

CHAPTER- VI

Kafka's Narrative Pattern: An Existential Perspective

To have the feeling of being bound and at the same time the other, that if one were unbound, it would be even worse.

Franz Kafka, *Diaries*, December 21, 1910.

Narrative is one of the essential constituents to the understanding of reality. To raise the question on the nature of narrative is to raise question on the very nature of culture and humanity. As Roland Barthes puts it in his landmark essay on narrative: "All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is often shared by men with different, even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself" (Barthes, 1982, 252). Since narrative involves translating *knowing* into *telling*, the understanding of a writer's text, no matter how different or exotic, his burden of culture can easily be transmitted with the help of a suitable narrative. This suggests as W.J.T Mitchell writes, "Narrative is a metacode, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted" (Mitchell, 1981,2); and such a stance would presume that the absence of narrative would indicate an absence of meaning itself. In this respect, Franz Kafka's narrative pattern would make an interesting study because in the works of Franz Kafka we see a total absence of the legitimate act of *knowing* into *telling*. At the same time all human beings are readers who seek to reconcile what they read with what they see. Such interpretative contexts are dependent upon each other to make sense of the fragmentary into the whole; or in other words in which the texts come to life or is concretized. This concretization of

the world buried within the sign of the text is a gradual but steady unfolding. This interaction of the three signified system – the presented world, the presentational process and reader- constitutes the ‘structural theory of context’ in proper fiction. Therefore any metastructural interpretation ought to be rooted in the interaction of these three signified system. Basically all texts start with an authorial reference to the world. In other words, the texts provide statements to establish what takes place so that seldom the readers are put to doubt as to the meaning of the text. But in Kafka, there is a continuous disjunction between the three signified systems – the presented word frequently has no spatial or temporal locus, the presentational process constantly shifting between different realms, and the reader is seldom a partner in contextualizing the meaning of the text. In other words, the existential crises in Franz Kafka results not just in the negation of inter-textuality and therefore the extraction of meaning in Kafka’s works would involve a special kind of reader. This reader is discouraged from asking any question but accept the presented word as it is. It is as if God’s act of creation cannot be understood in relation to anything else, but only as such. Thus what is present is the cold objectivity and the constricting impression of a singleview narrative; holding the reader a prisoner as in a nightmare.

However, according to Friedrich Beisner, Kafka’s ‘mono-perspective narration’ presents the external reality through the filtering process of the consciousness of the protagonist, where the narrator is not distinct from the protagonist; where free indirect speech with each word is drawn from the vocabulary of the focal character and recast in the third-person statement of the neutral narrator. Hence the protagonist seems more important than the author but the textual evidence shows that that the narration is not always mono-perspective. Similarly Rolf J. Goebel in his essay *The Exploration of the Modern City* in **The Trial** does not think that there could be a mono-

perspective narration in Kafka, for 'K.'s subjective perspective is frequently interrupted and supplemented by what can either be identified as a superior narrative consciousness or as K.'s own self-distancing, reflexive insights' (Preece,1999,45). Roy Pascal and others have focused on the dual perspective of the narration; which is one of the protagonist and the other of the narrator's consciousness. There are others like Patrick O' Neill in **Franz Kafka: His Craft and Thought** (1986) where he argues for Kafka's fiction reflecting a playful narrator's self-reflection. The unique narrative pattern of Franz Kafka is symptomatic of his existential crisis. Kafka was a Bourgeoisie product who represented in a very real sense the middle class awareness of spiritual starvation and moral disintegration. The world war plunged Germany into a long reign of historical complexity involving social, economic and political turmoil. Perhaps no other writer epitomized this crisis as beautifully as Franz Kafka. The plight of his heroes represents his own existential crisis, the representation of man as a being estranged from the world around him, haunted by feelings of guilt and governed by an all powerful and inscrutable authority. Torn by such cross – currents, we also find in Kafka a desperate search for an ordered pattern of faith on the other hand. Thus it is only natural that Kafka's narrative pattern should involve a blending of the neo-romantic with the surrealist, the spiritual with the realistic, and the allegorical with the symbolic. Rightfully, Kafka also makes use of the dream-narrative form. All these are fused in a stylistic lucidity rarely achieved in works with such great complexities. In a normal narrative situation, the author tries hard to win the attention of the listener or the reader or to stir their expectation in order to read a satisfactory conclusion. In fact, the entire framework of the story is governed by this fact. But this is not so in Franz Kafka because he was not writing with a reader in his mind; much of his works were chaotic, haphazard with no chronological sequence until Max Brod,

his close friend, confidante, and biographer compiled them together much against his wish even after his death; and as a result all his major works are fragmentary in nature and devoid of any meaningful conclusion. All his three fragmentary novels have been written with the help of an impersonal narrator. Perhaps the use of the impersonal narrator was an excellent way to describe the infinite variety of setting and mode; and the impersonal narrator narrating with an objective authority enjoys the privilege of the whole number of characters and situations unlike the personal narrator whose views can be blurred with his involvement in the real-life situation. However, Kafka's existential crisis is based upon Sartre's attack on the impersonal narrator who with the knowledge of the inner working of the characters and situation turns accident into destiny. Sartre was of the opinion that such a role totally misrepresented the nature of human existence. Sartre attacks the impersonal narrator as a 'piece of obscurantism, encouraging us to evade the truth of life.' It may be of significance to also refer to one of the best analyses of Kafka's narrative form by Harmut Binder who equates Kafka's narrative pattern with that of Flaubert, where the impersonal narrator narrates events from the outside, at the same time the narrative is also the narration of the characters themselves. But Kafka is an elusive writer who denies any attempt to associate his technique with any tendency. The existential Kafka struggled throughout his life to find a suitable form to suit his purpose. All his works begin with a realistic setting, situation and characters only to embroil us in the nightmarish world. There is also no clearing up of details at the end. Both **The Judgment** and **The Metamorphosis** is apparently narrated by an objective narrator but whose voice reflects the chief character's angle of vision. It was with **The Judgment** that Kafka thought he has reached his own mature method of self-expression. It is here that Kafka's narrative brilliantly fuses fantasy, realism, speculation and psychoanalysis into a new unity.

The Judgment has a conventional beginning, an initiation to an idyllic Sunday morning with Georg Bendemann having just finished off writing a letter to his old friend in Russia, announcing his professional success and personal success of being engaged. The narrative consisting of a long reverie throws much light on Georg's life of how he shared the house with his father; the death of his mother two years ago and his business ventures. At the same time, there are narratorial intrusions in the descriptions of the family adjustments after the death of the mother's death; or in statements containing the narrator's assumptions regarding his friend: "Should one advise him to come home, to transplant himself and take up his old friendship again- there was nothing to hinder him- and in general to rely on the help of his friends? But that was as good as telling him, and the more kindly the more offensively, that all his efforts hitherto had miscarried, that he should finally give up, come back home, and be gaped at by everyone as a returned prodigal, that only his friends knew what was what and that he himself was just a big child who should do what his successful and home-keeping friends prescribed' (CS, 78). The two perspectives are finely interwoven by plentiful use of free indirect speech which lends more objective observation but the line between subjectivity and objectivity is blurred in this dream-narrative. Georg reproaching himself for the apparent neglect of his father cannot be the statement of the narrator but of Georg's divided self- "The not so particularly clean appearance of his underwear made him reproach himself for having been neglectful. It should have certainly been his duty to see that his father had clean changes of underwear" (CS, 84). This could also be an instance of the narrator relinquishing his separate view to express the experience of the character. Thus there is no single authoritative voice in Kafka's works and therefore the temptation to look for symbolic and allegorical interpretations. Kafka's narrative lacks the purity of an

allegory as in *The Pilgrim's Progress* or *The Romance of the Rose*; rather the complex narrative pattern of Kafka, with its repository of symbols does not offer a key to the understanding of texts but makes it more baffling after each reading. A symbol is what it represents; but an allegory represents what it is not. Allegory refers to abstractions but a symbol is something that is specific and concrete. Thus Kafka's works have more symbolist value than as an allegory. Many of Kafka's narrative is expressed in mythopoetic terms where myth is used to elucidate structures or meanings that lie finely hidden beneath it to convey an eternal truth. Although despair emanates from it yet one cannot miss the humorous element in Kafka. Yet it is not the bitter laughter of Swift or the robustness of Rabelais's satire. It is comic irony with a mix of slap-stick humor. Kafka's humor is also disquieting with spiritual gravity. Clemens Heselhaus regards Kafka's works '*Anti-Marchen*', which is a form of narrative where failure is predestined and so the hero fails to reach his goal.

