butchers still insist that the artist eats something secretly. Their wish thinking tortures and slanders the artist as the story put it:

They (watchers) made him miserable; they made his fast seem unendurable; sometimes he mastered his feebleness sufficiently to sing during their watch for as long as he could keep going, to show them how unjust their suspicions were. That was of little use; they only wondered at his cleverness in being able to fill his mouth even while singing. (Edwin 242)

Though no one can monitor his behavior all the time, people should believe in him before any evidence is presented to show he is a liar. The distrust is an issue of emotion. Finally the artist is defeated by the time, though. Confronting those frustrations and unfair treatment, he is dismayed but does not give up fasting. He insists that fasting give him a relief. When he sits in the cage pondering, he holds that he can gain freedom in body, but he later on regrets. Maybe it is better that he gives up fasting. Not sticking to something for so long or sticking to break the record seems to be better to him because ups and downs in the life remain commonplace. Humans need to maintain anti-memory and so in favorable circumstance, we are not proud of ourselves and in adversary circumstance, we can come to terms with adversity and do not complain.



## **Chapter 5: Comparison of the Two Stories and Further Discussion of Marxist Interpretation**

### **A. The Nature of the Self and the Other (Family, Audience) in the Two Stories**

Greenberg proposes that Gregor knows that the truth about his life is his death-in-life by his exclusion and self-exclusion from the human community (60). In other words, Gregor self-prisons himself in his room to separate himself from others and world; others regards him as a self-exiled person. He is destined to be outcast. Although he longs to approach his family and understands more about his family, his family slowly pushes him out of the family circle because he loses his ability of earning money. Greenberg contends that only when Gregor fully accepts his outcast status can he feel a hunger, which indicates Gregor starts to understand a positive possibility from the negativity of his outcast (69). When Gregor grows accustomed to a beetle's physical condition, he feels more relieved than when he is human. Greenberg states that as a despised outcast from the human world, Gregor feels the possibility of relief, of final relief (70). Only as an outcast does he perceives the possibility of a salvation (Greenberg 70).

Robert Stallman interprets "The Hunger Artist" as both a metaphysical allegory depicting modern man's spiritual disunity and a sociological allegory describing modern artist's dissociation from the world where he lives (117). He says that stepping out of his cage, the artist collapses in a rage, not from hunger, but from having been cheated of the honor of fasting (Stallman 118). The clock inside the cage no longer ticks but the unlocked life of the artist outlasts centuries and thus his survival of starvation transcends human endurance (Stallman 119). From the viewpoint of metaphysics, the two occupants (the human and the panther) of the cage, and the artist and his observers make contrasts (Stallman 120). The audience and

panther are delighted in the same food and nourished by the same sensations and appetites, differing from the hunger artist's attitude toward food (Stallman 120). The hunger artist is no flesh; his spectators are all-flesh (Stallman 120). The panther consumes flesh; the butcher-guards destroy flesh; the doctors cure flesh (Stallman 120). The panther thus complements the hunger artist and the hunger artist is an emulation panther (Stallman 120). Artists imitate life (nature): he sits in black like a panther, yet a deathly paleness suggests his true self (Stallman 120). Indeed, time means nothing to him so the clock is only a decoration. He prefers straw to a chair; he nods his head as if beckoning to outsiders; half-closing his eyes he stares farther as if intent on inward vision (Stallman 120). Ribs are protruding "powerfully" from him, the arm he thrusts through the bars presents not strength, but emaciation (Stallman 120). Although the hunger artist remains a part of the sensuous world of matter, he is all along segmented from it (Stallman 121). The hunger artist's true freedom inheres in the soul and even he, dying for the divine, does not free from the chains of the body but he embodies the man as spiritual being; in contrast, the animal and the human's freedom rests on the area of their teeth, that is, on their appetite and man as animal is never free (Stallman 121). The world of the story can be divided into the realm of faith, symbolized by the mystic-faster (religious, qualitative, spiritual) and of practical reason, symbolized by the panther and the people (quantitative, sensuous) and in his writings Kafka claims that "what we call the physical world is the evil in the spiritual one" (Stallman 121). James Burnham's "Observations on Kafka" presents a passage defining Kafka's metaphysics:

His world is split by the absolute Manichaeic division into Good and Evil, which is identified with the division between Light and Darkness, Spirit and

Matter.... As with all Manichaeans, the ambivalence remains: *he [Kafka] longs for matter, for the evil natural social world, at the same time that he denies it; he is appalled by Spirit even while he must seek it absolutely* [Italics Stallman's]. (Stallman 121)

The hunger artist stands for Kafka's doctrine that "There is only a spiritual world; the physical world we call is the evil in the spiritual one, the evil a necessary moment in our endless development" (Stallman 121). At length, society where the hunger artist lives prizes matter over spirit (Stallman 122). The public honors a real panther, not a fake one (the hunger artist); the hunger artist seeks absolute spirit and denies the evil natural social world which at the same time he longs for (Stallman 12). I agree that the society where the hunger artist lives values the matter over the spirit, especially after the fasting show is not in vogue, and the panther symbolizes beauty and health and becomes prevalent. In the medieval ages, the people believe in God and believe that everyone should return to Heaven so each focuses on spiritual things but in the science-dominated ages, God is subverted, and people focus less on spirit than on matter.

