

CHAPTER - V

Realism and Fantasy

How incomplete a moment is human life, incomplete because a life like this could last forever and still be nothing but a moment.

Franz Kafka, *Diaries*, October 19, 1921.

The literature of transformations or the fantasy of transformations has attracted many writers from Ovid to Apuleius and from Donne and Keats to Virginia Woolf. Kafka is a writer who has unconsciously produced a body of literature of transformations where the play of realism and fantasy are finely worked out. Should these transformations be regarded as flight from reality; or is there still the autonomy of the self or the existent; and what effect do these transformations cast upon the others; or does it imply a split between the mental domain and the physical domain because the transformations are only at the physical level; these are questions that will be discussed in this chapter. Kafka does not provide simplistic answers to these questions or else how would one explain the transformed creatures responding like a human being in his works. To begin with, Kafka is an eternal dreamer. All his works – aphorisms, parables, diaries, letters and novels, both in its form and content, are an expression of his dream-like inner life. They may be ephemeral and bizarre but real, revealing the dark condition of being human. We see in these works the existential sensibility plagued by irrational world and neurotic ambivalence. Normally dreams serve as an outlet for meeting those psychic needs that are not fulfilled in the conscious day-time but for Kafka, the demons of his repressed self tear at him with increasing violence. Kafka mercilessly dissects the nethermost depths of his being, which serve as materials for his works. His works, though dream-like, are not

unorganized. Kafka had full control over what he was writing which is explained by the use of an objective narrator in most of his works to convey such deeply subjective experience. They are actually as Calvin S. Hall and Richard E. Lind in **Dreams, Life, and Literature: A Study of Franz Kafka** (1970) calls it 'the highly disciplined and refined product of a powerful intellect'. Through the use of this dualism of realism and fantasy, Kafka is able to convey the dark terrors of his existential angst that threatened him at every step. His life was beset with estrangement not only from his family, his Jewish identity, and his soul-destroying job and most important of all, his estrangement from himself. These conflicts both outside and within him made Kafka take refuge in the dream world. "The clocks are not in unison", ^{wrote} Kafka in his diary entry of January 16, 1922. For Kafka the conflict between the two worlds while competing to outrun the other threatens him to death or insanity. Yet, Kafka could objectify the inner world without losing its inward ephemeral nature. The reality of the inner world is thus experienced by plunging straight into the reality of this inner world. The disordered flux of a dream is absent because Kafka tells his dreams not from a dreamer's point of view but as a waking observer of dream. There is no doubt that Kafka was influenced by Plato's doctrine of ideas without ascribing to Plato's eternal essences because Kafka believed in subjective reality. The outside and the inside co-exist in Kafka and unlike the 'monologue interior', Kafka uses the language of the outer world to express the reality of the inner world. This feature as Max Brod points out, brings Kafka and Kliest together, as in both of them realistic detail is counterbalanced by their tendency to create a dream-atmosphere. The artist as an exile from reality was a common preoccupation in German literature from Goethe to Grillparzer and Thomas Mann. The conflict between the 'real' world and the 'spiritual' world was also a common preoccupation with Kliest and Holderlin too. In

Kafka, realism and fantasy are mingled leading to a paradoxical situation. In **The Castle**, K. needs to confirm his appointment as a land-surveyor first even before accepting the reality of the castle. However, his appointment or K.'s contacts with the castle are considered as figments of his imagination. The villagers of the castle tell K.: "You haven't once up till now come into real contact with our authorities. All those contacts have been illusory, but owing to your ignorance of the circumstances you take them to be real" (C, 73). Kafka's style is also influenced by some other German-Austrian-French writers like Stifter and Grillparzer. For Grillparzer 'life acquires the character of a dream and the dream maintains an uncanny reality.' Kafka shared the same uncanny feeling of being trapped in the crisis of modernism. There are no logical explanation, no linear progression of action, and no development of characters. All that one encounters in Kafka is a world fraught with existential absurdity and this is presented with the concrete images and the precise lucidity. One of his translators Edwin Muir has aptly pointed out the imaginative power of Kafka by which he is able to create a world more real from the real, and how it is only at such moments that truth, the higher reality, can be discerned.

Kafka does not just give banal photographic representation of life but an insight into the things that is more compellingly truthful than reality itself. Thus what appears fantastical is actually the truth of the matter, the reality of the author's vision. While both realism and fantasy claim exclusive epistemological and symbolic validity within their separate spheres, neither can hide its roots in the other. In Kafka, both realism and fantasy operate at all levels of narrative wherein a critically evaluated content, situation or characters are taken to fantastic heights to produce significant meanings. Impossible events occur with an air of inevitability and Kafka does not bother to give explanations for it. Perhaps, it was an expression of his existential necessity, or the so-

called anguish of being. Kafka shared with the Existentialists the conviction of the contingency of human life. Robert G. Olsen explains: "The anguish of being is properly the anguish one experiences at the thought that nothing and nobody might have come into existence or that everything and everybody might go out of existence in an instant" (Olson, 1961, 31). Human reason seems to be incapable of explaining this anguish of being and therefore absolute existence remains shrouded in mystery. Kafka acutely felt this anguish of being which consequently alienated him from any sources of his being; but rather than plunging into despair, Kafka tries to fathom the meaning of his being through his writings. Like most leading modern realist writers, Kafka focuses on the ambiguity and uncertainty inherent in man. Ontologically speaking, man is by nature solitary, unable to enter into relationships with other human beings. Georg Lukacs quotes Thomas Wolfe in his book **The Meaning of Contemporary Realism** :

My view of the world is based on the firm conviction that solitariness is by no means a rare condition, something peculiar to myself or to a few specially solitary human beings but the inescapable, central fact of human existence.' Man, thus imagined, may establish contact with other individuals, but only in a superficial, accidental manner; only, ontologically speaking, by retrospective reflection. For 'the others', too, are basically solitary, beyond significant human relationships.

(Lukacs , 1962,20)

The existential awareness of one's own being as a fact that is to be accepted is designated by the word '*facticity*', a term which is used to designate the limiting factor in existence. No one chooses to be, he simply finds himself in existence. Martin Heidegger has used the expression '*thrownness-into-being*' (*Geworfenheit Dasein*) , a metaphor for man's factual condition. Human possibilities are always set against a

framework of facticity, sometimes broad offering many choices, at other times narrow, almost stifling. But in most cases, the threat of tragedy due to the frustration of possibilities looms large because for all that man is, man really does not know why he exists. He is forsaken or thrown unfathomably, which further implies that man neither develops nor is developed by his contact with the world. In this respect, the external world of reality appears static; it is only the narrator or the examining subject who changes in course of time. Therefore the existentialists insist that it is only in action that existence attains concreteness and fullness. Through the phrase 'self as agent', both Kierkegaard and Gabriel Marcel support the dynamic view of man, but which is not to be confused with the functional view of man. As John Macquarrie elucidates:

Man is more than the task he performs and the role he plays. He is the unity of a person who expresses himself in all these activities or, perhaps better expressed, makes himself in these activities. His actions are more than empirically observable deeds, for in them he is both projecting and realizing an image of personhood.

