the space *of Kafka*

Timothy E.G McDonald
School of Architecture
McGill University, Montréal

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ABSTRACT

The following study investigates the fictional works of an early twentieth century Czechoslovakian writer named Franz Kafka. "The space of Kafka" is explored primarily through the "identity" of his characteristic *monster* figures and the temporally disjunctive narratives through which they travel. *Monstrosity* is qualified here as a principal mode of translation through which Kafka engaged the very terms of "identity" which an "individual" faces in the appearance of any "work". The intimations of a *monstrous self* are probed through Kafka's work in relation to human experience, intentionality, alterity and a "present" which is en-acted specifically as one *form* of the past. Through Kafka's paradigmatic "monster", "double" and "bachelor" figures, we find not "alternative" orientations of the "self" which contemporary literature and architecture may choose to undertake, but *intrinsic* re-presentations of the very relation which any *self*, any *author*, already is in the appearance of a "work".

RÉSUMÉ

L'ouvrage qui suit explore l'oeuvre fictive d'un écrivain tchécoslovaque du début du vingtième siècle: Franz Kafka. "L'espace de Kafka" est essentiellement sondé à travers l'"identité" de ses personnages *monstres* et les narratifs temporellement disloqués dans lesquels ils évoluent. *Monstruosité* s'entend ici comme un médian par lequel Kafka entreprend les termes mêmes de l'"identité" à laquelle un "individu" fait face dans l'apparence d'une "oeuvre". Les implications d'un *soi monstrueux* sont scrutées dans l'oeuvre de Kafka en relation avec l'expérience humaine, l'intentionnalité, l'altérité et un "présent" qui se joue en tant que *forme* du passé. A travers les personnages "monstre", "double" et "célibataire" paradigmatiques de Kafka, on trouve non pas les orientations "alternatives" du "soi" que la littérature et l'architecture contemporaines choisissent de soutenir, mais les re-présentations intrinsèques de la relation même qu'un *moi*, un *auteur*, est déjà dans l'apparence d'une "oeuvre".

CONTENTS

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"Before the law stands a doorkeeper. To this doorkeeper there comes a man from the country who begs admittance to the Law. But the doorkeeper says that he cannot admit the man at the moment. The man, on reflection, asks if he will be allowed, then, to enter later. "It is possible," answers the doorkeeper, "but not at this moment." Since the door leading to the Law stands open as usual and the doorkeeper steps to one side, the man bends down to peer through the entrance. When the doorkeeper sees that, he laughs and says: "If you are so strongly tempted, try to get in without my permission. But note that I am powerful. And I am only the lowest doorkeeper. From hall to hall, keepers stand at every door, one more powerful than the other. And the sight of the third man is already more than even I can stand." These are difficulties which the man from the country has not expected to meet, the Law, he thinks, should be accessible to every man and at all times, but when he looks more closely at the doorkeeper in his furred robe, with his huge, pointed nose and long thin, Tartar beard, he decides that he had better wait until he gets permission to enter. The doorkeeper gives him a stool and lets him sit down at the side of the door. There he sits waiting for days and years. He makes many attempts to be allowed in and wearies the doorkeeper with his importunity. The doorkeeper often engages him in brief conversation, asking him about his home and about other matters, but the questions are put quite impersonally, as great men put questions, an always conclude with the statement that the man cannot be allowed to enter yet. The man, who has equipped himself with many things for his journey, parts with all he has, however valuable, in the hope of bribing the doorkeeper. The doorkeeper accepts it all, saying, however, as he takes each gift: "I take this only to keep you from feeling that you have left something undone." During all these long years the man watches the doorkeeper almost incessantly. He forgets about the other doorkeepers, and this one seems to him the only barrier between himself and the Law. In the first years he curses his evil fate aloud; later, as he grows old, he only mutters to himself. He grows childish, and since in his prolonged study of the doorkeeper he has learned to

know even the fleas in his fur collar, he begs the very fleas to help him and to persuade the doorkeeper to change his mind. Finally his eyes grow dim and he does not know whether the world is really darkening around him or whether his eyes are only deceiving. But in the darkness he can now perceive a radiance that streams inextinguishably from the door of the Law. Now his life is drawing to a close. Before he dies, all that he has experienced during the whole time of his sojourn condenses in his mind into one question, which he has never yet put to the doorkeeper. He beckons the doorkeeper, since he can no longer raise his stiffening body. The doorkeeper has to bend far down to hear him, for the difference in size between them has increased very much to the man's disadvantage. "What do you want to know now?" asks the doorkeeper, "you are insatiable." "Everyone strives to attain the Law," answers the man, "how does it come about, then, that in all these years no one has come seeking admittance but me?" The doorkeeper perceives that the man is nearing his end and his hearing is failing, so he bellows in his ear: "No one but you could gain admittance through this door, since this door was intended for you. I am now going to shut it."

"Before the Law"(*The Trial*, p.213-215)

How does one speak of the light which emanates from another's eyes in a dark room? Is it not a harrowing light? Is it not a light which is the farthest thing from light? We search for its source and only too quickly it eludes us. Language meets with ruses more often than muses. Franz Kafka, however, had a unique muse-ical contract. His is a site where polarities duel incessantly, where the right and left maintain opposite but equal ground for eternity, and where the faint smile of an indifferent witness encourages the process.

Kafka is smiling, Kafka is laughing, cathartically laughing. And we first ask "why?". We first ask, not laugh, but ask. So then, why? He laughs again. Certainly nothing malicious, rather more endearing. We remain puzzled. And yet, this is the Franz Kafka who wrote "The Metamorphosis" and "The Cares of a Family Man" and *The Trial* and "A Report to an Academy" and "The Burrow". Certainly such abominations are the farthest things from laughter? And surely a student of architectural history and theory has better things to discuss than the creatures of a convoluted mind? Convolution? Nothing convoluted about a man who turns into a monstrous vermin (we are of course dealing with fiction); nothing convoluted about a man who perpetually strives toward finding justice and truth (we are of course all Christians); nothing convoluted about a rodent articulating the depths of his burrow (metaphors of self-introspection run rampant in literary history; besides, even children can attest to the wonders of talking animals). Convoluted or facile? Both and neither. The terms appear to have little to do with anything. And yet, language has little to do with anything if it doesn't have "little to do with anything" to some degree. It seems the closer one comes to saying "little about anything", is the degree to which something is actually being said. And Kafka laughs.

There is no shortage of literary criticism regarding the work of Franz Kafka. Familial/Freudian strife, oppressive/modern bureaucracies, circular/Judaic despair are frequented themes. In fact, it seems that readings of whatever slant may be coherently argued and founded in Kafka's work. Indeed, one might even perceive this interpretive pluralism as a burlesqued "reality" of Kafka's own fictions. In *The Castle*, for instance, a series of equally founded and valid interpretations of K.'s plight are put forth by almost every character at some point throughout the novel (Pepi's goes on for eighteen pages). The qualifying condition in Kafka's narrative, however, is that the protagonist, K., struggles within a timeless space, devoid of any temporal referent from which to judge his actions, interpretations, or the nature of his movement. This may be the very "referent" from which a majority of Kafka's literary critics expand.

When such readings of Kafka are critically addressed in this paper, however, it is not because they are viewed as incorrect interpretations. This would say nothing. It is rather firstly, that this pluralism may be seen as wholly indicative of the more encompassing extent of Kafka's literature to *comprehend all forms of alienation*.[1] In other words, Kafka's work may be coherently named, or typed according to a variety of literary, philosophical, theological, or political positions and orientations because it speaks from *beneath* all of them, from their *base relations*. Secondly, when we engage these readings critically (and at times, caustically), it is merely because we ask them (the critics) to take their theses to their respective limits. If there is one view most shared by Kafka readers it is that writing for Kafka was a limit condition.[2] To say that Kafka was a lonely and alienated figure, and that his work is depressing, for example, would not be incorrect. It would not be correct either. It would simply set the framework for a reading which identifies both but holds neither. Literature for Kafka, was an activity

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[1] Taken from the introductory comments of Stanley Corngold in his translation of Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, Bantam Books, NY, 1972, p xxii.

[2] In a letter to Felice, Kafka makes this clear: "You have to believe what I say about myself; which is the self-knowledge of a man of 30 who for deep-seated reasons has several times been close to madness, thus reaching the limits of his existence, and so can see all of himself and what can become of him within these limits." (*LF*, p.275)

of excess.[3] Kafka articulates this excess continuously throughout his life: "There is no having, only a being, a state of being which craves the last breath, craves suffocation"(*DF*, p.37). This is the work we experience in reading and re-reading Kafka. This is the terror of Kafka. It is the terror of stillness, a horrifying stillness which leaves the reader with nothing but pure intensities. This is the *life* of Kafka's work. It is the life of writing which comes from the last breath, from one who knows writing only as "revealing oneself to excess". It is an exemplary existence which is poised at the limit, which craves the last breath. One is horrifyingly moved by Kafka's work because one is never afforded a contented breath of air, one can never rest in its concentrated stillness. "I think we ought to read the kind of books that wound and stab us..."(*L*, p.16) This is the Kafka we experience. "Lonely", "alienated" and "depressing" readings *avoid* rather than *crave* suffocation. They passively identify limits rather than actively engage in them. They are readings which are quite simply lifeless, breathless, choking.

Kafka wrote about architecture continuously. "Myth", "form", "function", "culture", "codes", "technology", its all there. As in any building, you just have to look for it. If we were to read the surface of Kafka's fictions, we would find some of the most alluring constructions known to man: Titorelli's dematerialized artist's studio collaged into the attics of the courts; the subterranean gestural theater tucked within the foundations of The Castle; the labyrinthine *der bau* of a burrowing rodent; the pristinely 'modern' Stoker's bed/engine room; the kaleidoscopic series of stifling hallways and courtrooms of law officials suspended within the rafters of an endless suburbia.... These constructions expose the reading to dizzying dimensions. Kafka's consummate concrete language lends such scientific precision to these spaces that we sit merely in awe over their tangibility. It would, however, be doing an injustice to ourselves, as well as Kafka, if we were to rest within this space, if we were to reify these literary constructions, without mediation, into "architectural" experience.

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[3] And from an early letter to Felice: "Writing means revealing oneself to excess, that utmost of self-revelation and surrender, in which a human being, when involved with others, would feel he was losing himself, and from which, therefore, he will always shrink as long as he is in his own right mind - for everyone wants to live as long as he is alive..."(*LF*, p.156)

Literary and architectural *space* require much more subtle and poignant means of translation.

Literature and architecture are no strangers to each other. They are both essential forms of human representation. This is not the place, however, to engage in debates over "representation". A plethora of literature exists in both media, dedicated to articulating distinctions between Platonic, Aristotelian, Renaissance, Enlightenment, or modern forms of mimesis. We will simply qualify our understanding of "representation" with the belief that the prefix "*re*" presents an orientation to time, history and making which construes human artifacts only through *infinite and critical processes of reading and narration*. These are the intrinsic tools of both disciplines. "Copies" and "originals" in this framework are immediately consumed in the metamorphic wake of "*re*".

Contemporary lines of inquiry regarding architecture and literature build on their analogous concerns with narration, emplotment, characterization, structure, etc. They both share an inherent stake in language. For as long as myths have been orated and written, temples constructed in their reference and reverence, humans have recounted their existence in architecture and narration simultaneously. Indeed, a writer and an architect are as equally distinguishable as they are related. But Kafka was not interested in poles, or rather, he was interested in nothing but poles, poles as seen through the joints, the jigs, the monstrous relations which give polarities identity. To say that literature and architecture are related *generally*, is to say that their processes of thinking, making and reflecting are analogous. To say that the *space of Kafka* and architecture are related is to recognize in both the significance of a joint, jig or monster. All three are relational, translational and chiastic devices. They exist within the space between identifiable entities and subjectivities, and within architecture or the space of Kafka, they are most essentially the mediating elements of transition. Work which solicits the joint, jig or monster is work which solicits the 'active blank'. It is work which cannot be categorically defined, for it supports and denies all categories. How is one to *approach* such work which resists definition? Alas, the task of the reader!

Kafka had once referred to himself as a "writer in a body". Efforts in this study are primarily concerned with articulating this mode of existence. A "writer in a body" is a monstrous condition. It offers the image of a discontinuous self. And it is this *self* which is most intriguing. A *self* in transition is an unidentifiable *self*, one which can only be understood as a *relationship*, that is, as a joint, jig or monster. Initially, there might appear to be something unsettling about such a condition. Western history and all of its wondrous achievements has to its benefit the most substantial of all constructions, the reified self. A subjective self-thing which is disconnected from its world because it subjugates it. Modern virtues of self-preservation, and self-determination firmly project the solidity and soliloquy of such a self. Twentieth century literature and poetry's most prominent task has been directed at dismantling the foundations of this concrete self. What seems to take place through Kafka's *monstrous self*, however, is less a dismantling, destructuring or deconstructing, than a simple *crossing*. The implications of this *monstrous self* as a *crossing* are at the crux of this study and at the crux of any relations which may be drawn between literature and architecture, for it implies an understanding of an "individual's" relation to a work and a world which is not experienced dialectically but *chiastically*, as a relation of infinite recursion and reversibility.[4] Ultimately, this is the point in

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[4] This is the issue which will be repeated endlessly in various forms throughout this study, that is, within the fervent "contemporary" interest and need to ask the question, "How does one act?", one cannot simply set out to develop "methods" of orienting one's actions "responsibly" in a world, from which, for instance, conventional political, social, or cultural structures are "subverted", "deconstructed" or "dismantled" In the process, such orientations ironically yet implicitly construct a dialectical relationship between an "individual" and a "world". And the resultant, all to frequented and abused use of the term "alienation" describes "one self's" fundamental relationship to a "world". We (and Kafka), on the contrary, focus our investigations on the belief that any notion of "one-self" already implicates "a world", and that the attention should be drawn to how one "self" simultaneously experiences and lives through that implication. It is a relationship and experience which we have identified as "chiastic" rather than "dialectic". Donald Kunze introduces the implications of such a relationship: "Chiastic structure is normally thought of as a verbal device that sorts words and ideas in a mirror-like fashion, such as Pope's 'a wit with dunces, and a dunce with wits', leading to an ultimate and problematic convergence of a character with its double. The [Greek letter] *chi* [X], also stands for the principle of paratactic, or monstrous, order whereby parts to be related are simply juxtaposed without mediation into a fabulous being, such as a Chimera. The two ideas of *chiasmus* are connected, for both depend on the idea of conjunction as something involving a mystery and, for the logical mind at least, a catastrophe." ("A Teratology of Civic Space", an unpublished

crossing the boundaries of respective disciplines, not so that we may cohesively merge them, but so that we may communicate with one "individual's" relation to his/her work and world.

The strength of both Kafka as a writer and Kafka's work comes from the strength of this 'monstrous self as a crossing', for it displays an orientation to living, to thinking, to making, which tries not to arrest an essence, but approaches as a "veering around. Peering, timid, hopeful, the answer prowls around the question, desperately looking into its impenetrable face, following it along the most senseless paths, that is, along paths leading as far as possible away from the answer."(*DF*, p42) Kafka's "prowling around the question" betrays most characteristically his literary orientation. It suggests a course which remains in perpetual tension by clinging not to what can be definitively stated through the hunt, but rather to the further metamorphic possibilities imminent within the question itself. "Why is it meaningless to ask questions? To complain means to put a question and wait for the answer. But questions that don't answer themselves at the very moment of their asking are never answered. No distance divides the interrogator from the one who answers him. There's no distance to overcome. Hence meaningless to ask and wait."(*DII*, p.131) That "distance" is essential to Kafka, for the "interrogator" (or writer) steps back to see that the question itself is what remains possible, and hence, in the transformations of the question, one finds possibilities of movement. This is, in fact, the only possible movement for the 'monstrous self', which translated, reads as endless possibility. The monstrous self revels in *metamorphosis*, exists

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paper, Penn State University) And where Kunze articulates the relation of *chiasmus* to architecture and "Teratology" (the study of monstrosities), Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in the unfinished fragments of *The Visible and The Invisible*, (trans. by Alphonso Lingis, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1968) initiates the equally profound implications of *the chiasm* in relation to any articulation of human "identity" and "alterity" in the fourth section of this book entitled "The Intertwining - The Chiasm". For Merleau-Ponty, it is through the infinite reversibility of the *chiasm* that one finds the simultaneous continuity and discontinuity of "self" and "other", the immediacy of an "other" with the "same". It is this orientation to "self", which Merleau-Ponty develops, that initially spawned the present interest of study in Franz Kafka's work into an articulation of a *monstrous self* as a *crossing* . And it is this notion of "self", which as we will see, was simultaneously the source of Kafka's greatest consternation and ecstasy in literature.

only through metamorphosis, and metamorphosis defines the essential movement of Kafka's fictions.

We will spend most of our time on further extensions of both this movement of *metamorphosis*, and the elusive *monstrous self* within the context of Kafka's work. The implications of both address questions of reading and translating within any discipline, as well as issues of alterity, identity and temporality which inevitably arise when any human trial is approached. The first chapter introduces these issues by introducing Kafka and his understanding of an existence within literature. The experience of reading Kafka's work, as well as the roles that "experience", "expression", and "responsibility" play in it, initiate a glimpse into the monstrous condition of a "writer in a body".

Chapter two looks specifically at *metamorphosis* as not just the characteristic movement of all of Kafka's work, but historically, as an activity which has perpetually confronted the nature of being human. We will concentrate on the metamorphic *monsters* of history as a context for the *monsters* of Kafka. This chapter is both the logistical and theoretical *crossing* of this paper. Two columns of independent text run parallel to each other throughout. The left side deals more specifically with Kafka, "monstrosity" and "metamorphosis". The right side approaches the same issues historically, through Homer, Ovid and Apuleius. And yet, this *form* which is inseparable from the arguments presented, is given validity only by virtue of the temporary *crossings* which necessarily take place at random through the reading. The intent was that through these historical *hinges*, figures may momentarily cross, time collapse for what cannot even be considered an instant and the more encompassing *limits* to a "context" of one individual's work may be experienced. Each column carries its own independent narrative (albeit, infrequently and *chiastically* ruptured) which may be read in full without immediate reference to its parallel text. We suggest that the first reading take place in this way.

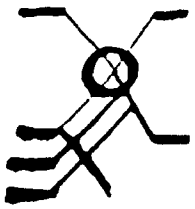
From chapter two is revealed the workings of a *monstrous self* which in the last chapter is developed further through the *double* and *bachelor* figures, most prominent personalities throughout Kafka's

work. It is through the double and bachelor figures that Kafka's *creatures* take on further human form, in-the-*flesh*.

One seems to always begin projects with reasons that don't tend to matter in the end. The original idea never remains static. And yet, hopefully what perpetuates is its simple hum of intensity. Kafka's work and the life it emits is quite simply ecstatic. This is the source of the present study, and the hum remains. If that hum is transferred and translated to some degree, so that the ecstatic movement in the process of living and making, the ecstasy of reading, translating, and thinking through another's body of work in architecture is opened by the work of one writer, then the crossing has been worth it.

chapter **1**

Reading Kafka



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EXPERIENCING KAFKA / KAFKA AND EXPERIENCE

Some of Kafka's most disturbing constructions are those which confound or distort "primarily in a kind of breath-taking reversal of the established relationship between *experience* and *thought*."[5] Whereas *thought* provides a critical distance from the rich immediacies of one's *experiences*, the crucial dimension in articulating their relationship is primarily the proximity of that distance. In many of Kafka's aphorisms and short sketches from his diaries, this relationship is inverted in such a way that the story or aphorism takes place in what Arendt has called, a "thought-landscape, which, without losing in precision, harbors all the riches, varieties, and dramatic elements characteristic of 'real life'".[6]

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[5] Arendt, Hannah, *Between Past and Future*, World Publishing Company, Cleveland, Ohio, 1963, p 10.

[6] In discussing this "thought landscape", Arendt refers to Kafka's aphorism from "'He': Notes from the Year 1920"(*GW* p.160-61) in which a character (not even *a* man, but more closely akin to *man* per se; a timeless "He") is positioned between the struggling forces of the future and the past: "*He has two antagonists: The first pushes him from behind, from his origin. The second blocks his road ahead. He struggles with both. Actually the first supports him in his struggle with the second, for the first wants to push him forward; and in the same way the second supports him in his struggle with the first, for the second of course forces him back. But it is only theoretically so. For it is not only the two protagonists who are there, but he himself as well, and who really knows his intentions? However that may be, he has a dream that sometime in an unguarded moment - it would require, though, a night as dark as no night has ever been - he will spring out of the fighting line and be prompted, on account of his experience of such warfare, as judge over his struggling antagonists.*" The fact that "he" exists within the *gap* between the past and future is a more perplexing condition than it may first appear. For, as Arendt notes, if one considers time in "historical or biological" terms, "gaps" in time do not exist. This is crucial, for it is "only in so far as he *thinks* and that in so far as ["he"] is ageless...does man in the full actuality of his concrete

But, what do such "landscapes" reveal? Are they intentional devices designed to maintain an author's obscurity? Or is there an attempt to articulate some relationship between "experience", "thought", and the "action" which takes place within these reversals? One frequently finds, for instance, in Kafka's figures, perverse associations between the characters' speech and their gestures. "Despite the fact that these voices issue out of human bodies, it is hard to conceive of the speakers as empirical personalities; the relation of intention to bodily gestures is too odd and incoherent."[7] The following fragment from the diaries on October 26, 1913 figures well:

> "Who am I then?" I rebuked myself. I got up from the sofa upon which I had been lying with my knees drawn up and sat erect. The door, which led straight from the stairway into my room, opened and a young man with a bowed head and searching eyes entered. He walked, as far as this was possible in the narrow room, in a curve around the sofa and stopped in the darkness of the corner near the window. I wanted to see what kind of apparition this was, went over and grasped the man by the arm. He was a living person. He looked up - a little shorter than I - at me with a smile, the very carelessness with which he nodded and said "Just try me" should have convinced me. Despite that, I seized him in front by the vest and in back by the jacket and shook him. His beautiful, strong, gold watch chain attracted my attention, I grabbed it and pulled down on it so that the buttonhole to which it was fastened tore. He put up with this, simply looked down at the damage, tried in vain to keep the vest button in the torn buttonhole. "What are you doing?" he said finally, and showed me the vest. "Just be quiet!" I said threateningly.
> I began to run around the room, from a walk I passed into a trot, from a trot into a gallop, every time I passed the man I raised my fist to him. He did not even look at me but worked on his vest. I felt very free, even my breathing was extraordinary, my breast felt that only my clothes prevented it from heaving gigantically.(*DI* p.305)

Our experience simply can't account for such short-circuited gestures. The discontinuities between intention and action, speech and gesture, distort the spatial and temporal framework which is commonly experienced in everyday movement. "It is hard to conceive of the speakers as empirical personalities", because it is hard to conceive of an intentional action which confounds the intention. But then, intentionality is born of the distance which distinguishes thought and

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being live in this gap of time between past and future."(*Between Past and Future*, p.13) This aphorism will surface again, but the issue of a "thought landscape" which complicates thought and experience is more immediately evident.

[7] Corngold, Stanley, *Franz Kafka: The Necessity of Form*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1988, p.13.

experience. The characters appear to be a site for radicalizing that distance; that is, by magnifying the distance necessary for one to recognize *thought* and *experience*, Kafka constructs a critical *gap* in which both clash in the absurdity of two discordant characters. What gives life to these preposterous personalities is the *tension*, the *dis*continuity, between their empirical worlds and a thinking which orients them in their gestures and actions. Hence, the appropriate opening line of this sketch, "Who am I then?".