The Judgment can also be discussed as a parable as Ellis has done who regards Georg as a stay-at-home son echoing the biblical parable of the prodigal son and the St. Petersburg friend as the favored son. However, Roy Pascal writes:

Quite apart from the fact that there is no external, objective corroboration of the father's charges (that he is in league with the St. Petersburg friend, that he has Georg's customers 'in his pocket', that Georg is thoroughly incompetent in business etc.), there is such spiteful malevolence in his behavior that we have no right to believe either the truth of his accusations or the justice of his sentence. It is strange that the acumen that detects the inner falsity of Georg should not recognize that of the father. But, it may be argued, the abject failure of Georg in their contest and his consent to the death-sentence prove the truth of the father's assertions.

(Pascal, 1982, 29)

What is important is not the truth or falsity of arguments, but the existential conflict of love and hate culminating in the father's collapse and the son's suicide. The son accepting the death sentence only reveals the absurdity of such a judgment. There is guilt, there is also suffering but there is no clarity as to why should man suffer so; or the relationship between guilt whose cause is unknown and the acceptance of willful suffering culminating in death. There is no such simplistic answer to such profoundly agonizing existential complexity but makes characters like Georg Bendemann or Gregor Samsa unique individuals like Abraham. Soren Kierkegaard's **Fear and Trembling** deals with the story of Genesis where Abraham is commanded by God to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. Ethically and morally, Abraham under such circumstance should not be condemned for carrying out God's command. Abraham becomes ready to sacrifice his son on the absurd premise that through Isaac's murder, he will carry out God's command and still retain his son. Thus absurdity lies at the heart of one's existence. This also explains the father-son conflict in **The Metamorphoses**, where the father is the cause of the son's death. Gregor's metamorphoses only bring hatred in the father, embarrassment in his mother and disgust in his sister. Such filial relationship bound by hypocrisy is laid threadbare. Gregor's agony under his changed exterior is narrated no doubt by an impersonal narrator, but as in **The Judgment**, the narrative voice in **The Metamorphosis** strongly identifies with the character. The Aristotelian form of narrative is violated with the climax taking place in the first sentence itself: "As GREGOR SAMSA awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect" (CS, 89). Parallel to the narrator's objective vision is Gregor's thoughts and impression which is recorded with a high degree of subjectivity: "If I didn't have to hold my hand because of my parents, I'd have given notice long ago,

I'd have gone to the chief and told him exactly what I think of him" (CS, 90) ; or his resentful reflection on his job: " Well, there's still hope; once I've saved enough money to pay back my parents' debts to him- that should take another five or six years- I'll do it without fail. I'll cut myself completely loose then" (CS, 90). Here also the authorial intrusion is determined by the consciousness of Gregor. When the text continues: "What has happened to me? He thought. It was no dream" (CS, 89); the first sentence is distinctly Gregor's thought and so is the conclusion 'It was no dream'. The details of the room are Gregor's thoughts as his eyes travel around his room but the words in the parentheses, 'Samsa was a commercial traveler' is an information provided by the narrator. The narrator also provides other information about the three lodgers, the char woman, his sister and the dwindling family fortune. There is a total change in perspective at the moment of Gregor's death and because the story ends with the main character's death, many find in it the reason why the first person narrative could not have been used here. However, the dream-narrative involves a state of suspension, where the first person 'I' cannot be the narrator and the object of narration because the object of narration is the 'I' itself. As in a dream the self is faced with his own self.

Kafka was hesitant to publish much of his works but he was especially eager to publish **The Metamorphosis**. Although at first he was hesitant to send for publication to Kurt Wolff in April, 1913; but he did send it to Robert Musil in 1914. Kafka was 'particularly eager' to see its publication. In contrast to the many works of Kafka which are fragmentary in nature, this is a complete work combining intense self-recrimination and ironic melodrama and grotesque humor. Gregor Samsa trying to get a better view from the ceiling or peeping through the chink of the door can be correlated with the readers skimming through the beetle's vision and trying to get a

clearer picture of the narrative. Both **The Judgment** and **The Metamorphosis** are novellas not just in terms of its length but novellas in the tradition of Kliest, Stendhal and Goethe. In the nineteenth century, the novella was already an established form of the shorter narrative fiction particularly in Germany. The novella being of a slightly longer length than a short story, allowed for complexity of plot and psychological analysis; and Kafka did write a number of novellas. The novella narrates something new and unusual event which is expressed with a great economy of form. The theory of the novella as given by Ludwig Tieck in 1821 is as follows:

A genuine novella may be bizarre, arbitrary, fantastic, witty, garrulous, losing itself completely even in the presentation of side issues, tragic as well as comic, profound and saucy- all of these qualities are possible in the novella- but it will always have that extraordinary and striking turning-point which distinguishes it from every other narrative form.

(Tieck, Vol.XI, lxxxv)

Goethe calls the novella as an unheard event, but which has taken place, for Goethe debates whether an untrue story could be of any interest to the readers. From this perspective, the purely fantastic lies outside the realm of the novella. Also the objectivity with which it narrates an event supplies the writer with the opportunity to express his own subjective feeling. In Kafka the objective is presented in a profoundly subjective manner and so for him the novella suited his purpose of portraying his inner self. Paul Ernst, a theorist as well a practitioner of shorter narrative fiction in the twentieth century writes: "The improbable, that may be intensified to the impossible, is the very atmosphere in which the Novella, that sister of the fairy tale, is most at home. It is perhaps the greatest pleasure for the poet as far as this type of composition is concerned, to represent the improbable in such a manner as to give the impression

of the purest probability" (Ernst, 1928, 288). The movement of the novella is circular moving against a fixed point as against the other linear narrative forms. Kafka's novellas like **The Metamorphosis**, **The Judgment**, **Description of a Struggle** and **Wedding Preparations in the Country** all centre on a fateful event, presupposing an irrational view of life. The narrative is kept close to the consciousness of the author's; yet the distancing is such that the personal becomes political; whereby the readers are in a position to judge the events.

The novella tended to break away from its nineteenth century tradition of external realism in the hands of writers like Thomas Mann, Kafka and Stephen Zweig to explore psychological dimensions. The earliest writer of the novella form was Boccaccio who used short, simple language to explore moral and social issues. The novella in its original form as practiced by Goethe dealt with the contemporary and the local. But much of Kafka's shorter narratives are in the form of parables and fables; possibly because contemporary German society during the time of Kafka and particularly after 1945 did not allow for free and open discussion of topical issues. A parable is a concise fictional narrative through which moral issues are worked out. Kafka regarded his works as 'prayers' which does suggest that although he was not fanatically religious; he did consider his writings as a sacred undertaking. His narrative pattern has biblical simplicity; the puritanical simplicity of language conveys a wealth of thought that is unique in itself. Also it has almost a fairy-tale like quality in its distant other worldly ephemeral quality through animals as protagonists. His dream narratives as they are called are because of their ability to churn out images, giving a feel of the exotic and the picturesque. But paradoxically, in Kafka the fairy-tale becomes anti-fairy tale; and dreams take the shape of nightmares. But these novellas dealing with 'unheard of occurrence', using the form of the dream-

narrative, also do not have conventional endings with a perfect sense of closure but reveal the perpetual sense of unfinished ness. Apparently, Kafka adopted for all three novels the impersonal narrator. The opening long sentence of **Amerika** gives an impression that the novel is going to be narrated by an objective narrator: "As Karl Rossmann, a poor boy of sixteen who had been packed off to **Amerika** by his parents because a servant girl had seduced him and got herself with child by him, stood on a liner slowly entering the harbor of New York, a sudden burst of sunshine seemed to illumine the statue of liberty so that he saw it in a new light although he had sighted it long before" (A, 13); but what is narrated immediately after is the world outside seen through Karl's observations- the 'endlessly recurring stairs', the 'corridors with countless turnings', and when the narrative goes- " In his bewilderment, meeting none and hearing nothing but the ceaseless shuffling of thousands of feet above him, and in the distance, his faint breathing, the last throbbing of the engines, which had already been shut off he began unthinkingly to hammer on a little door by which he had chanced to stop in his wanderings" (A, 14); the identification of the narrator with the character is complete. But unlike the other two novels **The Trial** and **The Castle**, the readers are not made to feel the dark subjectivity of the central character's vision; or the horror of abandon as found in the dream-narratives **The Judgment** and **The Metamorphosis**. **Amerika** appears more in the genre of the picaresque novel, recounting the experience of a young boy's transition from innocence to experience. It shares a great deal of resemblance with **Oliver Twist** and **David Copperfield**, evidence of Kafka's familiarity with Charles Dickens. The speedy flow of narration in the first chapter coincides with the flow of traffic; and the facts of Karl's life back home is presented in a piece-meal manner. Karl's encounter with the Slovak echoes Pip's encounter with Magwitch at the start of **Great Expectations**. The narration of