(Macquarrie, 1972, 137)

Kafka's existential crisis lies in his inability to realize his self as a whole. In this respect, Kafka's two chief early works **Description of a Struggle** and **Wedding Preparations in a Country** would make an interesting study. The first draft of the unfinished story **Description of a Struggle** was written in 1904-05. The story opens with the narrator's solitariness in the midst of a feast of life. He is estranged not only from the others but also from his own self as well until his solitariness is intruded by a new acquaintance much to his chagrin. The descriptive detail till here is realistic until Part -ii which is a phantasmagoria of dissolving landscape and figures, a reflection of the narrator's conflict-ridden self to effect changes in a minute, his wish to dissolve

himself. The narrative is now a series of disconnected conversations, reflections and fantastic images. The narrator relies on his imaginative power to transform the landscape to surrealistic heights of the dream world to come to the truth that all this in this earth boil down to nothing. When the Supplicant says to the interlocutor: "And I hope to learn from you how things really are, why it is that around me things sink away like fallen snow, whereas for other people even , a little liqueur glass stands on the table steady as a statue" (CS, 34); the illusory quality of reality that all things lack cohesiveness is revealed. Even the supplicant has doubts in his own existence and has to look outside himself as a proof to his reality. **Description of a Struggle** is a fantastical situation presented as real, where the narrator, by the power of his words is able to bring about fantastic changes in the world outside. He calls them "Diversions, or Proofs That It Is Impossible to Live". He walks on a wintry night on the streets of Prague, the only story in which actual Prague is mentioned, but takes on fantastic proportions as he commands the world outside with his words. Words can create a phantasmagoria of images where the self is no more a flesh but a pure spirit and then there is no divide between the two worlds. Marthe Robert has rightly put it:

This is the world of all-powerful thought, where desires are fulfilled more magically than in magic, before they have been formulated; but it is also a purely linguistic realm, where a well-constructed sentence instantly makes its content a reality and, anticipating the desire that dictated it, provokes the event instead of representing it. In this realm the weakest, most disarmed of persons is endowed with fantastic strength by reason of his weakness, which forces to be pure spirit.

(Robert, 1982,136)

Likewise, **Wedding Preparations in the Country** starts with a realistic descriptive realism with Eduard Raban looking at the pavement, people walking on the pavement,

girl holding puppy, two gentlemen exchanging information, lady carrying ribbon and flowers, men smoking and talking- realistic description to the point of banality. Eduard Raban, apparently getting ready to meet his fiancée, finds himself cut off from this feast of life. All that he wishes to do is dream himself being changed into a beetle to avoid life and love: "The form of a large beetle, yes. Then I would pretend it was a matter of hibernating, and would press my little legs to my bulging belly. And I would whisper a few words, instructions to my sad body, which stands close beside me, bent. Soon I shall have done- it bows, it goes swiftly, and it will manage everything efficiently while I rest" (CS, 56). In 'The Wedding Preparations in a Country,' the stranger tells the story of the fat man who wishes to recreate the outside world to suit himself. The Fat Man again tells a story of the man who contests with the instability of the outside reality. Thus here one inset story is meshed with another inset story; and reality is embedded beneath the layers of appearance.

This obsession with being transformed into an insect or animal is worked out more rigorously in **The Metamorphosis** and other works like **A Country Doctor**. The first of his great stories is **The Judgment**, written in one long stretch of time on the night of September 22-23, 1912. It is a triumphant release of his imaginative powers. The story opens with a perfectly realistic description and yet in many ways a strange one: "It was a Sunday morning in the very height of spring. Georg Bendemann, a young merchant, was sitting in his room on the first floor of one of a long row of small, ramshackle houses stretching beside the river which were scarcely distinguishable from each other in height and coloring" (CS, 77). It is the story of Georg, who writes a letter to his friend in Russia about his professional and personal success; and the ensuing dialogue between father and son; and the absurd sentencing to death by drowning by his father. The superficial impression of the story is the personal success

of Georg against the failure of his friend in Russia; the domestic comfort of home enjoyed by Georg to the cold alien ness associated with his friend. Never for once does the narrative betray the actual position of his friend first hand as the conversation between the father and the son becomes increasing unreal and grotesque. To the question of the father asking if the friend in St. Petersburg was real; Georg avoids a direct answer. Rather, he concentrates on the decrepit father not taking care of himself and his own guilt in his neglect. The image of the senile and decrepit father is strengthened as Georg puts his father to bed. But no sooner is he put to bed, he regains his lost strength and immediately springing erect in bed explodes: "You wanted to cover me up, I know my young sprig, but I'm far from being covered up yet. And even if this is the last strength I have, it's enough for you, too much for you. Of course, I know your friend. He would have been a son after my own heart. That's why you've been playing him false all these years. Why else? Do you think I haven't been sorry for him? And that's why you had to lock yourself up in your office- the Chief is busy, mustn't be disturbed – just so that you could write your lying little letters to Russia. But thank goodness a father doesn't need to be taught how to see through his son" (CS, 84-85). Georg is made to see the reality of the father's version of reality with such force that even Georg begins to acknowledge that truth. The reality of Georg's world is spilled into the fantastic with the transformation of the weak father into the image of strength. The phrase 'cover me up' stands for the son's effort to bury the father's presence but the father is not ready to be usurped by his son. The meekness and devotion which Georg shows for his father, supplemented with the maid's utterance of the word "Jesus!" upon seeing him running to submit himself to his father's order of death is sufficient to provoke the image of Christ and his willful sacrifice. Realistic presentation also makes use of linguistic, physical, historical,

cultural and psychological elements. In Kafka, instead of mimetic realism, there is a pronounced psychological realism wherein the individual subject is the locus of presentation. In each of the other elements of realism, the narrative at times oversteps them and such transgression leads to a fantastic interpretation of the real world. It is interesting to note that Kafka's faithfulness to external descriptive art makes him appear almost a naturalist like Emile Zola but Kafka's genius lies in his ability to go beyond the surface reality, to reach the truth. Realism constantly attempts to capture what is a 'true to life' aspect of a constantly shifting society which makes it a relative phenomenon. On the other hand, the narrative use of fantasy does not push realism into a world of abstraction but rather Kafka x-rays through the real world to reach surrealistic heights. He gives a bold vision of the 'real' unreality which lies behind, beneath, and beyond the frontiers of realism in other writers. This fracture between the real and the fantastic in **The Judgment** is a reminder of the fractured existential world. Like dreams, the surface of the text hides shadowy depths of meaning. There is a greater truth underlying the psychological one, of oppressor-father and victim-sons. It reflects the uncertainty of the world we live in. Thus what started with prosaic realism ends with poetic fantasticality. **The Judgment** was his first story where Kafka experimented with his dream narrative form, continued to use it in **The Metamorphoses** and thereby perfecting its use in **The Trial** and **The Castle**. Kafka is the consummate modern man with a fragmented, morose self. The fragmentation of his personality finds a parallel in the disintegration of the outer world represented in his works. The literature of realism should not only aim at the truthful reflection of reality, but also demonstrate both the abstract and concrete potentiality implying a description of plausible events and emotion which is the result of healthy interaction between man and his environment. But Kafka's protagonists are maladjusted