The space of Kafka is a space which resists the precipitous closure of experience with thought. Two implications immediately arise within such a space. First, in light of Kafka's question regarding the tension of the *writing* self and the *bodily* one, the activity of writing, as well, involves a tension; it is not a site for the immediate transcription of one's phenomenal reality. The writer does not circumscribe his every day experiences, and call it literature, regardless of his/her "talent". What is at issue is the *mediating space* which allows thinking to occur.[8] Second, if the task of writing requires this essential distance, then the demand placed on the reader is no less essential. It is indeed a *responsibility* which, by necessity, belongs to the reader; for, in fact, the writer (as well as the work) only appears in so far as he is revealed through the conscious reader.[9] Kafka sees clearly the mutually responsible tasks of both the writer and the reader. In a diary entry from 1911, after reading the memoirs of Karl Stauffer-Bern, Kafka discusses this experience of reading.[10]

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[8] At one level, this recognition would immediately dispel readings which draw purely biographical sketches around Kafka's work. As Kafka himself once noted in a diary entry after reading "The Judgment" to his sister, "My sister said: the house (in the story) is very like ours, I said: How? In that case then, father would have to be living in the toilet."(*DI*, p.277)

[9] A fundamental concern of this thesis involves an articulation of the role of hermeneutics in the "task" of reading. We aim to stress that this "task" is a responsibility, or ethos, which refers to the reader who, when asked the question "what is an unread book?", responds with, "something that has not yet been written."(Maurice Blanchot, "Reading", *Siren's Song*, p.250) Blanchot knows very well that "he (the poet) cannot, unaided, make the pure speech of beginnings burst forth from that which is at the source. Therefore, a poem is only a poem when it becomes the shared privacy of someone who writes and someone who reads, the passionately unfurled space of a mutual conflict between speaker and hearer."(Ibid, "Mallarmé and Literary Space", p.110)

[10] It should be emphasized that this entry is in reference to the writer's "book of letters and memoirs", that is, a form of writing which is more readily regarded as "descriptive", and more immediately linked to the vitality of one's experiences Yet,

> ...One doesn't make him [the writer] one's own by main strength, for to do this one has to employ art, and art is its own reward; but rather one suffers oneself to be drawn away - this is easily done if one doesn't resist - by the concentrated otherness of the person writing *and lets oneself be made into his **counterpart***.(emphasis added - below, to be abbreviated by "e.a.", *DI* p.173)

As he continues with the discussion of the Stauffer-Bern memoirs, Kafka further reveals his understanding of "experience" and its relation to the writer, in the activity of "description". Hence, as one is "brought back to oneself by closing the book",

> only later are we surprised that these experiences of another person's life, in spite of their vividness, are faithfully described in the book - our own experience inclines us to think that nothing in the world is further removed from an experience (sorrow over the death of a friend for instance) than its description (*DI* p.174)

This is a fascinating fragment. Like much of what is *Kafkan*, its apparent transparency is quickly confounded upon closer inspection. The first half of the entry, for instance, appears slightly unstable by the intersecting phrase "in spite of their vividness". In fact, the "in spite of" seems contradictory to the "vividness" which distinguishes experience. If one was to simply replace "in spite of" with "in all of", the sentence would read, "Only later are we surprised that these experiences of another person's life, in all of their vividness, are faithfully described in the book", and the transition from "these experiences" and their ability to be "faithfully described" is a rather smooth one. Our "surprise" in this case would refer to the author's raw *ability* to truthfully represent his experiences.

Yet, "in spite of their vividness" complicates matters. What is suggested is that the "vividness" of the author's "experiences" within a book are distanced from the "vividness" of the author's own temporal "experiences" in daily life; more precisely, what is suggested is that "description", for Kafka, connotes something very different within literature than a direct transcription of the author's empirical reality. If

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as we will see with Kafka, he had a profound mistrust in using language as a tool for empirical self-reflection. Writing for Kafka was not an exercise in "self-help": "For the last time psychology!" (*GWC*, p.180) He once referred to psychology as a dog chasing its tail. Consequently, we find his letters and diaries hold as equally a *fictive* position in his oeuvre as do his stories and novels.

read this way, our "surprise" is not with the author's ability to "faithfully" represent, but rather "in spite of [such] vividness", we are surprised at the space which the work *distinguishes from* "our experiences". The second half of the paragraph confirms this; that is, *because* "our own experience inclines us to think that nothing in the world is further removed from an experience...than its description", we are able to see that writing must entail something *other* than "faithfully describ[ing]" our experiences. Yet, it confirms this only if we have recognized the reversal which takes place in the first half of the sentence with "in spite of their vividness". If we have passed over this, unaware of the distinction in "experience" which Kafka is implying for the domain of writing, then the second half of the sentence ironically confirms the opposite, that is, *because* "our own experience inclines us to think that nothing in the world is further removed from an experience...than its description", we are "surprised" in the author's ability to *defy our own experience*, by "faithfully" representing "an experience" with "its description".

This is the task and wonder of reading Kafka. Although this is an apparently simple diary entry, hardly conceived on Kafka's part to induce such, if any, scrutiny, like all of Kafka's work, it *begs to be interpreted.* [11] The unsettling degree of straightforwardness and apparent contradiction together in all of his writings have prompted readers and critics to endless exegeses, and have subsequently produced a plethora of Kafkas in the process. Yet, there are common threads of thought which weave through these interminable tomes. One very frequent reading of Kafka's work dwells in its "immediacy", that is, in the one-to-one correspondence between Kafka's consummate language and its meaning. Readings of this nature see Kafka himself as the focus of his domineering constructions and tend to terminate with synthetic descriptions of the work (and author) such as "nihilistic", "hopeless", "totalitarian"[12]. Yet, in doing so, they consequently reach "a kind of

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[11] As Albert Camus once put it so tersely, "The whole of Kafka's art consists in compelling the reader to re-read him." *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. by Justin O'brien, Vintage Books, New York, NY., 1955, p.92.

[12] One such reading may be found in Peter Heller's *Dialectics and Nihilism : Essays on Lessing, Nietzsche, Mann and Kafka*, University of Mass. Press, 1966. "He [Kafka] was as gray as ashes, a jackdaw longing to vanish among the stones, to disappear, to die."(p.231)

opacity of which he (the reader) is unaware"[13]. A second familiar reading succumbs to the work's "paradox".[14] Such readings lie contented in a deferral of the present in light of future of possibilities, and hence remains always "excluded from the dark whose tell-tale light it (the work) is"[15]. These are, of course, generalities, yet they are emphasized merely to situate a reading which may be initially guided by that "dark whose tell-tale light", and recognize the demand which the unsettling mix of immediacy and contradiction places on the reader. One may even glimpse that in Kafka's work, one finds *the* hermeneutical site.

But, let us return to Kafka, in fact, let us return to that same diary entry. The striking element, again, is Kafka's term "experience". We have already suggested a distinction which Kafka maintains between one's temporal "experiences", and the writer's "descriptions" within the "book", yet Kafka uses "experience" in another way in this entry, that is, "experience" in the sense of "knowledge" - of that which we have attained through our "experience", and can reflect upon. It is when he writes "our own experience inclines us to think...", that "experience" in this sense is that which not only "inclines us to think", but also inclines us to act, or move in some oriented fashion, whether in thought or writing.

> If our letters cannot match our own feelings...if even at our best, expressions like "indescribable", "inexpressible", or "so sad", or "so beautiful", followed by a rapidly collapsing "that"-clause, must perpetually come to our assistance, then as if in compensation we have been given the ability to comprehend what another person has written with at least the same degree of calm exactitude which we lack when we confront our own letter writing.

He concludes with,

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[13] Blanchot, "Reading Kafka", *Siren's Song*, p.23.

[14] For instance, the book *Parables and Paradoxes* contains a series of writings by Kafka which were never organized by the author personally, but compiled and edited by Nahum N. Glatzer. The original version of this collection appeared under the title, *Parables* in 1935. Additional material was included in the Glatzer edition, and with it, the *interpretive title* of *Parables and Paradoxes* was deemed appropriate by the editors. We will see how important issues of the "appearance", "name" and "form" of Kafka's published works were to him, hence how inappropriate this editorial slight of hand would have been for Kafka.

[15] Blanchot, "Reading Kafka", *Siren's Song*, p.23.

> Our ignorance of those feelings which alternately make us crumple up and pull open again the letter in front of us, this very ignorance becomes knowledge the moment we are compelled to limit ourselves to this letter, to believe only what it says, and thus to find it perfectly expressed and perfect in expression, as is only right, if we are to see a clear road into what is most human

What begins to surface because of these "indescribable expressions" is that "we have been given the ability to comprehend [not only] what another person has written", but we have also been afforded, "as if in compensation", some knowledge of our own writing, in fact, an "ignorance" of our own writing. Yet it is the very fact that we are ignorant of an appropriate "expression" of those experiences, that we come to see that writing, which is "perfectly expressed and perfect in expression", maintains a discontinuous position in relation to the immediacy of one's "feelings". But, what is equally important is that this "ignorance which becomes knowledge the moment we are compelled to limit ourselves to the letter, to believe only what it says", puts into question the "experience" or knowledge which had previously "incline[d] us to think". For, it is because we have been "inclined to think" (and act, as we shall see with Kafka's characters) through this "experience", that we have come to *know* something other than "our own experience which inclines us to think"[16].

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[16] Kafka's concern with "experience" reflects the interminable tension of "a writer in a body". By implication, this concern also reflects a critique of an attitude which seeks to arrest "experience" in order to render its essence immediate and applicable to the orientation of one's actions. It is in the very naming of an experience as such, that we come to lose it "Each time we want to get at it immediately, or lay hands on it, or circumscribe it, or see it unveiled, we do in fact feel that the attempt is misconceived, that it retreats in the measure that we approach. The explication does not give us the idea itself; it is but a second version of it, a more manageable derivative."(Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p.150) Kafka wrote fluently of this condition, especially in his diaries: "I have never understood how it is possible for almost anyone who writes to objectify his sufferings in the very midst of suffering them, thus I, for example, in the midst of my unhappiness - my head, say, still on fire with unhappiness - sit down and write to someone. I am unhappy. Yes, I can even go beyond that and with the various flourishes I might have talent for, all of which seem to have nothing to do with my unhappiness, ring simple, or contrapuntal or a whole orchestration of changes on my theme. And it is not a lie, and it does not still my pain, it is simply a merciful *surplus of strength* at a moment when suffering has raked me to the bottom of my being and plainly exhausted all my strength. But then what kind of strength is it?"(translation taken from Stanley Corngold's *Fate of the Self*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986, p.163, in which he discusses this passage in great detail. A slightly different translation can be found in *Diaries 1914-1923*, Schocken Books, New York, 1948, pp. 183-184) One may provisionally see for Kafka the dilemma inherent in the act of naming one's experiences.

But, from where does writing emerge if not from the author's expression of his experiences? What is the author to convey, if not himself? Many Renaissance to Romantic efforts called on the "noble urge...[of] inspiration"[17], for the writer or artist was understood to be imbued with an innate genius, or talent, and writing issued from an expression of his/her own inner being. "Experience", in this context, fuels an author's inner fires, and becomes the point of departure from which writing is born; and hence, writers

> exert all their artistry in trying to communicate real experience, and are artists precisely in so far as they are able to find an equivalent - in style, imagery, plots and words - that will enable us to participate in a vision similar to their own But unfortunately, it is not as simple as that The ambiguity is that of the time which is here involved and which enables us to say and to feel that the image expressing the experience is, at a given moment, present while in fact such a presence is foreign to any kind of present, indeed abolishes the present in which it seems to participate.[18]

"Characters", in light of these romantic experiences, are often taken to be an expression of the many facets or dimensions to the interiority of the author, and "'I have something to say', is ultimately, at its simplest level, the artist's relation to the work's urgency."[19]

If writing is to "arrive at that freedom of true description which releases one's foot from the experienced"(*DI* p.100), then the writer must come to terms with the wisdom that "fiction creates a distance in he who is writing, a gap (itself fictional), without which he could not express himself."[20] Hence the enigmatic "gap" of a "writer in a body". And as the above diary entry had suggested, it is only through the "concentrated otherness" of an other, that the work even begins to exist. It is within the reading itself, within the reversals and ever-transforming rhetoric which we provisionally define as "Kafkan", and whose "dark, tell-tale light" incites us to look closer, to read, and to re-read, that we even touch upon what could be understood as an ethical experience. The stakes are in fact high for the reader who takes this responsibility lightly; as high for the reader as they are for Kafka's "heroes".

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[17] Blanchot, *Siren's Song*, p 4.
[18] Ibid , "The Siren's Song", p.65.
[19] Ibid , "A happy end is out of the question", p.48.
[20] Ibid, "Kafka and Literature", p.38.

One of those heroes is Joseph K., the Bank clerk who "was arrested one fine morning"(*T* p.1). But, is the narrator, who appears to know as much about the incident as K., being sarcastic with the phrase "one *fine* morning"? Or is this just a harmless euphemism? Such pleasantries appear not only inappropriate at a time like this, but mocking as well. Before this has happened, however, the reader learns that, "Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning."(*T* p.1) The plot of the story only begins after this opening statement. Although the narrator appears to always be at a similar level of consciousness as K. throughout the novel, this opening statement comes from a consciousness somewhere ahead of the novel, before it starts. The narrator has definitively established the strange encounter (at least for the reader and K.), which has yet to take place, within the categories of a common civil court. His very specific choice of the word "arrest" to define the as-yet encounter reveals a consciousness other than that of K.'s which confidently, yet strangely, assumes (or establishes) K.'s own interpretation of the forthcoming events as explained through the metaphors of a court, a trial, a judge, and a jury. Such a consciousness would tend to reveal the euphemism of "one fine morning" to be closer to a sarcastic snicker, an ironic twist of the knife which would eventually pierce K.'s heart.

But what purpose could such a narrative consciousness serve? It is indeed a distinction only given to the narrator at the beginning, for after that first sentence of the novel, the narrator is a veiled and nearly compatible consciousness with K.. Yet, in this moment before the novel has begun, an "arrest" is revealed in the absence of an accusation, which takes not only K., but the reader off guard; and the absurd temptation, uttered in its matter-of-fact tone, is "impossible to resist, because it is at the beginning and we are disarmed."[21] But, then,

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[21] Corngold, *Franz Kafka: The Necessity of Form*, p 224 Corngold offers great insight into this opening scene of *Der Prozess*, implications of which suggest the novel exists perpetually in the metamorphosis of its beginning.

isn't such resistance (for K. as well as the reader) a matter of life or death? What is fundamentally questioned, in this anticipation of a narrative, before it has even become an issue, is the very locus of the absurd power from which this "trial" will proceed.

K. is pondering the presence of the strange man who has just entered his room. When he asks who the man is and if Anna would be serving K.'s breakfast, the man responds, after consultations with an unseen character through the door, that "It can't be done". After he is told of his "arrest" by this "inspector", K. finds that the man has no knowledge of K. having ever been accused. K. wonders whether this may simply be a practical joke being played on him by his colleagues in the Bank because it was his thirtieth birthday. Well, if such were the case, he knew how to handle this incident. He would not make the mistakes he had made in previous situations of a similar nature with his friends, where he had behaved with "deliberate recklessness". Although it was not usual for him, this time he would "learn from experience"(*T* p.4), and play this charade - if that's what it was - out to the end. Besides, if it wasn't a charade, and he was guilty of some offense, then his case would surely be carried out in the most judicious manner.

The issue of K.'s own "experience" surfaces again, this time with greater force in the chapel with the priest just "Before the Law", and just before the end.[22] K. hopes he may gain assistance from the priest for his case, yet the priest tells him that he "cast[s] about too much for outside help". After reading the scripture of "Before the Law", K. immediately responds to the reading and concludes that the doorkeeper had deceived the man from the country. The priest proceeds to defend the door keeper as a man of duty. K. vehemently disagrees, for the doorkeeper's duty "might have been to keep all strangers away, but this man, for whom the door was intended, should have been let in." The priest tells K. that he has not enough respect for the scriptures and that he is altering the story, for what is important to maintain in a claim of deceit with the doorkeeper is that there was a contradiction in what he had told the man. His first statement was that

[22] Please refer to the epigraph for a transcription of "Before the Law". The following discussion assumes the reader to be well versed in the scripture.

he could not admit the man at the moment, his last statement was that the door was intended only for the man. There is no contradiction in the two statements. In fact the first implies the second. K. is momentarily silent then asks, "So, you think the man was not deceived?" The priest quickly retorts with,

> "Don't misunderstand me, I'm only showing you the various options concerning that point. You must not pay too much attention to them. *The scriptures are unalterable and the comments often enough merely express the commentator's despair.* (e a)"

He then continues with the second interpretation which claims that in fact it was the doorkeeper who was deluded. "That's a far-fetched interpretation", said K. "On what is it based?" "It is based," answered the priest, "on the simple-mindedness of the doorkeeper." He knew nothing of the Law from the inside, only the way to it. Besides, it was the doorkeeper who was subordinate to the man. The man from the country was free. He came of his own free will and stayed of his own free will, whereas the doorkeeper was bound, a slave, bound to his gate and bound to the man for whom he had to wait, bound in fact, until the man died. The doorkeeper was a slave. "A bondman is always subject to a free man." In fact, the doorkeeper was at the man's service even before the man had arrived at the gate - "he had to wait on the man's pleasure, for the man came of his own free will." Hence, one could say that "for many years...his service was in a sense an empty formality." The doorkeeper is deceived because of his given inferior nature. K. tends to agree that now the doorkeeper was deceived, but that still doesn't rule out his original claim that the man was deceived as well, for if the doorkeeper was deceived in his ignorance, "then his deception must of necessity be communicated to the man."

A third interpretation claims that it is simply not possible to pass judgment on the doorkeeper, for he has been appointed by the Law, and to question the doorkeeper was to question the Law. The doorkeeper cannot be judged because he is not of this world, "he belongs to the Law and such is beyond human judgment." And in the penultimate exchange of words,

> "I don't agree with that point of view," said K., shaking his head, "for if one accepts it, one must accept as true everything the doorkeeper says. But you

> yourself have sufficiently proved how impossible it is to do that." "No," said the priest, "it is not necessary to accept every thing as true, one must only accept it as necessary." "A melancholy conclusion," said K. "It turns lying into a universal principle."[23]

What can be definitely said in light of this apparently open but equally closed form of discourse? Let us return to the three interpretations. The issue which incites each interpretation is "deception". "Deception" implies a dialectical construct of a deceived and a deceiver. Until the end, what remains consistent in each interpretation, is that the question of the "deceiver" is always in reference to the doorkeeper and never falls on the man's shoulders. Even when the argument is put forth that it was in fact the doorkeeper who was "deceived", it was because of *his* "simple-mindedness", his ignorance of the interior as well as his subordinate position which made him prone to *self*-deception. The interpretations revolve around the guilt of the doorkeeper as "deceiver". What remains unquestioned for K. is the man's *innocence*.

Yet, what was the purpose of recalling this specific scripture in the first place? It is provoked by K.'s "delusion":

> "You are very good to me", said K. They paced side by side up and down the dusky aisle. "But you are an exception among those who belong to the Court I have more trust in you than in any of the others, though I don't know many of them " "Don't be deluded," said the priest. "How am I being deluded?" asked K "You are deluding yourself about the Court," said the priest. "in the writings which preface the Law, that particular delusion is described thus· before the Law stands a doorkeeper."(*T*, p.213)

He then proceeds with the scripture. K. immediately draws an affinity between the man from the country and himself. K. sees the man as the victim, by assuming his innocence from the start, and proceeds to seek out the victimizer. Yet, in this first step he has already forgotten the priest's initial intentions for the scripture: it was to describe that "particular delusion" which belonged to K. For it is not that the Court has deluded K. which makes the scripture relevant, but that it is K. who is deluding *himself* about the Court. What the priest suggests as a

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[23] *Necessity*, for Kafka, underlies man's relation to the *Law*. It is important to note that the necessity of the Law (in all its physical and metaphysical forms) is a temporary human construct in light of the law which is essentially unknown to man.

preface to the scripture is that K. is in fact the "deceiver" who deceives himself.

This sheds a very different light on the assumed innocence of the man from the country. For it would appear that in fact the man is *guilty* of his own deception. What such a deception suggests in light of the Law, and more precisely, "admittance", addresses the scripture most directly. If we remember that the delusion itself is "described thus: before the Law stands a doorkeeper.", then the scripture which follows this statement attempts to construct that very paradigm, that very delusion. Hence, the physical construction described in the scriptures, which we read as a passage way, sectioned by a hierarchy of doors, and guarded by increasingly powerful doorkeepers, ultimately culminating in the entity of "the Law", is simply a construction of the man's conception, or rather "delusion" of the Law. The question of "admittance" simply follows as a by-product of that delusion. What the man from the country is refused is not "admittance", but rather, *his own consciousness;* and it isn't the "Law" or the "doorkeeper" who refuses the man this consciousness, but rather, it is the man himself - who "strives to *attain* the Law" - who implicates himself, who is the guilty one. It is, in fact, the man from the country who is, *himself, the locus of his own condemnation.* Again, the reversal is as near as the reader is aware.

It is this locus of power in the scripture as well as in the events of the novel, which requires further questioning. If we return, therefore, to our initial concerns with K.'s actions informed by his "experience" in the opening moments of the novel, we find that by the time he reaches the priest in the chapel, his "delusion" has reached inconceivably arrogant heights.

> "It may be that you don't know the nature of the Court you are serving."(said K.) He got no answer. "These are only my personal experiences," said K. There was still no answer. "I wasn't trying to insult you," said K. And at that the priest shrieked from the pulpit: "Can't you see one pace before you?"(*T*, p.211)

This is the climax of the novel - but then, so was the first sentence. Guided by his "personal experience" (which is, quite succinctly, K.'s form of *unquestionable and unmediated historical knowledge*), K.

cannot help but define his own guilt by constructing his own trial and verdict.

In the end, we see the beginning. The locus of power in the novel which critics greatly associate with the "Law", represented by the Courts and in turn represented by their appointed officials; this omniscient and indifferent force which represses K., appears to stem from a far less, and at the same time more obscure source. The apathy of the officials, in fact, is an absurdly excessive one: they are *literally* indifferent. The description of the official who first enters Joseph's room (who we later find out is named Franz!), is simply comic:

> He was slim and yet well knit, he wore a closely fitting black suit furnished with all sorts of pleats, pockets, buckles, and buttons, as well as a belt, *like a tourist's outfit*, and in consequence looked eminently practical, though one could not quite tell what actual purpose it served.(*T* p.1, e a)

The "officials" actually tell K. that he is free to move about as he pleases. Is this an indication of a sadistic pleasure enjoyed by the invisible will of this exterior force? Or should one not take their indifference seriously?[24]

K. is simply incapable of comprehending that the force which continues to oppress him is the weight of his own *unmediated* "experience". The omnipotent and invisible force which appears to hover over the pages of this novel, originates not in an invisible and inaccessible orb surrounding K., but it originates with K. himself. The mechanisms of the Court are extravagantly impartial, and one must not accept them as true, "one must only accept them as necessary"; and they remain as such until the end, until K. is granted, almost mercifully, his self-inflicted verdict. Readings which see the Courts as *the* paradigm for all modern bureaucracies which hold K., and by association Kafka, in their all powerful clutches, slight the significance of a fictional politic which stresses a more (and simultaneously less)

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[24]A similar ultimate indifference may be found in the presence of the *Castle*. As Emrich notes, " When K. looked at the Castle, it seemed to him at times as if he were observing someone peacefully sitting there gazing before him, not as one might suppose, lost in thought and guarding himself in this way against everything, but free and unconcerned."(*Franz Kafka*, trans. by S.Z. Buehne, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1968, p.134.)

enigmatic source from which technocracies breathe, one*self*. Such readings are blinded from Kafka's actual "flair for bureaucracy, his ear for family language, and his *flaneur's* sense of the humbling ugliness of places in the city where business is done."[25] Kafka received his Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from German University in Prague on June 18, 1906, and worked as a high ranking "official" in the Worker's Accident Insurance Institute from 1908 until his retirement in July of 1922. He has been described as the "expert on power"(Canetti). K. is the testament to that expertise.

So far this reading of *The Trial* has focused greatly around its beginning. The first sentence does not encompass the novel, it merely establishes an orientation for its "hero". But, if this initial reversal slips past the reader as it did with Joseph K., then the reader is equally implicated in the offense, and hence equally condemned. Readings which tend to sympathetically align themselves with K. and the injustices that he faces, meet a similar quandary as K., for they see the evil force as an elusive ether that surrounds and oppresses him. Yet, pity for K. is pity for oneself. K. is the reader's worst enemy. K. is humanity's worst enemy; he is the archetypal *subject*, and by implication (and this is the crucial point), so is the reader that unquestioningly empathizes with K.-as-victim, and naively mourns his death. As Stanley Corngold so poignantly notes, "...in fact, all subjectivities are alike in their ignorance."[26] Kafka's own words on these characters are enlightening:

> All these fine and convincing passages always deal with the fact that someone is dying, that it is harsh for him to do, that it seems unjust to him, or at least harsh, and the reader is moved by this, or at least he should be. But for me, who believe I shall be able to lie contentedly on my deathbed, such scenes are secretly a game; indeed in the death enacted, I rejoice in my own death, hence calculatingly exploit the attention that the reader concentrates on death, have a much clearer understanding of it than he, of whom I suppose that he will loudly lament on his deathbed, and for these reasons my lament is as perfect as can be, nor does it suddenly break off, as is likely to be the case with a real lament, but dies beautifully and purely away. (*DII*, p.102)

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[25]Corngold, *Franz Kafka: The Necessity of Form*, p.3.
[26] Ibid., p.305.