Karl's employment at the Hotel Occidental shows how Karl overdoes to please one and all, in spite of it Karl is dismissed from his service. Warren Austin puts it aptly; "Kafka is a metaphysical poet in symbolist narrative. His is a city world. Like Dickens' London, it flourishes in grotesque.' The different chapters of the novel are episodic narratives loosely strung together so that each chapter can be seen as a whole in itself, at the same time not appearing unitary as a whole novel. Chapter one called 'The Stoker' deals with Karl Rossmann's encounter with the stoker after having lost his way. The exchange between Karl and the stoker is in direct speech; and in their essential loneliness they strike an instant rapport. Karl even takes a bold step of fighting for the cause of the stoker against the injustice meted out to him by Schubal. The first chapter ends with Karl unexpectedly meeting Uncle Jacob. Chapter two 'Uncle Jacob' deals with Karl adjusting himself to a new world of comfort from a world of destitute; but it still is a world of confusion with streaming traffic and high-rises dazzling the eye. Instead of feasting his eye on the new world, Karl spends his time playing the piano, learning English, learning to ride and meeting Uncle Jacob's friend. Chapter three 'A Country House near New York' deals with Karl's visit to Mr. Pollunder's house much against the disapproval of his uncle where he is subjected to strange treatment by his daughter Clara until Karl extricates himself from the house only to find himself thrown himself out by his uncle at the end. It is in chapter four 'The Road to Rameses' that Karl is subjected to the vulnerability of the outside world and his meeting with a pair of rogues- Robinson and Delemarche. Chapter five is called 'The Hotel Occidental' and here Karl is taken up by the kind Managress as Karl begins a new life as a lift-boy. The only diversion from Karl's adventurous life is the pathetic story of Therese's mother. Chapter six entitled 'The Case of Robinson' deals with Robinson's unexpected visit to Hotel Occidental and Karl is thrown out off

his job as a result of Robinson's drunken behavior. In Chapter seven 'The Refuge' Karl is forced to stay as a servant to Delemarche and Brunelda. How Karl manages to escape from this forced slavery is not clear as the narrative breaks off suddenly and opening in the chapter called "The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma" with Karl finally out in the open air of freedom. This brief glance at the chapters of **Amerika** shows that each chapter can be treated as a whole in itself. Thus the narrative here is in the tradition of the picaresque and Karl Rossmann as the 'upside down Picaro', who doesn't lose his innocence till the end in spite of encountering a range of experiences. Although there are anomalies in the narrative description right from the beginning where we see Karl's sympathy for the stoker slackening because of Uncle Jacob's recognition of him as a relative. Besides the narrative also shifts its focus on the outside world, for beneath the apparent sheen is the sordidness of modernism and capitalism. If the narrative is successful in conveying the order, primness and aristocracy of the Hotel Occidental, it also conveys the sordidness, seediness and filth of the same people living in crowded tenements working hard to convey the apparent sheen. The narrative is also important in conveying the existential loneliness of man, which Kafka believed was endemic to human condition. The young Gustav Janouch once asked Kafka if he was as lonely as Kasper Haus, to which Kafka reportedly laughingly replied-"More worse than Kasper Hauser. I am as lonely as -as Franz Kafka" (GJ, 70). What draws Karl to the stoker was his loneliness- "Perhaps I should join with this man,' the thought came into Karl's head, 'Where am I going to find a better friend?' (A,15). Karl incorporates in him the existential angst of incompleteness from which he can emerge wholesome only in communion with his other fellow human beings. To quote the German existentialist Karl Jaspers: "The individual cannot become human by himself." Thereafter, ironically Karl is never left alone- be

it in the hustle and bustle of the Hotel Occidental or the cramped dormitory where he sleeps with other sado-masochistic inmates. To make matters worse, the two former companions, Delemarche and Robinson cling to him and finally when the Head Cook asks Karl if he is really free of them, Karl answers- " Yes, I am free', said Karl, and nothing seemed more worthless than his freedom" (A, 125). The narrative here conveys the emptiness of freedom and perhaps this is what Soren Kierkegaard meant when he remarked "We are condemned to be free." Thus existentially freedom implies isolation. Freedom implies freedom from the causal chain of cause and effect, cutting off from one's past, and to negate all those things which might prevent one thing moving into another. **Amerika** contains the image of the New World, a world of infinite possibilities but also a world where against the blow of impersonal forces, individuals can be crushed. The inset story of the death of Therese's homeless mother crushed by the Capitalist system is a case in point. Even in the grandiose image of freedom in the last chapter 'The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma', the placard which read:" Everyone is welcome', it said. Everyone, that meant Karl too" (A, 246). But just when Karl had thought of applying for the job of which he need not be as amend to his burden of past; and soaring with the promise that he too would find acceptance and dignity is soon deflated when he feels deeply ashamed to utter his own name, and instead gives his name as 'Negro', the nickname he had had in his last post. The incidence echoes his reluctance to utter his name also in Chapter one which can be an indication of his lack of a proper self. Thus it is on this duplicity that Karl Rossmann is absorbed in the Theatre of Oklahoma till the narrative breaks off abruptly. The novel remains unfinished, although it is said that Kafka had intended this novel to end on a happy note, perhaps with his hero finding again his dignity that he had been

robbed off. Although the narrative progression from one chapter to another is aimless, the last chapter is undoubtedly more out of sync with the earlier chapters.

The narrative pattern of **The Trial** is complex. When Kafka sent the first chapter of **The Trial** to his publisher Kurt Wolff, he called the rest five hundred pages as a 'complete failure', but it is this failure which will give it a complete wholeness. The novel appears like a moral autobiography; or at most a psychological narrative of guilt. In Kafka there is the failure of the narrator as the source of fictive discourse and also the centrality of the protagonist's perspective is mixed. Richard Walsh in the essay *The Pragmatics of Narrative Fictionality* deals with the problem of relevance and the problem of truthfulness in narration where he notes that the issue of relevance is largely contextual yet there are gaps and incompleteness keeping in mind the world beyond the fictional text. K.'s death at the end of **The Trial**, according to Richard Walsh occasions many relevance from the readers like conflict between the State and the Individual; structure and agency; authority of the superego and guilt. Joseph K. thinks someone had played foul with him and that he was being implicated. The narrative suggests K.'s perspective but a little later there is authorial intrusion.

The same kind of episodic movement is seen in **The Trial**. Here also each chapter deals with specific characters and soon forgotten in the following chapters; for instance after the first chapter Fraulein Burstner is heard no more, we get a fleeting glimpse of her only in the last chapter; likewise several other characters like the Advocate, the two warders, the painter Titorelli, and K.'s Uncle are carelessly forgotten. One even feels that chapter nine "In the Cathedral" containing the essence-bearing parable "Before the Law" ought to have been placed much earlier. But to say **The Trial** is episodic would be too simplistic but the narrative here consists of two

parallel strands of movement. On close scrutiny, we find that the subject of **The Trial** is not Joseph K. who seems to be absurdly implicated in an unspecified charge, but the court itself. Thus the unfolding of the narrative actually works to show the blind and irrational working of the court to which all human characters only play a subordinate role. But at the same time the narrative also reveals the effect of such an irrational system inflicting on Joseph K. who till his thirtieth year had evidently led a perfectly normal life. The irrationality of his arrest leads to a series of reflection in Chapter one "The Arrest": Who could these men be? What were they talking about? What authority could this represent? K. lived in a country with a legal constitution; there was universal peace, all the laws were in force; who dared seize him in his own dwelling?" (T, 10) .These reflections on the absurdity of the court seem to be that of Joseph K.'s as much as of the impersonal narrator. Joseph K. now seriously attempts to prove his innocence in Chapter two "First interrogation" and in chapter three "In the Empty Interrogating Chamber- The Student- The Officer". When no summons for him come, Joseph K. himself 'assumed that he was tacitly expected to report himself again at the same address and at the same time'. Chapter four " Fraulein Burstner's Friend", Chapter five " The whipper", Chapter six " K.'s Uncle-Leni", Chapter seven" Advocate-Manufacturer- Painter", and Chapter eight " The Commercial Traveller- Dismissal of the Advocate" –all these chapters tighten the trial upon Joseph K. and deal with people whom he thinks as the narrative indicates could help Joseph K.. He is deluded because all of them only help to make his case more complicated; that the trial exists everywhere intruding upon Joseph K.'s life , and most important of all the trial is there in the inside of his mind. "Nothing is so difficult as not to deceive yourself," Wittgenstein says and thus the existential question of whether we can escape willful self-deception is quite tricky. The reader's share the anxiety and