A person hardly reaches a state of pure spirituality and a synthesis of spirit and matter and the hunger artist as an agent of divine purity is an example of failure (Stallman 122). His emaciation results from lack of food and symbolizes the divine but his agitation like a wild animal deprives him of the divine (Stallman 122). His cage next to the stables serves as a reminder that although matter is totally evil (the evil odors from the stalls), the soul still needs the animal body (matter) and cannot separate from reality (Stallman 122). Dualism between spirit and matter by no means exists, for the mystic-faster is dead (Stallman 122).

In terms of sociology, the artist in the Renaissance and Middle Ages is glorified and honored by world but the artist in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century such as the hunger artist is exploited by the impresario who makes profits from the exhibition, is watched by butchers who misjudge the artist, is documented by the historians who record the creative acts (Stallman 124). Society crucifies the hunger artist over and over again by distrust and utter indifference; society and the artist disbelieve in each other and even the artist disbelieves in himself (Stallman 124). He grows distressed in denial of the realm of matter (Stallman 125). The clock in the cage defeats the artist and the artist denies time representing his present reality (Stallman 125). He confesses that the sovereignty of the soul is illusory, and if isolated from matter, the spirit is nothing so he compromises with his life and the reality (Stallman 125).

Anne Golomb Hoffman suggests that the activity of hungering implies some communicative value but both Gregor and the artist fail to achieve effective communication (50). Nevertheless, the leopard bridges the gap between desire and demand; unlike the hunger artist, it is an unreflecting beast which eats well; the continuum of leopard-food-spectator provides a communicative network (Hoffman 51). However, Mahatma Gandhi is highly acclaimed and usually hunger-striking turns into a routine in political struggles or wage negotiations in some western countries. The hunger strike demonstrates a revolt against the powerful authorities.

Neither the hunger artist nor Gregor is interested in food people like. Gregor, however, does not dislike the food as the hunger artist does. He is sick and lying in bed for so long he loses the appetite and on the brink of the death, he longs for spirituality (unknown nourishment) to return to the heaven. The hunger artist dislikes the food so much he performs the fasting to satisfy his inner needs and his vanity but at last he admits that he is dying to eat like everyone else. He symbolizes

a traditional artist in pursuit of something spiritual and religious, but he joins modern artists' procession for a short period of time for his wealth and fame and that is to say, he has ever crossed the border between the traditional artist and modern artist.

Although he participates in the modern art (a combination of art and money)(matter over spirit), he still hopes to maintain the tradition (spirit over matter), already a thing of past. He sticks to seek spirituality or create another big goal to accomplish to overcome his depression. Maybe his previous success leads him into another stage in his life and since he reaches his short-term goal (being admired by audience) and discovers the nothingness deep inside. He, therefore, feels tremble so much that he needs to set a big, and long-term goals (breaking historical records) to prevent him from falling into an abyss. Or he will directly confront the uncertainty, everyone can hardly face with. If he puts down the desire and gives up seeking, maybe he will approach toward his true self and put himself at ease.

## **B. The Nature of the Self-imprisonment, Transformation and the Hopeless Dream of Freedom in the Two Stories (Defrauding)**

Marx believes that under capitalism the governing principle of human life is mutual defrauding (Sokel 79). In Gregor's case, however, the Samsa family deceives Gregor, but Gregor seems not to deceive his family. His father has all along not told his son the financial situation after Gregor's working outside. He accumulates his son's salary to a modest capital and only after the transformation does Gregor have chances to discover the financial situation by eavesdropping his family's conversation.

The world shows that one can purchase enjoyment at the cost of the other (Sokel

79). Gregor's self-surrender to his work produces a twofold alienation: alienation from his work and from his family (Sokel 79). His rise to power in the family overshadows the other members and contributes to their alienation from him. Before his metamorphosis, however, Gregor and his family live coldly and incommunicatively (Sokel 80). Sokel contends that the metamorphosis reveals this alienation (the total dehumanization of man) which Marx regards as the ultimate fate of man under capitalism and that through the metamorphosis, Gregor no longer needs to pay back the debt (the Schuld) of his parents but instead incorporates it (80). That implies the disaster of the family changes from the debt (the object) to Gregor (person). Gregor's first reaction to the transformation is a guilty conscience: he misses the hour of the work and feels guilty for his family and attempts to hide himself (Sokel 80). His transformation presents parasitic exploitation and effectively forces family members to work (Sokel 80). Sokel argues that Gregor is an archetypal parasite, but I contend that he is not a typical parasite because Gregor does not destroy his family as a parasite does but instead commits suicide and corresponds to what his family wishes. Besides, family members work for themselves, not for Gregor and the money they earn does not enter the pocket of Gregor. Additionally, Gregor does not eat too much food, only the leftover food.