creatures which explain why there is a constant negation of outward reality. The descriptive detail of his works deal with palpable characters but behind the realistic veneer lie the fantastic even nightmarish world whose function is to evoke angst. Thus there is an inter-dependent relation between the negation of reality and the dissolution of personality. Man is reduced to a sequence of unrelated fragments. He is as inexplicable to others as to himself. How the personality is severed by the destruction of this complex tissue of man's relationship with his environment can be understood by an existential analysis of **The Metamorphosis**. The narration here does not explain the occurrence of the extraordinary event but the effects which this extraordinary event causes upon this network of associated events and people. The breakthrough he made in **The Judgment** continued in **The Metamorphosis** where the real dabbles with the unreal. Unlike a purely fantastical work which begins with a perfectly natural situation to move into the unreal; **The Metamorphosis** starts with the supernatural event (Georg's metamorphosis into a vermin) moving into the natural. The fine blending of realism with fantasy lies in the reader's willing participation in the text, so that the readers get a feel that the metamorphosis of Georg into a vermin may be fantastical but possible. The opening sentence shows Georg's metamorphosis as though it was a dream yet Georg does not stop looking around for a rational explanation for it: "As GREGOR SAMSA awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect" (CS, 89). The element of realism is introduced in Gregor's recognition of his room, the cloth samples, picture frame of a woman in furs, alarm clock, furniture, keys, living room, family chief clerk, so much so that even his details of his transformed body is impeccably meticulous and scientific. His metamorphosis into a disgusting vermin is no dream but a revelation of a truth. The temptation to call this work as a piece of

fantastic literature is strongly present. Tzvetan Todorov (1939-), the French literary critic writes: "The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty" (Sander, 2004, 136); and by 'uncertainty' Todorov means the hesitation experienced by the characters between the real and the supernatural. He was of the view that if this tension is given a logical explanation, the narrative falls into the genre of the uncanny; and if supernatural, the narrative would move into the realm of the marvelous. He regards only works remaining in 'hesitation' as the fantastic. In **The Metamorphosis**, Gregor's transformation leaves him uncertain about his transformation. Thinking it to be an 'uneasy dream', Gregor gradually looks around seeking rational explanation and comes to the conclusion that his metamorphosis may be unusual but possible. When his family members call for him 'his immediate intention was to get up quietly without being disturbed, to put on his clothes and above all eat his breakfast, and only then consider what else was to be done, since in bed, he was well aware, his meditations would come to no sensible conclusion. He remembered that often enough in bed he had felt small aches and pains, probably caused by awkward postures, which had proved purely imaginary. Once he got up and he looked forward eagerly to seeing this morning's delusions gradually fall away. That the change in his voice was nothing but the precursor of a severe chill, a standing ailment of commercial travelers, he had not the least possible doubt" (CS, 92). He felt he could still really catch the eight o' clock train to work. Gradually he resigns to his situation for now he can relieve himself of the unnerving responsibilities both at home and at work; and even resigns himself to death that his family desires for him. Many see *The Metamorphoses* as "an ultimately serious and universally human parable of man's fate"; or as an exposé of the "persistent primitiveness of man", or as in such existential situation the animal-identity is felt deeper. The fantastic here hovers

between the uncanny and the marvelous; and the hesitation or uncertainty that Todorov speaks of is overcome as the nightmarish irrational stance is presented with perfect oneiric logic. **The Metamorphoses** is the change brought to him by his soul-destroying job, the pressure of being the dutiful son and the father-son opposition changing him into a parasite. His resignation to death is the result of his failure to enter the human-circle. Thus we see that Kafka's works dabble between two opposing but complementary dialectic propositions, as there lies no immutable external reality as our preconceptions of the impossible are assaulted each day. Being works of art they represent not just the external perceptions but are legitimized by their own internal rules, so that the totally fantastic is contradicted by the profound reality underneath the things. The unreality of fantasy gives to Kafka's works a kind of separate existence, a unique reality and autonomy of its own. The mode of the fantasy can be used to mimic the absurdity of modernist Capitalism. The grotesqueness of social realism has made the Marxists interested in the fantastic. China Mieville (1972-) in his brilliant essay **Marxism and Fantasy: An Introduction** writes, "Real" life under capitalism is a fantasy: "realism", narrowly defined, is therefore a "realistic" depiction of an absurdity which is true yet absurd. The Marxists reveal how our social and personal relationships are to be governed in the same way as a commodity. This explains why Gregor is important to the family only as long as contributes to the material welfare of the family. It is also a projection of the bourgeois family values that Kafka was fed with. Marx and Engels in **The Communist Manifesto** said about the bourgeois as such: "The bourgeoisies, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors', and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than

callous 'cash payment'.....It has resolved personal worth to exchange value" (Marx and Engels, 1952, 35). The same kind of tedium of workplace reducing an individual to a mechanical work piece and erosion of self-worth is again seen in another little story **Poseidon**. Even though the nightmarish quality of **The Metamorphoses** is absent here but beneath the apparent hilarity is the agony of being tied with Poseidon, the mythical God of the Seas, with the trident, confined to earthly matters, reveals the soul-wrenching mechanism of modernism. The use of myth by Thomas Mann and other German writers was no accident; Mann used biblical and Germanic myth to recreate the grandeur of the heroic past in the present. No doubt Kafka was inspired by Mann but Kafka uses mythical background to explore the social and psychological insecurity inherent in the very act of living. Marthe Robert elucidates:

An imitator, as befits a latecomer in the world where everything has already been done, said, and written, he appropriated the harmony of the ancients in order to show the discord of his own being and the imposture of what was offered to him under the name of established order. Veiling his sick, irresolute self with the eternal youth of the epic, he anchored the transient and fortuitous in the millennia, the present in the timeless literature of the past, and his own instability in the permanence of the sacrosanct tradition. But his purpose in borrowing the mask of a Greek armed with unshaken confidence in his heroes and his gods was certainly not to proclaim his attachment to the purported humanism of the 'average cultivated European' but, by contrast, to expose the wandering Jew that he himself was in the infinite misery of his loneliness.

(Robert, 1982, 166)

However, unlike Mann, Kafka uses myth to explore the grandeur of the present, though often self-defeating, yet ennobling. The mythical Poseidon was used by Kafka to illustrate the reality of modern day capitalism, one that reduces everything to the