disorientation that Joseph K. suffers from as the narrative does show that being on trial does sap one's energy, a distinctly human attribute. However, existential anxiety arises from an unknown quarter and Joseph K. is jerked from the pseudo-normalcy of his life and self-delusion and his willingness to be executed is the final proof of this absurdity. For Sartre, anxiety is a heightened awareness that there is nothing that stands between one's being and not being. Therefore at the moment of death, an individual can give himself a reason for living. But for Kafka there was no reason for living reflected in Joseph K. relinquishing his will to live. The novel's ultimate revelation lies in the parable "Before the Law" which is a proof of beauty amidst the tragedy of human life. The door keeper in the parable deceives the man from the country by not letting him in only to reveal at the end that the door was only meant for him. The Priest interprets the parable by saying that it is not the doorkeeper who deceives but rather he is the one who is deceived for the man enjoys relative freedom compared to the doorkeeper who is tied to the door meant solely for the man. The doorkeeper who stands for 'law' thus not only deceives but also is deceived. Likewise, Joseph K. is deceived in thinking that he can free himself from the legal entangle, not realizing that he was already condemned from the beginning. Early in chapter one, Joseph K. finds the idea of committing suicide 'senseless' but after a year having ceaselessly tired of fighting the case, he realizes this futility of resistance and so willingly submits to death. There is an obscure sense of "betrayal" at the heart of Existentialism. Albert Camus in **The Myth of Sisyphus** says "a reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying". Thus the narrative in **The Trial** does not lead to the gradual unfolding of the events but only a deepening of a foregone conclusion, already taken in the beginning. That is why the various intercessors cannot actually help Josephs K. when Joseph K. tells the priests that he was going to get more help

the priest sardonically comments – ‘You cast about too much for outside help, especially from women. Don’t you see that it isn’t the right kind of help?’ (T, 233). Joseph K. could have helped to salvage his situation if only he had looked for help within himself than casting about for outside help. The two strands of narrative which never does, rather which cannot merge, makes the narrative of **The Trial** susceptible to multiple interpretation commenting on the density of this text.

Kafka uses the device of understatement; dramatic economy and much of what is concealed becomes more meaningful than what is apparent. Often Kafka’s narrative pattern is called the symbolist narrative. Kafka manages to create an air of mystery in his narrative. In **The Castle** there is an aura surrounding the “higher-ups”, the villagers gossiping and speculating on the true nature of the authority. Thus there are multiple interpretations of the same event; the same event is viewed from several perspectives. Unfortunately, what results is only a muddled vision. K., an outsider, is aware of this fault as he reprimands Olga: “Amalia’s act was remarkable enough, but the more you say about it the less clearly can it be decided whether it was noble or petty, clever or foolish, heroic or cowardly” (C, 187). In **The Trial** too several interpretations of the same situations is provided in the Priest’s discourse at the cathedral. “I am only showing you different opinions about it”, he says, “You mustn’t have too much regard for opinions. The text is unchangeable and opinions are often only an expression of about it” (T, 240). What ultimately comes out is that one can no longer reach the truth. It is from such a situation that Martin Greenberg in **The Terror Of Art : Kafka and Modern literature** still finds a kind of a ‘vision’, really requiring no connectives.

The meaning, the unity is there, but K. struggles against seeing it; his constant complaint, which is not really a complaint but a cause he

defends, is that the court and all its works are senseless , a ridiculous joke . But as K. is gradually forced to think about himself , to peer into the murk of his own self , the incoherencies of his soul's trial became resolved – the parts of the novel became connected into a unity by an act of perception which consists in K.'s having deeper and deeper insight into the connections of his self.

(Greenberg, 1971, 179)

The Trial has a lot of Chaplinesque music hall grotesque humor. Also there are a lot of missing links and several incidents and episodes; and the characters lack connections. Fraulein Burstner is heard no more although we get a fleeting glimpse of her in the last chapter; the warders, Joseph K.'s Uncle, the advocate and Titorelli disappear from the novel. Kafka carelessly leaves these loose ends without tying them up. However, **The Trial** and **The Castle** are complementary to each other as Albert Camus in his essay **Hope And the Absurd in the work of Franz Kafka**. **The Castle** is the culmination of Kafka's literary effort and one the most ambitious work where the narrative not only reflects the illusory quality of the castle but also provides the reflections of a man resolved on finding a place in the village. The narrative in the first chapter presents the image of the castle 'veiled in mist and darkness', and K. claiming to be the land-surveyor appointed by the castle authorities, but appearing more as a vagabond tramp, 'a disreputable-looking man in the thirties, sleeping calmly on a bag of straw minute rucksack for pillow and a knotty stick within reach' (C, 11). But here again the dual voice of the narrator submerging with the central character is used. After much initial deterrent and disrespect for being there without the village permit, the telephone call made by Schwarzer, the son of the under-castellan clears K.'s appointment for the time being. K. considered it quite 'unpropitious' for him in spite of his insouciant manner of a tramp. Thereafter the

narrative unfolds to reveal K.'s attempts to familiarize himself with the new community; but such attempt only makes his singularity more pronounced. As K. confesses to the village teacher: "I am to be staying here for some time and already feel a little lonely. I don't fit in with the peasants nor, I, imagine, with the castle." ; to which the teacher retorts: " There is no difference between the peasantry and the Castle." The narrative focuses on the existential condition of man, on the essential loneliness endemic to human condition irrespective of class. K. feels irresistibly drawn to seek out new acquaintance but each new acquaintance only serves to increase his weariness; and in spite of his best efforts to move closer to the castle, was actually no nearer to it. K. takes the route to the castle, he leaves behind a warm world of densely packed humanity into the freezing world of solitariness. The only communication K. receives is the letter from the castle signed illegibly the 'Chief of Department X' borne by Barnabas. And when Barnabas presumably leads him to the castle the objective narrator observes: "Where were they? Was this the end? Would Barnabas try to leave him? He wouldn't succeed. K. clutched his arm so firmly that it almost made his hand ache. Or, had the incredible happened, and were they already in the castle or at its gates? But had they not done any climbing so far as K. could tell. Or had Barnabas taken him up an imperceptibly mounting road?" (C, 35). The deviation in the narrative comes with the inset story of the ostracization of the Barnabas family because the sister Amalia had rejected the advances of a castle official. At the village inn, K. happens to hear of the Chief Klamm staying there and when all efforts for a direct meeting with Klamm is frustrated, he gets betrothed to Frieda, a barmaid and Klamm's mistress. The narrative now shifts to K.'s attempts to find a place in the village in spite of the unassuring words from the Superintendent. K. is not going to take things lying down now that he had renounced all that he had, a

wife and a child back at home.- "No, absolutely," said K. , 'I don't want any act of favor from the castle but my rights." Interestingly, the narrative now begins to deal with K.'s involvement in his new life with Frieda, and the replacement of Frieda with Pepi in Herrenhof; K.'s long conversation with Burgel and the Barnabas family. All these individual episodes can form narratives in their own way narrated from the point-of-view of different characters involved. Such a case of multiple interpretation makes the major narrative of K.'s sojourn into the castle more illusory and K. loses track of his being a land-surveyor in the first place. In the final chapter, we even find the landlady mistaking him for a tailor. It is rather amusing that she refuses to understand his proclaimed profession: "'What actually is it you are?' 'Land surveyor'.' 'What is that?' K. explained; the explanations made her yawn.' You're lost telling the truth. Why won't you tell the truth?" (C, 297). By denying recognition to the 'truth' of the matter, she is indeed pointing to the existential lack of self, closely related to the ontological uncertainty about whether one really exists or not. K. is never out of the castle precincts, he neither meets the castle Chief Klamm , neither does he ever gain admittance into the castle or officially confirm his appointment as the land surveyor. Austin Warren in his essay **Franz Kafka** writes: "Kafka is a metaphysical poet in symbolist narrative." and regards K. as a man in search of salvation. As the narrative pierces through one inset story to another inset story, the narrative implies that truth may after all be hidden beneath layers of appearance. Here the device of the framework technique is used to break down the normal narrative; the security of well rounded characters and three-dimensional outside world. Olga's narrative is a story within a story; but is a commentary on man's relation with a woman which is full of contempt. But Olga's narrative throws the reader into a state of greater confusion. Amalia rejecting Sortini, the Castellen, is not a sign of Amalia

not being in love with him. Unlike Kierkegaard's 'teleological suspension of the ethical' in *Fear and Trembling* where God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son is accepted without question; in Kafka it takes the shape of 'bad faith'. The text is replete with a number of ambivalent phrases like 'to a certain extent', 'perhaps', 'probably' 'and yet', all of it suggesting a kind of indeterminacy. After long passages of monologues; the Burgel episode is the only passage from dialogue is used; but K. falls asleep at this climactic moment, thus achieving no finality. The narrative is strewn with Chaplinesque comedy in describing the activity of the castle officials who are seen shouting, clapping, rejoicing, pouring water over each other, lacking seriousness and behaving more like petulant children. It is possible to read several levels of allegorical meanings in his text. The image of the castle can stand for Heaven and K.'s inability to penetrate the castle could symbolize the incomprehensibility of man to understand the mysterious ways of God. At the same time there can also be other symbolist interpretation. According to his biographer friend Max Brod, the figure of K. is also a projection of Kafka as a Jew, his exclusion from mainstream society, and his earnest desire for reintegration into it. K. could also symbolize Kafka as a bachelor seeking companionship through marriage which he could never fulfill in his life, and most important of all K. could also stand for man in his loneliness. Thus Kafka's works are not simply about man's relation to God but man's relation to man, because his existential crises arises from the fact that the major concern of the existentialists is not God or abstract ideas or theoretical formulations but mankind and the contingency of his life.