Paradoxically, what motivates the hunger artist to accomplish perfection in his art is his need, although he claims he can readily fast in the middle of the story, he confesses his art is fraud at the end of the story, for he cannot find the adequate food to eat. He is ever frustrated at the audience's lack of appreciation for a true form of his art and until he answers the riddle does his art become fraud. Generally, the public regards his art as fraud on the ground that the artist uses skill (an illusionary approach) to present the art and at that time no audience knows the hunger artist

dislikes eating.

The guards the public selects are usually butchers by trade, placed outside the cage in charge for monitoring the artist; however, they are not convinced of the artist's integrity, some of them insistently believing the artist's cheating and looking the other way (Steinhauer 33). Harry Steinhauer comes to the conclusion that, no matter what precautions are taken to ensure honest performance, suspicion is an integral part of hungering and always there. I hold that the hungering presents a man's willpower and although the media cannot track twenty four by seven, the artist should not be treated as a deceptive artist, for no one with sufficient evidence can substantiate he cheats the public. Steinhauer states that the more the artist insists fasting is easy, the more skeptical and cynical the audience turns (33). Steinhauer accounts for the artist's fraud as if a phenomenon in the psychology of religious experience: a naïve belief in the magical powers by the priests as representatives of god (38). Those guards, whose positions are paralleled with the priests, are "usually butchers or materialists, interested in meat and breakfasts and card playing," some of whom refuse to believe anyone can be holy, for they are not holy so no one can be holy (Steinhauer 38). It is these corrupt souls who lead the hunger artist to distress (Steinhauer 38).

Christ suffers for humanity; because of human distrust, the hunger artist suffers. He appears more Jewish-like than Christ-like, for the artist is marginalized and cast as the outsider in the society as Jews are.

Mitchell Breon suggests that The Hunger Artist's narrator furnishes a blend of journalistic essays and analytical observation, and keeps a distance from the protagonist (237). Most details correspond to the historical records of professional fasting for pay, from the onset of the strange occupation in 1880, down to 1922, when

Kafka writes this story (Breon 238). Daily newspapers report the detail of such fasts, with an emphasis on change of weight and mood in the faster and if no fraud is involved, the torture has some scientific value (Breon 238-39). Professional fasting grows a fad in the public's eye; a joke that happens to be in vogue in the narrator's eye (Breon 239). The taste of the public constantly changes and thus the fasting show dies out (Breon 239). This fasting performance we have the knowledge of stems from scientific studies at the time (Breon 239). Real professional fasting and the advent of the hunger artist take place in 1880 in America, where Dr. Henry Tanner, of New York City, bid to go forty days without food and his example soon inspires imitator in Europe, the most famous of whom is Giovanni Succi, possibly the model of Kafka's writing the hunger artist (Breon 239). Since no one can watch the artist continuously, the audience suspect whether the artist deceives them but Professor Luciani proposes that such fears and suspicions are unsubstantiated and that the measurement of urine and feces produced during the fast shows whether there is any nourishment inside the body (Breon 239). During the fast, Luciani reports that Succi is always in the good mood, talkative without being aggressive toward visitors; the narrator afterwards reports that the artist is impatient, talking to show he is not eating (Breon 239). Kafka's impresario attributes the artist's outbreaks to the weakness from lack of food; in essence, being coerced to stop fasting distresses the artist (Breon 242). The impresario intentionally manipulates the event by bringing out the photographs of the artist's exhaustingly lying in bed to prove that the artist cannot fast longer (Breon 248). However, the cage with its straw-covered floor is so much exaggerated: Suci in Florence remains in a large barrel while others are placed behind glass (Breon 245). Since the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century, lions and leopards are parts of animal training acts, therefore the powerful young panther is a usual sight and while



the horse dominates the 19 century circus, the greatest show on earth is involved with the animals such as elephants, monkeys, and the great cats (Breon 251).

News writings are professionally limited to time and creating a variety of untruthful coverage and seldom focus on why an event happens. The content of a newspaper contains statistic data, local information, real-time news, photograph and its analyses, and editorials (editor's opinions, reader's opinions). The impresario manipulates the content of the coverage, though, and he proactively reports something not real to the journalists and the journalists report the phenomena again and the audience finally receives what the journalists are saying. The hunger artist, for example, can last only 40 days on the average, the local citizens observe him before the cage, the artist stretches out his arm to show his thinness, the impresario shows photograph to reveal the artist is exhausted, and the butchers express their doubt and distrust and the audience believes more in the visual medium of photography than in what lies before its eyes and in other words, the static, recorded spectacle is more attractive and reliable than the live one.