K., as a *character* of Kafka's, harbors one possibility of existence, in fact his most "deadly possibility"[27]. The Court is merely the *necessary* tool for K. to carry out his own sentence. K. is guilty before the narration begins. What is so fascinating about the character K. is that through the construction of an excessive or extreme willing subject, whose *project* radically affirms the facticity of his self, what ironically emerges in the process is the space of fiction. Hence, the further perplexity of the reader who feels the *reality* of K.'s futile strivings, for this *reality* is a radicalized fact become fiction, and to lose oneself in the facticity of K.'s plight is to *unquestionably*, although innocently, both miss the point and confirm Kafka's ironic chuckle. As Kafka had once noted, in comparing the hero of *Der Verschollene,*[28] Karl Rossman, and Joseph K., the hero from *Der Prozess* ,

> Rossman and K., the innocent and the guilty, both executed without distinction in the end, the guilty one with a gentler hand, more pushed aside than struck down.(*Dll* p 132)

In the last scene of *Der Verschollene,* Karl Rossman (literally) rides off into the sunset on his way to "The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma", where "Everyone is welcome"(*A* p.272).[29] Unadulterated freedom is what the ironic *Nature* Theatre of Oklahoma guarantees, and in Karl's "innocence" Kafka finds his guilt, and subsequently is "executed without distinction in the end".[30]

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[27] Ibid., p.246

[28] Or more commonly entitled *Amerika,* as deemed equally appropriate by Kafka's friend Max Brod, who edited and published the novel. *Der Verschollene,* as Mark Anderson notes, "defies any simple English translation: in German it indicates an unnamed person who has got lost in obscure circumstances, and who's existence hangs in doubt This loss is often the result of an accident (ship passengers lost at sea are *verschollen*) and can refer to persons as well as objects...etymologically, the title suggests a progressive silencing (from the verb *verschallen,* 'to die out')." *Kafka's Clothes· Ornament and Aestheticism in the Hapsburg Fin de Siècle,* Oxford University Press, NY, 1992, p.104

[29] Karl is informed of this opportunity by a suggestively ironic placard posted on a street corner which read, *"The Oklahoma Theatre will engage members for its company today at Clayton race-course from six o'clock in the morning until midnight. The great Theatre of Oklahoma calls you! Today only and never again! If you miss your chance now you miss it forever! If you think of your future you are one of us! Everyone is welcome! If you want to be an artist, join our company! Our Theatre can find employment for everyone, a place for everyone! If you decide on an engagement, we congratulate you here and now! But hurry, so that you get in before midnight! At twelve o'clock the doors will be shut and never opened again! Down with all those who do not believe in us! Up, and to Clayton!"*

[30] "Guilt" and "innocence" are made into dialectical constructs for K. and Karl.

It is precisely the facticity of Kafka's "heroes" and their journeys, that his novels question. Within Kafka's understanding of one's "never ending compulsion to think,"[31] one sees his heroes as simply incapable of thought; that is, incapable of the fictional gap which distinguishes the proximity of a distance with one's "experience", and which is necessary for thought (or action) to exist.

Brod's oversight in the re-titling of *Der Verschollene* as *Amerika* ironically focuses, by default, on a distinctive and pervasive element of that "fictional gap" within Kafka's work (and especially his novels). Brod's title provides a definitive geographical and temporal landscape for the "action" of the novel to take place. But, as mentioned earlier, what is most apparent in all of Kafka's work is the *non-specificity* of his "thought landscapes". His characters move through timeless and un-presentable spaces. Karl's landscape is no different. Brod's *Amerika* is not Karl's *Amerika*. Karl arrives in New York to the image of a statue of liberty holding a sword rather than a torch:

> The arm of the sword rose up as if newly stretched aloft, and round the figure blew the free winds of heaven. (*A*, p.3)

Temporal and spatial disjunctions traverse the novel. The "rising country" on the immediate outskirts of Manhattan climb to mountainous heights enabling Karl to see an impossible "panorama of New York and its harbor"; a five story high "Hotel Occidental" in the town of Rameses has thousands of employees, and thirty elevators; a "little country house in the neighborhood of New York" is "surrounded by high walls and guard dogs" and slowly unveils itself as an endless Gothic labyrinth of unlit and drafty hallways connecting marble chapels and decadent bedrooms; Karl pays for a meal in pounds rather than dollars; even the "Oklahoma" of "The Nature Theater" is spelled "Oklah<u>a</u>ma".[32] The specificity of place is immediately

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[31] Kafka, *Great Wall of China*, p.154.

[32] Anderson has meticulously pointed out many of these temporal and spatial discrepancies in *Der Verschollene*, and notes that only in Kafka's original manuscript for the novel can be found "Oklah<u>a</u>ma". In every translated edition we have found, "Oklah<u>o</u>ma" appears, as an obvious "correction" made on the part of the translators and editors. He also points out that at another point in the original manuscript, Kafka

consumed in timeless obscurity. It is through this unidentifiable space that Karl maneuvers and passes in and out of the lives of those he encounters, only to be repeatedly cast out. America is, in fact, the same as the homeland from which he was similarly cast out of all familial and traditional structures by the illegitimate child he fathered after the family's maid seduced and raped him. Except for brief moments through his journeys, Karl's *past is severed from his present* (the only connections he has are his father's suitcase and a photograph of his parents, and they are eventually lost throughout the story). What is most disturbing and captivating about Kafka's work appears through his essentially inhuman characters, constructed and articulated with scientific precision, who ironically read as all too human. With no past, with no *foundation*, Karl is incapable of orienting himself, incapable of reflection, of memory, incapable of acting. By the construction of fictional character who is *essentially* flawed, *essentially* in-human, Kafka places a wholly astounding creation before the reader: a being which is totally discontinuous with the world and its experience. And we still continue to "relate" to Karl? Kafka's heroes are formless, and severed consciences incapable of thinking and acting as they pass through an endless present devoid of past or future.[33]

In Kafka's heroes, one finds not specifically a "modern" condition, but rather the question of a human/in-human one - that is, provided we have in mind a *humanity* which has always been affirmed through "meta" levels of existence - one in which any foundations from which human actions may be judged are absent.[34] The question remains, therefore, what form of human, what form of self may be conceived within such a condition? There is indeed a necessity of such a form.

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writes of a bridge which spans the east river from "Manhattan to Boston". The editors have again "corrected" that to "Brooklyn". *Kafka's Clothes*, pp.111-112.

[33] "Kafka's characters are temporarily flat - cut out of a historical continuum and presented to us as isolated, tantalizingly vivid, but finally opaque objects of interpretation." Ibid, p.107.

[34] Gianni Vattimo's work, for instance, articulates this condition quite comprehensively It places us tenuously, yet acceptingly, in our newly fitted, post-historically soleless shoes, but leaves the question of "action" up to the "individual". This is the point of departure for Kafka, where he, in effect, steps in.

Some of the more disturbing experiences in studying Kafka emerge as a result of liberties taken in the translation and collation of Kafka's work by various editors, including one of Kafka's closest friends, Max Brod. The world is forever indebted, of course, to Brod for making the difficult decision to publish his friend's work after his death. But Kafka's most paradoxical request on his death bed[35] is a request which betrays the perplexing rhetoric of Kafka's intentions. Yet, what confounds this request further is that Kafka not only knew that his friend could not oblige his request (i.e., he would certainly publish the work), but he also knew very well Brod's own literary constitution, as is revealed in Kafka's frank criticism through letters to Brod and through his own diaries. Although Kafka had unbounded respect for his friend's work, one can see, in fact, as early as 1911[36] that, as Kafka put it, "Max and I are very different people." Even in the last years of Kafka's life, after being diagnosed with tuberculosis, we see with even greater clarity the disjunction between Brod and Kafka.[37] In a Postscript

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[35] Brod was asked by Kafka to burn all of his unpublished work, including his diaries and letters; while, at the same time, Kafka was fully aware that Brod, of all people, would never be capable of carrying out such a request; in fact, Brod had warned him that he would refuse to oblige.

[36] Kafka and Brod worked on a joint project called "Richard and Samuel" in 1911, which was a short story in the form of a travel diary. It was the first published work with Kafka's name. This was the first and last project Kafka would do with Brod

[37] Brod writes to Kafka that he has noticed that Kafka has seemed to find "happiness in unhappiness". He is referring to his tuberculosis. But Kafka quickly dispels such theorizing on Brod's part in a letter to Felice as "a kind of contemporary criticism. I don't know if he (Brod) has put it into an article yet, but it has been on his mind for a long time "(*LF* p.547) This "contemporary criticism" can be found in many Expressionist writers of this time, and is an attitude which reacts to the terrors of mechanistic society, and attempts to "*escape* [its] social determinations".(Einstein, Carl *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, 1973, p.132, as quoted by Corngold, *Franz Kafka. The Necessity of Form*) "Happiness in unhappiness" in this context means simply a deferral of one's responsibility in the present - which Kafka perceived quite clearly: "Finding happiness in unhappiness is beyond me...which simultaneously means 'finding unhappiness in happiness'...- and these words may have been said when Cain was branded...it means that *he who bears the mark is the one who has destroyed the world* and, incapable of resurrecting it, is hunted through the ruins. Unhappiness, however, is not what he feels, since unhappiness belongs to life and this he has disposed of, but he sees the fact with inordinate clarity, and in this sphere that amounts to unhappiness "(*LF* p.547, e a) Seeking affirmation through negation is the basic premise in Brod's suggestion; but for Kafka, this would imply that one must first relinquish one's life and the world, and hence, the affirmation which is sought really has nothing to do with life, since "this he has disposed of". More importantly, for Kafka, the one who is "branded" as such, is not only the one who relinquishes his world, he is primarily "the one who has *destroyed* the world."

written by Brod and published with Kafka's *Diaries*[38], Brod conveys the challenging task of preparing his friend's work for publication:

> There was even further difficulty in arranging the material chronologically in the fact that Kafka would occasionally, in the same notebook, write from the last page backward as well as from the first pages forward, so that the entries met in the middle.

Yet, Brod proceeds: "*nevertheless*, it was possible to establish the *correct* chronological order."(ea) Initially, given Kafka's apparently deliberate intentions, Brod's editorial activities strike one as conspicuously irresponsible. However, if Kafka was critically aware of his friend's literary constitution, as noted above, and yet asked him to do something he knew Brod could never do, then the paradox of Kafka's request would exist both in his consciousness of Brod's inability to oblige, as well as in his consciousness of Brod's [in]ability to read his (Kafka's) work. This is a very strange form of logic, for, although at first glance it may appear as if Brod has irresponsibly denied his friend's last wishes, at the first moment of questioning we discover that Kafka's request appears to include or at least suggest its opposite; in fact, Brod's decision to "establish the correct chronological order" of Kafka's diaries, seems strangely enough, *appropriate;* i.e., essential to Kafka's request; essential to the emergence of a work we call "Kafkan".

This is the difficulty one encounters in attempting to speak about intentionality and Kafka. In a letter to Felice in 1913, Kafka tells his love of a letter which he has recently received from his friend Stoessl, who writes about his feelings on Kafka's recently published first book, *Meditation*. Stoessl finds the book has a "profound gaiety...full of very pertinent humor."(*LF* pp.177) Kafka can't believe how profoundly Stoessl has misunderstood his book:

> He writes about my book, but with such complete lack of understanding that for a moment I thought the book must really be good, since - even in a man as discerning and experienced in literary matters as Stoessl - it can create the kind of misunderstanding one would consider impossible with books and possible only with living.(*LF* p.177)

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[38] Kafka, Franz, *Diaries: 1914-1923*, Schocken Books, New York, 1949, p.328.

He then goes on to say that Stoessl's letter,

> goes rather well with an extravagantly favorable review published today, which finds in the book nothing but sorrow (*LF* p.178)

In a slightly ironic tone Kafka finds utter "misunderstanding" to be the shared essence of both readings. Yet, he finds these misunderstandings not symptomatic of a failure to communicate his more specific intentions, on the contrary, they make explicit the impossibility of a *work* to emerge solely through the articulation or clarification of an author's intention. With Brod, we see that Kafka's intentional request is confounded by his consciousness of the impossibility of such a request. With Stoessl's and other "favorable reviews", we find that a work involves a kind of misunderstanding "one would consider impossible with books and possible only with living." The issue, for Kafka, is not whether in the end the author is left only with his intentions, but rather, whether *a work* is guaranteed through the author's intentions, *a priori*. This does not mean that we cannot speak of some point of reference, or locus of intent, but again, "I have something to say", says nothing - necessarily.[39]

This issue continually arises, especially in Kafka's letters, and often in his letters to Brod. Kafka had just finished reading Brod's recently published book, *The Intensity of Feeling*, which addresses modern concerns of "authenticity". Kafka conveys his reaction to the book in a letter to Brod in which a very brief, sober, and potent discussion on the status of the work of art, the artist, and also the critic ensues:

> When we write something, we have not coughed up the moon, whose origins might then be investigated. Rather, we have moved to the moon with everything we have. Nothing has changed, there, we are what we were here A thousand differences are possible in the voyage, none in the fact itself (*L* p.204)

[39]This is an issue which underlies the naiveté of art as a mode of "individual expression" The essential critique is with the *essential author*

Kafka's criticism is aimed mostly at Brod's concepts of "will" and "feeling", for he finds Brod's understanding of the artist in need of discernment.

> Therefore, any criticism that deals in concepts of authentic and inauthentic, and seeks to find in the work the will and feelings of an author who isn't present - any such criticism seems nonsensical and follows from the critic's also having lost his homeland. And since everything is all of a piece, of course I mean: having lost his conscious homeland.(*L.* p.204)

Brod's romantic visions of the artist are supported by his understanding of the role of the critic who sees the work of art as given a privileged status *a priori*, and who's task (the critic's) is one of alignment with the artist's "will" and "feelings". Kafka fundamentally questions the privilege which Brod assumes unquestionably.

What is implied by the loss of such a conscious homeland, is the loss of the "passionately unfurled space of a mutual conflict between speaker and hearer"(Blanchot), from which the critic *subjects* the work to the impossible demands of revealing an "authentic self". And, whether in reference to the critic or the writer, the issue Kafka raises, and incessantly addresses, concerns the status of "the constitutive participation of the conscious subject."[40]

In the past two hundred years especially, the attention drawn to this conscious "self" has been intense. Yet, to address this modern self "head-on" runs the danger of identifying the self as a generalized "self-thing".[41] It is from within the "historical density" of the self that we can even begin to see what is at stake in the most recent "attacks" on

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[40] Corngold, Stanley, *The Fate of the Self*, p.1. This is Corngold's definition of "self".

[41] "The question of the self, of the self *in general*, cannot, it seems, be met head-on. It might be possible to write about the dogwood outside my window, the child playing beneath it, or even the German writer open on my desk *in general*, and not feel that everything is lost *That* dogwood, *that* child, *this* text is, really, nothing like the genus, and yet none of them is so unlike the genus as the self...A swift survey of its concrete experience finds no stopping place, and it has forgotten all the narratives of self laid down in its archives "(Ibid., p.5)

subjectivity[42], "as is only right, if we are to see a clear road into what is most human."(*DI* p.174)[43]

What seems more appropriate at this stage is to consider a *form* of "self" which relies not on dialectical constructs of identity, but on *relational* ones. As we have this far noted, writing is itself primarily an activity and space of *mediation*. It *re-lates*, and *trans-lates* discontinuities which distinguish thought from experience. The burning question, however, is "Who is this *self* that writes?" How are we to *identify* it? How are we to pinpoint some locus of intent, some *position* from which a "work" appears? This is, however, the very paradox. A "work" *appears* only once it is heard, and a *writing self* appears *(dis)positioned* in this hearing. The concept of a constitutive "identity" of *self* simply cannot be "pinpointed" as an *identity*, but approached only as a *relation*. This experience of self is as enigmatic as is the "concept" of *identity*. And yet, we can still speak.....Enter the monster.

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[42] "The attack has been aimed chiefly at the Cartesian subject, the *res cogitans*, a substantial self identified uniformly with the thinking subject and cited in 'philosophies of consciousness', where it is erected into the foundation of an epistemology."(Ibid., p.3)

[43] The point which we are approaching involves a critical look at modern practices of "elimination" or "destruction" of any form of orienting consciousness Most importantly, it is a look into Kafka's own words on this practice of destruction in which he says, the issue is "not shaking off the self, but consuming the self"(*DF* p.87). "Strictly speaking, the post-modern attack on subjectivity is nonsense "(Rosen, Stanley, *Hermeneutics as Politics*, p.26) We mean to emphasize that such "practices" ironically and inevitably become the focus of their own critique, that is, their own destruction

chapter **2**

KINDRED BEINGS

fig 2

MYTH & *MYTH*

'Monsters', whether worshipped or desecrated throughout history, have remained marvelous beings for human beings simply because they have continually referred to the analogous marvels of being human; marvels which rest not in man's concentrated efforts to concretely define his existence, but in perpetually *approaching* it. Indeed, 'monstrosity' is born the moment any concept of 'human existence' is considered. The question remains, however, as to why one twentieth century writer was obsessed with the apparently defunct mythical trope of the monster. At first glance, the twentieth century might not appear capable of supporting such creatures; however, in spite of, or rather, in light of man's contemporary existence, riddled with synthetic truths of non-truth, the monster, in its paradigmatic incompletion, remains 'true' to itself. Such monstrous 'truth', which precisely lies in its ability to *mutate*, has for the past few enlightened centuries been perceived as wholly intolerable to either canonical forms of *immutable* 'Truth', or contemporary forms of human completion. The mute monster for contemporary man, was for mythic man the very medium though which he perceived in order to situate himself on earth. 'Metamorphosis' was both the activity and the object of **tolerate** his existence. The shift seems to be that while human existence was 'intoler-

testaments to the other side of the human coin. Not surprisingly, the very terms through which this qualitative other have been historically recounted by man, have, themselves radically metamorphosed. And yet, it is easy to see why 'metamorphosis' continues to fascinate contemporary writers, poets and theorists. While the divine is no longer revealed through transmutation, and while a metaphysical framework no longer qualifies the status of the monster, within a 'change in form' always lies a secret. It is just this form of secret which cannot be disclosed either through metaphysical structures or through their demise, but rather the 'secret' is a space within appearances which does not readily lend itself to interpretation (refer to Baudrillard's essay on "Metamorphosis" in his Ecstasy of Communication, *pp.47-63). For Baudrillard, this "secret" which appears in metamorphosis is the catalyst of* seduction - *"seduction being simply that which lets appearance circulate and move as a secret." (p.63) The secular 'secret' of* metamorphosis *for*

able' for mythic man without the simultaneous presence of the monster, it has been the monster which has been troped the 'intolerable' in order to initiate the emergence of a 'truly' modern man devoid of the 'myth' (in this sense, non-truth) of human existence. The monster appears to have come full circle, and contemporary man is certainly not yet freed of this circle. In fact, it appears as if we are at the point where either the circle closes or it spirals on. Its signs are everywhere. "Deformities" of all connotations are today still viewed with repugnance. To 'de-form' is to do away with 'form'; and still suspiciously lurking behind this contemporary root, lie the tattered remains of their Platonic ancestral 'Forms' as a referent for diagnosis as well as correction. Such 'Truth', it appears, is less dead than stylized into the ironic theo/ideologies of the status quo. The 'truth' of the *metamorphic* construct of the monster, however, travels *below* these, as well as all ideological and metaphysical constructions. In fact, it wallows, *in time*. The 'meta' of 'metaphysics' is a beyond which is unearthly. Yet as one critic notes, "since for Kafka the world beyond imagining is in man himself, since there is no beyond exterior to man...", the 'meta' of 'metamorphosis' and the "...parable of this beyond is necessarily an earthly image that is unearthly."[†] *In time*, the monster attests to a human temporality which is

[†] Emrich, Wilhelm, *Franz Kafka*, trans. by S.Z. Buehne, Unger Pub. Inc., N.Y., 1968, p.131.

reflection, the instrument and the 'substance' of the gods' relation to man. It was the device through which the gods were made manifest, and through which man articulated himself. Only through metamorphosis could man come-to-terms with his own earthly inconstancy, by placing this ever-becoming existence within the shared horizon of language and myth. It is, however, difficult to come to terms with an early Greek's conception of 'metamorphosis' without simultaneously coming to terms with the distinctive notions of 'mind', 'body', 'self', 'man', or 'beast' inherent within. To speak of a 'mind' and 'body', for instance, as related to Homeric man, is at best a gross generalization, if not entirely misleading. There is no definitive term which refers to the body as a unitary object of perception or reflection. It is referred to only in plurals, and only then within the specificity of an act; not as a collection of parts which form a whole (a "body"), rather, as a "life" seen in the wonder which comes from the articulation of those pieces and their joints. Equally distinct, and in fact, infinitely more complex is the Homeric "mind/soul". As with the "body", there existed in early Greek no one word which defined the 'mind' and the 'soul'. Terms which did not directly denote the "soul" but were connected closely to it were 'psyche', 'thymos', and 'noos'. For later Greeks, psyche became the constitutive term for the soul, but for Homer, psyche was most distinctly, "the force which

metamorphically fuelled. The monster *presents* itself as simply one *form* of the past.[∞]

This is the form of humanity Kafka writes about. Prometheus is not important to Kafka as an index of what we have lost, but as a metamorphosis of what we are.[§] This metamorphic relation to 'time' is what should be kept in mind when we speak of the "context" of Kafka's work. "Metamorphosis" is understood to be the implicit title within each of

[∞] This monstrous image of 'presence' actually inverses the modern cone of vision which would have the 'present' consigned to one *form* of the 'future'. The difficulty, in fact, even in describing fiction as a 'space of possibility' is that it has the danger of being assimilated into this 'projectable' form of the present. Historically, this has been, in effect, the intention and fascination of science fiction. Modernity's 'present' has been most characteristically understood as 'change' in a revolutionary sense, that is, as a severing of all forms of the past (and other kindred metaphors such as 'darkness', 'ambiguity', 'the grotesque'...), so that an 'open road' may be seen to the future. Yet, on such an untainted, metaphorical road, no bearings, no points of reference are experienced; hence no means of orientation are possible other than to proceed forward. Most wanting, it seems, are the scattered remains of the tainted, defiled, or infected 'road kill' (to reluctantly continue the metaphor) which mark an attempt at a *crossing* along this desert road. Such squalid beacons become the qualifying terms or *signs* of orientation. The 'monster' is revealed in this sordid sign precisely because it attests to this temporal 'cross-roads', because it 'presents' (or de-monstrates) itself as a 'tainted' form of some other existence. The 'present' for the monster is nothing but an infected and obscene gap in time, an ecstatic 'chiasm' of spiralling activity within which previous forms and substances return to themselves 'metamorphosed'.

§ Refer to Kafka's aphorism "Prometheus" (CS, p.432). Also refer to Hans Blumenberg's *Work on Myth* (trans. by Robert M. Wallace, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1985), in which he centers his discussion and critique of "metamorphosis" and "human nature" around the myth of Prometheus. His study begins and ends with Kafka's "Prometheus".

keeps the human being alive"[*]. *The word* psyche *is akin to the Greek verb "to breathe", and hence might generally be interpreted as "the breath of life".* Thymos *and* noos *are both considered organs and all "mental" phenomena are attributed to these spheres.* Thymos *is "the generator of motion and agitation, while* noos *is the organ of ideas or images".* Thymos *is literally an "organ of (e)motion", and hence when Homer says that "the* thymos *left his bones", he is speaking of motion as an active organ which departs and leaves the man motion-less.* Thymos *is that which rouses man to action: i.e. emotion.* Noos *is the organ of the thinking image as well as the thought. The important point to be made is that* thymos *and* noos *are departments of the* psyche. *With Homer, unlike Plato, there is no conception of a "*psychic *whole". They are each considered separate organs with separate functions. The lyric poets were the first to articulate the "depths" of intellectual and spiritual matters.*

Odysseus' wanderings and encounters, therefore, take on more explicit connotations when we read, for instance, in the first few lines of Book 1 of The Odyssey, *that "He saw the townlands and learned the minds [noos] of many distant men." (O., p.1) In this first declaration of Odysseus' achievements, Homer*

[*] *Snell, Bruno,* The Discovery of the Mind, in Greek Philosophy and Literature, *Dover Publications Inc., 1982, p.7.*

Kafka's individual fictions, for it stresses this orientation to time and emphasizes that the "context" of this work is given by virtue not of discrete and timely relationships to early twentieth century Europe, totalitarianism, or modern angst, but by virtue of a time which transgresses these identifiable and discrete moments. "Metamorphosis" is not a time of modern "change", but of re-inscription. It is not a time which successively names itself through distinctive 'themes' of human activity, but one which continually provokes in the name an "other" reading.®

Such a 'reading' is not, however, found in Max Brod's book, published in 1920 entitled, *Paganism, Christianity, Judaism*©. Kafka read the chapter "Paganism" and wrote to Brod that "The chapter [was] magnificent and I became your wholly uncritical Galician pupil..." Yet, again we soon find that Kafka's "wholly uncritical" claim is hardly so, and actually purports the entrance of an essential critique. Brod's intent for this book is to "represent three ways of interpreting ultimate

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® As Henry Ebel notes on p.26 of his *After Dionysius: An Essay on Where We are Now* (Associated University Presses, Inc., Cranbury, New Jersey, 1972), *"Metamorphosis is not just a 'theme' in literature; it is what literature is all about....All authors, even the humblest, are concerned with metamorphosis. Those who have dealt with it (or played with it) more explicitly have been those great enough to reflect on their capacities and to integrate their reflections into the very process of creation. One could hardly ask for more."*

© Brod, Max *Paganism, Christianity, Judaism*, trans. by William Wolf, University of Alabama Press, University of Alabama, 1970.

emphasizes not the relevance of Odysseus' coming to **know** *men's "minds", but rather, the accent is on the organ of "seeing". If we consider the* noos *as the "organ of clear images", then what Odysseus "sees" of men's "townlands" or "sees" of men's* noos *is merely an* organ-ic *distinction. Both are, in fact, modes of seeing, and both are equally worthy accomplishments of the hero.*

A similar, and yet more complicated, encounter with the Homeric noos *appears in Book 10, when Odysseus and his men visit the island of Circe, for it is here that we meet with these human faculties in* **metamorphosis**.