level of a commodity. Similarly in another short tale **Prometheus**, Kafka presents four variants of the Promethean Legend instead of one authorized real version. Prometheus, tied to the rock in the Caucasus, perpetually punished by Zeus, by making an eagle feed his liver for thousands of years until all is forgotten due to weariness. The entire process of torture is detailed with precise realism but the cause unknown: "There remained the inexplicable mass of rock. The legend tried to explain the inexplicable. As it came out of a substratum of truth it had in turn to end in the inexplicable" (CS, 432). The Promethean tale of betrayal and suffering is entrenched in the modern world, for the 'wounds closed wearily' but not healed ; and Prometheus and the massy rock becoming one reveals how the torture of the world causes the individual to lose the last vestiges of his humanity. Kafka also uses the element of myth to explore the atavistic fear present in man, that fear the reality of which confounds man as seen in the thin line between realism and fantasy in stories like **The Great wall of China**, **The Burrow** and **The Old Manuscript**. Yet again in **The Silence of the Sirens**, which is an ironic reworking of Homer's **The Odyssey**, Kafka shows how Ulysses could escape the alluring sirens by the resoluteness of his faith. The sirens of Kafka, mythically known for their power of their songs to allure men, here are seen using the other tactic of alluring Ulysses, by their silence. It was believed that the songs of the sirens could pierce through everything, yet Ulysses ignorant of it was confident that his handful of wax was enough to save him from the potent songstresses. Ulysses, thinking that they were singing even in their silence defeats the sirens: "They no longer had any desire to allure; all that they wanted to hold as long as they could the radiance that fell from Ulysses' great eyes." (CS, 431) This use of the myth of Ulysses, apparently fantastical echoes strong reverberations of modernism. It bespeaks of the power of transformations caused by fantasy to bring

effective changes in reality. For the Marxists it is of interest to see that the demands of fantasy should met lest it should cause disruption in the society. Lenin writes in his article *What is to be Done? Burning Questions of our Movement*: "The rift between dreams and reality causes no harm if only the person dreaming believes in his dreams, if he attentively observes his life, compares his observations with his castles in the air, and if, generally speaking, he works conscientiously of his fantasies" (Lenin, Vol.5, 509). Both Lenin and the radical critic Pisarev believed that " If there is some connection between dreams and life then all is well." Even in Kafka's most fantastical works, one can discern social, polemical, cultural, political and psychological reality, and this would be of interest to the Marxists, which can bring transformations in the way we perceive the world. Thus **The Great wall of China** is a commentary on the Jewish life in the Diaspora, the separateness of the Jews and their insecurity expressed in the story through the need to build a wall. Interestingly the narrative also throws light on how the very manner of constructing this wall does not actually serve to protect , rather the very manner of piece-meal construction with many gaps only make them more conspicuous and vulnerable. Also the wall standing in a deserted region makes it susceptible to be pulled down with ease. The narrator who is a contemporary scholar trying to explain his country's imperial history also finds no logical reason for the building of the wall-"Against whom was the Great wall to serve as a protection? Against the people of the North. Now, I come from the south-east of China. No northern people can menace us there.[. . .] . We have not seen them, and if we remain in our villages we shall never see them, even if on their wild horses they should ride as hard as they can straight towards us- the land is too vast and would not let them reach us, they would end their course in the empty air" (CS,241). Thus there seems to be no real external dangers against which man needs to

be protected with and in such a situation man dream of an internal danger. The messenger with an imperial message 'Just for you' never reaches its goal forcing us to dream the message by our self can symbolize the need for self-reliance. Like the futility of building a wall against unseen danger is similar to the elaborate and labyrinthine burrow that the badger builds to fortify himself against an illusory enemy in **The Burrow**. The constantly threatening noise in the burrow is a reflection of the last stages of Kafka's tuberculosis gnawing his life. Likewise in **An Old Manuscript**, the nomads from the North, with their savage ways of living, failing to communicate not just in language but also in signs, and the helplessness of the Europeans to tackle them points to the terror of darkness residing within man beneath the veneer of civilization. The fine line between man and beast is blurred as in **A Country Doctor**, where the country doctor is awoken in the middle of a cold night to attend a seriously ill-patient. The doctor's thought is broken by the sudden appearance of a groom with giant-horses breaking into supernatural force while the bestial groom stays behind to assault the servant girl. The end is a pitiable picture with the doctor exposed to the cold of the weather and his patient. He now realizes the disappointment of his vocation as a healer. The doctor's 'earthly vehicle' borne by 'unearthly horses', again symbolize his state of dubious existence. Here is the pathetic figure of the doctor who can neither face the harshness of reality nor escape into the fantastic. Kafka's own sense of betrayal is unmistakable here. Kafka's approach to the dualism of realism and fantasy can be also be derived from his **Diaries**. Plato in his Republic expresses man's pitiable ignorance about the true nature of the Ideas where reality is to be deciphered by the play of shadows. Kafka's works show a similar illusion where ultimate reality and truth continually evaded. Kafka puts it succinctly in his diary entry of December 16, 1911: " I am separated from all things by a hollow space, and I

do not even reach to its boundaries.”; and again in November 19 and 21, 1913, he writes: “ Everything appears to me construed...I am chasing after constructions. I enter a room, and I them in a corner, a white tangle.”; finally the most hopeless statement of Kafka is made on October 21, 1921: “All is imaginary- family, office, friends, the street, all imaginary, far away or close at hand, the woman; the truth that lies closest, however, is only this, that you are beating your head against the wall of a windowless and doorless cell.” This is Kafka, the tortured soul, trapped in the reality of clock-time, unable to carry the burden of past and future. “What is it here”, he asks, “ to tie me to a past or a future? The present is a phantom state for me.” (D, 1914-1923,p.126.) This forms the essence of all his novels. **Amerika** is perhaps the most realistic of his writings in its use of actual geographical exploration and historical name; and as Edwin Muir in his introduction to the novel tells there is very little trace of allegory in it. Kafka had no first-hand knowledge of America; and much of his information is based on his imagination and personal contacts. His cousin Otto emigrated to America in 1906 to work as a porter in a corset-manufacturing firm and by dint of his hard work had made his way to become its export Manager. Otto later found his own business, the Kafka Export Corporation. Otto’s brother Franz joined him in 1909 in New York. Another cousin Emil emigrated in 1904 and did quite well. Thus it was natural for Franz Kafka to picture America as the New World, the rebirth place of average Europeans. He himself called the novel as ‘an imitation of Dickens’ in its picaresque features. Thus its realism is closely associated in its likeness to the novel of adventure and the novel of education. But there are a lot of dream-distortions of reality that make this novel open not only to psychoanalytical and existential interpretations. Containing no inaccessible castles and no mysterious courts of justice, this novel deals with ordinary people not intended with any symbolic ramifications;

yet what makes **Amerika** correspond to the two novels is the quality of its imagination. It is not nightmarish as the novel is the one of the happier works rare in Kafka. It is a work where grotesque realism is set against pure comic fantasy. The novel opens with a realistic backdrop of America: "Karl Rossmann, a poor boy of sixteen who had been packed off to America by his parents because a servant girl had seduced him and got herself with child by him, stood on the 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 to long before. The arm with the sword rose up as if newly stretched aloft, and round the figure blew the free winds of heaven"(A,13). The statue of liberty holds aloft not a torch but a sword; the maddening traffic dazzling the eye; Uncle Jacob's imposing residence with six over ground and five underground storey and his business power-house; the multi-storied Hotel Occidental with thirty lifts makes 'both recognizable and disfigured' (Anderson, 1992,105). The distortion of these American icons and images reflect the destabilization of the protagonist's perception because of which Karl fails to undergo the process of self-formation. His refusal even to associate himself with his name is the outward projection of his inadequate self. The split between the self and the world point to the fragility and instability of subjectivity in a hostile modern world. Karl's search for his umbrella like his search for his self takes a labyrinthine journey: ".....and he had painfully to find his way down endlessly recurring stairs, through an empty room with a deserted writing-table until in the end, since he had taken this route no more than once or twice and always a crowd of other people, he lost himself completely"(A,14). During the trial scene in the Captain's cabin he notices the bustle of the boats and ships on the river. In chapter 2, Karl gazes down similarly on the perpetual stream of traffic and foreshortened human figures visible from his uncle's