Gregor's family deceives Gregor about the family's condition so Gregor cannot earlier retreat from that disturbing job to rest. Originally, Gregor chooses to support the family out of his free will but the family's hiding the truth disturbs Gregor's judgment and free will that he wrongly continues on working. On the other hand, whether the hunger artist deceives the audience? In his performance, he eats nothing at all and even though he is insensitive to food or dislikes the food, the fasting is true. The impresario hides something the hunger artist intends to express from the audience just for entertainment and the news reports or newspapers often create something fake and untruthful out of some pictures or scenes. The impresario persuades the audience to believe that the hunger artist strives to fast and is exhausted by fasting and

needs someone to rescue him to get out of the cage and that the fasting conveys the willpower so that I hold that the impresario deceives the audience and the hunger artist unwillingly corresponds to the impresario in order to survive. The butchers agitates the audience not to believe the hunger strike is real and the butchers represents the scientific spirit and skepticism to examine the fasting and when the fasting cannot be monitored twenty-four hours, everybody has the right not to be convinced of that. They are given chances to supervise the artist and do intentionally not look at the artist all the time so they lose the qualification of telling that the fasting is fake. They can suspect the words of impresario, but they cannot. Rather, they suspect the feat of the artist. All in all, Gregor and the hunger artist thus do not deceive the family and audience, in fact.

### **C. Similarities and Differences between the Two Stories with Regard to Marxist and Religious (e.g. Jewish and Christian) Interpretations**

The roach (or Dung-beetle) metaphor symbolizes Gregor's attitude, which may be considered parasitical, the image reflecting Gregor's insecurity and self-loathing in need of the emotional sustenance his family offers (Moss 56).

Nalini Natarajan argues that metamorphosis in fairy tales is connected to human powerlessness: witch's curses contribute to transform (137). Voluntary metamorphosis partakes of divine; lack of power over this process partakes of human (Natarajan 137).

Suzanne Wolkenfeld suggests that the emergence of Gregor's metamorphosis externalizes his miserable insect-like existence of being a commercial traveler and causes Gregor to regress into a previous state to avoid the burden of tedious

responsibility and the painfulness of the human situation as well as alienates him from others more completely (58). Wolkenfeld describes Gregor as a Christ-like figure (58). Gregor feels relieved when doing fretwork after work; he, a carpenter, shadows Christ (Wolkenfeld 59). On the Christmas day, he will announce his decision to send her to the Conservatorium to study music (Wolkenfeld 59). He is seen as a potential savior and as a seeker of salvation (Wolkenfeld 59). Gregor pinpoints the discrepancy between his spiritual yearnings and longings of people gratified with the stuff of this life when he watches the lodgers enjoying their dinner; "I am hungry enough but not for the kind of food," Gregor mutters sadly to himself (Wolkenfeld 59). The scene in which food and music is fused into an image of salvation intensifies Gregor's spiritual quest; however, his search for salvation fails (Wolkenfeld 59). The apple and dust represent man's fallen state; Gregor's magnanimity prefigures Christ's ushering in a new institution (Wolkenfeld 60). Gregor dies at the end of March at three o'clock, the time of the crucifixion; his last posture resembles that of Christ's death: "He bowed down his head and died" (Wolkenfeld 60). Gregor's insect-like figure undermines his resemblance to Christ: his state of "vacant and peaceful meditation" reveals not spiritual exaltation but the mindless vacuity of an animal and his dying posture presents mechanical instinct replacing human will (Wolkenfeld 60). Gregor dies at three A.M. while Christ dies at three P.M. (Wolkenfeld 60). No eclipse of the sun miraculously appears in his death, but the sun naturally rise (Wolkenfeld 60). Although Christ and Gregor undergo the metamorphosis, Christ's metamorphosis represents the possibility of transcendence for man whereas Gregor's refutes this possibility (Wolkenfeld 60). In his attempt for salvation, Gregor by no means rises upward to the divine but falls downward to an animal level, similar to the Hungry Artist's situation (Wolkenfeld 60).

Martin Greenberg contrasts Tolstoy's "Death of Ivan Ilyich" with Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." "As Ivan Ilyich struggles against the knowledge of his own death, so does Gregor Samsa" (63). Tolstoy's work is as to death literally; Kafka's work is as to death in life: Ivan Ilyich he refuses the knowledge of his dying and at last embraces the truth of his life equivalent to the truth of death and discovers spiritual light and life as he dies; Kafka's protagonist also struggles against the truth of life and death and Gregor's life is his death and there is no salvation (Greenberg 63). In Wolkenfeld's book, Gregor pursues salvation; in Greenberg's book, there is no salvation for Gregor. Gregor is attracted to his sister's violin playing as a symbol of unknown nourishment, which remains unknown (Greenberg 63).

What the truth of Gregor's life is his soul-destroying job, which keeps him on the move and from the possibility of human associations (Greenberg 63). His work is lonely and exhausting and even degrading. He does not wake up this morning after eight days of resting, and the chief clerk visits his apartment as quickly as he can to accuse him of neglect of his business duties (Greenberg 63). He peoples the guilty world: his missing the train this morning changes his excellent work record at one stroke (Greenberg 64). He has been sacrificing himself to work at his meaningless, degrading job just to pay off the debts of his parents' to his employer (Greenberg 64). His lying in bed after metamorphosis loses the chance of speaking for himself as to quitting the job (Greenberg 64). If a person such Gregor continuously postpones claiming his human self and gradually transforms himself into an animal as an insect (Greenberg 64). Gregor's humanity is defeated in his private life and in his working life (Greenberg 64). His mother depicts Gregor's boring life to the chief clerk:

He's not well, sir, believe me. What else would make him miss a train!