In the Penal Colony was written in October 1914. The opening describes the impersonal narrator describing the nonchalance of the explorer, the last minute adjustments of the officer and the dog-like submissiveness of the prisoner. These

suggestions imply an impersonal narrator who seems to be actually present at the site. But it is from the third paragraph onwards that the narratorial stance focuses more on the explorer's thoughts, in spite of the officer's long drawn account of the history of the apparatus, apparently to justify the legal system of the penal colony, while the explorer is all content to remain as an outside observer. Statements like 'the explorer intended to make no answer, but he felt the prisoner's gaze turned on him; it seemed to ask if he approved such goings-on' (CS,145), actually seem to be the narrative perspective not of the impersonal narrator but of the explorer. It serves to highlight the dialectical contradiction between the explorer's desire to remain an observer and the officer's insistence that he take sides. The apparent confusion of the narrator with the explorer is because the scene is limited to what the explorer sees and experiences, and the narrator is as ignorant about the officer as the explorer. The narrator is also as indifferent as the explorer in the officer's lengthy explanation. All that the narrator serves to do is to reveal the sadistic pride of the officer in his execution-apparatus, his blind acceptance of the penal system which acknowledges no right to the convict, his conviction in the absolute truth of his commandment, and his readiness to submit himself to the same torture to prove that truth. The convict's behavior and thought is interpreted from the explorer's point of view. For instance when the officer announces his release, free indirect speech is now used- 'Was it true? Was it only a caprice of the officer's, that might change again? Had the foreign explorer begged him off? What was it? One could read these questions on his face. But not for long. So whatever it might be, he wanted to be really free if he might, and he began to struggle so far as the Harrow permitted him' (CS, 161) ; or statements like- "The condemned man especially seemed struck with the notion that some great change was impending. What had happened to him was now going to happen to the

officer. Perhaps even to very end. Apparently the foreign explorer had given the order for it. So this was revenge. Although he himself had not suffered to the end, he was to be revenged to the end. A broad, silent grin now appeared on his face and stayed there all the rest of the time" (CS, 163). On the other hand the officer's thoughts are always prefaced by an 'as though' implying an observer reporting the officer's behavior- 'The officer smiled at the traveler *as though* he now expected him to'; or 'He looked sideways *as though* talking to himself.' This kind of aligning the narrator with the explorer helps to enhance the existential meaning of the story. It is a tale of horror, but even at its most painful moment Kafka undercuts the pain with humor; like the play with the ladies handkerchief by the condemned man in his last hour. The narrative filtered through the mind of the narrator help the reader's to understand the complex mental processes of the characters. It is a form which was already used by Thomas Mann in **Death in Venice**. Like K. in **The Trial**, here also the true motive of the hero is not revealed. Nothing is told about the past of the explorer or the purpose of his visit. Although his feelings of revulsion at the inhumanity of the execution make him appear as humanitarian, Kafka is able to eliminate the subjective responses on the explorer's past. Perhaps **In the Penal Colony** is one of the few complete stories written by Kafka where he has befittingly used the impersonal narrator. Kafka himself was dissatisfied by the ending of this story. The officer dies for his conviction but there is no such finality with the explorer as the flight of the explorer signifies refusing to take with him people who wanted to join him in his inadequacies. The story only continues to perpetuate an existential world fraught with uncertainty and doubt which the explorer carries with him. **In the Penal Colony** can be looked upon as a religious allegory with the officer religiously ritualizing the process of torture and death, and his death does invoke the idea of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The

officer's devout conviction, the belief in the Second Coming of the Commandment exemplified in the profound faith in the legal system no matter how brutal and illogical it may seem give it an aura of religious symbolism. The moral inconclusiveness of the ending suggests the deeper nature of problems which shall continue to gnaw mankind.

After having written **In the Penal Colony**, Kafka shows a marked preference for a personal narrator in the form of a major character. In **Blumfeld an Elderly Bachelor** written in 1914 there is a steady disintegration of the impersonal narrator. It has a very conventional opening like **The Judgment**: "One evening Blumfeld, an elderly bachelor, was climbing up to his apartment- a laborious undertaking, for he lived on the sixth floor" (CS, 183), making us ready to hear a story told retrospectively. The frequent reference to Blumfeld by his name is a pointer to his deep set insecurity and his desire for self-importance. Also there is a switch from the past tense of the reported speech to the present tense by the second paragraph helps us to have an access to the character's thought with ease. It requires no intellectual gymnastics to see the total alignment of the narrator with the character in statements like: "While taking the key from his pocket outside his room, he is startled by a sound coming from within. A peculiar rattling sound, very lively but very regular. Since Blumfeld has just been thinking of dogs, it reminds him of the sound produced by paws pattering one after the other over the floor. But paws don't rattle, so it can't be paws" (CS, 184-85). Henceforth whatever the reader sees and hears, follow the consciousness of Blumfeld. The narrator's function of the reporter of events or any other function associated with the traditional artifices of story-telling is reduced to nothingness. Perhaps the diffuse kind of an ending to this story is not an accident. Many regard this story as an 'artistic failure', but another story in the same mode is A

Hunger Artist, which is one of the most flawless works of Kafka. Unlike the earlier tales, the narrator here is in full control of the hunger artist's mind and situation. The peculiar authoritative stance of the narrator makes the plight of the hunger artist more real. It is to Eberhard Frey to whom goes the credit of giving an in-depth study of its style. The story was written as early as in 1922, but was published only in 1924 when it came out together in other stories- **First Grief; A Little Woman; and Josephine the Singer**. Frey points out the narrator's use of superlatives and the heavily emotionally loaded speech and how the narrator identifies with the hunger artist. Frey also points out some lapses in the narratorial description which are at times contradictory. For instance, the narrator begins by saying how the whole town took a lively interest in the hunger artist, but very soon he again reports, "On fine days the cage was set out in the open air, and then it was the children's special treat to see the hunger artist; for their elders he was often just a joke that happened to be in fashion" (CS, 268). Although the story starts as a treatise on the dying art of fasting but soon the narrative is a tale of disillusionment faced by the artist: "During these last decades the interest in professional fasting has markedly diminished. It used to pay very well to stage such great performances under one's own management, but today that is quite impossible. We live in a different world now" (CS, 268). Interestingly, it is also in the first paragraph that the narrator narrates the obsessive devotion to his art by the hunger artist in one long sentence of Two Hundred and Forty Eight words. The narrator reports with absolute clarity the plight of the artist when the watchers become lax in carrying out their duties by playing cards so as to give the hunger artist a chance to take a little refreshment, 'nothing annoyed the artist more than such watchers; 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. But that was of little use; they only wondered at his cleverness in being able to fill his mouth even while singing” (CS, 269). The narrator is unmistakably one with the artist in his anguish. The longest period of fasting which was fixed by the impresario was of forty days. On the fortieth day the cage would be bedecked with flowers amidst cheering spectators and the playing of the military band as the Hunger Artist would be helped by two young ladies, blissful at the honor. At this juncture, the narrative changes its flow as the hunger artist is filled with obdurate pride thinks: “Why stop fasting at this particular moment, after forty days of it? He had held out for a long time; why stop now, when he was in his best fasting form, or rather, not quite in his best fasting form?” (CS, 267). **The Hunger Artist** reveals the obsession with fasting and as such with the body. The body is one of the important preoccupations of the existential philosophy. It is deemed to be the site of immediate awareness of one’s being-in-the-world and through one participates in the world. The body for the existentialists is also the centre upon which the world reflects back, making man a kind of microcosm. Therefore the hunger artist through the renunciation of his bodily claim of hunger seeks to achieve a heightened awareness of his being-in-the-world. This heightened consciousness results in existential transcendence which is a kind of mystical trance. But the Hunger Artist fails to achieve this state as the narrative describes the aftereffects of fasting, melancholia with fits of violence, upon him. The dramatic revelation comes in the honest confession of the Hunger artist at the end of the story: “...because I couldn’t find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else” (CS, 277). In this way there is a gradual obliteration of the narrator towards the end of the story and much of the conversation now takes place in direct speech. Also the narrator had been assuming the role more

of a showman entailing him focus not on the mental agony of the hunger Artist who wanted to prove his dedication to art but more on fasting as an art. By the end of the story, the narrator's presence is totally wiped off because in extolling the virtue of fasting; the existential agony could be conveyed not by the narrator narrating the event from the outside but by the Hunger artist himself who was undergoing the process. Thus, the dramatic revelation proves the great showman, the perfect salesman selling the power of endurance, wrong.