balcony. At the end of the same chapter, we see Pollunder's car taking a complicated route through the busy streets of the New York suburbs where it further bifurcates into side-streets as the main road is blocked by a workers' mass demonstration. The experience of reality as a labyrinth points to the physical, perceptual and psychological disorientation suffered by the self who cannot assimilate in a hostile environment. If making sense depends upon one's ability to register reality then Kafka highlights the consequence of when such distinctions are abolished, the boundaries of self are dissolved and hence one can no longer differentiate between the inner and the outer world. The novel also debunks America as land of wealth and opportunity, for beside the technological feats lie the sordidness of the crowded tenements and the dehumanizing process of the modern world. Kafka took keen interest in socialism and it is not difficult to discern elements of social realism. The Stoker is thrown out of his job in spite of being efficient and every positive step undertaken by Karl only serves to lower his social standing culminating in the highly fantastic last chapter 'The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma'. The ethereal theatricality is presented in the form of the Oklahoma theatre promising jobs for everyone. Karl goes to try his luck admiring hundreds of women dressed as angels in white robes with huge wings on their shoulders. Throughout the chapter there is an air of carnival permeating with performers performing, hordes of people queuing for jobs, staffs enrolling all and sundry. The entire chapter though incomplete is without doubt, was to be the conclusion Kafka intended. Max Brod corroborates: "From what he told me, I know that the incomplete chapter about the nature theatre of Oklahoma....was intended to be the concluding chapter of the work and should end on a note of reconciliation." This chapter is a kind of wish-fulfillment, a place for everyone in this world. It is a figment of a world which respects individuals unlike the American

system. Karl is amazed at the care they were taken at: "what destitute, disreputable characters were here assembled, and yet how well they had been received and cared for!" (A, 266). The novel ends with Karl traveling with the troupe through the high range of mountains. Thus realism and fantasy is worked by Kafka's peculiar approach to reality which is both mimetic and anti-mimetic., but which Anne Fuch says ' cannot be explained by Kafka's lack of first-hand experience of American Life. Rather it has to with the way he employs modern America both as the main locus of social contest and as a metaphor' (Preece, 1999, 25). Kafka gave up the Dickensian experiment after **Amerika** for he was more at home in the reality of the fantasy. Like **Amerika**, **The Trial** presents kaleidoscopic images of urban reality- the court and its labyrinthine corridor, crowded streets, law offices, dusty attics and other concrete pictures of social misery and filth. Kafka has even meticulously presented the smallest of detail to provide a naturalistic effect- men shopping, vendors shouting, children playing or men relaxing at the windows. **The Trial** is also a surrealistic journey of Joseph K. through a phantasmagoria of the modern city. Even though external reality is presented through the consciousness of Joseph K., but again it is a highly disoriented world which serves to reveal his inability to associate with his environment. Like Kafka who had known the bourgeois-capitalist security, Joseph K. cannot participate in the throbbing life of the Proletariats. The influential Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukacs has explored in **Franz Kafka : An Anthology of Marxist Criticism** (1981) how Kafka's writings are actually reflections of man's impotence in the face of modern capitalism. Also **The Trial** is a search for a ration between the court's inexplicable accusation and Joseph K.'s insistence on his innocence. However at the very outset only, it is not difficult to see that Joseph K.'s arrest is a foregone conclusion. He is arrested by an unknown but powerful authority. Initially he thinks it

as a joke planned for him on his thirtieth birthday by his friends until the warders don't just arrest him but also intrudes upon his private space by eating his breakfast and confiscating his underwear. The court itself is highly unreal in its utter lack of legal sense and grave administrative defects, for instance, the Examining Magistrate does not even know for sure who exactly is Joseph K. . He thinks him to be a house painter, and yet it does not matter. No doubt, the image of the court is real but its trappings are without any logic of cause and effect. Joseph K. tries hard to bring the court within the grasp of his rationality, but the court refuses to fit into any sort of logic mastered by Joseph K.'s moral and legal knowledge. The court intrudes all spheres of his life – the courtroom situated in the tenement and its representatives whom he meets in the streets, and so Joseph K. finds ' a summary court in perpetual session.' The reality of the court is produced with concreteness yet reality moves into the realm of the fantastic as the trial begins to take on a purely subjective colour. Joseph K. presents himself for his hearing even uncalled under the tacit presumption that he is to report himself again at the same address and at the same time. Therefore Joseph K. sits in self-judgment and this makes him regard all mediators between him and the court as useless ; even dismissing his lawyer Huld , and Joseph K. absurdly trusting court-painter Titorelli. Titorelli advises him how definite acquittal would be the best possibility for him bespeaks of the absurdity of the law: "As far as I know, there is no single person who could influence the verdict of definite acquittal. The only deciding factor seems to be the innocence of the accused. Since you're innocent, of course it would be possible for you to ground your case on your innocence alone. But then you would require neither my help nor help from anyone." (T, 169)

Paradoxically, Joseph K. never escapes from the shadow of the court. Chapter 10 'The End' reaches surrealistic heights when Joseph K. realizes the futility of his

resistance after peering into his murky self and so willingly submits to his death, the truth of the clash within his self having dawned upon him. His execution is full of 'odious' ceremony and ironical 'courtesy'. Thus **The Trial** is a plunge into a nightmarish world where the charge against Joseph K. is never specified but his indictment is confirmed right from the very first chapter. Seen from this angle the Joseph K.'s efforts to prove his innocence has been all along not only futile but absurd. This is what Martin Heidegger means by '*thrownness*'. The court is a subjective reality but a reality which permeates through all spheres of his life in spite of its irrationality; we can also say whether the court is real or not is immaterial but the way Joseph K. reacts to it is real. Like the first novel **Amerika**, this novel is also full of eccentric characters and absurd situations. Even the various identifiable places defying order and logic like the crowded tenement which houses the court offices, the lawyer Huld's claustrophobic house serving also as his office, the dusty atelier of the painter Titorelli and the cathedral lack the tangibility of reality; and appear more as hallucinations of the estranged consciousness of their author Franz Kafka. Being '*thrown*' into this world makes it difficult both for the author and the protagonist to relate to any outside physical objects. Herman Hesse, after reading Max Brod's version of **The Trial** found it a delightful book conveying through its gossamer construct the guilt of life itself. Brod mentions the joy Kafka himself derived from reading the first chapter of **The Trial** aloud to his close friends. **The Trial** is thus a brilliant piece of fantastic literature, almost bordering on the uncanny; and at the same time, very real in its essential truth it conveys. Like the man in the parable of the Doorkeeper, Joseph K. meets with the same fate. Like the man in the parable Joseph K. does not walk out off his agonizing situation but rather submits to it; failing to understand the meaning of the Doorkeeper's words: "No one but you could gain