The boy thinks about nothing but his work. It makes me almost cross the way he never goes out in the evenings; he's been here the last eight days and has stayed at home every single evenings. He just sits there quietly at the table reading a newspaper or looking through railway timetables. The only amusement he gets is doing fretwork. For instance, he spent two or three evenings cutting out a little picture frame; you would be surprised to see how pretty it is; it's hanging in his room; you'll see it in a minute when Gregor opens the door. (Greenberg 64)

Usually, the employees take a rest after Christmas and in Gregor's case, he takes an eight-day rest on the working day. Gregor still cannot work after eight days of resting.

Gregor's work deprives him of creative urge and desire and descends him from human to animal, but ironically after his metamorphosis into a "real" beetle, he instead has abundant time to create and fancy. Before the metamorphosis, he is already estranged from himself and often locked in the room alone. In essence, he dislikes his work, but out of love he willingly embraces this work which torments him so much. He endures this job for five years on end, just for paying off the debts his parents owe. His locking the hotel room proves he dislikes his surrounding milieu and only in his room does he feel tentatively relieved and undisturbed.

Gregor's self-alienation matches Marx's definition of the externalization of work under capitalism:

His work is external to the worker, i.e., it does not form part of his essential

being so that instead of feeling well in his work, he feels unhappy, instead of developing his free physical and mental energy, he abuses his body and ruins his mind (Sokel 76).

Due to external need, Gregor works to support his family and loses the essence of human defined by Marx—creativity. In free evenings prior to his metamorphosis, he spends only a little time obsessed with fretwork, his only pastime. His labor does not correspond to his true desires and his salary or commission—does not reside in him and his torture does not assist his existence (Sokel 77). The money Gregor earns belongs to his father who remains a non-working benefiter and exploiter of Gregor's efforts and who enjoys and distributes the money of Gregor's work (Sokel 77). The relation of Gregor to his father thus represents a paradigm of Marx's defining the worker's exploitation by his capitalist employer (Sokel 77). The worker is already alienated from his or her product, for he or she has surrendered himself or herself to the capitalist, who retains the lion's share for himself and grants the worker the remaining petty money, so that the worker's existence turns into self-sacrifice (Sokel 77). The worker's hating his or her work leads to the worker's losing his or her self: Gregor's metamorphosis compels him to lose his self and self-estrangement to be visible (Sokel 77). The metamorphosis thus accentuates the loss of his self.

The failure of Gregor's father's business triggers the financial crises. The German word *Schuld* equals debt, guilt, and causative fault, those meanings helpful to understand Kafka's mythos (Sokel 78). The *Schuld* (debt) of Gregor's parents lies in socio-economic reality but the guilt of Gregor's parents involves "a subtle analogy to the fall of mankind as told in Genesis" (Sokel 78). Gregor takes on his parents' guilt and strives to work to trade off the debts; his alienated existence before his

metamorphosis builds the parallel to the man's fate after the exile from paradise (Sokel 79). Like Christ, Gregor is the scapegoat on whom the rejection, the filth, the sin of the whole community is deposited; like Agamemnon's daughter, Gregor needs to sacrifice himself to make his family's moving the house go smooth.

The materialistic mind-set usually enslaves the individual, transforming him into a beast or insect not having time to look after others. Gregor is the perfect example: he hates the job as a salesman but endures it for supporting materiality to his family so he sacrifices developmental needs such as a social life, companionship, pleasure, and dreams and thus his life remains miserable. Ironically, those he supports and loves show that they have no depth of affection for him, and once he is financially not able to care for them, they one by one desert him, adding to his tragedy.

About the hunger artist, Milan Kundera states that time in Kafka's works is the time of a humanity losing all continuity with humanity, of a humanity no longer knowing anything nor remember anything (Breon 238). "The Hunger Artist" tends to offer continuity through memory with a cultural past (Breon 238). The narrator, for instance, recalls those decades where hunger artists are worshiped and celebrated, keeps track of the decline of interest in professional fasting, and proposes the possibility of the fact that such feats will be honored and esteemed in the future (Breon 238).

James Rolleston argues that cultural shift is embedded in the story so allegorical (136). This allegory is connected with the initial understanding of Joseph K. in The Trial when the little man fights against the regime of Big Brother (Rolleston 136). The hunger artist is accused of being fraud and only in the final moment does he admit his guilt (the fraud) (Rolleston 136). From this perspective, since he does not fashion the reality into something different but presents it naturally, he is not an artist

and his art denies validity of being a human, this view as suggested by Richard Sheppard's 1973 article on the story:

Because the Hunger Artist is unwilling to accept the limitations of his human existence, symbolized by his refusal to eat, he resolves to flee those limitations and the self which they define, in order willfully to pursue the ideal of absolute fasting which is vacuous because it is tantamount to death.... His task is to be a man among men, but he refuses this and turns his back upon men out of a deep-seated sense of pride. (Rolleston 136)

What the artist seeks is death, and the world of afterlife is unknown so the religion has played a pivotal role in spreading the world view of afterlife-- after death, the man may return to the heaven or go down to the hell. The artist pursues the level of spirit (the medieval faith); the public the level of material (modern urban faith). I do not hold that due to the pride, the artist refuses to eat, for he says unless he can find the food he wants to eat, he refuses to eat and nothing to eat puts him at ease. Strangely, Rolleston states that the artist seeks not truth, but new fasting records (138) whereas I contend that the artist seeks to break historical records to overcome his anxiety as I put it previously. He persists in fasting, which also causes him anxious, and if he puts down that persistence, he may approach toward his true self.