As the years went by, Kafka now begins the use of the personal narration, which is a reflection of his new attitude towards fear and anxiety. His pet theme of the fate of the artist in the modern world is again used in **First Grief**. If fasting only tested the power of endurance with no worthy motive, the trapeze artist is a narration of his superb technical feat. It was published posthumously although it was written in Spring, 1922. **First Grief** is the story in this group of stories making use of the impersonal narrative. The trapeze artist is described as a brilliant performer, again obsessed with his art of airy suspension. The only thing that discomforts him were the journeys that they needed to undertake while shifting from one town to another. In spite of the great care taken by the manager, the journey still 'got on the nerves of the artist a great deal.' It is during one such journey that the lying on a luggage rack opposite the manager expresses the desire to have two facing trapezes instead on one. The manager at once agrees to it saying two trapezes could indeed produce more variety. This positive answer only distresses the trapeze artist to the utter disbelief of the manager. Finally when the matter of having two trapezes is settled and the artist is pacified with great difficulty, this time it leaves the manager deeply unsettled. The story ends with the following reflection of the manager: "But he himself was far from reassured, with deep uneasiness he kept glancing secretly at the trapeze artist over the

top of the book. Once such ideas began to torment him, would they ever quite leave him alone? Would they not increase in urgency? Would they not threaten his very existence? And indeed the manager believed he could see, during the apparent peaceful sleep what had succeeded the fit of tears, the first furrows of care engraving themselves upon the trapeze artist's smooth, child like forehead" (CS, 448). In this way the narrative has no definite closure or a dramatic outcome as such. The tension outgrows the story. The impersonal narrator who had described the trapeze artist's situation as idyllic in the beginning calling it ' quite healthful up there' or ' live peacefully like that' but what was apparently idyllic was not actually so. The narrator was oblivious of the fact that the desire for two trapezes was his desire to have a companion in his loneliness, a natural human instinct; and this time it was not to be a ' fellow acrobat crossing him at times, or the workman repairing the roof, or the fireman framing the emergency light as in the gallery' (CS,447) ; the trapeze artist now earnestly desired for a true companion.

The Village Schoolmaster or **The Giant Mole** is narrated by the chief participant, who is a businessman fascinated by the rumor of the appearance of a giant mole. The businessman finds his affinity in the schoolmaster in their common interest in the giant mole and also in their obsession to make a mark in this world through it. Although the story begins by narrating how the schoolmaster wanted to 'write a defense of the teacher, or more exactly, of the good intensions of an honest but uninfluent man' (CS, 170), but after a few lines the narrative goes, 'For it is in his heart he was convinced that I wanted to rob him of the fame of being the first man publicly to vindicate the mole' (CS, 172); and still more when the narrative betrays the businessman's insincere motives. The final paragraph shows the businessman's condescending attitude towards the village schoolmaster. The last line ends: 'As I

contemplated the stubborn little old fellow from behind, while he sat at the table, it seemed an impossible idea even to show him the door' (CS, 182). The story may be as Roy Pascal observes, a symptom of Kafka coming to terms with his own tormenting neuroses. "When you cannot do away with it, you can at least accept it", Kafka writes in another of his story **My Neighbour**. The first person narrator here is so tormented by the idea of his imagined rival neighbour that his sense of threat becomes almost comic: "Perhaps he doesn't wait even for the end of the conversation, but gets up at the point where the matter has become dear to him, flies through the town with his usual haste, and, before I have hung up the receiver is already at his goal working against me" (CS, 427). Another similar story dealing with this neurotic state of mind is **The Burrow**. The first person narrative of the badger is his obsession with fortifying his burrow against unforeseen danger. Even after digging a series of passages and cells, the badger tests it by watching it from above the ground. Having done all he can to fortify his burrow, it is the badger himself who gives away the reason of his ungrounded fear; that the anxiety lies not outside him, but in his inside. He tells: "These anxieties are different from ordinary ones, provides richer in content, often long repressed but in their destructive effects they are perhaps much the same as the anxieties that existence in the outer world gives rise to" (CS, 339). This makes the badger and his burrow 'indissolubly together', and that even in its silence, the burrow seems to 'answer' him, until he is disturbed by a persistent noise. The narrative ends with the badger investigating the cause of the noise and making presumptions of the invisible creatures gnawing his burrow. The ending of the story has again a sense of continuity, as if the story could not have had any finality. The ending is very much like the ending of **The Castle** where the incomplete sojourn seemed designed to be incomplete in principle, rather than by accident.

Another story of obsession is **A Little woman** written towards the end of 1923, narrated in the first person. The story has no conclusive ending, in spite of a concrete beginning and the use of the present tense through out. The narrator seems to force the reader's attention on the unreasoned rancor of the little woman over him. Interestingly unlike the other tales in these stories of obsession; **A Little Woman** focuses more on the painful neurosis endured by the little woman caused by him: "Every now and then, and more frequently of late, information is brought to me that she has risen of a morning pale, unslept, oppressed by headache and almost unable to work; her family are worried about her, they wonder what can have caused her condition, and they have not yet found the answer . I am the only one who knows that it is her settled and daily renewed vexation with me" (CS,318). The narrator is so obsessed with her hatred for him that he imagines the little woman waging a public conspiracy against him. However, there are no concrete evidence to prove it. In fact the narrator even doubts her symptom of illness. This does not deter him still from believing that even his death would not pacify her rage. The suggestion of his friend to leave the city for a holiday also is rejected by him. Thus he continues to live under a state of paranoia, until he decides to live his life 'untroubled' by the world, despite all the outbursts of the woman. These stories of obsession leading to anxiety are an indication of an existential state of mind. Anxiety is not to be confused with fear here, for fear is caused by an object but anxiety is totally ungrounded, be it the neuroses of **The Village Schoolmaster** by a groundless cause of an imagined giant mole, or the neuroses suffered by the narrator because of his imagined rival in **My Neighbour** , or the unidentified threat faced by the badger in **The Burrow** . Existential Anxiety causes the existent to flee from oneself unable to confront oneself; and supposing all else to be ordered until the realization that the order is actually unstable and can be

discarded at will. Such preoccupation with existential anxiety which was a pet theme of Kafka could only be brought out because of his unique narrative mode. On the other hand, many of Kafka's shorter stories are in the form of fables and parable. Although the simplicity and bare objectivity that marks these forms are found in Kafka but no definite interpretation can be given to them. Unlike a fable as a parable, whose primary motive is moral and spiritual injunction, the stories of Kafka are open-ended inviting several interpretation and every interpretation as Ingeborg Henel says is 'equally meaningless'* Heinz Politzer's **Franz kafka : Parable and Paradox** provides an in depth and scholarly study of Kafka's parable with meassages linking it to the Jewish tradition. Human aspirations are here translated through the form of the fable, whereby a solitary individual waits for divine mediation.

Kafka also uses a lot of animal symbolism derived from Jewish folklore; and as transformations were often regarded as punishments for transgression in the Jewish folklore from this angle Gregor Samsa's transformation can be seen as a punishment for transgressing the authority of his father. One of the common motif of the Jewish folklore is the implication of the common mortals in crime as seen in Joseph K. implicated in *The Trial* and who willingly succumbs to the power of the law. Form the very outset the narrative suggests that the trial would be a farce. Before the Law is a kind of rabbinical discourse. The metaphor of the 'trained animal' for the assimilated Jew is taken from the novel by Mendele called **The Mare** (1876). Kafka's interest in Zionism is inspired by his reading of several books and particularly Richard Lichtheim's **The Zionist Programme**. Lichtheim describes forced assimilation of the Jews in the following manner:

The systematic aping of foreign manners, anxious glances in the direction of the 'others', the artificial covering up of anything that

could be seen as distinctly Jewish, this becomes the Law of Life. Already we have a Jewish anti-Semitism which attempts to demonstrate, in a comic and repugnant fashion, justifications for anti-Semitism and Jewish inferiority. Zionism wants to lead us out of this spiritual wasteland.