Upon landing on the shores of Circe, Odysseus sent a group of men to investigate, in mid-forest, the source of the smoke wisp he had earlier spied from atop a hill. With trepidation, the men came to the house of Circe and were coerced by the weaving maiden found there to enter.

On thrones she seated them, and lounging chairs,
while she prepared a meal of cheese and barley
and amber honey mixed with Pramnian wine,
adding her own vile pinch, to make them lose
desire or thought of our dear father land.
Scarce had they drunk when she flew after them
with her long stick and shut them in a pigsty -
bodies, voices, heads, and bristles, all
swinish now, though minds [*noos*] were still unchanged. (*O.*, p.172)

things, three attempts to relate the visible world with a divine superworld, three ways in which the human soul reacts to the religious experience."[^] He provisionally defines these three orientations as such:

> Paganism *is dedicated to the idea of the* continuation of this world. *The divine sphere is seen as a continuation of this world* Christianity *is dedicated to the idea of the* denial of this world. *It sees divinity in the image of the denial of this world, and it strives after the dissolution of the visible world and hopes for the invisible one...*Judaism.. *neither affirms nor negates this world...*

What Kafka finds most apparent in his friend's book is the intensely modern vision which Brod assumes in his definitions, especially of the pagan world. Since "*paganism* approves the material world without any restriction"[Ω], Brod proceeds to link Hellenism with all modern forms of *inaction*, and with "every philosophy that acknowledges this world without an attempt at modification"[~]. Hence, the "liberal motto of *laissez-faire*" is linked with "the ancient polis" implying that the Greek polis was a forum in which *nothing took place.* Now, this is a potentially fruitful observation if one understands the difference between the Greek and modern notions of "change". Brod does not appreciate this distinction and consequently perceives the polis as an arena

Homer presents us with a fantastic image of men who have been fashioned to display all the corporeal characteristics of common swine. And more, we are to imagine that these **men** *have endured their ordeal in another fashion which allows Odysseus, as well as the reader, to conceive of these beings as somehow still persons. Was it a "swinish" fate for these men as sentence for their "swinish" ways of life? This seems unlikely.*[~] *Homer describes the goddess' actions in no such malevolent terms. Besides, "swinish" ways of life assumes not only a conscious - as well as impossible - theology at work, but also consciously willing subjects who choose their ways of life, something inconceivable to an early Greek. Circe's work is of far less nefarious origins. 'Divine punishment' is hardly a concept to which Circe would be accustomed. We find out later that in retrospect she actually "pitied [the] transformation" once Odysseus had her remove her spell (O., p.177). The issue seems to be not so much "why" the transformation - causality meets with indifferent participants in Homer. The fascination exists simply in these* **men**, *who "all are like swine to see".*[¶] *And yet the story of what these men are to see has only been half-told,*

[^] Ibid., p 3.
[Ω] Ibid., p.5.
[~] Ibid

[~] *Such an interpretation would involve a Christian moral dilemma.*

[¶] *This quote comes from Hermes who visits Odysseus on his way to Circe's palace to rescue his men. Hermes warns Odysseus of Circe's powers and reveals to him the divine herb which "will keep [his] mind [noos] and senses clear" in the face of Circe's curse.*

of *inactivity*.[¥] For Brod, there exists no *tension* within the Greek experience, that is, the pagan "seeks its divine world in a straight continuation of this one"[¤]. Actions have no need to fundamentally change the world within such an experience, yet for Brod this is the *irresponsible consequence* of "the pagan idea of 'only this world'". Kafka is immediately conscious of Brod's modern spectacles:

> *You see, I do not believe in paganism in your sense of the word The Greeks, for instance, were well acquainted with a certain dualism; how otherwise could* moira *and many other such concepts be accounted for*[¤]*? Only, they happened to be unusually humble people - in regard to religion - a sort of Lutheran sect. They could not put the determining divine principle at sufficient distance from themselves; the whole pantheon was only a means by which the determining forces could be kept at a distance from man's physical being, so that human lungs could have air. A great national educational institution, which captured and held men's gaze It was less profound than the Law of the Jews, but perhaps more democratic (scarcely any leaders or founders of religion among the Greeks), perhaps freer (it kept its hold, but I don't know how), perhaps more humble (for the sight of the gods merely made men aware of this: so we are not even, not even gods, and if we were gods, what would we be?). The closest approach to your conception might be to say: There exists a theoretic possibility of perfect human happiness, that is, to believe in the determining divine principle and not to strive toward it. This possibility of happiness*

for, a clue to the nature of their metamorphosis comes when they are re-metamorphosed back into men. Homer narrates the crucial moment:

> She stroked them, each in turn, with some new chrism;
> and then, behold! their bristles fell away,
> the coarse pelt grown upon them by her drug
> melted away, and they were men again,
> *younger, more handsome, taller than before.*

Directly after this re-transformation we learn of Circe's "pity" - for the context of that "pity" now strengthens it - and the "room rang with sobs", indeed, cathartic sobs: "The ordeal of transformation, far from being a corruption, is an initiation and cannot end with the mere restoration of the earlier shape, or anything short of the means for a new beginning. Circe reveals her victims, not in the shape they lost, but in the shape to which they have meanwhile been ascending."[∂] The metamorphosis ecstatically celebrates the birth of something human, i.e. it **initiates** a human being. The question, therefore, regarding these earlier porcine bodies in apparent contrast to their enduring noos is not whether these faculties were diametrically opposed, i.e. whether they had stopped being human, but rather, "that they had never begar"[¢]. The metamorphosis displays not the discrepancies in form and content of one species to another, as it does the emergence of

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[¥] This is the absolute inverse of the polis, at least as understood by Aristotle, as the definitive realm of individual ethical activity.

[¤] *Paganism, Christianity, Judaism*, p.6.

[¤] *Moira* (which came to identify the generalized principle of 'fate'), for early Greeks, was one of many controlling or overriding forces in the universe stronger even than the gods. Other closely related concepts were *tyche* (chance), and *ananke* (necessity).

[∂] *Skulsky*, Metamorphosis: The Mind in Exile, *p.19*

[¢] *Ibid, p.21*

is as blasphemous as it is unattainable, but the Greeks perhaps were closer to it than many others. But not even this is paganism in your sense. And you have failed to prove that the Greek soul was desperate, but only that you would be desperate if you had to be a Greek I grant you that applies to both you and me, but even then not quite.(L ., p 242)

While Brod attempts to establish the privilege that Judaic thought and action maintains in keeping a "religious experience" of the world in tact somewhere outside Christian negation and pagan affirmation, Kafka suggests that before any such relational structures are even conceived, before they are appropriated into the definition of a 'modern condition' in light of Judaic possibility, the "pagan" or "Christian" experience in thought and action initially requires a reading which is conscious of itself and what it takes for granted. An appropriate understanding of the historical relationship between thought and action reveals ourselves to ourselves, it does not turn us into Greeks or Greeks into us. What Kafka recognizes through the Greeks is a fundamental *form* of himself; what Brod sees is the absence of any *form* of himself, because history for Brod is an instrument which *validates* the solidity of his theoretical *project.*

We should be careful, however, not to construe this "fundamental form" which Kafka recognizes, as an indication of an archeological desire to unearth one's 'origins', from which human history would be conceived as a continuous and non-contradictory

an exemplary human "form" within the chiasm of the act of metamorphosis itself. We may take Hermes' words to Odysseus then as equally applicable to their former state: if they were "like swine to see" then they were previously and equally only "like men to see". Odysseus' men seem to have this purpose in general for Homer: as guinea pigs. *They are the testing grounds of humanity - and specifically with Homer, Odysseus' humanity. We continually find references to their principally monstrous condition in relation to Odysseus: Circe tells Odysseus to bring the rest of his shipmates from the shore to her palace in celebration. Odysseus betrays a telling image of himself and his men;*

Now, being a man (e a), I could not help consenting.
So I went down to the sea beach and the ship,
where I found all my other men on board,
weeping, in despair along the beaches.
Sometimes in farmyards when the cows return
well fed from pasture to the barn, one sees
the pens give way before the calves in tumult,
breaking through to cluster about their mothers,
bumping together, bawling. Just that way
my crew poured round me when they saw me come
(O., p.177)

Odysseus is returning from the metamorphic encounter with Circe and his men who were moments before "like swine to see", only to give us the image of the rest of his crew, unaffected by Circean beguilement, as equally monstrous, "like cattle to see". The metaphor of the cattle merely stresses the position, or office *(or in Homeric terms,* moîra*) which Odysseus' men hold in the Homeric scheme of*

process of evolution. On the contrary, this is precisely Kafka's critique. The irony exists in the fact that although Brod appears to be articulating a discontinuous conception of history via distinctive temporal epochs of religious experience, he does so through a process of valuation (i.e., the Judaic experience is more "true"), and hence, constructs a linear and continuous history of human activity which negates "lesser" truths in the light of "higher" ones. Ultimately, Brod's *forms* are at no great distance from Plato's, for 'value' is the guiding light of metaphysics. Kafka, on the other hand, is guided by more *base* (that is, *metamorphic*) relations to history. This 'fundamental form' of himself which Kafka recognizes through history illustrates two essential points to Kafka's work: 1. a 'form' of *self* which is experienced as both 'here' and 'there'; a *self* which is principally *monstrous*. This gives some indication as to what form, or *identity*, might be attributed to Kafka's characters as well as 'a writer in a body'. 2. an experience through reading of the metamorphic time in Kafka's writings which is translated and understood as a 'vivid', or more appropriately, '*monstrous* present'.

Metaphysics and *metamorphics* are kindred and yet distinctive understandings of human temporality. The latter necessarily completes and yet abolishes the former. "Classical" forms, in the service of clarity, continuity and consistency, have systematically positioned

things. It should be clear then that the noos *which remains unchanged in Odysseus' men under Circe's influence is essentially not in opposition with their beastly bodies, precisely because something human (again, ultimately displayed in Odysseus) is revealed primarily not through* noos, *nor through form, but through metamorphosis per se. Metamorphosis is, in fact, a privilege; for, 'being human' in 700 BC. is not taken for granted.* Noos *has yet to develop its constitutional role as "mind" in identifying the human self (this will appear a couple of thousand years later with Descartes when the full implications of the historical density of the self become not only apparent, but necessary to man's ontological essence.) The Homeric 'self', like its 'mind' and 'body', cannot be held objectively, and is most appropriately akin to a Its distinct understanding in the context of* The Iliad *and* The Odyssey, *however, quickly transforms in meaning in the centuries following Homer, and with it so too does man's relation to the gods. The 'philosophic moment', as Snell notes, "laid low"[m] the Olympian gods (which by no means ushers in their demise but simply initiates a necessary gap with them in order for man to discover him-self), and yet, the activity of metamorphosis persists as man's fundamental relation to them, i.e. to*

[m] *Snell, p.40.*

metamorphic (or monstrous) forms to the periphery of human "orders" of existence. Kafka's work suggests otherwise, for *within* the logic such continuity, 'metamorphosis' reads as a necessary counterpart/kin to any such synthetic definitions of "order" per se. Kindred beings, in the "light" of metamorphosis, convey less the continuity of blood or historical relations than the discontinuous "illicit" ones.†

METAMORPHOSIS & *OVID'S VEIL*

It is easy to see why, in a discussion regarding metamorphosis (or for that matter, anything pertaining to the monstrous beings of Kafka's work), one would begin with Kafka's short story of the same name. *The Metamorphosis* is probably one of Kafka's most well known works. It is the story of a man who wakes one morning "from uneasy dreams" to find himself transformed into a "monstrous vermin". Great pains have been taken by readers and scholars over the past seventy years

having to do with an account of Western history), one would consult Ovid.

...along with Virgil's Aeneid, [Ovid's *Metamorphoses*] is the only work of antiquity, within the horizon of myth, that draws after it a continuous history of people being affected and fascinated by it - a history such as we are inclined to credit Homer with but are not in a position to demonstrate. The European imagination is a network of reference that centers, to a large extent, on Ovid. Metamorphosis was the key word not only for the relationships of the gods, down to the most recent dynasty, but also even for human history into the contemporary period of Caesar and Augustus, as an expression of the capacity

that which is most human. As we will see, when the Olympian gods are translated through Roman eyes, and more specifically through the narration of Ovidian metamorphosis, the affairs of men and the gods take on a markedly distinct rapport.

†As the half-lamb, half-kitten creature in Kafka's short story "A Crossbreed [A Sport]" conveys, "...though it has countless step-relations in the world, [it] has perhaps not a single blood relation, and to which consequently the protection it has found with us is sacred "(C S , p427)

in unveiling and articulating mostly the symbolic/allegorical tenors of this apparently tragic transformation of Gregor Samsa.[∞] Few studies have concentrated their efforts on the activity itself.

The definitive article "*The*" of "*The Metamorphosis*" (***Die Verwandlung***) turns an undifferentiated occurrence of transformation into a specific event in need of discernment. In the process, "*metamorphosis*" *per se* is troped (or, for that matter, "roped") into a name, with a specific set of conditions, circumstances, and context. It has been the interpreter's task to seek out a motive and speak accordingly. It seems, however, that if one were to step back from the "*The*" momentarily, the precipice rather than the bridge is encountered. The apparent "context" in which the definitive "*The*" definitively names is simply a stunted *morphe* of "context" the moment we ask not what *The Metamorphosis* means, but rather what *metamorphosis* has to do with *The Metamorphosis*, and most importantly, what *metamorphosis* has to do with Kafka.

Kafka is part of a long history of metamorphic activity in literature. Some critics have even categorically arranged "types" of literary

[∞] Stanley Corngold has written "a critical bibliography of *The Metamorphosis*...[which] describes more than one hundred published critiques of an empirical or programmatic kind", in his *The Commentator's Despair: The Interpretation of Kafka's "Metamorphosis"*, Port Washington, NY, Kennikat Press, 1973.

of even human 'substance' for transformation.[≠]

The first line in the book conveys Ovid's chief intent - "My design leads me to speak of forms changed into new bodies"[Σ] - beginning with the act of the forming of "Chaos: a rude and undigested mass."[§] In these first few pages we see that "Chaos", no longer is "the gaping abyss of Hesiod"[●], but in its primordial "mass" (molis), it is "already morphe (form) before all the metamorphoses"[©]. In this, as Blumenberg notes, Ovid's "Chaos" is more closely related to "the hyle ('matter') of the philosophers", and yet, as we will see, metamorphosis for Ovid, as conveyed in his opening thesis of "Chaos" is conscious, if not suspicious, of any metaphysically construed history of man or the cosmos[Δ].

> The ideal does not draw the cosmos out of chaos, as in Plato's myth of the demiurge, instead, formlessness is itself instability and inability to endure, and has to do something to resolve its incompatibility. In that way it, too, finally tends toward the "forms" of metaphysics, but 'from behind', out of the desperation of the origin.[Ω]

[≠] *Blumenberg, Hans,* Work on Myth, *trans. by Robert M Wallace, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1985, p.351-352.*

[Σ] *Ovid,* Metamorphoses, *"Literally translated into English prose with copious notes and explanations, by Henry T. Riley", H.G. Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden, London, England, 1861, 1.1*

[§] *Ibid., 1.2*

[●] *Blumenberg,* Work on Myth, *p.352.*

[©] *Ibid., p.353.*

[Δ] *Skulsky, in his chapter on Ovid, refers his* Metamorphoses *as "Metamorphosis as Metaphysical Doubt".*

[Ω] *Blumenberg,* Work on Myth, *p.353.*

metamorphosis according to the dominating 'themes' of distinct epochs, or occasionally regarding the preoccupations of a specific author.- These systems do have their merit, but the emphasis on the "type" needlessly confuses the issue. Indeed, history inevitably classifies all "work" regardless of its authentic moment; this is perhaps greatly its nature. However, that is not the issue of the present concern. In fact, it is *precisely* not the issue because *metamorphosis* is and always has been intimately engaged in all "types", for it is, in any "epoch", an act of fantasia which perpetually confronts, questions, and demonstrates all notions of typing, of naming, of *identity*. In transformations from Homer

This simply sets the stage for Ovid's metamorphoses to continue. "Elements" begin from one another and return through one another.

"Our own bodies too are changing always and without any intermission, and to-morrow we shall not be what we *now* are."¥

For Homer, all human affairs were inextricably tied up in the gods. The Olympians were not piously revered by humans, but were encountered simply in amazement, wonder and marvel. With Ovid, there is a "gap", or in effect, a "critical distance" established between the gods and man. It is a distance which conveys the complexity of an un-reasonable, *yet lived mythic order (less the pure "serenity" of Homeric unconcealment). Ovid's cosmological structure is at once both a symptom of the "gap" - which, since Homer, has enabled man to develop his continually unfolding invention (***himself***) - and, as we will see, an implicit criticism of any 'contemporary'* causal *conceptions of the man and the cosmos.*

Ovid's metamorphoses are both complex and varied. Within the multiplicity of transformations, however, there are distinct forms of metamorphosis which he frequents. One prevalent form is a transformation into the process of dying: Atlas is metamorphosed

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- Refer to Irving Massey's work on the subject entitled *The Gaping Pig*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1976. Massey finds it "unprofitable" to search for a single cause or function within the history of literary metamorphosis, and creates *"a set of categories under which the problems of metamorphosis can be studied, and even a classification of the types of metamorphosis"*(p.3). They are as follows: 1 Scientific metamorphosis, 2 metamorphosis and issues of the self, 3.metamorphosis and anthropology, 4 Religion and eschatology, and how it relates to metamorphosis, 5.Psychology and metamorphosis, 6.Metamorphosis and aesthetics. Massey introduces an impressive array of literary figures and brings much theoretical debate to the literary history of metamorphosis within his small book;...in fact, too much. He seems to have bitten off more than he can chew, which is only, and disappointingly, verified when in a timid disclaimer footnote on page 201, we see *by default* where his real thesis lies: *"It is perhaps an evasion of responsibility not to offer a chapter on Kafka in a book on metamorphosis I have been deterred by the feeling that Kafka is an author whom I would rather, on the whole, not attempt to* ***violate*** *by analysis,(e.a.) also because of the sense that too much of my energy would have been withdrawn from the other authors if I had allowed myself to become deeply involved with Kafka."*(footnote #18)

¥ *Ovid,* Metamorphoses, *p.524, 15.214. Pythagoras is speaking through Ovid.*

to Kafka, what has remained implicitly at stake throughout has been the degree to which an *identity* (i.e.., a *human* identity), endures through a change in form (*morphe*). The worlds between Homer and Kafka, of course, require no facile leap of scholarship, but the historical metamorphoses within a Western articulation of "identity", as they relate to *metamorphosis*, are worthy of mention. They are worthy immediately, since we are concerned with the more encompassing *context* of Gregor's transformation. Equally, if we are to speculate on the *identity* of a "writer in a body", if we are to articulate one human narrative which was "made of literature"[e] and nothing else, then *metamorphosis* appropriately comes to our aid. Within the nature of any translation, a mediating activity and device is required. Reading is one such medium. The explicit nature of Kafka's animal, or more appropriately, *monster* narratives only make both literally and deceivingly apparent the monstrous core from which every fictive character - from Joseph K. to Josephine - is formed. Kafka's *monsters* and the *techne* of metamorphosis are his and our most potent means of interpreting the space of this *monstrous self* and its relation to the work and the world.

At its most fundamental level, the movement of *metamorphosis* perpetually addresses ques-

[e] Kafka, Franz, *LF.*, p.304.

into a mountain, the Ismenides into stone monuments of their own grief, Heliades into a tree as her mother tears off branches attempting to rescue her from her fate, etc.

> Treated this way, the fantasy of transformation tends to reduce death to still life and life to death in motion.[π]

The general tendency, however, in Ovid's metamorphoses is not defined through the deaths of those transformed. Rather, the metamorphoses are still generally in line with the Homeric "versions of the fantasy in rendering transformation as the ordeal of a persisting awareness...for Ovid too, this awareness is not a physical process".[™]

> The crucial and pervasive assumption [with Ovid] is the Homeric: the properties of having a mind and having a certain sort of body may invariably coincide without thereby needing to be the same; the possibility of their not coinciding [animal form] is far from unthinkable, for a reader of Ovid's poem is in the business of thinking it repeatedly [¢]

And yet, an equally crucial and pervasive assumption which is not Homeric is how the body and mind have come to be both understood, and related. With Ovid, both are apparent by virtue of the soul:

> All things are **ever**changing; nothing perishes. The soul wanders about and comes from that spot to this, from this to that and takes possession of any limbs whatever; it both

[π] *Skulsky, Metamorphosis. The Mind in Exile, p.27.*
[™] *Ibid.*
[¢] *Ibid., p.28.*

tions concerning what it is to be human. And yet the present essay does not attempt to provide any synthetic *human* definition. It is concerned ultimately with articulating one person's understanding of his personhood. Such an understanding can not help but speak of "something" human (and simultaneously *monstrous*).

What then, may be definitively said regarding the identity of our present persona, Gregor Samsa? He has been transformed into a "monstrous vermin"? Is this not blatantly astonishing? Gregor certainly isn't astonished. He only wants to make the seven o'clock train. Upon first reading, something lamentable suggests itself in Gregor's lot. "Lament" might, however, muddle the potentcy of this metamorphosis, especially if we keep in mind the problematic humanist sympathy previously discussed regarding K.. Let us take Gregor seriously for a moment. He himself takes nothing for granted, hence, everything seriously. He is a "monstrous vermin", and he unquestionably accepts *himself* within his new form. In fact, not only is there no emotion of self-empathy on Gregor's part, but on the contrary, a greater self-indulgence in his new form of himself.

> *. .for mere recreation he had formed the habit of crawling crisscross over the walls and ceiling. He especially enjoyed hanging suspended from the ceiling. it was much better than lying on the floor; one could breathe more freely; one's body swung and rocked lightly, and in the almost blissful*

> passes from the beasts to human bodies, and so does our soul into the beasts; and in no lapse of time does it perish. And as the pliable wax is moulded into new forms, and no longer abides as it was before, nor preserves the same shape, but is still the same wax, so I tell you that the soul is ever the same, but passes into different forms....all things are in flux. ≠

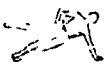
The transformations into the process of dying then, are not primarily understood as a "death" which occurs in metamorphosis (or at least, it is strictly a formal *death, where the form de-monstrates the act), or for that matter, even a birth, but simply a transference.*Σ

> "O race! stricken by the alarms of icy death, why do you dread Styx? why the shades, why empty names, the stock subjects of the poets, and the atonements of an imaginary world? Whether the funeral pile consumes your bodies with flames, or old age with gradual dissolution, believe that they cannot suffer injury. Souls are not subject to death; and having left their former abode, they ever inhabit new dwellings, and, there received, live on.∂

≠ *Ovid,* Metamorphoses, *15.165-73, p.523. Pythagoras is speaking through Ovid.*

Σ *In footnote of the* Selected Works of Porphyry, *trans. by T. Taylor, London, 1823, p.186, Taylor refers to Macrobius in the twelfth chapter of his Commentary on Scipio's Dream, in which he describes the descent of the soul, which is understood to be initially divine, into human bodies. In the descent, the souls touch something very human, what Macrobius calls "oblivion". Through the, in effect,* tainting *of the soul, man* forgets *what he originally knew. Macrobius'* soul *contains a more overt epistemological essence to it than Ovid's, however, within both conceptions of the* soul *is the essential ingredient of eternity, and although tainted by the* timely *curse of oblivion, man not only carries the divine within him, but since it is eternal, it is* transferred *in the simultaneous moment of a human death and birth. The* organ-ic *nature of Homer's* psyche *is far removed from this ubiquitous soul.*

∂ *Ovid,* Metamorphoses, *15.131-62, p.522. Pythagoras is speaking through Ovid.*



absorption induced by this suspension it could happen to his own surprise that he let go and fell plump on the floor. Yet now he had his body much better under control than formerly, and even such a big fall did him no harm *

And yet, this is precisely the irony, he is still *himself.* A reflective consciousness apparently survives in what appears to be Gregor's *formal* change. In the first moments of the story we are suddenly faced with the weathered dialectical constructions of form/substance, appearance/essence, surface/depth, in the hope and search for an enduring 'Gregor'. There are apparently no other variables with which to operate. 'Gregor' must survive in some manner, or there would be no way of our comprehending the transformation.¥

For the reader, Gregor's consciousness maintains itself in the face of a bodily change.