In The Castle, the surveyor K. strives to receive the permission from the Castle but fails to acquire and the village girl Frieda longs to escape to freedom but ends in a more terrible failure and the villagers around castle are not free and not dying for freedom although the authority in the castle do not mete out punishment. The protagonist in "The metamorphosis" strives to release himself and seeks freedom but



fails. The hunger artist and Gregor as well as Frieda struggle for freedom but end in a worsened situation, for the human can hardly transcend the limitation of the human.

#### **D. Comparison of the Endings of the Two Stories**

Gregor's ugly body is replaced by Grete's beautiful body. Gregor is tormented to death; Grete is going to embrace the breadwinner and accepts the torture by her parents or she is going to marry under her parent's arrangement and the parents can reduce the burden more quickly. Gregor's death brings the family freedom in spirit and the situation like Kafka's, the hope is always for others, not me.

Elizabeth Boa states that the panther's mode of relating is through consumption and that instead of choosing to sit in a cage, the panther (animal) remains unaware of its confinement and of freedom residing in its jaws as well as that only if it has meat to tear, it can attract the public for its amazing vitality (173). The choice of the public not to view the hunger challenge, but to view the meat-eating panther, symbolizing beautiful and innocent at the time corresponds to the fad in the early 1920s in which the health and beauty object unfitness or degeneration (Boa 174).

Health is contrasted with sickness, or degeneration, or aging, or unfitness (Boa 109). The contrast of bodily health and sickness lies in the context of body culture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century:

the cult of youth and health, of hiking, cycling, and climbing, of dieting or banting, of chewing food forty times, of vegetarianism, of exercising every morning, of fresh air and open windows, of naked bathing and sun and air cures. (Boa 109)

Those practices attempt to repair the perceived damage conflicted by urban industrial life (Boa 109). Elizabeth Boa argues that the good life is the healthy life and that the medical can be combined with the aesthetic: health and beauty resist degeneration and ugliness (109). The hunger artist overly executes ascetic action and fails to take exercise, causing him the thin, ugly body, and he less sits around the coffee house discussing literature—both exercise and activity are also essential (Boa 110). Gregor Samsa remains picky about food and reveals athletic tendencies in crawling up and over the walls and ceiling (Boa 110). Like the hunger artist, he stops eating too long and starves to death (Boa 110).

Nathan Cervo states that the panther—sinuous, voluptuous, young, and vital—means all beasts in Greek and represents the Dionysian, or Bacchic (99). Jesus's true father is a certain Panthera, sometimes identified as a Roman soldier and the name Panthera might have stemmed from a mishearing of the Greek genitive form of parthenos (unmarried woman) (Cervo 100). The phrase huios parthenou (son of an unmarried woman) may have been misheard as huios pantherou (son of Panthera) (Cervo 100). The panther (son of Panthera--Jesus) is caged but freedom is hidden in its jaws (Cervo100).

Harry Steinhauer contends that food and fasting respectively as symbols for materialism and ascetic idealism or the supernatural (36). Besides, the panther presents gross entertainment (Steinhauer 37). On the other hand, if God does not exist, all is permitted and then the only ethic is the one of the jungle: man grows a panther which needs no freedom, no transcendence, only meat to tear between its teeth (Steinhauer 40). The story implies that we humans need God and we seek freedom and transcendence and we expect one day we will return to the heaven

(Steinhauer 40).

Meno Spann contends that the panther (the wild animal) lacks nothing that the keepers have no difficulty in deciding on and bring it the food it likes (85). The noble body constantly replenishes all its needs, seemingly carrying freedom within, hidden somewhere between its fangs (Spann 85). Spann argues that the word panther should be translated into something like leopard or else many American and English critics render the panther black and evil and think of an image of Dante's allegorical leopard—wantonness and envy (Spann 89). The hunger artist's lack of appetite causes his existence meaningless and deprives him of dignity, joy, and freedom; the panther (leopard) lacks nothing according to the narrator and has a plenitude of everything the hunger artist misses (Spann 90). The hunger artist realizes that he cannot find the right food and in turn his performance loses meanings so that he prefers the capability of eating to his fasting achievement (Spann 82). Spann proposes the meaning of the food (hunger strike)--the unwillingness to participate in life and unwillingness is a weakness, which is also a sign of greatness (96).

Allen Thiler states that "A Report to the Academy" leaves uncertain whether man is an elevated ape or the ape is a fallen man (81). Besides, like the sister at the end of "The Metamorphosis" or the panther that replaces the hunger artist at the end of "The Hunger Artist," the natural being has a body that bursts with sufficiency, and that needs no freedom the artists need (Thiler 81).