admittance through the door, since this door was intended for you" (T, 237). Thus **The Trial** can also be seen as an emblem of man's self-trial in his pursuit of the ultimate truth which would entail the total abrogation of the clock time. The dream-like quality is further carried on in **The Castle**, where the castle like the image of the court remain intangible ideas existing at all realms. **The Castle** opens with K., of whose past we know nothing of presents himself as the land-surveyor of a village which is ruled by a castle. After the initial skepticism, the telephone conversation with the castle authorities his appointment is confirmed; yet K. himself is never sure of his own place in the village. Even the villagers later believe that his appointment with the castle authorities is only illusory. In this way the question of whether K. had really been summoned by the castle authorities or is K. only imagining or pretending is never made clear by Kafka. But we never doubt the sincerity with which he pursues his goal of gaining entrance into the castle, be it by appropriating Frieda, the mistress of a higher castle official, Klamm; or the physical hardship that he endures in the hostile cold and snow to go to the castle; or the nuisance he tolerates of his two assistants Arthur and Jeremiah provided by the castle authorities. This elusive nature of the castle is present right from the beginning when the castle is pictured as 'hidden, veiled in mist and darkness, nor was there even a glimmer of light to show that a castle was there.' (C, 9) Thus K. adopts the Herculean task of making an entry into the castle and on the first morning, he makes straight for the castle only to realize that the road 'did not lead up to the castle hill, it only made towards it and then, deliberately, turned aside, and though it did not lead away from the castle it got no nearer to it either' (C, 73). But this does not deter him from seeking out the castle. Thus **The Castle** can also be interpreted as man's effort to overcome his singularity by reaching out to the outside world to build meaningful relationships. It is only by

reaching out that man derives meaning of himself. The existentialists have stressed on the importance of human relationships. Sartre says that our '*being-for-others*' is as fundamental as our '*being-for-ourselves*'. The concept of being-with or '*Mitsein*' is an important point of discussion in Heidegger's **Being and Time**. Jaspers also writes: "The individual cannot become human by himself. Self-being is only real in communication with another self-being. Alone I sink into gloomy isolation- only in communication with others can I be revealed" (Jaspers, 1970, 147). It seems paradoxical that a movement so intensely individualistic should devote so much space to the analyses of human relationships. However, for the existentialists, individualism does not mean physical seclusion or even indifference. They do believe that interpersonal relationships are impossible because of the very nature of the human condition. Yet, man is peculiarly aware of his matter-of-factness. No one chooses to be, he simply finds himself in existence. Man is 'forsaken' just as Christ was forsaken. For Kafka, God as an entity did not exist. Now even if he presumes that only God could give meaning to the world, then the world was apparently meaningless for Kafka; and even if God did exist, there are not really any definite ways to prove that the world was made for man, just as K.'s appointment as a land surveyor is never proved. K. greatly desires for the village to adopt him and so his whole effort is directed towards removing the tag of an outsider from himself. But he fails to realize that to be on the outside is a strategic strength and so when K.'s appointment is apparently confirmed initially, his strategic strength is converted to weakness. Just as we realize that K. has forfeited his freedom by changing his position but the image of the castle of brooding impenetrability confuse our minds: "**The Castle**, whose contours were already beginning to dissolve, lay silent as ever; never yet had K. seen there the slightest sign of life- perhaps it was quite impossible to

recognize anything at that distance, and yet the eye demanded it and could not endure that stillness. When K. looked at the castle, often it seemed to him he were observing someone who sat quietly there in front of him gazing, not lost in thought and so oblivious of everything, but free and untroubled, as if he were alone with nobody to observe him, and yet must notice that he was observed, and all the same remained with his calm not even slightly disturbed: and really one did not know whether it was cause or effect- the gaze of the observer could not remain concentrated there, but slid away" (C, 97). Martin Greenberg explains it in the following way:

Much of the surface confusion of the novel is due to the fact that K. strives simultaneously after two contradictory goals- to settle in the village (Life) and to penetrate into the castle (thinking-about-life) – without recognizing the contradiction. He is the man in the joke who rushes out of the house in opposite directions. His failure to recognize the contradiction is ignorance of the world, of reality, which is why the landlady of the Bridge Inn, that expert on reality calls him "the most ignorant person in the village". But what is confusion, madness, impossibility in the perspective of the world and its reality, is courageous effort in the perspective of the spirit. K.'s worldly confusion (ignorance) is at the same time spiritual effort (awareness).

(Greenberg, 1971,168)

But this goes against the idea that K. wants to settle in the village so that his admittance becomes easier as a part of that community, as an insider. **The Castle** is the image of the unattainable ideal and in spite of man's heroic unavailing strength till the end we realize that K.'s situation is no better than when he started. The confusion becomes clear to see K. not as a quester but as the one who is pursued, one subjected to a nightmarish world of weariness rather than the strength of the pursuer. The existential tragedy of K. lies not only in the impossibility of K. reaching the castle and

his returning back home becomes more difficult still. The desire for settlement to overcome the coldness of being outside the human circle is portrayed with child-like fantasy in **Blumfeld, an elderly Bachelor**. With no wife, no children waiting for him at home, Blumfeld decides to take up a dog to fill the void in his life only to give away the idea by the thought of dirt, contagion and inconvenience the dog would cause. Thus Blumfeld continues to suppress his loneliness only to have two jumping small white celluloid balls with blue stripes waiting for him at home. The inner harmony which Blumfeld had maintained till now is disturbed by the constant rattling of these two jumping balls. Finally Blumfeld is able to shut the two balls in lock and key, and goes to the office only to be harassed by two hopeless assistants. The two bouncing balls, though inert in composition yet possessing peculiarly active human characteristics have their contrasting counterpart in these two timid and lazy assistants. The story is therefore a commentary on Blumfeld's loneliness which is juxtaposed with his infantilism by the shirking off of responsibilities which starting a family would entail. These two assistants of Blumfeld remind us of the two assistants of K. in **The Castle**, Arthur and Jeremiah, but who know nothing of surveying. There is nothing noteworthy in them except for their marked physical similarity between the two like the two bouncing balls. Kafka's stories are fraught with such fantastic aberrations of singing mices, investigating dogs, reporting apes, giant moles, man turned insects or animals, but the strangest quintessential Kafka figure is the Hunter Gracchus floating in his 'death ship' for fifteen years. Although this peculiar story **The Hunter Gracchus** opens with a highly realistic description- two boys sitting near the harbor wall playing dice, a man reading newspaper, girl filling bucket at the fountain, fruit seller selling his wares, men drinking wine and the wine-seller dozing away. Such a picturesque idyllic description is interrupted by the arrival of a boat

from where alight men carrying the bier of Hunter Gracchus. The crowd is cleared in the second half of the story which consists largely of the enigmatic exchange between the Burgo master of Riva and the arisen Hunter Gracchus, their conversation dealing with who the hunter is, his origin, how and why the hunter died. The inability of the Hunter Gracchus to reach the other world is symbolic of the plight of the modern man: "My ship has no rudder and it is driven by the wind that blows in the nethermost regions of death" (CS, 230). The religious allegory of Christ's crucifixion and questions of man's redemption is unmistakable here. This is one short story where the geographical locale can be identified- Riva or Lake Garda; a hint on the visit to the same place by Max Brod and Kafka in 1909)- but such boundaries dissolve with the existential anguish of universal suffering. The Hunter Gracchus will never find rest, his tragedy being his not belonging to neither to this world nor to the other. But this sense of non-belonging brings with it a peculiar freedom- a simultaneous belonging to nowhere and everywhere. The ultimate challenge lies in 'going over' as in the parable "**On Parables**"- "When the sage says: "Go Over", he does not mean that we should cross to some actual place, which we could do anyhow if the labor were worth it; he means some fabulous yonder, something unknown to us, something that he cannot designate more precisely either, and therefore help us here in the least" (CS, 457). Like the Existentialists, Kafka believed that it is only in action that existence attains concreteness and fullness. By '*self as agent*', Soren Kierkegaard and Gabriel Marcel shed light on the dynamic view of man, but which is not to be confused with the functional view of man. As John Macquarrie elucidates:

Man is more than the task he performs and the role he plays. He is the unity of a person who expresses himself in all these activities or, perhaps better expressed, makes himself in these activities. His actions

are more than empirically observable deeds, for in them he is both projecting and realizing an image of personhood.

(Macquarrie, 1972, 137)

Another interesting aspect of the fantastic in Kafka's works is the use of hybridity : man-animal as in **The Metamorphoses**, **Investigations of a Dog**, **Josephine**, **The Country Singer** and **A Report to an Academy**; man and rock as in **Prometheus**; the living and the dead as in **The Hunter Grachus**, or in the use of doubles like the two assistants (Arthur and Jeremiah) of K. in **The Castle**; or the rogue companions (Robinson and Delemarche) of Karl Rossmann in **Amerika**, or the two intrusive warders (Franz and Willem); or even the two bouncing parasitic balls in **Blumfeld.**, **the Elderly Bachelor**. Such duplication is symptomatic of the split within Kafka's own psyche. Kafka's brilliant use of his imaginative fantasy is also revealed in the creation of such creatures like a cross between kitten and lamb; and a spool like unearthly creature Odradek; but in their emotional make-up these curious creatures are more real than human beings. The half-kitten, half-lamb of **A Crossbreed** takes from the cat its head and claws; and from the lamb its size and shape. The crossbreed defies classification, it flees from cats and makes to attack lambs; and strangely it is not a cat in its inability to mew and in its hatred for rats; and neither can it be more of a lamb in its animosity for lambs. Its grotesqueness is further worked out when the narrator says: ' In long draughts it sucks the milk in through its fang like teeth' (CS, 426) and when ' not content with being lamb and cat, it almost insists on being a dog as well' (CS,427). The aggressiveness of the cat is toned down by the gentleness of the cat. In its desire to communicate with its owner and the joy it displays in its understanding of their communication makes it more real and human. However, the irony lies in the last paragraph when the narrator says: "Perhaps the knife of the

butcher would be a release for this animal; but as it is a legacy I must deny it that” (CS, 427), points to complexity that Kafka bore of the legacy of being a Jew. Its playfulness is combined with its morbidity- tears rolling down imploring on end to its lonely life, or dancing with joy in its supposed understanding between the narrator and the cross.. It is not difficult to discern the cross as an extension of Kafka himself; a bundle of contradiction. Another story in the similar vein is of another incongruous creature Odradek in **The Cares of a Family Man**. Although the strange creature is given rational interpretation to its physical existence- its name bearing the Slavonic or Germanic influence; its shape being flat star-shaped spool (the image of a cross) and in its nimble agility., but in its wheezing laughter ‘as if it has no lungs’ it is not just grotesque but reminiscent of Kafka’s suffering with tuberculoses. But the language of the story is a series of contradiction- Odradek appearing ‘unfinished’ or ‘unbroken’ but ‘in its own way perfectly finished’; it being ‘ extraordinarily nimble’ again juxtaposed with its ‘wooden’ appearance. Such a creature cannot help arising several questions in the mind of the narrator- greater questions of its fate, death and after-life; but for the narrator the idea that he is likely to survive him pains him. So questions of life and death have no final answers as Odradek suspends between life and death; finally revealing its inaffinity with anything animate. Its star-shape echoes Jewish sentiments and Odradek having no ‘fixed abode’ an indication of the Jewish Diaspora that Kafka faced of being at once German, Czech and Jewish. Thus these stories apparently dealing with fantastical creatures, defying any logical categorization, points to the truth of Kafka’s own anxiety and security.

According to the German Idealist Hegel, truth and existence is one in the Absolute; but in Kafka truth and existence are mutually exclusive in the absolute. For Kafka existence or life is but a dream- like state expressed in his writings and this explains

his dream-like quality of his works. Also Kafka found the real world sordid; the court in **The Trial** is housed in the claustrophobic and crowded tenement; the inn houses in **The Castle** is nauseating with dirty beer puddles everywhere and rampant prostitution; and the picture of the foreign land in **Amerika** is disorienting. Nature descriptions in Kafka offer no freshness with an exception in the short story **Descriptions of a Struggle**. In Kafka's world there is so much anxiety that reality is forfeited. In the short story **Unhappiness** the exchange between the narrator and the ghost is conceived in normal way where terror is underplayed. **The Judgment** is a kind of a waking dream and the diary entry of this period notes: "Open up let the man come forth." Claude-Edmonde Magney finds the story so far away from reality unless it were a representation of a mad world. So difficult is the attempt to categorize the story that it points to the fundamental irreducibility of things and events. Others like Kate Flores see a dichotomy of Kafka whereby Georg represents the Kafka of the outer world, the son of a well-to-do merchant; and the absent friend represents the Kafka of the inner world, the tortured artist. The dichotomy continues in **Amerika** which is the dichotomy between innocence and guilt. Karl is punished by all father figures for expressing his sexual fulfillment. As in **The Trial** and **The Castle**, here too in **Amerika**, Karl does not know for sure what or who he is essentially looking for. However, the world of reality is never doubted in Kafka; the physical transformation of Gregor into a beetle in **The Metamorphoses** is tangibly real to see for all to see, Gregor's thoughts and feelings are described in human terms; we do not doubt the reality and the ability to think and speak like a human being; everyone believes the trial of Joseph K. to be real; K. in **The Castle** accepts his appointment as the land surveyor to be true; investigating dogs, singing mice, giant moles, war-horses transforming into human lawyer and other such talking animals are all

plausible in Kafka's fictions. Also K. is acutely conscious of his existence and hence his right in the castle, yet consciousness fails to interpenetrate into the complex and vague castle organization. **The Castle** as a way to God is dubious in Kafka although K. does not want to meet Klamm but the owner of the castle Count West West. In many ways these stories may be echoing Kafka's doubts as a writer; it leads the readers to question if Kafka is doubting his credibility as a writer just as K. in **The Castle** doubts his appointment as a land surveyor; also no where in the text does K. hint at doing or speaking anything about surveying. It is also easy to surmise that the torture machine of **In The Penal Colony** represents the torture of writing; and the act of burrowing in **The Burrow** can be a metaphor for writing.