* Kafka, Franz, *C.S.*, p.115

¥ Skulsky throws light on both Gregor's condition and how it is read when he refers to Thomas Nagel and his philosophical meanderings on "what is it like to be a bat?" Nagel ponders a preposterous "subject" which does not want to know what it would be like for *it* to be a bat, but wants to know what it would be like for a *bat* to be a bat. In the absolutism of such a suggested self-transcendence, Nagel's hypothetical self poignantly and critically addresses earlier mentioned concerns over modern practices of 'elimination' or 'destruction' of any form of orienting consciousness, for what Nagel proposes is not even a "bat/man", but a complete man who is absolutely transformed into a complete bat. The implications of such absolutism carry over in all directions. Although the promise of unbridled "freedom" is the ruse suggested in this form of transformation, to imagine, and if pushed further, to *understand* such a "future stage" of oneself within this framework, is simply absurd. As Skulsky notes, *"We cannot grasp subjective experience other than our own without imagining our survival of a transformation - without trying to adopt the relevant point of view: The more different from oneself the other experiencer is, the less success Ovid's soul is that which defines and simultaneously denies a human identity.† In this "transference" of the soul, Ovid's mortals do not experience a self-"transcendence", for self-transcendence first requires a constitutive being from which to transcend. In the metamorphosis of Myrrha, who remains in perpetual labor in the form of a tree/pregnant belly; with Callisto, transformed as a bear, although the "former mind remained"; Actaeon who, as a deer, is devoured by his own hunting dogs as "he groans, and utters a noise, though not that of a man, still, such as a stag cannot make" (3.237-40); or in Io's comic/tragic transformation into a cow in which "the focus of the narrative irony is the fact*

† *Less rigorous modern interpretations of Ovid, such as Joseph B. Solodow's* The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses, *(University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1988), do not fully appreciate the ambiguity of the Ovidian identity:* "A cardinal feature in Ovidian metamorphosis is continuity between the person and what he is changed into, but the particular form which the continuity takes is not determined by any prior condition and cannot be predicted. It seems fair then to study metamorphosis separately from what comes before it. ..What is metamorphosis? It is clarification. It is a process by which characteristics of a person, essential or incidental, are given physical embodiments and are so rendered visible and manifest Metamorphosis makes plain a person's qualities, yet without passing judgment on them. It is - and this constitutes a central paradox of the poem - a change which preserves, an alteration which maintains identity, a change of form by which content becomes represented in form." *p.174. Solodow's thesis rests on the belief that Ovid's metamorphoses are not degradations or demotions of a character's identity, but a further explicit description of that identity. But what remains problematic with his thesis is that an originary and a priori self is assumed and unaccounted for. The "continuity" of which Solodow speaks, refers to a continuity between this originary self and the*

Gregor's family, however, is not afforded the same luxury of the narrator's perspective. The issue is simply, what kind of *self* exists in the metamorphosed form we definitively name 'Gregor'; i.e., in the persistence of 'some form of self', are the dialectical rules implicit throughout - man/beast, consciousness (mind)/form (body) - reinforced or, in essence, *crossed* through the metamorphosis? This is certainly an old question within the literary history of metamorphosis, one which Kafka continually asks.

As the "hero" of "The Metamorphosis", Gregor appears to be a sad and abominable form of any classical "hero"; and yet a kindred relationship remains in that he - as the Greek name 'Odysseus' similarly suggests - is "no-one". In his *crossing* from man to beast, no one identity may be attributed to him. It is this very *crossing* which is at the heart of the term Kafka uses to *identify* the beast we name "Gregor": *Ungeheure Ungeziefer*. In English, this has been translated as anything from "cockroach", to "giant bug" to "monstrous

one can expect with this enterprise."(p.4.)
Some form of self must persist through metamorphosis or nothing could be said. Unlike Nagel's 'man-turned-bat', who's (I)dentity is tragically *destroyed* through the transformation, (who's subject now **is** a bat) the (I)dentity of Kafka's 'Gregor' is not so easily relinquished, and certainly not so completely experienced by Gregor. Kafka's beast remains in tension, hence, the facile and yet infinitely profound condition of a consciousness which *formally* is *not itself*." Metamorphosis speaks most articulately on any discourse of inter-subjectivity because through a change in form, one's 'identity' can be defined neither "in itself" nor "for an other", but at the inter-stice of both.

that among those who are prevented by Io's deformity from making full contact with her is Io herself";[∞] *we are invited to partake in the perpetually unidentifiable condition of Ovid's metamorphic self. Gone is the "Odysseus" hero in which these transformations are qualified. The emphasis is placed on the universal and historical condition of* man *in, as, metamorphosis. And yet, the essential Homeric theme remains: "metamorphosis" is not an action performed on man by the deities, but rather, it* defines *man, and hence, history and time. Although the gods hold a distinct position in the Homeric and Ovidian scheme of things, there is yet no metaphysical check from which they act. Their decrees are whimsical, a product of their "mood".*

In the metamorphosis of Myrrha, transformation into a tree is initiated by her own request to the divinities that she be transformed, according to her "criminalities", so that she may be denied "both life and death" (10.464-

metamorphosed one. Although we agree that "continuity" is essential in the Ovidian metamorphosis, we disagree with the notion that that continuity is given by virtue of an originary self, but rather, by virtue of the Ovidian soul. *Solodow's "continuity" only remains appropriate if one re-contextualizes the term by virtue of this* soul. *Metamorphosis is "clarification", although it clarifies not the solidity of the self, but (and this goes for Ovid as well as Homer) rather, the inconstancy, inexplicability, and enigma of the self. Time and time again with Ovid, the same enigma arises: "...if, as the visions of Narcissus and Sosia wickedly suggest, our notion of identity itself is inexplicable, (Skulsky, Metamorphosis: The Mind in Exile, p.34) This is the "identity" which is "maintained" in Ovid's metamorphoses.*

- *Skulsky, Metamorphosis: The Mind in Exile, p.30.*

vermin". The latter comes closest to the German and yet does not carry the full implications of Kafka's term. A more precise definition of Kafka's German only shows how impossible it is to define:

> *The opening designation of Gregor as an 'Ungeheure Ungeziefer', or 'giant vermin' is notoriously ambiguous, for* Ungeziefer *refers to a broad range of animal parasites rather than a single type,* Ungeheure *('monstrous') is by definition vague, and the 'un'- prefixes in both words double the terms' lack of specificity into a kind of negative infinity.* §

And yet, even this "broad range of animal parasites" still generalizes *Ungeziefer*, for as Stanley Corngold notes, "*Ungeziefer*, is a word that cannot be expressed by the English words 'bug' or 'vermin'. *Ungeziefer* derives (as Kafka probably knew) from the late Middle High German word originally meaning *'the unclean animal not suited for sacrifice'*."(ea)®

96). It may read as just desserts for her incestuous deeds; and yet the exact same arborous fate meets Philemon and Baucis, although now conveyed in the context of a divine recognition of their virtuous acts. Causally speaking, this appears 'unnatural'. The god's must be maliciously joking - unless something more shrewd than such gods is at work in Ovid's program. Skulsky, in fact defines Ovid as an "embittered theologian", for he finds the gods, firstly, although neither cruel nor comic, incompassionate; and secondly - obviously inseparable - is the belief in "an essentially irreformable human nature" (something of which Homer was not in the position to conceive since there was no "gap" through which he could envision man by himself). Ovid's gods are essentially benevolent "tyrants", wanting to instill not fear but reverence. And yet there is an essential continuity between the mythological world of the gods and humans. For Ovid, most importantly, the gods are not the unjust oppressors of humanity. They do not sit in judgment over man. In the fables of Myrrha, Baucis, Glaucus, Dryope, etc., there is no intentional act of a deity which initiates these metamorphoses, it is their "fortune", "fate"(moîra), "necessity". The deities are "the carnival mirroring of a cosmic absurdity that, for the poet, is all too real".©

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§ Anderson, *Kafka's Clothes: Ornament and Aestheticism in the Hapsburg Fin de Siècle*, Oxford University Press, NY, 1992, p.124.

® "Sacrifice" and its kindred associations to monstrosity and metamorphosis might best be summarized as a mutual engagement in the principle of 'exchange'. As Donald Kunze notes, "*The two metaphors associated with exchange are metamorphosis and the monster. In metamorphosis, one form is exchanged for another, as in the human to animal transformations recorded by Ovid. The monster is, however, not the result of exchange but rather the* symbol *of exchange...The children of prostitutes in Republican Rome were condemned to death as monsters because they were, in the most literal sense, the products of illicit unions.*" (from an unpublished article entitled "Teratology of Civic Space", p.10) Similarly, an exchange of one form of life for another was the underlying principle in ritualistic animal sacrifice. With the introduction of "pure" Forms came the necessity for "pure", or "virgin" forms of sacrifice, an exchange of purity for purification. Animals such as pigs and asses, which were perceived as unclean and unsuitable sac-

© *Ibid., p52. As a slightly relevant aside, in a note from Henry T. Riley, the translator of the edition of Ovid's* Metamorphosis *consulted here, an illuminating editorial opinion is given regarding the "reality" of*

The more specific the reference, the more ambiguous "Gregor" becomes. And yet, the reference leads the reader into even further dimensions of reading what *identity* might be attributed to the hero of the tale.

The "*Ungeheure*", or "monstrous" side of the term, is infinitely enigmatic because the monster is "a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, continually created; and *it is the principle of other bodies*".(e a)Δ Hence, it is never simply formally depicted, for it is never formally distinct. This inability to definitively depict or represent the monster is suggested in many of Kafka's short stories, but most decisively in "The Metamorphosis"Ω.

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rifices, were understood as such greatly in light of their antithetical and 'pure' sacrificial counterparts. Kafka reverses the rules of sacrifice with his *Ungehere Ungeziefer* and provides the reader with an apparently ironic sacrifice.

Δ Frascari., *Monsters of Architecture*, p.32.

Ω During Kafka's lifetime, thirty-nine of his short stories were published. He rarely had a conflict with his publisher, except when it came to publishing "The Metamorphosis". In two specific instances, we see the absolute importance for Kafka of the appropriate *representation* of the story in published form. (1.) In a letter to Kurt Wolff Verlag, on October 25, 1915, at the time when "The Metamorphosis" was about to be published in a separate volume, Kafka wrote, *"You mentioned that Ottomar Starke is going to do a drawing for the title page of* Metamorphosis. *In so far as I know the artist's style, from* Napoleon, *this prospect has given me a minor and perhaps unnecessary fright. It struck me that Starke, as an illustrator, might want to draw the insect itself Not that, please not that! I do not want to restrict him, but only to make this plea out of my deeper knowledge of the story The insect itself cannot be depicted. It cannot even be shown from a distance. Perhaps there is no such inten-*

"The anger of the gods", says Proclus "is not an indication of any passion in them, but demonstrates our inaptitude to participate of their illuminations".¤

"Guilt" and "innocence" are dissolved in the recognition of that which can never be known. Dryope's "innocent" suffering comes from forces other than acts of the deities, and yet, is absurdly and precisely equivalent to them.¥ Within the dissolution of this dialectical framework lies precisely Ovid's polemic. Tagging Ovid as an "embittered theologian" does not fully capture the significance and aptitude of his rhetoric, for, in Book 15 a so far implicit orientation becomes explicit when Ovid shifts from the fables of metamorphoses to the teachings of Pythagoras. Pythagoras' "all things are in flux" resounds not just through Ovid's historical and transient "individual" metamorphoses, as the previous fourteen books so assiduously narrated, but such "flux" extends its implica-

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Ovid's poem and his philosophical cohort, Pythagoras: "The principle of Pythagoras, that everything is continually changing and that nothing perishes, is true to a certain extent; but in his times, and even those of Ovid, philosophy was not sufficiently advanced to speak with precision on the subject, and to discover the true boundary between truth and fiction." *p.536.*

¤ *From the* Selected Works of Porphyry, *in a footnote by the translator on p.199.*

¥ *The Neoplatonic, as well as Christian, conception of "Divine Providence" is quite another issue. In the paradigmatic Christian example of Job in the Old Testament, "guilt" and "innocence" are capable of being "known" by virtue of an unalterable* Truth, *God. Job's anxiety, and the butt of the irony, comes precisely from the fact that his punishment is unjust because he has lived* the truth.

Similarly in "The Village Schoolmaster", the desire to not only visually apprehend but to *prove* the existence of a "giant mole" becomes the lifelong ambition of a village schoolmaster and a curious scientist. The premise, however, is that it is not clear as to who has actually seen this "giant mole", only "that a few years back it was observed in the neighborhood of one of our small villages". It is, however, described as being so repulsive that if anyone saw it, they "would prob-

tion and my plea can be dismissed with a smile - so much the better....If I were to offer suggestions for an illustration, I would choose such scenes as the following: the parents and the head clerk in front of the locked door, or even better, the parents and the sister in the lighted room, with the door open upon the adjoining room that lies in darkness."(L. p.114-115) Starke's design for the cover of the published version shows a man in a morning coat, hands clasped to his face in fright as he peeks through a door which is slightly ajar. The definitive expression of fright on the man's face trivializes Kafka's indifferent images of the family and their dwelling. The fact that the "insect itself cannot be depicted" is the essential qualification. Kafka's "abstraction" does not deal with a "depiction" of something intelligible and human. It confronts the facile dualities and relationships conventionally understood between the image or form and its constituted substance or meaning. Starke's frightened man already describes "the insect", and consequently gives it form. Corngold's interpretation of the vermin not as a visual cipher but as a rhetorical one in his chapter "The Metamorphosis of Metaphor", is more perceptive. (2.) On August 19, 1916, Kafka attempted to clear up some confusion over his suggestion to publish a book entitled *Punishments*, within which would appear, "The Judgment", "The Metamorphosis", and "In the Penal Colony" together. Verlag had slighted the relevance of the three stories together and suggested publishing only "The Judgment" and "In the Penal Colony" together. Kafka sternly clarifies that, *"'The Judgment' and 'In the Penal Colony' would make a dreadful combination; 'Metamorphosis' might still mediate between them, but without that story, you would have two alien heads knocking violently at each other."*(L. p126) Even outside the story itself, "The Metamorphosis" is identified as a monstrous device of mediation which, although unrepresentable is still wholly necessary.

tions for Ovid into any conception of human space and time. Ovidian metamorphosis communicates 'time' as "a discrete series of sudden moments",[ø] and hence, history as well. Given Ovid's sociopolitical and philosophical context, Book 15 ingeniously and subtly articulates the importance of such a claim. The Pythagorean device of "flux" allows Ovid to place the fantasy of metamorphosis in a context in which his implicit theme of human nature, as being "stripped of the least suggestion of causal order",[π] becomes critically strengthened.

"Thou, Time, the consumer of *all* things, and thou, hateful Old Age (Skulsky translates as "malign Antiquity"), together destroy all things; and, by degrees ye consume each thing, decayed by the teeth of old age, with a slow death. (p.525, 15.229-64, Pythagoras is speaking through Ovid)

"So in lapse of time, we see nations change, and these gaining strength, while those are falling. So Troy was great, both in her riches and her men, and for ten years could afford so much blood; whereas, now laid low, she only shows her ancient ruins, and, instead of her wealth , she points at the tombs of her ancestors. Sparta was famed; great Mycenæ flourished; so, too, the citadel of Cecrops, and that of Amphion. Now Sparta is a contemptible spot; lofty Mycenæ is laid low. What now is Thebes, the city of Oedipus, but a mere story? What remains of Athens, the city of Pandion, but its name? (p.533, 15.414-44)

And yet given the previous verbose descriptions at the beginning of Book 15 of all

[ø] *Skulsky*, Metamorphosis: The Mind in Exile, *p.53.*
[π] *Ibid., p.59.*

ably have died of disgust".(*CS*, p.167) It becomes clear very early on in the story, however, that what is unbearable is not the creature's formal appearance (its soft, furry coat, tiny feet, and delicately tapered nose actually appear to be quite endearing features), but rather its incomprehensible source of existence.™

As a "principle of other bodies", the monster is caught between the boundaries of identifiable beings;

things from rivers that petrified those who drank of them; to fountains that kindled wood; others that caused a change of sex; that created an aversion to wine; that transformed men into birds; to frogs, silkworms, bees, hyena, chameleons, and the phoenix which is not birthed into one static form but continually changing - this of course coming after fourteen books in which virtually all transformations which antiquity could provide to the poet, were exhausted - what are we to make of a Pythagoras speaking through a conscious Ovid of the unique and illustrious nature of the rising Rome?

> Now, too, there is a report that Dardanian Rome is rising; which, close to the waters of Tiber that rises in the Apennines, is laying the foundations of her greatness beneath a vast structure. She then, in her growth, is changing her form, and will one day be the mistress of the boundless earth. (p.533, 15.414-44)

And to further the authority, as well the ambiguity of the authority, Ovid's Pythagoras recollects what Helenus said to Aeneas as Troy was sinking:

> Even now so I see that our Phrygian posterity is destined to build a city, so great as neither now exists, nor will exist, nor has been seen in former times. Through a long lapse of ages, other distinguished men shall make it powerful, but one born of the blood of Iulus[¢] shall make it the mistress of the world.[≠]

™ As we will find with most of Kafka's animal/heroes, a mythological precedent suspiciously lurks in close proximity Emrich mentions a study which appeared in Prague in 1872 on the mythological origins of the mole by Josef Virgil Grohmann, entitled *Apollo Smintheus und die Bedeutung der Mäuse in der Mythologie der Indogermanen*, in which he notes, *"That moles were gencnerally considered to be mysterious beings is evident from the fact that moles were believed to be capable of understanding human speech and would flee on hearing themselves talked about (Pliny, X, 88). In German and Slavic popular belief, the mole is likewise a prophetic animal; it foretells death and birth, its heart, if eaten or carried on one's person, bestows miraculous powers* (p.50) "(Emrich, *Franz Kafka*, p 532) As a daemonic being, the monstrous mole was a medium of divine power, ie. impossible to be visually apprehended, hence its capacity to flee, unseen, upon the presence of human voices. This was its *intermediary post*, which in the context of Kafka's short story, conveys the more complex absurdity of the scientist's desire to "prove" its existence. Primarily, however, "The Village Schoolmaster" reads less as a critique of the inherent contradictions in modern science than as a portrayal of the profundity of the mediating monster in modern life. Kafka frequents the prodigious type of the mole in his other short stories, "The Burrow", and "Josephine the Singer, or The Mouse Folk". In fact, even Gregor's mole-like mannerisms are distinctive in that he would bury himself completely under a couch when his sister or mother would enter his room, since the very sight of him would be too repulsive for them to bear The point is simply that Kafka's monsters are not arbitrary animal types, but carefully considered ones.

¢ *Ovid's Pythagoras is referring to the adopted son to come of Julius Caesar, Augustus, the first emperor of Rome.*

≠ *Ovid, Metamorphoses, 15.444-75, p.533-34. Again, Helenus is speaking through Pythagoras who is speaking through Ovid.*

> ...*a body in* a continuous metamorphosis, a body freed from the mirror of itself - *freed from similar resemblance.(e.a.)*[Σ]

"Monstrosity" and "metamorphosis" as *chiastic* practices of human representation, are both testaments to man's "inability to abstract forms and properties from subjects"[∂], and as a consequence, *subjects, properties* (essences) and *forms* are never the issue, and yet, critically speaking, always the issue. Within the monster is held the *crossing* of all dialectical constructions, and any definition of *self* in this crossing can only provisionally and simply be considered a *monstrous self.*

What are the *implications* of such a non-definitive "self" ? This is the question that "The Metamorphosis" primarily poses, and by concentrating on Gregor's *relations* (literally, his family), these implications begin to take on *ethical* ramifications[*]. Through Gregor's *flesh and blood*, as it were, we come to find first, the 'judges' of Gregor's humanity, and second, the terms by which their last judgements are made.

Should we not also see in this "Rome" the inevitability of just a "name"? We are left with the same enigma as we encountered in all the metamorphoses of the poem: the inevitable dissolution - or more appropriately, "flux" - of all other great societies, and yet we are given a prophesized solidity of the Roman world. In the apparent mutual exclusivity of these claims, "the butt of the irony is as much the ironist as it is the Emperor".[≠] It is a precarious rhetoric in which Ovid engages, for it both affirms and denies his overall premise (not to mention the potentially hazardous political implications for himself, as a Roman). And yet, the Pythagorean "flux" is what triumphs in the end, as is only fitting in Ovid's human world of inconstancies. In the metamorphoses of nations, as paradigmatically displayed in Book 14 in the fall of the Ritulian capitol of Ardea and the birth of the phoenix, as well as in the "individual" metamorphoses which are given substance only by virtue of Pythagoras' transmigration of souls, the implicit critique of a cosmology devoid of causality remains essential. Considering the philosophical context of Ovid's world, the critique appears even more appropriate. The Stoics, for instance, who "insist on the absence of logos*...from beasts on whose flesh man must live", must be irrevocably discounted in Ovid's* human *cosmology. The presence of*

Σ Frascari, *Monsters of Architecture*, p.35.

∂ Ibid., p.14.

* Unlike Walter Sokel's psychological readings of "The Metamorphosis", in which he concentrates on the irresponsible Gregor (He is "guilty" of his own tragic state of metamorphosis because he has failed his duties to his family, essentially confirming sister Grete's final claim), the questions begging to be asked involve rather the ethical constructs of the family members Refer to Sokel, Walter, "Education for Tragedy", from Stanley Corngold's translation of *The Metamorphosis*, Bantam Books, New York, 1972.

≠ *Skulsky, Metamorphosis: The Mind in Exile, p.54*

Gregor's family initially clings to the belief that beneath the *form* of this creature lies the *substance* of their Gregor. His mother remains most adamant about this until the end - at least in principle if not in practice, since she was forbidden by her husband and daughter to enter Gregor's room. Grete, too, appears to be concerned for her brother's well being. Her first glimpse of Gregor, however, as she peers anxiously into his room, belies a different impression:

> *She did not see him right away, but when she caught sight of him under the couch - God, he had to be somewhere, he couldn't just fly away - she became so frightened that she lost control of herself and she slammed the door shut again. But, as if she felt sorry for her behavior, she immediately opened the door again and came in on tiptoe, as if she were visiting someone seriously ill or perhaps even a stranger.*†

Grete, at first, intimates that the beast - although unclear as to what relationship it has with her brother (questioned by the fact that she had just seen *him* under the couch yet wondered, "God, he had to be somewhere, he couldn't just fly away.") - is still in need of care. She appoints herself the duties of feeding and cleaning up after him, hence, initiates what Gregor interprets to be the first step toward a restoration of their familial bonds of compassion. These are, however, precisely the bonds which come to be questioned later, as Grete is the first one to set forth a *"theory*

† Kafka, Franz, *The Metamorphosis*, translated by Stanley Corngold, Bantam Books, Inc., N.Y., 1972, p.23.

logos *in any degree for the Stoics "would entail that injustice is practically unavoidable, that moral perception is either meaningless or nonexistent. The slightest gesture in a world of imponderables is liable to result in an atrocity [i.e., cannibalism]",*[∞] *and yet for Ovid, the atrocity is the same although the issue is not with the* logos, *but the* psyche.