We human beings have our special attributes: divine, human, and animal ones. One of the greatest differences between humans and animals lies in humans' greater self-consciousness. Many exterior needs stem from our childhood dissatisfaction. To compensate for the holes in us, we continuously seek exterior resources to satisfy

our interior needs. Gregor supports his family to gain his parents' love and recognition. The hunger artist attaches himself to the impresario to gain success and admiration. When they pursue what they long for, they experience a sense of guilt, a feeling of anxiety and when they obtain it, they still feel dissatisfied and need to find a great goal to accomplish. They think that another goal can lead them to approach freedom, but in fact they therefore keep a greater distance from freedom. Gregor's dislike of his job drives him to alienate himself from his true self, as does the hunger artist's seeking for fame.



## Conclusion

The approach to reading Kafka in terms of his racial background (Jewish) and/or family background (a powerful father of which the son is afraid, as if of an arbitrary God or Law) tends to cast further light on any sort of more purely metaphysical reading. Christians declared that the Jews had defiled the body of Jesus, and even put the poison in the well to cause the outbreak of the Black Death; Shakespeare gives us the stereotypical image of the Jew as a loan shark; different nations' kings exiled the Jews and further confiscated their property. Hitler slaughtered six million Jews and occupied the land of the Czech Republic, a multicultural country to whose Jewish minority Kafka belonged. Furthermore, growing up, Kafka was routinely tortured by his powerful, hyper-critical father, who tried to totally dominate his life. Though he loved his father, his father gave him so much stress that he could barely take a breath. The son was always striving to demolish the influence of his father and reconstruct himself, reconstruct his own life.

Both this racial and this familial alienation—alienation from dominant (Christian) society, alienation from dominant family member (father)—may lead also to a form of self-alienation. The same is true of a Marxist view of workers under capitalism: because they no longer own the very products they produce, and thus are alienated from those products, insofar as these products are expressions of themselves they are also alienated from themselves. In “Metamorphosis” the father sees his son Gregor only as a worker (his work needed to support the family, and the son’s ontological or metaphysical alienation via becoming-an-insect (becoming-nonhuman) is tied by Kafka here to both his alienation from himself as mere worker and his alienation from his family (in particular his father) which, like the capitalist factory owner in Marx’s

theory, Gregor as human being must live (work) to support.

So too in “The Hunger Artist” the “artist” can be seen as a self-absorbed intellectual “modern artist,” and/or a meditating religious holy man (the modern artist as “holy” figure, suggested already by Romantic poets like Coleridge in “Kubla Khan”). Thus he imprisons himself in a cage because (apparently unlike Gregor, who as insect locks himself in his still-human room) he chooses to separate or alienate himself from the society outside the cage, believing (with justification) that they cannot possibly understand his impractical, complex “art” or his spiritual “fast.” Yet here, ironically enough, the impresario merely uses the hunger artist to make money, like Gregor’s father uses his son or the capitalist factory-owner uses his workers, and since what the spectators/audience members really want is “popular art” (which can be much more readily understood and appreciated), they all turn away from this too-sophisticated human artist and toward the roaring sub-human panther in his cage.

Given these various forms of (self-) alienation suffered by Kafka as sensitive and artistic son of a too-powerful Jewish father, split or multiple characters often appear in Kafka’s works. That is, like the socially-outcast Jew and socially- (even culturally)-outcast “modern artist,” the weak son takes on a double identity in his love-hate relationship with his bourgeois, exploitative father, and these various forms of split or double identity appear in Kafka’s characters. Gregor is a human-insect (human-nonhuman) and the hunger artist is a sophisticated artist-carnival freak, also in a sense (again) a human-nonhuman (human-animal) in his animal’s cage. Of course, in the case of the artist, being “nonhuman” may imply being “trans-human”(godlike) rather than, like the panther, being subhuman, just as Gregor-as-beetle could be seen as being trans-human rather than subhuman.

On the one hand, then, it is true that Kafka himself may suffer from a form of

psychological self-alienation and thus may have a multiple-identity perspective; as author it means not only that he can play the role of many characters but also that they, like him, will be in various ways self-alienated. However, in fact this need not only be a negative limitation; it could also allow a wider or deeper view of reality, a view which more nearly sees a deeper truth that most of us conceal or hides from ourselves.

Thus there is after all a more positive side, a more metaphysical and/or “artistic” (in the old aesthetic sense) side here. Kafka is clearly an alienated artist, both self-alienated and alienated from society, but from a purely “artistic” point of view we also need not agree with Marx that art is useless insofar as it is not productive in a practical sense, e.g. to support survival. Perhaps art’s use is closer to that of metaphysics or even (on some definition) of religion: to show us the depths of a reality we are never fully at home in and can never really get to the bottom of, to show us the infinite or indefinite reach of the mystery that is human existence.