(Lichtheim, 1913,22)

The Animal in the Synagogue is a fragmentary narrative where a martin like creature, engraved in a synagogue comes alive and the Rabbis considering these images as distraction for prayers makes an effort for its expulsion. It is a kind of commentary on the Jewish scriptures. **Investigations of a Dog** echoes the myth of the wandering Jew, the dog's metaphor is used for the Jewish life in exile. Like many Zionists, the dog narrator thinks it not right that the dog community should obey the commandments of a foreign law. The silent willingness on the part of the dog community recalls one of Ahad Haam who said that 'the Jews are no longer the people of Scripture but the slaves of Scripture.'¹¹ Kafka had read this book with great interest. The predicament of the Jews is also referred by one of Kafka's school friends Hugo Bergmann (1883-1975): "The Jews want the *Guluth* [Exile]" (Bergmann, 1919, 36). The story **Investigations of a Dog** has no linear narrative as the narrative breaks down at several points and it is interspersed with humorous anecdotes at several points. These humorous anecdotes are like Rabbinical texts. The dog narrator's encounter with the 'musical dogs' could imply Kafka's love for Yiddish theatre and Jewish mysticism. Also the 'air dogs' could symbolize the tenacity of the Jews. Iris Bruce correlates this story to Kafka's growing interest in Jewish Children Literature. Reference may be here made of the fact that in the year 1920, the Jewish Elementary School was founded in Prague and Kafka along with Felice Bauer collected children's literature instructional materials. A discussion on the narrative pattern remains

incomplete without discussing these animal parables composed mostly during the last phase of Kafka's life. What attracts our attention is the anthropomorphic treatment of these animals. These animals are not just simple narrators of events but also characters involved. These animals think and act as humans do, making us believe that they are not animals but human beings with masks of animals. The objectivity marking the earlier tales is distinctly missing with the tenses virtually shuttling between past and present, and like most of Kafka's stories these animal tales also do not have a rounding off of events or a definite closure. Most of these parables have a non-personal narrator as in **Little Fable**, written in 1920 about a mouse and a cat. Traditionally, mouse and cat can symbolize various human qualities of timidity and ferocity, hunter and hunted, and the like; and this little fable could provide a moral like not to trust your every as not to follow the same path all life. But the fable, apparently simple does not provide any definite moral lesson; it merely baffles the mind. The narrator occupies an authoritarian stand and the parable ending with a simple yet final phrase 'and ate it up' is a supreme example of dramatic economy in narrative art.

Kafka's narrative pattern is simple and lucid; one can find a sense of reality even in the most extraordinary circumstances. While in the biblical parables, meanings are to be deduced from concrete images; in the parables of Kafka varied meanings tussle to suggest only meaninglessness. The narrative technique in Kafka moves from being a purely realist narrative to a grotesque nightmare. In **On Parables** the parable of 'going over' is actually the movement away from the real world to a dream like state, which is uncanny, fantastical, even absurd resulting in the 'Kafkaesque'. **The Castle** the jerky movement of the narrative prose hints at the frustrated effort of K. in reaching the castle. The long winding sentences and convolutions in Kafka's narrative

points to the difficult exhaustion due to the threat of the unknown. Yet one cannot ignore the tenacity of Kafka's protagonists in their effort to reach their goal; this explains much of the urgency in the narrative. Also the narrator shows a cold detachment as seen **In the Penal Colony** where the narrator displays complete indifference in explaining the cruel torture machine.

Jackals and Arabs is a first person narrative of a person woken up by a pack of jackals, instigating him to relieve them from the clutches of the Arab, seeing him as a kind of messiah. The man only expresses like inability – "I am not competent to judge; it seems to me a very old quarrel; I suppose its in the blood and perhaps will only end with it" (CS, 408). The dramatic entry of the whip – cracking Arabs ridiculously changes the situation. There is comic irony for the savior now becomes the saved by the Arab from the menacing jackals, who immediately flee the place to pounce upon dead carrion thrown by the Arabs. The lust for the Arab's blood is forgotten, and the beast remains not only 'fools' but bestial fools. In the parable "**Give it up!**" written in 1922, the narrator himself is involved in a particular situation. Finding his way to the station, the narrator turn to the policeman, who could only say, 'Give it up, give it up' (CS, 456) with a flourish. The parable could send a message of uncertainty of the individual in a world of disorder but Politzer sees it bearing no existential message. But '**Give it up!**' could also mean giving up one's existence, the threat of the very annihilation of oneself gives the parable a terrifying conclusion. The first person t is successful in conveying the bewilderment at failed help from expected quarter. **Testimonials**, written in 1922, is more in the parabolic form with a moral injunction. In it we see the narrator formulating a way of survival. The narrator here is undoubtedly Kafka himself learning to make painful adjustment in his life as a marginalized Jew and his soul-destroying job. The switch from the past tense to

present tense makes it more personal. Another parable on a similar vein is **Poseidon**. Notice the comic irony in Poseidon. Poseidon the name mythically associated with the God of the Seas , and brother of the mighty Zeus , should here be so prisoned down by earthly matters .The narrative device of understatement is glimpsed in the last line of the tale : ‘ just before the end and having gone through the last account , he could still make a quick tour’ (CS, 435). It is enough to convey a glimmer of escape from the Kafkaesque trap.

Now the use of myth in the narrative art of Kafka is an interesting observation. Most Romantic philosophers and poets and literary figures of Germany see in the power of myth a higher spiritual insight. They identified the myth with reality just as the way they identified poetry with truth. Realism in Kafka is not naturalistic realism although his interest in scientific naturalism has evoked many scholars like Wilhelm Emrich to look for naturalistic traits in Kafka. Emrich mentions how in his exactness of descriptions and precision of details that are graphically and concisely recorded make him similar to Arno Holz and Emile Zola. Kafka’s works are often considered as surrealist rather than naturalist realism. It is as if he were trying to break through the frigidity of concrete reality to release the latent energies inside. In naturalism there is accumulation of outside fact, massing of details; characters are reduced to standard types and the outside environment displacing the hero. Unfortunately it would be a representation of an inert world possessing no depth only length-wise dissection of consciousness. It was from myth that “they saw all things in a new shape. They could not return to the common world- the world of the *profanum vulgus*” (Cassier, 1946, 5). The resurgence of the cult of the myth in the modern age could be due to factors like the fulfillment of the neo-primitivistic urge; or nostalgic archaism; or because it offered a release from the flux of temporality. The stability of the myth encourages

Kafka to use the mythic form because it provided to him a sense of groundedness and made his existence concrete when his own history threatened to erase him from the face of the universe. Often myths as narratives is linked with rite; hence for Kafka too, in his mythic stories the process of writing then becomes a kind of ritual enactment which made him feel more purer and more whole. Cassirer perhaps derived his idea of the myth as a ritual or sacred act from S.M.Hooke who writes:

The originators were not occupied with general questions concerning the world but with certain practical and pressing problems of daily life. They were the main problems of securing the means of subsistence, of keeping the sun and moon doing their duty, of ensuring the regular flooding of the Nile, of maintaining the bodily vigor of the King who was the embodiment of the prosperity of the community.....In order to meet these needs the early inhabitants of Egypt and Mesopotamia developed a set of customary activities directed toward a definite end. Thus the coronation of a King consisted of a regular pattern of actions, of things prescribed to be done, whose purpose was to fit the King completely to be the source of the well-being of the community. It is in the sense in which we shall use the term 'ritual'.

(Hooke, 1949,6)

Thus the origin of the myth has less to do with scientific and philosophic speculations but more to do with satisfying the emotions. Myth also provides refuge from the burden of history; however, this supplanting does not provide comfort to Kafka because he linked art with creativity and not stagnation. Unlike the mythic imagination, in the artistic imagination there is certain freedom, certain liberation from the actual, the material and the objectifying power of the myth. So it is due to the timeless unity of the myths that there is totality, unity of thought and action, word and deed. Kafka uses the mythic form as a mode of self-revelation. **A Report for an**

Academy is the earliest of the animal tale published in the collection **A Country Doctor** in 1917. It is a report reported by an ape to the members of a Academy narrating the account of his former life. He narrates how he was shot in two places – once in the cheek where the wound earned him the name of Red Peter and the second shot below the hip. What ensues is a series of human maltreatment until the ape realized that he had to stop being an ape – “I had no way out but I had to devise one , for without it I could not live ” (CS, 253). His ‘way out’ was not the thought of escape, for either way he could only meet more punishment or death. So the ape starts to mimic man, he learns to spit, smoke, drink; and once even uttered ‘Hallo’ to the absolute delight of men around. In this way the ape tells us his development by adopting ‘the average, culture of a European’, in a highly official language as in a formal report. The ape’s narration shows no regret in having to forget his inheritance and having to adjust in a new environment: “I repeat: there was no attraction for me in imitating human beings; I imitated them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason” (CS, 257). Many critics like W. Emrich and Heinz Politzer see in the ape the abandonment of selfhood. The existential crisis here is in the ape, a symbol of the marginalized as a Jew, but also because when you had doubts about your own ability of living with your own community. The comic irony is seen in the ape adjusting to the ways of the human society about whose efficacy one seriously doubts. The narrative is authentic in a sense it reveals the great divide that lie between two ways of life. For instance the ease with which the ape could pull down his trousers before the visitors show where the shot went in; or when he says: “A fine clear train of thought, which I must have constructed somehow with my belly, since apes think with their bellies” (CS, 253). The narrative of the ape seems quite honest when he speaks about the concept of freedom .Freedom was not his choice, like the

existential man, he was only interested in a 'way out'. The narrative of the ape is devoid of any emotion for the story ends with the ape proclaiming that his report was specifically meant for a learned society. This tale is different from **Investigations of a Dog** which is more of a metaphysical rambling of a narrator dog, written in 1922. It is a cumbrous speculation of a dog – world where the dog wants to find place yet is painfully aware of his singularity. The tale echoes Aesop and Apuleius' **The Golden Ass**; or Swift's **Gulliver's Travels** and Orwell's **Animal Farm**, where these anthromorphic animals provide a commentary on human society through their own social attitudes and relationships. The dog suffers from a sense of self-delusion as when he gives a metaphysical dimension to the group of dancing – dogs, for we, as readers, can understand that there is really nothing mysterious about a pack of dogs performing in a circus. Similarly, the investigations undertaken by the dog regarding the source of food which comes 'from above' willfully refusing to accept the simple fact of food actually being thrown by their human masters from above, calling it the 'theory of incantation' (CS, 315). At the end, the dog lies in a pool of bloody vomit proving his test (reminiscent of Kafka's ill-health due to consumption at this stage), until he is overwhelmed by the sudden music reverberating in the air. Thus the dog dies with his convictions speculating on freedom: "Prize freedom higher than everything else. Freedom! Certainly such freedom as is possible today is a wretched business. But nevertheless freedom, nevertheless a possession" (CS, 316). It is fitting that a series of investigations regarding existence should end with the idea of freedom, for existence is inextricably linked with freedom.