Ovid's work is an epic story which begins with the forming of the earth and cosmos, and ends with his own time, that of Augustus Ceasar. In the last paragraph of the last book, Ovid projects himself immortally into the stars, next to Julius Ceasar, as a result of his "work...which shall be read by the lips of nations, and (if the passages of Poets have aught of truth) throughout all ages shall I survive in fame" (p.553, 15.877-79). Some critics have formulated this last explicit intent of Ovid's as conveying near preMachiavellian aspirations to be Emperor- that is, Augustus - and support such aspirations by relating this last statement with Ovid's story of Cipus. Such aspirations would, however, be highly inconsistent with his literary constitution. Ovid was first a poet, nonetheless a politically conscious poet, yet if his relation to Pythagoras - who is said to have been self-exiled from the tyranny of

[∞] *Ibid., p.60. Skulsky refers to Ovid's Pythagoras as a "polemical weapon against the Stoics".*

of what it is to be a person, a theory that excludes not only Gregor - if we share the bias of the narrative - but the rest of us as well."§ "Compassion" is as burlesqued and impoverished a concept as Grete's conception of her brother, for if the story was meant to be a moral lesson in the recognition of "a person's" *rights* to *human* compassion, than a character with Cerebral Palsy would have been adequate. Grete puts forward her definitive theory at the end of the story, after Gregor had frightened off the boarders, a theory which had been implicitly present with her first glimpse of the creature:

> *"My dear parents," said his sister and by way of an introduction pounded her hand on the table, "things can't go on like this Maybe you don't realize it but I do.* ***I won't pronounce the name of my brother in front of this monster****, and so all I say is; we have to try to get rid of it. ..It has got to go....that's the only answer father. You just have to try to get rid of the idea that it is our Gregor. Believing it for so long, that is our real misfortune. (e a.)*®

What are the precise grounds for Grete's claim? Indeed, Gregor's despicable form is intolerable to her, but it is his "behavior" that she finds most objectionable, "*..this animal persecutes us, drives the roomers away, obviously wants to occupy the whole apartment and for us to sleep in the gutter.*"(p.52) If this beast was truly Gregor, he would have rid the family of

Polycrates, king of Samos - is any indication of Ovid's own aversion to self projection, then his parting words seem to carry a much less adorned explanation:

> ...the target of his reproach...is far broader: the inevitabilities of human nature and history as Ovid has taken a whole poem to display them.©

*Ovidian man appears to skirt past the dialectic and yet it is only in so far as the dialectic is in place that any such maneuvering is possible. Ovid's metaphysical skepticism is appropriately positioned at a time in which Middle Platonists began gearing up for a systematic exegesis of Platonic doctrines - the outcome being the Neoplatonism of Plotinus, and further, that of St. Augustine - neatly named by a definitive temporal marker to denote the appearance of the Christian era (*Anno Domini*). If there is a hint of nostalgia in Ovid, it comes from a conscious glimpse of that threshold, and a suspense of that which is already in place (the metaphysical construct of man) and yet still in its embryonic stages. His* Metamorphoses*, however, cannot help but tend toward the forms of metaphysics, just as Pythagoras' couldn't, given the ubiquitous presence of the psyche. And yet, it is both the eternal construct of this soul as well as the still essentially impartial and inconceivable acts of the gods which al-*

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§ Skulsky, *Metamorphosis: The Mind in Exile*, p.187.

® *The Metamorphosis*, trans. by Corngold, pp.51-52

© *Ibid., p.56.*

his burden long before. In effect, via Grete's logic, Gregor could have been a human recognizable form, and depending on his behavior could have been treated the same. It is solely through *appearance* (which connotes both "behavior" and "form"), that Grete fails to discover a consciousness, which if found would have definitively established for her in this beast something human.[Δ]

Grete holds the reigns of Gregor's identity as an interpreter of *appearance* and nothing more. The only conflicting interpretation comes from Gregor's mother who refuses to judge the beast from its *appearance*, and subsequently relies on the faith that the *essence* of the beast is still her Gregor.

> Let me go to Gregor, he is my unfortunate boy! Don't you understand, I have to go to him? (p 31)

lows Ovid to keep the dialectic in abeyance, and with it, a definitive human identity - a constitutive **self**.

Within the literature and pervading consciousness of 'metamorphosis' in the centuries following Ovid, it is this very 'self' *which acquires new form, or rather,* 'a form' *at all. Simply stated, man takes* 'shape', *with respect to himself, and hence, an other (with both an 'o' and an 'O'). This shape becomes discernible most distinctly through the simultaneous and uniform positioning of the* 'psyche' *at the center of a comprehensive personal human identity. What was merely intimated through the early Greeks, most significantly Plato - i.e. the concept of an atemporal psychic whole with respect to a temporal form - takes considerable* 'form' *in the "metamorphoses" following Ovid. "Metamorphosis" remains, however, primarily engaged in the same thing, "changes in form", although it, like* 'man', *is also engaged in a process of further discernment.*

Δ Within many studies in behaviorism, a similar debate ensues. Skulsky cites one such debate over "Koko", an ape who was trained to communicate through human sign language. Two interpretations are mentioned which comment on the issue of this animal raised to "personhood". One, which comes from a "juridical theorist", believes, "*If it has never been one before, it is an individual now. It has the apparatus for the beginning of a historical sense, for the contemplation of self*" The other view comes from a "positivist" who believes that, "*animals [that have been taught to speak] are still not human, and the laws [the jurist] would bring to bear are human rights, are they not?*" (quotes from "The Pursuit of Reason", *New York Times Magazine*) Skulsky, *Metamorphosis, The Mind in Exile*, pp.6-7. The members of Gregor's family appear to be such "positivists" and "jurists" (both are appropriate since naiveté takes no sides), who sit in judgment over him. The verdict for Gregor, however, (unlike Koko) is a matter of life and death.

SOME ASININE THOUGHTS:

Grete is the judge of *appearance*, the mother, the judge of *essence* (the father is indifferent), and in the clash of these polarities, no recognition of Gregor's *monstrous self* is possible.[Ω] However, since Gregor is *himself* and yet *otherwise*, and since recognition comes from "the joints", he alone is capable of comprehending something essential about *his own alterity*. He is in the position of experiencing his identity, his *self as a relation*. He is uniquely capable of an "authentic", *ethical* experience. Kafka's fantasy of transformation is a testing ground not only for the dialectical theories of "self", "identity", and "alterity" put forth through the members of the family, it is also the place where the monster ecstatically reveals a theory of self-hood which *crosses* these dialectical constructions.

The significant moment for Gregor occurs when Grete suggests that all of the furniture in her brother's room be removed so that the beast may crawl freely over all the room's surfaces. The mother vehemently objects, and suggests that the room be preserved exactly

There is no shortage of serious philosophical scholarship regarding a definitive human nature. "Lovers of knowledge" will be perpetually entrenched in essences of some sort. Literary "heroes" have equally treaded such ground historically, although they, more often than not, leave notably different traces. In fact, one may generally find that the more a philosopher loves, the more scant his traces on the ground become (at least, that has been the hope). What then are we to make of a self-proclaimed quadra-ped philosopher? The second century Apuleius of Madauros offers his readers, in his Metamorphoses, *or later titled* The Golden Ass, *an invitation to such an image.*

In the opening segments of the work, we find the "hero", Lucius, en route to Hypata in Thessaly, the home of his ancestry, descending, as we are told, from Plutarch. The narrator makes explicit the hero's sophist lineage for reasons which are only later apparent. And yet, Lucius' inherited curiositas *clearly comes though in his initial fascinations with Thessaly, a region renown for its metamorphic capacities.*

Soon as, the night being dispersed, a new sun had made the day emerging at the same time from sleep and my bed, being likewise anxious and above measure desirous of knowing what is rare and admirable, and recollecting that I was in the midst of Thessaly, where the genuine incantations of the magical art are reported to have originated by the unanimous consent of the whole earth...though I was otherwise in suspense from the desire of seeing something wonderful, and my diligence in the investigation of it. Nor was there anything in that city which, when I beheld, I could be-

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Ω Merleau-Ponty articulately addresses the difficulties inherent in such dialectical thinking: "*The being of the essence is not primary, it does not rest on itself, it is not that it can teach us what Being is; the essence is not* the *answer to the philosophical question, the philosophical question is not posed in us by a pure spectator: it is first a question as to how, upon what ground,* the pure spectator is established, *from what more profound source he himself draws...it would be naive to seek solidity in a heaven of ideas or in a ground (fond) of meaning - it is neither above nor beneath the appearances,* ***but at their joints*** (e.a.); *it is the tie that secretly connects an experience to its variants.*" *The Visible and the Invisible,* pp. 109-116.

as her son left it. Through this nostalgic plea by his mother, Gregor is cathartically startled out of what he perceives to have been a listless lull of consciousness which the past few months of his existence had introduced.

> Had he really wanted to have his room, comfortably fitted with furniture that had always been in the family, changed into a cave, in which of course, he would be able to crawl around *unhampered in all directions, but at the cost of simultaneously, rapidly and totally forgetting his human past*? Even now he had been *on the verge of forgetting*, and only his mother's voice, which he had not heard for so long, had shaken him up. Nothing should be removed; everything had to stay; he could not do without the beneficial influence of the furniture on his state of mind; and if the furniture prevented him from carrying on this senseless crawling around, then that was no less but rather a great advantage.(e.a., pp.33-34)

In Gregor's earlier "almost happy absent-mindedness" of crawling along the ceiling, he did not grasp the significance of this apparently harmless activity. Gregor is now aware that he can not lapse completely into such a state, for "absent-mindedness" is the absence of any orienting consciousness or memory, and he could never allow himself that freedom, since his consciousness and memories were all he had.≈

lieve to be that which it really was. But I was induced to think that everything was transmuted into another form by magical incantation so that the stones which I met with were hardened into that shape from men; the birds which I heard singing had once been in the human form, but were now invested with feathers, and that this was also the case with the trees which were clothed with leaves, and surrounded the pomoerium or precinct of the town; and with the fountains of water, which devolved their streams from the liquefied bodies of men. I now likewise expected to find that the statues and images would walk; that the walls would speak; that sheep and that kind of cattle would prophesy; and that an oracle would suddenly be given from heaven itself and the orb of the sun. Being thus astonished, or rather stupefied with tormenting desire, finding no beginning, or even trace of the objects of my wish, I rapidly investigated every particular.Ø

Apuleius promises in the beginning of his Metamorphoses *to provide "an admirable account of men changed into different forms, and by certain vicissitudes, again restored to themselves."(1.1) Similar to Ovid's initial opening claim, Apuleius offers us an equally exciting proposition, and yet, in his suggestion that metamorphosed men will be "restored to themselves", something of a metamorphic distinction with Ovid lurks beneath his promise. Within the same descriptive passage of Thessaly, we are introduced to not only a 'hotbed of magic', but Lucius' inquiring mind as well. The Thessalian atmosphere of unreliable forms will serve metonymically for the entire book, and yet, by virtue of those inconstancies, Lucius betrays a poignant orientation: he is on a* **quest**. *He is in search of all the "objects*

≈ Gregor's most decisive act in the story comes as he realizes that in his condition he could not overpower the two women if they insisted on removing his furniture and so, in a near masturbatory scene, he turned to a picture - which he had recently "*cut out of a glossy magazine and lodged in a pretty gilt frame*" - hanging on his wall which "*showed a lady done up in a fur hat and a fur boa, sitting upright and raising up against the viewer a heavy fur muff in which her whole forearm disappeared*"(p.3). This woman - effectively consumed within some form of furry creature - mirroring

Ø *Apuleius,* The Metamorphoses of Apuleius or the Golden Ass, *translated from the original Latin by Thomas Taylor, Universal Press, Birmingham, 1822, 2.17-18.*

The persistent dilemma of the story - that which is most "tragic" for the reader as well as Gregor - is that no *conscious* recognition of Gregor's "humanity" (and by this point it should be clear that we mean, the "enigma" of his -and our - humanity) is provided through his family. This is precisely why his *self-consciousness* is so important to him, why this *intrinsic* recognition of *an-other's* consciousness *within himself* must not be lost now at any price.™ Without the conscious recognition of this *other*, he would be set *free*, and it is this *freedom*, "unhampered in all directions", which is most terrifying for Gregor. It would signal his complete and total disappearance. K. could not help but disappear since he had most effectively lost his "conscious homeland", never to be regained. The more mature Gregor realizes that this "consciousness" - which is his only and most essential connection to his "human past" - can never be relinquished. K. was "always forgetting". Gregor is perched at the boundary, always "on the verge of forgetting", and the distinction is essential.¥

of [his] wish"; which is nothing less than the hope of a connection or illumination with the divine power behind the magical Thessalian aura.

In Lucius' first attempt to receive directly this illumination, by illicitly spying on the magician Pamphile as she changes herself into an owl, he meets with his own metamorphic fortune, as Fotis, Pamphile's maid - as well as another object of Lucius' desire - mistakenly chooses the wrong ointment from her master's alchemical stash and changes Lucius into an ass instead of the desired owl. In order for this greatly desired divine illumination to occur, it appears that Lucius must first be transformed into an ass, *and the same metamorphic enigma arises: the secret of a human consciousness consumed in animal form, and Lucius must be retained if this asinine fortune is to be understood.*

Lucius' odyssey begins as a four-legged asinine sophist. It could also be said that his sophist fortune is directly connected with his asinine fortune. "Why?" is slightly more complicated. The more immediate question pertains to "What?" we are now faced with: the timeless enigma of a monstrous identity and how to come-to-terms *with it. Immediately following the transformation, we are introduced to the conscious and resultant distinction in identity which is made between the character who was "Lucius" and the character who was*

Gregor's own kindred fate, would not be removed, as he "*hurriedly crawled up on it and pressed himself against the glass, which gave a good surface to stick to and soothed his hot belly.*"(p.35)

™ The issue which, again was similarly most crucial for Merleau-Ponty and his notion of "flesh" was that one experiences oneself as already 'social', as having a "proto-social" body within the "flesh" from which any notion of 'individual' activity must be considered.

¥ "Freedom" has complex connotations for Kafka. An experience of "freedom" which comes from "forgetting", from a "loss of consciousness", is an experience which many of Kafka's characters face. It is a conception of "freedom" which sleeps well with "Truth", and as Kafka once put it, "*Truth is indivisible, therefore cannot know itself; the man who desires to know it must be false*" (GWC, p.177). The enigma of "freedom" which

It is this very resistance to a freedom "unhampered in all directions" which *orients* Kafka in literature, which enables him to remain in perpetual tension as a "writer in a body". Unlike many of Kafka's Expressionist contemporaries, literature could never be conceived of as a technique of self-transcendence, or means of escape. On the contrary, as seen through the character of Gregor, the writer must remain forever bound to the world. The "identity" of a "writer in a body" articulates both the ecstasy and tragedy of this very "human condition". The *task* (or *ethos*), therefore, in

Kafka's monsters continually put forth is one which must be simultaneously "bound" to a "human past". Kafka's later short story "A Report to an Academy" emphasizes this point most persistently. It narrates what might be described as a "reverse metamorphosis" of a wild ape, captured along the "Gold Coast", into a talking, philosophizing, smoking, schnapps-drinking, fornicating "human" named Red Peter. Unlike Gregor, Red Peter's "original" form (a furry ape) remains unchanged. Red tells the story of his "achievement" of transformation to the "Honored Members of the Academy", as essentially a metamorphosis of "consciousness" In his process of "becoming human", Red articulates "human freedom" as he began to understand it while locked in a cage, searching for a "way out": *I fear that perhaps you don't understand what I mean by "way out". I use the expression in its fullest and most popular sense. I deliberately do not use the word freedom. I do not mean the spacious feeling of freedom on all sides. As an ape, perhaps, I knew that, and I have met men who yearn for it. But for my part I desired such freedom neither then nor now. In passing: may I say that all too often men are betrayed by the word freedom. And as freedom is counted among the most sublime feelings, so the corresponding disillusionment can be also sublime. In variety theaters I have often watched, before my turn came on, a couple of acrobats performing on trapezes high in the roof. They swung themselves, they rocked to and fro, they sprang into the air, they floated into each others arms, one hung by the hair from the teeth of the other "And that too is human freedom," I thought, "self-controlled movement." What a mockery of holy Mother Nature! Were the apes to see such a spectacle, no theater walls could stand the shock of their laughter.* (C.S., p.253)

named *"Lucius". This is indicated in several places, as when Fotis reveals the antidote which will return "Lucius" to his former state.*

"It is well, however, that a remedy for this transformation may be easily obtained; for by only chewing roses, you will put off the form of an ass, and will immediately become again *my Lucius."* (e.a., 3.47)

Later, while being placed in a stable with his "companions", "Lucius" links his former state to his name, yearning for the next day when "...I should become Lucius *again by the assistance of roses." (e.a. 3.48)*[π] *The narrator establishes the complexity of such a person - Lucius I, the beast of burden, and Lucius II, the narrator "I".*

But I, though I was a complete ass; and, instead of Lucius, a labouring beast, yet retained human sense. (111.48)

The question of whether the beast is a **person** *or not is moot, for the issue concerns the identity of a* **monster**.

[π] *The concern for Lucius' name is pervasive throughout the tale, and it is a concern which struggles with the connections and discrepancies of identity in all metamorphoses.* "What is the essential ground of identity that we are forced to seek by the disappearance of such accidental grounds as determine the reference of a name?" *Skulsky, p.69. It should also be noted that our author's very authorship is considered by most historians to be dubious.* Apuleius' Metamorphoses *comes from an adaptation of a work of the Greek satirist Lucian of Patras' (AD. 165) entitled* Lucian or The Ass *(trans. by Paul Turner, Indiana Univ. Press, Bloomington, 1974). This Greek precedent narrates essentially the same tale as Apuleius, albeit in a shorter version.*

writing is not simply to maintain a precarious balance between "oneself" and the "world", but rather it is to initially recognize that given the self evident "Truth" of these very conceptions of "self" and "world", a writer must write from the *joints* of these truths.™ This is where *responsibility*, where an "ethical experience" is initiated. Contemporary interest in redefinitions of "self", "authorship" and "identity" have greatly concentrated on "deconstructing" the historical truths which have given these concepts solidity. In the process, any form of orienting consciousness, any definitive point of authoritative reference is destroyed. "Je suis un autre", Rimbaud's famous dictum, contains and suggests two very different readings of identity and alterity. One focuses on the *metamorphosis* which takes place at the *crossing*, or *chiasm* of "suis" (etre); for it is there that the "identity" of a *monstrous self* is revealed. The other focuses on the *subject* (Je) and *direct object* (un autre), and reads the metamorphosis of "etre" as the *destruction* (or deconstuction) of any definitive *subject* to the position of the object (in this context, remember "the man who *is* a bat"). Gregor's sister Grete is entirely sympathetic to this second reading. She is the arch-deconstructionist. She lies contented with the theory of "getting rid of" that which has become most despicable, and as an ironic con-

For thus I shall at the same time make trial of my own genius, and enable the reader to perceive clearly, whether I was also an ass in understanding and sense. (e.a., 4.54)

What is this "I" that survives, that persists through metamorphosis in this second century comic/tragic character? It is certainly not "a person - and not as a participant of humanity even in the figurative (honorific) sense of the term",[¢] and yet, as noted above, a "human sense remains". Still, "Lucius" is linked to a "sense" which is beastly *as well, as he continually speaks of his "asinine thoughts" or an "ass's judgment", and it is clear both how one "sense" is inseparable from the other, and as well, how crucial these "senses", and the metamorphosis, is to Lucius' "quest". Continually throughout the narrative, we find further the kinship which connects "Lucius" with his human and beastly companions. As "Lucius" eyes the workings of a mill, we see the monstrous kinship.*

Good Gods! [Dii Boni!] What abject fellows were the men that were there! The whole of their skin was marked with lived spots, and their scarred backs were rather shaded than covered with torn garments, composed of shreds Some had only their private parts concealed by a small covering; and all of them were so clothed, that their skin might be seen through the intervals of the patches. Their foreheads were marked with letters, their hair was half-shaved off and their feet were bound with fetters. They were also deformed, through paleness, and their eyelids were corroded with the smoky darkness of black vapour; and on

™ And, for the last time, as one critic so blatantly states in relation to Kafka, "*Truth and self are identical. The self is the inexplicable, pure and simple. It is beyond all our conceptions of the self...*" Emrich, *Franz Kafka*, p.121.

¢ *Skulsky, Metamorphosis, The Mind in Exile, p. 69.*

sequence only strengthens the polarity of a "self" (Je) and a "world" (un autre). With the construction of the monstrous Gregor, Kafka de-monstrates as yet his most profound grasp of the implications, complexities and subtleties of not only "Je suis un autre", but equally "a writer in a body".

Some of Kafka's earliest stories show the efforts of a writer coming to terms with these complexities. In the early, unfinished novel, "Wedding Preparations in the Country", written when Kafka was twenty years old (four or five years before "The Metamorphosis"), the later figure of Gregor is suggested in the character of Edward Raban. In the opening moments of the story, Raban stands at his door in the rain watching the bustle of activity in the street while contemplating how he might overcome his reluctance to (literally) engage himself in this societal traffic and proceed to initiate his trip to the country. We have yet to be informed of any "wedding preparations", only Raban's anxiety over the excursion itself. Raban muses over his possibilities:

> *" can't I do it the way I always used to as a child in matters that were dangerous? I don't even need to go to the country myself, it isn't necessary. I'll send my clothed body If it staggers out of the door of my room, the staggering will indicate not fear but nothingness. Nor is it a sign of excitement if it stumbles on the stairs, if it travels into the country, sobbing as it goes, and there eats its supper in tears For I myself am meanwhile lying in my bed, smoothly covered over with the yellow-brown blanket, exposed to the breeze that is wafted through that seldom aired room The carriages and people in the street move and walk hesi-*

> this account they had bad eyes. They were likewise filthy white through the flour of the mill, like those pugilists, who fight sprinkled with fine dust. But what, and after what manner, shall I speak of the labouring beasts, *my associates [de meo imentario contubernio]* ? What of these old mules and infirm horses? With their heads inclined downwards about the manger, they diminished the heaps of chaff. Their necks were putrid with wounds; their nostrils, which laboured in breathing, were languid, and wide through the continual pulsation of coughing; their breasts were ulcerated through the constant friction of the ropes by which they were tied; their sides were bared even to their bones, by perpetual castigation; their hoofs were extended to an enormous size by manifold circumduction; and the whole of their hide was rough with inveterate and scabby leanness. Fearing that the same baneful misery with which this family [talis familiae] was affected, would happen to me, recollecting also the fortune of the *pristine Lucius* (e.a.), and perceiving myself thrust down to the last goal of safety, I lamented my condition with dependent head. (9.149)

In this segment, the overlapping complexities and ironies of Lucius' condition become explicit. Although his kinship is clearly drawn to the beasts of burden, his "associates", they are perceived and articulated most clearly only in "the discovery of something monstrous: the spectacle of kindred beings turned into travesties of themselves...without the sense of kinship, surely there would be no such acute sense of monstrosity".[Δ] *But the reverse reads more clearly:* without such an acute sense of monstrosity, *surely there would be no sense of kinship. It is through this monstrous kinship that "Lucius" finds a heightened dimension of his* humanitas, *as he notes*

Δ *Skulsky, note #4, p.229.*

tantly on shining ground, for I am still dreaming. Coachmen and pedestrians are shy, and every step they want to advance they ask as a favor from me, by looking at me. I encourage them and encounter no obstacle.

"As I lie in bed I assume the shape of a big beetle or a cockchafer, I think....