The doorkeeper in the parable “Before the Law” may stand for Kafka’s father, who prevents Kafka from getting married, or may stand for the grave, under which the man from the country in effect already lies long before he dies. Usually, though, he is taken to represent the actual means of access to the Law, where this Law may mean God or truth or self-actualization or freedom. Since we cannot ourselves be the all-transcendent God, the Law may be God. Since we are readily provoked by others’ words and lose our sense of judgment, the Law may be Truth. Since we are all to some degree, as human beings, self-alienated, the Law may be self-identity or self-actualization. Since we are subject to many forms of natural determinism in our lives, even if we don’t believe in supernatural determinism (God, Fate), the Law may mean Freedom, even the ultimate freedom of death—whether or not we assume any form of life after death.

But in the parable, when the man is about to die the gatekeeper says that this gate to the Law was meant only for him and now he will close it, meaning the man can never enter to see or know the Law, either in life or after death. Even if the law represents God, Truth, Freedom or Justice, how could any of these exist if they are not universal, that is, if each man has his own subjective God, Truth, Freedom, Justice? (In the case of Law it implies that the rich or powerful man, e.g. the king, has his own Law; he can be “above the Law.”) Of course, if we take the Law on a traditional metaphysical-religious interpretation as meaning God, then the fact that the gateway closes when we die also implies that there is no Heaven, no eternal life after death. And yet a certain relativity prevails in Kafka’s thinking, perhaps a function of his two-sided or multiple perspective(s), so that even here there is no necessity to rank the absolute higher than the “relative” and “contingent.”

Music, specifically in the scene where Gregor-as-beetle listens to his sister playing the violin, plays a pivotal role in “The Metamorphosis.” It can symbolize Gregor’s (potentially or latently) erotic relationship with his sister, who stands over against the patriarchal, un-artistic, nonmusical father and so may represent a mediation, a middle-way or possibly a “way out” for Gregor. On another level it clearly symbolizes that “unknown nourishment” for which Gregor-as-nonhuman craves: while we first assume this means a “human” nourishment (a being-human once again) it might also mean the sort of trans-human nourishment or meaning he has already tasted by becoming an insect. Once again, a certain relativity prevails here, and as noted above Gregor is to a certain degree happy with his new insect body and the new powers, the new freedom it gives him. Of course, at this point Gregor can no longer speak in a human language or understand such a language, so as a form of language music is indeed already trans-human.



Gregor remains in his room to separate himself from others, largely from a sense of shame: they, even his dear family members, will be shocked if they see him as a giant insect. In effect he now sees himself through their eyes: this is the self-alienation of shame or guilt. Yet, having already undergone his metamorphosis before he awakened, he becomes strangely content (even to a degree joyful) in his non-human state, which includes certain non-human powers of movement. In this sense the self-alienation as self-difference can have a positive sense of liberation, of a certain kind of freedom . . . though soon, like Chopin's Mrs. Mallard, who also undergoes a metamorphosis—in her case clearly a gain in the sense of freedom—he must die.

The hunger artist believes that if he sits in a cage fasting, he can gain a kind of absolute spiritual transcendence or freedom. If we like—it is an “open question”—we may say he fails because he dies, thus ending his fast (practice of spiritual transcendence), but perhaps he does after all gain such transcendence after death. And we obviously cannot say he fails simply because the spectators lose interest in his “spiritual-transcendent performance” since it is precisely at this moment that he becomes more fully committed to—i.e. not at all alienated from—his “art.” Still, it is true that the common people (the non-artists, like Kafka's father) prefer the strong healthy panther in his cage, eating his food and roaring loudly, happily, to the weak and slowing dying, ascetic monk-like artist in his self-chosen cage.

Yet taking it from another, more cynical perspective, perhaps that of Marx who contends that under capitalism the principle of human life is mutual defrauding (Sokel 79), we note that the impresario promotes the artist's fast as a money-making attraction and thus in a certain sense deceives the spectators, if only by distracting them from the true (transcendent-metaphysical) purpose of the fast. By the same

token we might say the artist is just trying to break the world fasting record, while pretending (to his audience) that this is a truly spiritual activity. Or we might say the only one the artist is deceiving is himself, for death itself is the infinite fast, yet once we are dead it is not clear that we can still “break any records.”

The Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi speaks of an old tree which is so ugly and gnarled that no woodcutter ever wants to chop it down, for no carpenter is interested in using its wood. Thus this old tree could survive for a long, long time, that is, “uselessness” in this particular case promotes survival. If we see the tree’s silent persistence in life, its bare survival praxis, as being that of (for instance) a Buddhist monk who meditates through one lifetime, then we might want to compare this with the hunger artist’s fast viewed positively as a truly spiritual quest. The problem is that fasting (e.g. that of a monk) does not ultimately promote survival but just the opposite, it promotes death. In a sense the ongoing life of the tree no one wants to cut down is more comparable to the healthy panther, to the healthy, Nietzschean life-force of that animal—except for the fact that it is in a cage.

The “imperial messenger” in Kafka’s long story “The Great Wall of China” is trapped in a kind of infinite regress: he can never even get outside of the walls of the imperial city, let alone outside the city walls of Beijing, let alone all the way across the vast land of China to deliver the emperor’s message “to you, the reader.” Yet this hopelessness of the communication of the message is already a very powerful and weighty message in itself. Perhaps it reaches us precisely by being unable to reach us.

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