The Emperor's Message, published in 1919, is about the message which the emperor in his death-bed whispers to the ear of his messenger to 'carry to you the humble subject'. The messenger passes through obstructing walls, crowded rooms, one

chamber after another, for thousands of years. Interestingly, the supposedly objective narrator knows that never shall the message reach the outer most gate. And if he should, the narrator confidently tells, "the imperial capital would be for him, the centre of the world, crammed to bursting with its own sediment. Nobody could find his way through here even with a message from a dead man. But you sit at your window when evening falls and dream it to yourself." Thus the parable ends on a note of hope ascertaining the power of faith which is not there in **Home-Coming** (1920). The parable **Home-Coming** is clearly an inversion of the biblical parable of the Prodigal Son. But unlike the biblical parable, here the prodigal son, also the narrator, does not submit himself to the forgiveness of the father and family. The narrative conveys the hesitancy of the returning son: "Who will receive me? Who is waiting behind the kitchen door? Smoke is coming from the chimney, the coffee is being made for supper. Do you feel at ease, do you feel at home? I don't know, I am very uncertain" (CS, 445), until at last the returning son removes all thoughts of his happy reunion. The rambling narrative in present tense is enough to convey that the barrier is his own creation. It is who himself who is alienated and lacks the temerity of entering his Father's home. While the traditional parable bespeaks of hope through moral tales, Kafka's parable bespeaks of the perpetuation of uncertainty, but which can be overcome by going out. The existential philosophy postulates that man is not to be a self-enclosed entity. Man derives meaning only by reaching out, but Kafka, like the returning son, faced a thousand thoughts and thousand deaths, before crossing the bar to achieve transcendence. Man is an existent first, rather than a thinking subject; what gives meaning to being is not the involvement with the thoughts behind the act of living-in-the-world, but with the simple fact of existence. Perhaps, this idea is best summed up in the parable **On Parable**, where the objective narrator states that

the incomprehensible is best left incomprehensible; for what threatens existence is not the incomprehensible but the banality of everyday struggle.

The last story completed by Kafka was **Josephine, the Singer, or the nation of mice**, published in the year 1924, the year Kafka died. The narrator here is a mouse narrating the piping talent of a female mouse, Josephine. The narrative here lacks the insight to Josephine's mind and so while conveying the prowess of Josephine, also shows how she is different from the mice-community. He presumes that the mice community can understand Josephine's singing, while she believes she was 'singing to deaf ears.' The narrative makes plenty of generalizations of how the mice-community are not a music-loving race, and how their life is fraught with other concerns. Thus, in the beginning itself, the narrator tries to find out the meaning of Josephine's music, and if at all Josephine's piping could be called singing. Like the dog in **Investigations of a Dog** here the mouse investigates why people throng to listen to Josephine's songs overcoming several obstacles. In submitting to Josephine's caprice like a father to a child's and even risking their lives. Although Josephine thinks it is she who protects the people through her singing, but the narrator mouse thinks contrarily: "May Josephine be spared from perceiving that the mere fact of our listening to her is proof that she is no singer. An intuition of it she must have, else why does she so passionately deny we do listen, only she keeps on singing and piping her intuition away" (CS, 368). The narrator leads us to no final solution to the mystery surrounding Josephine and her music, and further digresses by making generalized statements on the mouse-community- the lack of youth in mouse, their rapid proliferation by breeding, and finally to her prayers from the exemption of daily work citing physical stress hampering her singing. Interestingly, the mice-community is repeatedly addressed as people, so that we are often bound to forget that we are

only reading about animals. Their 'impenetrable front' makes her cut short her grace notes; pleads she is physically drained out; bursts into tears and ultimately vanishes. The narrative ends with a number of questions, still no where to solving the enigma of Josephine's music, even a sense of bewildered astonishment at the ease with which she shed off the power she had assumed through her art. The narrative ends with a fitting tribute to Josephine and the last paragraph reads like an epitaph on Josephine's grave: "So perhaps we shall not miss so very much after all, while Josephine, redeemed from the earthly sorrows which to her thinking lay in wait for all chosen spirits, will happily lose herself in the numberless throng of the heroes of our people, and soon, since we are not historians, will rise to the heights of redemption and be forgotten like all her brothers" (CS, 376). Although we are not presented with an insight to Josephine's mind, we do begin to understand the functioning of the mice-community through their social attitudes to Josephine. The linguistic sophistication and official jargon present in the early animal tales is absent here. There is a lot of comic irony in between the pages, like Josephine's audience becoming still as a mouse; or the way in which the crowd thronged in multitudes with messengers and sentries involved. The humor is not meant to provoke laughter but to point out the oddity involved. The narrator mouse identifies not with Josephine but with the general mice-community, and unabashedly joins them in their cold meanness. When Josephine hurts her foot, the narrator mouse echoes the sentiments of their community: "Granted that her frail body is extra-sensitive, she is yet one of us and we are a race of workers ; if we were to start limping every time we got a scratch, the whole people would never be limping" (CS, 375). This confirms our suspicion that Josephine has not really been represented truthfully by the narrator, but more as a primma-donna given to childish tantrums at the drop of a hat, and thus forgotten to

oblivion once she vanishes. There are several allegorical meanings in the story. Max Brod sees the mice-community as the allegory of the segregated and endangered Jew community; Roy Pascal sees in it the tragic fate of the artist in the modern world; and Heinz Politzer sees it as a commentary on the unwholesome relationship between the artist and the community. However, for the Existentialists alienation is chiefly understood in terms of its inwardness, meaning the danger of being alienated from one's own self, and thus the quest for authentic selfhood. Assumed that Josephine may be alienated from her mice-community but what redeems is her passionate effort of reaching out through her singing. The idea of Josephine reaching 'heights of redemption' relegates into background the idea of Josephine's nullity. It is a positive resurgent image of a creature liberated from the tiredness of putting-up of a continuous show to an insensitive community. It can also be interpreted as a kind of spiritual affirmation, and even in her death, Josephine continues to find her place in their lives, unknown and unacknowledged by them.

Kafka was a careful observer of life and events; and this was the reason of his highly ingenuous narrative pattern. Max Brod while talking on his narrative pattern appreciates it for its 'matter-of-factness'; while Edwin Muir, one of his major translators calls it 'exquisitely just'; still others use epithets like 'absolute precision', 'complete honesty', 'scrupulous care', 'scientific lucidity', and the like for Kafka's narrative pattern. His narrative pattern is also known for its impression of clarity, purity and naturalness. Friedrich Beissner finds a 'uniqueness of meaning' in Kafka's narrative style. We saw how the narrator submerged into the central character's point of view; thus constantly evading the fixity of any final meaning, not even by the narrator or the characters involved. In most of Kafka's fiction there is very little forward progression; and thus the static nature of narration only delays rather than

postponing any finality. The readers are left in a state of suspense, straddling between the network of metaphors and denied the joy of finding any ultimate meaning. Likewise it is difficult, rather impossible to deduce any definite meaning out of his host of writings; his language being mercurial almost impenetrable like the castle. Both the maze of the castle or the intricacies of the court reflect the ramifications of the thought consciousness. Kafka is known for his simplicity of prose style, shorn off all artificial embellishments, uninfluenced by the affected nineteenth century European style. Kafka's narrative pattern is different from the comic satire of Rabelias or the bitter laughter of Swift. Rather one can find elements of Manippean satire in its use of the fantastic, moral-psychological experimentation, representation of aberrant state of psyche, dreams, split personality, eccentric behavior, and its concern with current and topical issues or 'the creation of extraordinary situations from the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea, a discourse, a truth, embodied in the image of a wise man, the seeker of this truth." Kafka's works are also not exactly allegorical although the conceptual framework to existential human situation is temptingly present, and his works as a commentary on his life as a marginalized writer, or his time with historical upheavals cannot be overlooked.