"The form of a large beetle, yes. Then I would pretend it was a matter of hibernating, and I 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 " (C.S., pp.55-56)

As an early story of Kafka's, we see the introduction of a creature, as well as a condition, which prefaces Kafka's lifelong investigations into the complexities of a monstrous self. In Raban there is an early attempt at articulating this condition, which is given by the definitive separation of an empty human shell (which goes out into the world), and an animal substance (which "rests" in solitude with the comfort that its "sad body...will manage everything [in the world] efficiently"). Raban's metamorphosis differs from Gregor's in a number of significant ways. First, Raban imagines himself as split, a dual (or duel) self. Both have independent forms and both *can be depicted.* Unlike Gregor, their dual existences have not yet *crossed.*

Secondly, the condition of the self of Raban takes place while dreaming only. It occurs while he imagines how he might divest himself of his responsibilities in the country. With Gregor, the narrator specifically notes that "it was not a dream", hence the metamorphosis *directly after this scene:*

For I confess that I owe great thanks to my asinine form, because, concealing me by its covering, and exercising me through various fortunes, it certainly rendered me, if not more wise, yet knowing in many things. (9.150)

This **humanitas**, *however, has the danger of being misconstrued, if considered in Ovidian terms,* and with it Apuleius' distinct notion of "metamorphosis". *Lucius travels through a plethora of metamorphic encounters with impious homosexual priests, murderous roadside thieves, deceitfully adulterous wives, vengeful husbands, and blood thirsty merchants whose animalistic transformations can be seen as one critic notes, as "the development of many Luciuses in tropistic adaptation to the world they must inhabit".*[*] *The* Metamorphoses *of Lucius are exactly that, his metamorphoses. The reader who gets swept away in the all encompassing, and figuratively Ovidian, metamorphoses, will have a rude awakening upon reaching Book XI, when the narrative takes a sudden shift in emphasis, and we find Ovid's rhetorical and ubiquitous construct of mutability abruptly funnelled and centered on the projected metamorphosis of one individual, our hero, Lucius.*

The opening of Book XI finds our hero on the shores of the Aegean after escaping his last captors and the threat of being made the asinine counterpart in a public display of bestial formi-

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[*] *Ebel, Henry, After Dionysus: An Essay on Where We are Now, Associated University Presses, Inc., Cranbury, New Jersey, 1972, p.28.*

"cannot be simply driven away as an apparition and as a dream fabrication. This seemingly fantastic unreality of this vermin is that which is actually supreme reality from which no one can escape.."[Σ] For Raban, this daydream, the fantasy of metamorphosis relates a desire to remain in the world, but only in a limited understanding of *form*, only out of an impoverished, *formalized* conception of duty. Kafka's later Gregor did not engage in such daydreams, could not conceive of himself as being removed from his formal existence. Gregor accepts himself in his new form, merely *undergoes* his metamorphosis. Raban consciously wills his. He revels in it, sees it as beneficial, as aiding in his anxiety toward and "freedom" from the world. Gregor is indifferent, horrifyingly indifferent. In the bizarre transformation, Raban actually identifies himself with the beetle. The more sophisticated Gregor cannot make that split, cannot be identified, is both and neither. The role that "metamorphosis" plays in Kafka's later works questions not only his own "historical development" as a "writer in a body", but the very premises upon which "metamorphosis" had "developed" into the twentieth century.

"Metamorphosis" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century appears in forms previously and literally imagined only in dreams.

it is through "dreaming" that the answers to his present anxieties are given an appearance. By virtue of such divine guidance, Lucius sees through the obscurity of his given condition.

> "Availing myself, therefore, of the silent secrets of opaque Night, as I was also well assured that the primary Goddess possessed a transcendent majesty, and that all human affairs are entirely governed by her Providence; and that not only the cattle and wild beasts, but likewise things inanimate, were invigorated by the divine power of her light and her deity; that the bodies likewise which are in the earth, in the heavens, and in the sea, are at one time increased as she increases, and at another time, conformably to her decrements, are diminished; being well assured of this, I determined to implore the august image of the Goddess then present, Fate being now satiated with my calamities so many and so great, and administering to me the hope of safety, though late." (11.192)

The last chapter is the culmination of Lucius' quest. *He petitions the goddess Isis to aid in his reverse metamorphosis to human form, and in a dream she answers him by describing the festival within which his prayers would be answered the following day.*[Ω] *During the ecstatic ceremony, Lucius is fed the long awaited roses by a priest which initiates his entering into the* "the most pure religion" *(11.206).*

[Σ] Emrich, *Franz Kafka*, p.121.

[Ω] *Isis is the Egyptian Goddess of Nature. She is the wife and sister of Osiris, the Egyptian god of the Underworld, and father of the gods. Osiris is associated with fertility and its sources, the Nile and the sun. Isis' cult spread to Greece and Rome in the 3rd century B.C. She became widely worshipped in the Greco-Roman world.*

"Beneficial" precepts of metamorphosis perpetuate the modern consciousness. Human/animal narratives take on demythologized relevance. The *appearance* of man (more clarified by the epoch) has no need for "fictitious" and cumbersome processes of signification in order to identify itself. Man had definitively found his origins - through Darwin - in other species. His descent from the kingdom of the beasts with which he had for so long in myth and ritual come to terms with himself is reified. The *enigma* of the monster is seen to be expendable, since *"all life forms were understood to be united in a great chain of being stretching from single-celled plasma to the highest primates."*∂ The comfort and solidity of the origin! Darwin's evolutionary monism gives "metamorphosis" the status of a" natural" process in the definition of man as a "natural" being.

The implications of Darwin's teachings (most explicitly in, *On the Origin of Species*) were quickly dispersed into numerous disciplines at the turn of the century. Ernst Haeckel, a German scientist who popularized Darwin's work, held an important lecture in 1882 (one year before Kafka's birth) on the evolutionary theories of Goethe, Lamark and Darwin. Kafka read Haeckel's *Kunstformen der Nature*

∂ Anderson, Mark M., *Kafka's Clothes: Ornament and Aesthetic ism in the Hapsburg Fin de Siècle*, Oxford University Press, NY, 1992, p.127.

Lucius then proceeds into further initiations of the sacred rites of Isis, and on the night of his other "natal day", his transcendence is made even more complete, while in a dream he is informed that he will be further deified by being initiated into the sacred mysteries of Isis' husband, "the father of the gods, the invincible Osiris"(11.210). "...All the darkness of ambiguity therefore was removed after such a manifest declaration of the will of the gods"(11.211). The metaphor of darkness in the metamorphosed ass is abolished by the resplendent light of Isis and Osiris. Through a series of the most occult rituals, Lucius is transcended into the center of "the most pure religion", and at the climax of his mystic union with Isis, Lucius experiences a form of voluntary death.

> I approached the confines of death, and having trod on the threshold of Prosperine, I returned from it, being carried through all the elements. At midnight I saw the sun shining with a splendid light; and I manifestly drew near to the Gods beneath, and the Gods above, and proximately adored them.(11.207-8)

Lucius' quest, from the beginning, was a quest for transcendence, and it is this very transcendence which distinguishes Apuleius' "metamorphoses" from antiquity's, for "metamorphosis" is understood with Lucius as a beneficial "discipline" of self-construction and self-transcendence.

Apuleius intimates the appearance of a self-

(Art-Forms of Nature, 1899-1903) and *Welträtsel (The Riddle of the Universe, 1899)* when he was young with "unusual enthusiasm".*

The implications which make Darwin's work so potent are hinted at by Haeckel's title, *Art-Forms in Nature*. For as Anderson notes,

> *On the theoretical level, Haeckel promoted the notion of an originary* Kunsttrieb *or artistic impulse that could be found in nature...he posited a 'soul' within each cell that constantly struggled for 'plastic' definition and self-realization...the will to art not merely as a democratic possibility, but as a biological necessity arising from the depths of every living organism.*~

We seem to have come full circle from a Homeric understanding of "metamorphosis" *as* man with Haeckel's theory. One is now seen to be imbued with an a priori *biological* "artistic impulse" which not only assures and defines one's *humanity*, but is also dispersed and diluted throughout all living beings. A "correspondence" is assumed between plant and animal exotica and the human soul, radicalizing even Ovidian transmigration of souls from humans to animals. Rather than one's "identity" being understood through the "joints", one must now look through the microscope to find traces of one's "humanity" everywhere.† The world becomes "a work of

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* As quoted by Klaus Wagenbach, *Franz Kafka: Eine Biographie Seiner Jugend*, p.34.

~ Anderson, p128.

† Some modern conceptions of "vegetarianism" convey the explicit consequences of this contemporary "natural" human being. Although it is practised in sense through metamorphosis which Ovid intentionally suppressed. We see this most clearly at the logistical, thematic, and philosophical center of Apuleius' tale: the myth of Cupid and Psyche, which spans the forth, fifth and sixth books of the narrative.∞ There is no trace of this myth in Greek or Latin literature before Apuleius' Metamorphoses, and in reference to the last book, the necessity for this myth becomes obvious. The mythical Psyche is Lucius' double. Their plights construe the same clearly Platonic and desirous end: the progress of the soul toward a mystical union.§

Both Lucius and Psyche are guilty of the same crime, "curiositas". Psyche attempts to possess "impiously" that which she has been forbidden: Cupid's identity. Lucius analogously strives to attain the magician's al-

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∞We will assume that the reader has a familiarity with the myth.

§Apuleius was well versed in Platonic philosophy. His strictly philosophical writings included his De Deo Socratis, De Platone et eius Dogmate, a fairly loose translation of the Pseudo-Aristotelian work De Mundo, and a collection of extracts from personal orations delivered while in Carthage called Florida. Without going into Apuleius' Neoplatonic detail, it should be noted that his understanding of the "psyche", best conveyed in De Deo Socratis and De Platone, borrows essentially from Plato's early dialogues. In Plato's Gorgias, for instance, we find a distinction held between body and soul in the belief that "body and soul are served by utterly different therapies, not by a common, or nearly common, therapy addressed to a psychosomatic mixture of body and soul." (Claus, Toward the Soul, p.178) Cookery, for instance, is understood to be a matter of "experience", and not an "art", for it deals with the gratification and therapy of the body. Medicine, on

art". Haeckel, in fact, suggests in the forward to his book, the relevance of these theories for contemporary artists, in that *"his book will bring these hidden treasures to light, therefore providing them with a 'rich supply of new and beautiful motifs.'"*©

One critic, Mark Anderson, provides a fascinating study of turn of the century Prague, the Hapsburg Empire and its relation to

many forms, a most pervasive form of vegetarianism relies on the belief that animals are *similar* to humans in that they similarly have a *natural right* to life. Greatly differing from either traditional eastern philosophies on the subject or even western ones initiated with Pythagoras's "transmigration of souls", the *natural right* assumed in modern forms of vegetarianism implies a perverted origin of truth from which *rights* of any kind are assumed a priori; something which was inconceivable in traditional philosophies. Kafka seems to radicalize that assumed "similar to" for two reasons: 1. to display the *naive* absurdity of such a relation between man and animal, and 2. to display its *profound* absurdity, that is, a man/animal politic only makes the issue of the self, and hence what it is to be human, more explicit (its interesting to note that Kafka was a vegetarian, but for reasons of health and preference, not as a display of his philosophical or political beliefs). This radicalized picture makes ironically apparent the reality of our substantially subjective experience, that is, contemporary conceptions of "human rights" are *enforced* or subjected upon the animal world. One example of this can be found in Margot Norris' book entitled *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1985), in which she discusses the changing conceptions of man's relation to animals through figures such as Nietzsche, Darwin, and Kafka. Her political and academic orientation toward issues of metamorphosis and monstrosity, however, are made clear by a declaration, which prefaces the book, that a percentage of the proceeds from her book will go to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Society. The irony is outstanding.

© Ibid. And as Anderson notes further, *"Not infrequently,* Jugenstil *artists drew inspiration from contemporary scientific representations, which increasingly emphasized unusual, unknown, exotic, or otherwise bizarre forms of the natural world."*, p.127

chemical art. Apuleius is conscious of such acts of hubris as he notes in his Florida, "There are those intermediate forces of the gods, powers that one is allowed to sense but which are not given to us to see, such as the class of Love and other gods: their form is unseen, their force is perceived."● *Lucius and Psyche were equally impious and yet, in the end equally illuminated.*∂

the other hand, is considered an "art", for one must be knowing in the health of the soul. It is the soul's job to self-*regulate. Essentially, the soul takes on a "separate order of existence". In chapter 9 of* De Platone, *Apuleius addresses the subject of the "soul", and speaks of a "World Soul" being the source of all individual souls - Plato's Demiurge. Apuleius, however, is combining Mind and Soul,* noos *and* psyche *- something which remains tenuous in Plato - into the entity of the World Soul. He is thinking of a* rational World Soul, *and consequently, a rational individual soul which is* "incorporeal, imperishable, is prior to all things, and therefore rules over them and is their source of motion," *(Dillon,* The Middle Platonists,, *p.315). The traditional understanding of* psyche *as an animator, or "life-force", translates to* soul *as "self", a self as center or microcosm of its whole being which as David Claus notes* "is able to ground human life in knowledge of a non-phenomenal reality..." *(p.163.)*

● Florida, *p.10, as translated by Tatum,* Apuleius, *p.56.*

∂ *The reason for this apparently "undeserved" illumination makes more sense when one addresses the complexity of "forces" that are at work. In Plato's causal framework, a hierarchical order of these forces is established. "Providence" is the primary orienting force; it is very simply the god of divine care and guidance (and for Apuleius, is therefore associated with Isis). As Lucius notes, "all human affairs are entirely governed by [her] Providence" (XI, p.192.) Other forces such as "Fortuna" (chance), "Fate" (moira), and "human will", although understood as autonomous forces, are all ultimately accommodated within the omnipotence of "Providence". Hence, the relation between "Fortuna" and "Providence" in Lucius' metamorphosis should be seen not so much as a "work of chance interrupted at length by 'Providence', but the work of 'Providence' on the mere stuff of chance." (Skulsky, p.87) As far as Lucius' own "will" is concerned, his only clearly "free act" can be found in his petition to Isis. In fact, Isis is "moved by thy prayer" (XI, p.194). Lucius', as well as Psyche's metamorphosis amounts to a virtue endorsed through Providence by Isis.*

Kafka's work.[^] His thesis primarily emphasizes the intimate link between the prevalent literary styles and agendas of poets and writers from this period and Kafka's own literary intentions[Ω]. He connects Kafka's early works with the preoccupations of the Viennese "Jung Wien" group of poets which included Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, and Altenberg, that is, with the preoccupations of *"the observing poet, dandy, flaneur, or dilettante - all terms from the vocabulary of the European fin de siécle - who find themselves located at the margin of this spectacle."*[¥] In so doing, Kafka is defined as the eminent fin de siécle decadent aesthete whose fictions expound upon the inherent social and

[^] Anderson, Mark, *Kafka's Clothes: Ornament and Aestheticism in the Hapsburg Fin de Siecle*, Oxford University Press, N.Y., 1992

[Ω] For instance, in relation to Darwin's theories of evolution, Anderson notes that "*the idea of 'metamorphosis' was in the air*", and refers to Goethe's *Metamorphosis of Plants and Animals*. Kafka's preoccupation with "metamorphosis" in his animal narratives, as far as Anderson is concerned, is a result of an explicit critique of Darwin. By "critique", he means that "metamorphosis" was for Kafka a reactionary technique used to intentionally subvert Darwin's *natural* processes of human evolution. We emphasize, on the contrary, that Kafka was not interested in this form of overt and ultimately ephemeral criticism (as are all subversive intentions). Kafka rarely concerned himself with the current topics of the day. When he did, it was with indifference: "*Germany has declared war on Russia. - Swimming in the afternoon.*" (*DII*, p.75.) Kafka's *critique* should be understood more as a *re-writing* (similar to Joyce's *critique* of Homer in his *Ullysses*). Hence, Kafka's engagement with "metamorphosis" may certainly be discussed in relation to Darwin, but most effectively if one realizes that he merely radicalizes the implications of Darwin's monism. Since the issue of "metamorphosis" and "monstrosity" is a much older one for Kafka, one might say that *in the process*, Kafka unwittingly subverts Darwin. In that light, Darwin is almost humorous.

[¥] Ibid, p.23.

> All the natural and hence rightly ordered events are controlled by the guardianship of Providence, and no evil will be attributed to God. Accordingly, all things in Plato's judgment are to be referred to the lot of fate...but something inheres in us [human will], and something inheres in Fortune."[≈]

Apuleius' theology is a deceivingly delicate one, for although his psyche *construes a constituting self, and hence intimates a conscious willing subject, the* psyche *still remains* subject *to Providence. There are no willed acts, on the part of Lucius or Psyche, besides prayer, which aid in their transcendence. Neither, in fact, seemed to 'learn' anything through their "trials". Psyche botches her final task by peeking into the forbidden box from the underworld and repeats her original mistake. It was only through Cupid's doings that she was saved once again. Lucius as well has learned nothing, but then, Lucius is only a stubborn mule. It seems that the initiates, most poignantly, "are not required to learn but only to undergo".[ø] And yet, in another work, Apuleius suggests an alternate view on the nature and significance of human acts.*

> ...Divine favor has to be earned "in proportion to the *merit* of a life passed more purely and chastely [than the common run]" (from Apuleius' *De Platone*, 2.20); the whole point of limiting Isis' providence so as to accommodate

[≈] *Apuleius,* De Platone, *as translated by Skulsky, p.85.*

[ø] *Kenney is quoting Aristotle, footnote #61, p.14, from* Cupid and Psyche, *edited by E.J. Kenney, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990 (Annotated version of the myth with a substantial introduction to the myth, Apuleius and* Metamorphoses*).*

political implications perceived between the dialectics of "reality" (that is, the "social reality" of a modern, mechanized and alienated existence) versus "appearance" (or the mere "surface" of reality, the habitat of the dandy). He cites Kafka's early story, "Description of a Struggle", in which "*the urban world appears as a mere surface - without any deeper foundation, without any further (metaphysical) truth that would ground it as a permanent reality.*"* The implications of this life experienced as an "aesthetic phenomenon" for Anderson show themselves in Kafka's work and describes the slow yet consistent removal of the artist from the world and into his art.

> *To spin the silk of one's soul in writing, to mask oneself in the cocoon of a self-created identity, to remove oneself from society's "traffic" - these are the necessary preparations for the redemptive metamorphosis of the self into the literary text.* Σ

Ie: metamorphosis as an aesthetic and "redemptive" technique of "self-created identity" which first requires the artist to spin himself into a literary "cocoon". The complementary trope of metamorphosis," monstrosity", signifies, therefore, a "volition to *display*" oneself (connected by Anderson etymologically, yet not rigorously, to *monstrare* - "to show"). The monster, rather than a de-monstration of what is *other* to oneself (as a rigorous investigation of the Latin root suggests: see Frascari's *Monsters of Architecture*) is now seen to dis-

* Ibid, p.43.
Σ Ibid, p.48.

free will is to lay the ground for a theory of divine reward and punishment and not of unmerited grace.π

Is Apuleius caught in a theological contradiction with his unmerited characters, or is this merely a tell tale sign of a world in metaphysical transition - the simultaneous existence of a mythical order in which human actions are appropriated within the omnipotence of the god's and their agencies, in coexistence with the "ground work" (an ironic term indeed) set for the elevation of an ethical human will and psyche to the virtuous offices of self-initiated salvation?™

Lucius' metamorphosis is a substantial one in any case...body and soul. It is only in so far as we can place that "and" that we can speak of something substantial, for it denotes a tenuous separation and dual order of human existence; a psycho-somatic identity in the shape of man.

Lucius' asinine form appears more monstrous than ever. He is not simply a consciousness in the form of an ass, but a paradigmatic de-

π *Skulsky, p.87.*
™ *As one critic notes only half the issue, "With Psyche's entrance into the company of the Olympian gods, a bond is established between Soul and god through the agency of Love, and Soul is then admitted to what Plato urged was the highest goal it could attain - knowledge of the divine (Symposium 210E). Through the birth of a child named Voluptas (Pleasure, or perhaps Joy), we infer that true happiness cannot come into being until such time as Soul acquires knowledge of the divine.", Tatum, Apuleius p.61. The other half of the issue is the qualifying agency of Providence under which no "Soul" "attains" anything save the gods deem it so.*

play a *"'melancholic disposition' and thereby linked to the melancholy of the fin-de-siécle decadent aesthete".*[∂]

The implications of Anderson's thesis summarize (by negative example) one crucial issue regarding Kafka's relation to his work and world put forth in this chapter: the *context* of that work. Unlike Walter Benjamin, who sees Kafka's work in the mirror of a "prehistoric world"*, as a testament to a "present" which is experienced through the past; unlike Hannah Arendt, who speaks of "the present" in Kafka's works as "the gap" between the past and future, a chiastic "thought landscape" within which the past continually metamorphoses; unlike those few critics who recognize that the "world" (context) of Kafka's work *unwittingly* addresses the *timely* concerns of a "modern condition" while fundamentally engaged in the *timeless* concerns of a "human condition", Mark Anderson's reading of Kafka, while fascinating in its *timely* scope, represents the most frequented theme in Kafka scholarship: Kafka, the paradigmatic modern writer, whose works and intentions are primarily linked to the alienated condition of contemporary man. Although such themes are undeniably at the surface of Kafka's work, these critics do not take such themes to their more encompassing limits, do not address the timeless human inquiry into

monstration of the "darkness of ambiguity", the darkness of an unidentifiable identity, the darkness of metamorphosis. The desire is not so much to 'make sense' of the enigma as it is to put a value on it. The creatures of metamorphosis are seen now as sacrificial, yet soiled lambs in the service of the most valuable: clarity, unity and the pure form.[¢]

And yet, that 'clarity and unity' is not complete if not in body and soul. The corporeal form is indispensable to the Apuleian psyche. Apuleius' kin describes the "tenuous" rela-

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[∂] Ibid, p.142.

* Benjamin, Walter, "Franz Kafka", *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, Schocken Books, N.Y., 1969, p.128.

[¢] *There is, as we have noted in previous examples, an intimate connection between the beasts of metamorphosis and those of sacrifice. The "ass" is no exception, and Lucius is not transformed into an arbitrary other, but diametrically considered one:* "In the festivals of Isis, Plutarch informs us, the ass is ritually hurled from a cliff because like [Seth-]Typhon he is red-haired and unteachable, and because sacrificial or impure beasts are those animated by wicked men who have endured transformation." *(Skulsky, p.99, Also refer to Apuleius' blood relation, Plutarch, in his* De Iside et Osiride.*) In the cult of Isis and Osiris, Seth-Typhon is the daemonic beast said to have killed Osiris. He is displayed as a man with the head of an ass. In the festivals of Isis, supplications were made to her through acts of humiliation performed on the ass, as well as even "men with ruddy [i.e. ass-like] complexions". This cult then is* "distinguished by a dualistic opposition of demonic, magical powers. Seth exists as a divine creator of evil, independent of Isis, a creator of good." *(Tatum,* Apuleius, *p.45) The "impure beast" [Kafka's "Ungeheure Ungeziefer" suspiciously comes to mind] is animated by the wicked Seth, and the sacrifice of such a beast is a sacrifice in negation. The figure of the ass, and especially Apuleius' ass, continually resurfaces through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In the early 16th century, for instance, Machiavelli wrote a poem (which remained unfinished) titled the* Golden Ass. *A Florentine hero with a similar fate as Lucius' and a similar odyssey in search of salvation. Giordano Bruno, in various writings, refers with ironic praise to* l'asinita. *For an exegesis of the "ass" figure through the Renaissance, consult, Elizabeth Hazelton Haight's* Apuleius and His Influence, *Longmans, Green and Co., New York, 1927. Also see Nuccio Ordine's work on the significance of the ass figure in the work of Giordano Bruno entitled,* Le Mystere de L'Ane, *trans. by F. Liffran, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1993.*

concepts of "identity" and "alterity" (fundamental terms of alienation), do not ask of Kafka (as he perpetually asked of himself) what it would mean to comprehend "all forms of alienation".