Dreams take the shape of reality; but dreams in actuality don't persist for long; in **The Metamorphoses** the entire episode takes place after Gregor is said to have awoken from 'uneasy dream'; so is Joseph K. in **The Trial** arrested immediately after having woken up one fine morning; **The Country Doctor** is woken up in the middle of the night. Here it is as if after having woken up the dream like situation persists thereupon taking up nightmarish yet more real proportions. These situations are unbelievable but true due to its matter-of-factness which is existential. In actuality there is no stable reality but only versions of reality and Kafka seems to problematize reality. Kafka was also impressed by the Hasidic movement founded by Baal-Shem-Tov, who called for a spiritual renaissance and especially the Hasidics believed in the continuity of earthly reality and the unreality. Kafka's narratives have a chimeral powers, there is a fluidity in its tenor, one is carried into the fluid world without losing the matter-of-factness of things as they are in one of his notebooks, he writes that he wishes to recreate life in such a way that "while still retaining its natural full-bodied rise and fall, it would simultaneously be recognized no less clearly as a nothing, a dream, a

dim hovering..... Considered as a wish, somewhat as if one were to hammer together a table with a painful and methodical and technical efficiency, and simultaneously do nothing at all, and not in such a way that people would say: 'Hammering a table together is nothing to him', but rather 'Hammering a table together is really hammering a table together to him, but at the same time it is nothing', whereby certainly the hammering would become still bolder, still surer, still more real and, if you will, still more senseless." According to the Phenomenologists like Franz Brentano and Edmund Husserl, the object of man's belief or emotion is not to be sought in the external but that it is to be realized in the internal world which they call the 'intentional object'. Perhaps in this they agree to the gap that exists between knowledge of oneself with knowledge of the others. When the others are viewed from the others point of view, judged by the emotions and beliefs of the others, then such a perspective falls into the danger of reducing the others into simply objects. In this regard the phenomenologists differ from the existentialists because for the existentialists to reduce others to objects would be to see the existent as other than what he is.

Like most modernist writers, Kafka too rejects mimesis and there is a kind of social amnesia. Kafka did not represent the pure empirical reality. J.M. Bernstein tells how the problem of mimetic representation can lead to the twin errors of either 'metaphysical reification' or 'Empirical Reduction'. Let me quote Bernstein:

What we call reality is a 'complex formation of montages of notions, representations, images and of modes of action, gestures, attitudes; the whole ensemble functioning as practical norms which govern the concrete stance of men in relation to the objects and problems of their social and individual existence.' Marxists may call this the world of practical ideology; Proust, and with him Josipovici, denominate it the

domain of habit. Whatever it is called, it is not reality in itself. Realism, then, does not represent reality, but only repeats the received forms in which a society presents the world to itself and itself to the world. Instead of alerting us to the fiction we call reality, realism dulls our awareness of the problematic status of our representations and auto-representations, immuring us more deeply in the repetitions of social existence precisely by treating them as representations of reality.

(Bernstein, 1984, 232)

Further Bernstein therefore argues that modernist texts are in reality a self-validating constructions rather than as something given and produced by the writer, and hence meaning is always to be constructed rather than to be formed of mimetic representation of external reality. Now since representation is 'always second-hand', so Kafka has rightly adopted a form that very easily slides from realism to fantasy. For the Marxists behind the phenomenon of representation is the reality of capitalism. Many people see modernism as a move against realism as life is not presented as we live or experience it. In Kafka there is breakdown of pure realism because realism is seen as a demythologizing force. Kafka's protagonists are like Plato's man chained in the cave in Republic. This man sees not the real world but the hopeless distortion of the real world caused by the play of shadows. In Kafka's world, the reality does not correspond with the normal sense-perceptions. It is like the crisis which arises from the conviction of the existence of God, but apparently there is no God. In German Literature, the artist as an exile from reality is traced by many writers from Goethe's Tasso and Grillparzer's Sappho to Thomas Mann's Tonio Kroges. Even authors like Kliest and Hölderlin have traced this split in reality. Kafka mingles reality with fantasy because reality is constantly threatened; also reality being illusory; the Kafkean Hero tries to grope with the truth that lies buried within reality. However, his

search in this world is reduced to mockery. In *The Castle*, it is not the village authorities who is against K. but it is actually K., who in his defiance, refuses to live life according to the laws of the land. **The Bucket Rider** is one such strange story, written in the fantastic mode. However, the juxtaposition of the freezing cold suffered by the bucket rider with the warmth enjoyed by the coal dealer and his wife is also a pointer to the post-war economic slump. The bucket rider's plea for a shovelful of coal is ignored by them. The streak of cruelty in the bucket rider's wife is rarely to be found in Kafka's portrayal of women characters. The story ends with the bucket rider shouting back: " 'You bad woman! I begged you for a shovelful of the worst coal and you would not give it me.' And with that I ascend into the regions of the ice-mountains and am lost forever" (CS, 414). The futility of seeking help from heaven or earth by the suspended bucket rider in air is unmistakable here. His cries for help only cause him to be wiped away from the face of this universe forever. In such a case the dualism of realism and fantasy would play an important role in Kafka to present the dream-like contour behind the concreteness of things. It is the consequence of what the existentialists would call the '*anguish of here and now*'. Man is reduced to nothing but a temporal being constricted by the restraints of time and space. Philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Spinoza have all believed that man could escape through the anguish of here and now with the help of mind or intellect. This argument shows that all these thinkers tend to gloss over the duality of man, the observer and man, a part of the historical process. But Existentialists see no way in which this duality can be overcome. If man is seen as actively engaged in the historical process, he can sufficiently detach himself from his involvement to adopt a perspective on the whole of things. But even if he detaches himself to exist only as a spectator, he still fails to gain a vision on the whole of things because being a spectator, he would still

fail he could not be possibly be included in that vision. Therefore, there remains no longer a stable reality in the external world. What exist outside are only versions of reality which is again uncertain and inadequate. Thus Kafka does not aim to take his readers to marvelous heights of fantasy. Rather, his works jerk us out of our self-complacency to profound self-knowledge, where existence and consciousness dissolve. Kafka's existential crisis is conveyed by using descriptive realism as a precondition, but the structure and presentation making for an adequate image of the objective world depends on the writer's attitude towards reality as a whole. For Kafka, the world, being beset with anxiety, seeks refuge in the world of art, which makes the external world an equally incomprehensible terrifying place. Objective reality is subjectivized and distorted to help grasp the ultimate truth redeeming man. The subjectivizing of objective reality leads to angst. According to Kierkegaard, to undergo dread is necessary to appreciate fully the nature of existence; or else one is cut off from reality. However, the reality of existence is achieved at the cost of destroying one's faith. Reality is not static or quantifiable. Like Kant, Kierkegaard refused to believe that logic was the key to reality. Rather, Kierkegaard's maxim was 'subjectivity is truth', hence, Kierkegaard believed that it is only by turning inward that man discovers his real self and discovers freedom. In Kafka angst as a dominant existential condition leads to the reduction and distortion of reality. Thus the concrete novelty of Kafka's works makes one aware of the transcendent reality and Kafka's images become cryptic symbols of the unfathomable transcendence. Truth emerges out of the dream-like state in Kafka; and this is the truth that leads man to a better understanding of his existence. His stories exercise a magical effect, but his magic is not the magic of illusion but of revelation.