As Benjamin so articulately puts it, "*Kafka listened to tradition, and he who listens hard does not see.*"[†] What Kafka does not see is a present which is limited to his own biological existence, and hence what he is blind to is the importance of metamorphosis and literature as a technique of self initiated change in that present. For Kafka, the present itself, is metamorphic, something which cannot be held by the reigns and directed into a more desirable future. Any movement one makes, any ethically oriented human acts within the chiastic space of this present must first come to terms with the *limits*, the boundaries of one's alterity. A *monstrous* self suggests that the boundaries of one's "identity" encompass any notion of an "I" and an "other, simultaneously . A *monstrous* present suggests that those boundaries reach into the past. Ovid's veil, perceived at the end of his *Metamorphosis*, masked his critique of any Roman pretensions of world conquest. Kafka's veil, perceived at the end of his *Metamorphosis*, is both less apparent and more substantial. It *conceals* any overt critique of modern man within the infinitely more *revealing* human enigma of a *monstrous self.*

tionship:

> The Stoics hold that bodily seemliness and vigor contribute nothing of use or benefit to happiness. But this does not prevent them from buying health at the price of intelligence. For even Heraclitus and Pherecydes think it would be fitting if indeed they could, to give up virtue and intelligence in order to get rid of dropsy and fleas. Indeed if Circe poured out two drugs, the one making fools out of wise men, the other [wise asses out of human beings], Odysseus should drink the drug of folly rather than change into the shape of a beast while retaining his wisdom - and with wisdom presumably the essence of happiness. This is tantamount to their claiming that the precept of Wisdom herself is: "Discard me, scorn me if I am destroyed and corrupted into the face of an ass."[†]

Form and substance (Wisdom) are anything but mutually exclusive, indeed, for in the loss of the former, the latter is viewed with repugnance. Rather a fool in human form than a wise ass! In the duality of their inclusivity, form *maintains an essential position in the identity of a truly human being, and yet it is* form *in negation. The pristine* Forms *of Neoplatonism are celebrated by negative example in the abominations of metamorphosis. The monster is a most essential trope of human identity to Apuleius, although most definitively as the antithesis of Form, as a sacrificial* **de-formation** *of man. Apuleius reifies and deifies Plato's metaphysics, and in the service of the purity of* self, *sacrifices*

[†] Ibid, p.143

[†] *Plutarch,* De Communibus Notitiis, *1064AB, as translated by Skulsky, p.102.*

chapter 3

READING THE BACHELOR

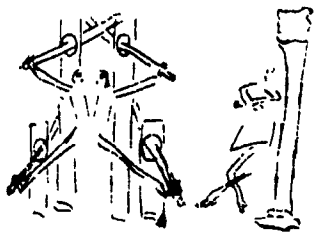

fig. 3

THE DOUBLE

> "Examples of the way this writing, which is on the whole trivial, strengthens me after all: .....Yesterday evening I simultaneously held out both hands to my sisters-in-law on Mariengasse with a degree of adroitness as if they were two right hands and I a double person."(*DI*, p.104)[42]

This is an image which one frequently finds in Kafka's diaries, letters and stories. In fact, if this experience was not qualified by the first

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[42] Compare this experience of Kafka's with an image which has come to represent the later work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty: "My left hand is always on the verge of touching my right hand touching the things, but I never reach coincidence; the coincidence eclipses itself at the moment of producing itself, and one of two things always occurs: either my right hand really passes over to the rank of touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch *it* - my right hand touching, I palpate with my left hand only its exterior envelope...But this incessant withdrawal or concealment, this impotence to superpose exactly upon one another the touching of the things by my right hand and the touching of this same right hand by my left hand...is not a failure...This hiatus between my right hand touched and my right hand touching...is not an ontological void, a non-being spanned by the total being of my body, and by that of the world; it is the zero of pressure between two solids that make them adhere to one another."(*The Visible and the Invisible* [*VI*], p.147-48) Certainly both writers communicate a kindred condition, one which offers an image of a body in similar forms of "hiatus". With both, this "hiatus" is a *lived* mode of existence, an experience of "selfness" which reveals and conceals "this double relationship from itself, by dehiscence or fission of its own mass."(*VI*, p.146) For Merleau-Ponty, the question of this "dehiscence" or "chiasm", as the title of the section suggests, is the space within which the "visibility" and "tangibility" of things *reverse* into each other: "There is a double and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and of the tangible in the visible; the two maps are complete, and yet they do not merge into one. The two parts are total parts and yet are not superposable."(*VI*, p.134) For Kafka, the "double person" that he *is* provides him with a distinctive "strength" in writing. The intriguing issue which arises for both centers upon the experience within that very "dehiscence". Kafka and Merleau-Ponty indeed arrive at this literary and philosophical crossing from different paths, but, for the moment it will be stressed simply that both writers speak of the same monstrous *body*.

sentence, it would be difficult to immediately distinguish from which source this image comes. With this instance, however, what is particularly intriguing concerns the experience of a "double person" in relation to a writing which "strengthens" Kafka. From an apparently simple encounter on a street in Prague, Kafka discloses the image of a mode of being which would serve as a source of his own anxiety and "strength" in literature throughout his life. The "anxiety" is made abundantly clear in his letters and diaries through innumerable and scathing self-reproaches of this "insubstantial" existence, since, "such a figure [of a writer] has no base, no substance, is less than dust."(*L*, p.334) The "strength" which comes from this "double" existence is, however, less obvious. In many of Kafka's short stories and unfinished novels, the figure of the "double" consistently traverses the narrative. Moreover, this double is always placed in relation to a "bachelor" character. This is made blatantly apparent through one of Kafka's least discussed, most humorous and unfinished short stories, "Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor". (*CS*, p.183-205)

The story revolves around an absurd encounter between Blumfeld, an elderly bachelor, and "two small white celluloid balls with blue stripes" which simply "appear" one evening as he enters his apartment longing to be rid of the nuisances at the office and pondering over the idea of some form of companion requiring no form of responsibility - more indifferent than even a dog. As he opens his door, the narrator exclaims, "this is magic", and the balls excitedly bounce in servile cadence at Blumfeld's feet "reporting to him for duty". As submissive pets subjected to an existence only in the light of the master's presence, the balls take up their essentially shadowed positions, "...they try to avoid appearing in front of Blumfeld". As equally meaningless and absurd as they appear at first to Blumfeld, he finds something intriguing in them when they are at his heels, "that is part of him...that somehow had to be involved also in any judgment of him as a person".

> ...to hear the sound of the jumps coinciding with that of his own steps almost hurts him.(*CS*, 187)

How these bouncing balls are involved in any judgment of Blumfeld as a person is of course the perplexing and intriguing question. The

perverse descriptions which evolve as to the purpose of the balls' existence are revealing:

> If one looks at the whole thing with an unprejudiced eye, the balls behave modestly enough. From time to time, for instance, they could jump into the foreground, show themselves, and then return again to their positions, or they could jump higher so as to beat against the table top in order to compensate themselves for the muffling effect on the rug. But this they don't do, they don't want to irritate Blumfeld unduly, they are evidently confining themselves to what is *absolutely necessary*.(e.a., *CS*, 189)

The absurdity of this "absolute necessity" is that these bouncing balls are simply bound to bouncing in the service of Blumfeld. It is the "law which governs" these balls that makes their existence necessary, and this "law" puts forth that they act most intentionally as *witnesses* over "any judgment of him as a person". What is suggested is that Blumfeld is not quite "real" without the presence of these balls, without the guarantee of presence through its double's, or "other's" recognition (and moreover, what a preposterous "other"!). The bachelor, who by his own definition, lives a solitary existence, must confront the terms of that existence once in the presence of the double's conscious gaze. These two spherical and ocular witnesses, in fact, *eye* Blumfeld wherever he goes. They follow him to his wardrobe, reading table and bed, where they remain bound to their posts, bouncing behind - or in the case of the bed, 'beneath' - him. It is only through the *witness* that the crime of the bachelor's existence in the world is reconsidered. Kafka constructs a theoretical landscape in which the identity of a "bachelor self" is presented as a fragmented figure of both *subject* and *witness* - i.e. the actual "figure" appears only as the coincidence between Blumfeld and the balls. This very "figure" is the indescribable center of this and most of Kafka's necessarily "incomplete" short stories - incomplete not primarily because the narrative is left open, but because this "figure" of self presented cannot be "depicted...even from a distance", but must be perpetually "completed". Without its double, the bachelor lives without a shadow, is temporally and spatially flat, imperceptible to the human eye.

The pure "being" of these two inanimate yet animated balls, which proclaim *judgment* over Blumfeld's identity, only radicalize the deceivingly more "human" appearances of the *double* in Kafka's work. The actions of the balls actually convey the essence of all the double

figures which pervade his fictions. At the office, the double structure continues for Blumfeld as his two appointed assistants mirror the obtrusive and thing-like nature of the balls. The insufferably childish nature of these assistants was nothing but a hindrance to Blumfeld: "according to their credentials, they had already passed school age, but in reality this was difficult to believe. In fact their rightful place was so clearly at their mother's knee that one would hardly have dared to entrust them to a teacher."(*CS*, p.200)[43] Similarly in *The Trial* and *The Castle*, the omnipresent twin assistants might easily have been portrayed as inanimate bouncing balls and the narrative would not have changed. Like Blumfeld, K.'s identity is forever held in suspension through the existence of his double assistants:

> They pressed their shoulders firmly against his from behind, they did not bend their arms but used them to entwine the full length of K.'s arms, below they held his hands with a well-practiced, irresistible, standard grip. K walked stiffly stretched between them and now the three of them formed such a unity that if one of them had been shattered by a blow, the other's would have been shattered with him. It was the kind of a unity which perhaps only a lifeless thing can form.(*T*, p 218)

The "double" reveals the self as vulnerable, and as Corngold notes, "objectif[ies] the terror of the experience of the *déjà vu* which threatens the individual identity."[44] This "threatening" of the individual identity is a common concern in twentieth century literature. It is a concern which echoes the anxiety experienced through an essentially fragmented "modern" self, a self which, in all its physical and

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[43] Refer to Adorno's *Prisms* on this subject where he notes that "the sameness or intriguing similarity [of things] ranks among Kafka's most stubborn motifs; all possible creatures step up in pairs, frequently with the stamp of the childish or silly, oscillating between good and cruelty like savages in children's books. Individuation has become such a burden for men, and has remained so precarious up to the present, that they are frightened to death whenever its veil lifts a little "(p.315, Corngold, *The Metamorphosis*, translated and edited by Corngold, Bantam Books, NY, 1972, p 97)

[44] Ibid. For a detailed study into the historical and philosophical construction of this modern "identity", refer to Nicholas Lobkowicz's work, *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, London, 1967). While succinctly tracing the transforming relationship between the concepts of "theory" and "praxis" in Western history, Lobkowicz also addresses the increasing significance and soliloquy of man's constitutive "identity" in the making of his world, a "world" which had come to be defined through the progressive dissolution of the gods presence from man's thoughts, judgments and actions. Although Lobkowicz provides an historical frame of reference and 'critique' for this modern self, his criticism does not offer *other* possibilities for considering this self. Any contemporary forms of "theory", "praxis" and "ethics" must inevitably address these *intrinsic possibilities* of the self. "Responsibility" begins with how these possibilities of *selfness* are apprehended

metaphysical connotations, must 'fend for itself'. And yet, the "threat" that the *double* implies toward the "individual identity" does not remain purely a "modern critique" of the self for Kafka (as it had for many Expressionist poets and writers of his time), that is, it is not primarily for Kafka a reactive and subversive attempt to eradicate the historical foundations of this "self". This understanding of "criticism" is the rightful property of the naive cynic. Through the figure of the *double*, and it's relation to the *bachelor*, Kafka offers the reader the possibility of imagining the "self" *otherwise*.[45] Again, where the "self" reveals itself in these bachelor narratives is in the unidentifiable gap between the bachelor and its double - a proposal of "self" as related to both subject and witness, and yet, definitively neither.

Most of Kafka's characters perform primarily as experiments in "character", as *trials* of identity. They frequently appear as particularly obscure in Kafka's "character sketches" found intermittently throughout his diaries. In one such sketch from 1910, Kafka begins a dialogue between two characters with "'You', I said, and gave him a little shove with my knee (at this sudden utterance some saliva flew from my mouth as an evil omen), 'don't fall asleep!'"(*DI*, p.22) The setting for this encounter occurs on the street, at the foot of a set of steps leading to an apartment and undefined celebration simultaneously taking place above the characters. The conversation ensues and its tone is antagonistic and reproving.[46] The narrator, who is defined as having "literary inclinations", and only revealed as "I", is kept from joining the celebration through a strange bond with the other character who is simply named "this bachelor"(*DI*, p.24). The nature of this bond is suggested immediately as the bachelor responds to the narrator's scolding:

> "I'm not falling asleep," he answered, and shook his head while opening his eyes. "If I were to fall asleep, how could I guard you then?"(*DI*, p.22)

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[45] Certainly, one may begin to see the intimate connections between Kafka's literary obsessions with the figures of the *bachelor*, the *double* and those of the *monster*.

[46] A similar setting and narrative can be found in a section of a 1904 sketch entitled "Conversation with a Supplicant" from the wildly fragmented and more chimeric short story "Description of a Struggle".(*CS*, p.29). Kafka returned to these two characters and their relationship over and over again and traces of it are found in a short 1911 sketch entitled "Unmasking a Confidence Trickster".(*CS*, p.395)

The purpose of this guardian bachelor is never explained, but understood by both characters as self-evident. The narrator, however, appears insecure in their relationship, while the bachelor is self-consciously aware of his own position to the narrator as well as the festivities above them.

> Look, if you think that it will be better for you up there than down here, then just go up there at once without thinking of me. .True it is, and I can repeat that in front of anyone you like, that it goes badly with us here below; yes, it's even a dog's life, but there's no help for me now; whether I lie here in the gutter and stow away the rain water or drink champagne with the same lips up there under the chandelier makes no difference to me Besides, I don't even have so much as a choice between the two things...Try it anyhow, what do you have to lose, after all - often you can already recognize yourself, if you pay attention, in the face of the servant at the door.(*DI*, p.23)

The bachelor willfully taunts the narrator with the ruse that he is capable of his own independent acts. The narrator sheepishly questions if the bachelor is not being completely honest with him, at which point the devilish snicker of the bachelor confirms the narrator's anxiety, "You are right, I am not sincere with you." The narrator is appalled by his companion's trickery and launches into a monologue in which he expounds upon the bachelor's "shabby physique", his lack of a "center", his "patched-up existence". He caustically attacks the bachelor's despicable condition in the world, which while apparently opposed to his own, is inescapably linked to him.

> ...There is at this moment scarcely any difference between me and the bachelor, only that I can still think of my youth in the village and perhaps, if I want to, perhaps even if my situation alone demands it, can throw myself back there The bachelor, however, has nothing before him and therefore nothing behind him. *At the moment there is no difference, but the bachelor has only the moment*....We others, we indeed are held in our past and future We pass almost all our leisure and how much of our work in letting them bob up and down in the balance. Whatever advantage the future has in size, the past compensates for in weight, and at their end, the two are indeed no longer distinguishable, earliest youth later becomes distinct, and the future is, and the end of the future is really already experienced in all our sighs, and thus becomes past. So this circle along whose rim we move almost closes. Well, this circle indeed belongs to us, but belongs to us only so long as we keep to it, if we move to the side just once, in any chance forgetting of self, in some distraction, some fright, some astonishment, some fatigue, we have already lost it into space, until now we had our noses stuck into the tide of the times, now we step back, former swimmers, present walkers, and are lost. We are outside the law, no one knows it and yet everyone treats us accordingly.(e.a ,*DI* , p.25-27)

The complexity of these two discordant characters' relationship is both clarified and at the same time expanded through the narrator's monologue.[47] The narrator, who is so tenuously bound to "the tide of the times", bound to a present in which the "size" of the future is precariously balanced through the "weight" of the past, a "present" which is situated at the gap where the circle "almost closes", is apparently diametrically opposed to the bachelor who "has nothing before him and therefore nothing behind him", who has "only the moment". The narrator is engaged in all that is "humanly" possible *in time*. The bachelor is "once and for all outside our people, outside our humanity."(*DI*, p.26) He is a prisoner of both "the everlasting moment of torment, which is followed by no glimpse of a moment of recovery", and at the same time completely free, one who "knows himself thoroughly...knows who he has before him and that he may therefore allow himself anything"; moreover, he is indifferent to both his torment and freedom:

> Now it perhaps seems to you as though I wanted to complain about it? But no, why complain about it, after all neither the one nor the other is permitted me. I must just take my walks and that must be sufficient, but in compensation there is no place in all the world where I could not take my walks.(*DI*, p.28)

The narrator remarks after this confession from the bachelor that "I have it easy, then. I shouldn't have stopped here in front of the house." In so doing, he suggests that he should not have questioned himself (as well as his "literary inclinations") in relation to the bachelor. He ultimately denounces the bachelor's existence and the sketch ends with the narrator's triumph over him, suggested by the disappearance of the quotation marks - indicating a "conversation" - from his concluding remarks.(*DI*, pp.28-29) The narrative closes in the diametrically opposed spaces of the narrator ("I") and bachelor. And yet, the irony which remains is precisely in relation to the narrator's original obsession, as the bachelor sagaciously remarks, "And how can you want to compare yourself to me?"(*DI*, p.27) The relation of this "I"

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[47] And this "monologue" is significant, for as Fickert notes in relation to "Conversation with the Supplicant", "Since the relationship between the two men in both instances consists solely of the mutuality of their interests, the conclusion must be drawn that they are two aspects of one person and that the conversations, which, peculiarly, serve the function of describing the association between the characters, are a monologue..."(*Kafka's Doubles*, p.27) Certainly the intimacy between the characters of the present sketch and those of "Conversation with the Supplicant" are evident.

to its "guardian bachelor" has only been temporarily resolved, for we must keep in mind that there is one consciousness which is always one step ahead of the characters' - Kafka's. That a relationship could be considered between the "timely" existence of a narrative "I" and the "timeless" condition of a bachelor figure will require further investigation on Kafka's part, more than this early character sketch would indicate. In fact, as we will see, the "bachelor figure" transforms in Kafka's later life and works from its antagonistic and dialectic position to a figure which *characterizes* the very gap in which he found himself as "a writer in a body".

WRITING AND THE BACHELOR

In a letter to Felice Bauer, on August 14, 1913, Kafka responds to an earlier letter in which she tells him of a "graphologist" she had met on her vacation who had made some very specific comments about Kafka's character based solely on an interpretation of his handwriting. The graphologist unwittingly provides us with a revealing image of Kafka, as Kafka writes,

> The man in your pension should leave graphology alone. I am certainly not "very determined in my behavior" (unless you have had this experience); furthermore, I am by no means "extremely sensual", but have a magnificent inborn capacity for asceticism; I am not good-natured; it's true that I am thrifty, but "from necessity" - never; as for being generous - no certainly not; and whatever else the man said, the things you couldn't remember, will have been very much the same Even "artistic interests" is not true; in fact of all the erroneous statements, this is the most erroneous. *I have no literary interests, but am made of literature, I am nothing else, and cannot be anything else...*
> To your graphologist, I now add a critic. The other day a review of *Meditation* appeared in the *Literary Echo*. It is very friendly, but in itself not otherwise noteworthy. Only one remark is striking; in the course of the discussion, the reviewer mentions: "*Kafka's bachelor art...*" What do you think of that Felice? (e.a., *LF*, p304)

The extent to which Kafka's 'literary constitution', presented here as being "made of literature", is informed through the "striking" recognition of Kafka's explicit "bachelor art", may arguably be the question which Kafka most relentlessly addressed himself; primarily

because the *bachelor* not only conveys something of Kafka's "literary constitution", but something of his "bodily" one as well.[48] The *bachelor* has an inherent allegiance to art and 'literary space'; for the *bachelor*, by its own definition, is a figure which is specifically *not* engaged in the "timely", human, and procreative activities of its corporeal existence, hence, is implicated within the *illicit* space of art and literature. And yet, this allegiance is by no means complete. Indeed, the *bachelor* is as equally disengaged from this space as it is engaged, since it is simultaneous bound to its 'corporeal space' of mortality. While for Kafka, "the point of view of art and that of life are different even in the artist himself"(*DF*, p.86), the position of the *bachelor* indicates the point at which the duality of these dual experiences of 'existence' (or 'doubled duality', as the above quote suggests) most ecstatically *cross;* where literary and bodily flesh coincide; and where the construction of the *bachelor* stands as the mediating figure of that coincidence.[49] It is within Kafka's simultaneous *engagement* within both forms of existence that the paradigmatic *bachelor* is born. And so, Kafka's rhetorical question to Felice at the end of the above letter, reads as particularly complex since it was written to the woman with whom he had "officially" *engaged* himself two months previously. The complexity arises out of how this form of *engagement* is understood. It is precisely where this "engaged bachelor" is placed in-relation-to his bride-to-be, which is in need of discernment.

Kafka's relationship with Felice must always be seen in the perspective of a simultaneous *engagement* with literature. The impossibility of these contradictory "relationships" co-existing was the source of Kafka's greatest despair. He often emphasized their apparently irreconcilable differences. Marriage, was, "the most social act", where a relationship with the world is *explicitly* forged, and where the power of this progenitive union persistently reconstitutes a human world. Literature's "essential solitude" produces it's own form of progeny, although sterile and "incapable of becoming history", incapable of socialization. We say "apparent" because their coincidence would

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[48] This may give some indication as to the appropriateness of speaking specifically about Kafka's ***"body of work"***.

[49] "A formative *medium* of the object and subject, it [*flesh*] is not the atom of being, the hard in itself that resides in a unique place and moment: one can indeed say of my body that it is not *elsewhere*, but one cannot say that it is *here* or *now*..."(*VI*, p.147)

require an *engagement* which would always remain in tension, one which could relinquish neither and yet never completely engage either. This apparently impossible space of existence is inhabited by the apparently impossible figure of the *bachelor*. At the point when one side of this dialectic is jeopardized through a union with the other, the "tension" is dispersed, the bachelor is debilitated and the "dread" is intense.[50]

After Kafka's first meeting with Felice, he described his encounter and 'attraction' to her in his diaries in this paradoxical manner,

> Miss F.B. When I arrived at Brod's on August 13th, she was sitting at the table I was not at all curious about who she was, but rather took her for granted at once. Bony, empty face that wore its emptiness openly. Bare throat A blouse thrown on. Looked very domestic in her dress although, as it later turned out, she by no means was.....Almost broken nose. Blond, somewhat straight, unattractive hair, strong chin. As I was taking my seat I looked at her closely for the first time, by the time I was seated I already had an unshakable *judgment* [unershütterliches *Urteil*].(e.a., *DI*, pp.268-9)

One month after this entry, Kafka writes his first letter to Felice. In this letter, he reintroduces himself and his interest in organizing the trip to Palestine which he, Brod and Felice discussed at their first meeting (which they incidentally never took). He ends the letter with a desire to begin a correspondence with her to see if "doubts were raised, practical doubts I mean, about choosing me as a traveling companion, guide, encumbrance, tyrant, or whatever else I might turn into, there shouldn't be any prior objections to me as a corespondent - and for the time being this is the only thing at issue - and as such, *you might well give me a trial.*" (e.a., *LF*, p.5) Neither Felice nor Kafka would

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[50] Kafka wrote to Felice in July of 1913, one month after his proposal of marriage (a month filled with letters to Felice which attempt to communicate to her the despicable terms under which such a union could only occur. The self abasing tone of this letter is indicative of the others) "To be quite frank (as I have been with you as far as my self-knowledge at the moment allow) and at long last to be recognized by you as the madman that I am, it is my ***dread of union*** even with the most beloved woman, above all with her...I have a definite feeling that through marriage, ***through the union, through the dissolution***, of this nothingness that I am, I shall perish, and not alone but with my wife, and that the more I love her the swifter and more terrible it will be."(Kafka's emphasis, *LF*, p289) One month after this letter, Kafka's first "official" engagement to Felice would be "officially" broken. And in a parallel entry in his diaries eleven days later, Kafka gives a "Summary of all the arguments for and against marriage", the most telling of which is, "5. The fear of the connection, of passing into the other Then I'll never be alone again."(*DI*, p.292)

recognize the appropriateness of this metaphor of "a trial" until much later.

Three days after this letter, Kafka writes "The Judgment" [*Das Urteil*], a short story which initiates Kafka's most potent articulation to date of his enigmatic "literary/bodily" constitution. The relevance of this short story in relation to Kafka's 'oeuvre' is unparalleled. He had just recently been given approval for the publishing of his first book *Meditation*, and yet Kafka never referred to it with the same exuberance in his diaries as he did with "The Judgment". Preceded by a full transcription of "The Judgment" on September 23, 1912, Kafka writes in his diaries:

> This story, "The Judgment", I wrote at one sitting during the night of the 22nd-23rd, from ten o'clock at night to six o'clock in the morning. I was hardly able to pull my legs from under the desk, they had got so stiff from sitting. The fearful strain and joy, how the story developed before me, as if I were advancing over water. Several times during the night I heaved my own weight on my back. How everything can be said, how for everything, for the strangest fancies, there waits a great fire in which they perish and rise up again. How it turned blue outside the window. A wagon rolled by. Two men walked across the bridge. At two I looked at the clock for the last time. As the maid walked through the anteroom for the first time I wrote the last sentence. Turning out the light and the light of day. The slight pains around my heart. The weariness that disappeared in the middle of the night. The trembling entrance into my sisters' room. Reading aloud. Before that, stretching in the presence of the maid and saying, "I've been writing until now." The appearance of the undisturbed bed, as though it had been brought in...Only ***in this way*** [Kafka's emphasis] can writing be done, only with such coherence, with such a complete opening of the body and the soul. (*DI*, pp.275-6)

"The Stoker" and "The Metamorphosis" were written within three months of "The Judgment". These are the only "works", properly speaking, which Kafka would produce between September of 1912 to September of 1913. We have already discussed the centrality of "The Metamorphosis" in Kafka's work. Likewise, "The Stoker" would remain one of the only stories throughout Kafka's life with which he would distinctly speak of with pleasure, "In high spirits because I consider 'The Stoker' so good." (*DI*, p.287) In these three months Kafka wrote the three works which most articulately defined what he called, his "being [as] a writer".[51] And in a letter to his publisher, Kurt Wolff, in

[51] This "being [as] a writer" is translated from Kafka's own term *Schriftstellersein*, by Stanley Corngold (*The Necessity of Form*, p.xv.). It can be found in a letter to Brod (*L*, p.333), where Kafka writes, "Last night as I lay sleepless and let everything

April 1913, Kafka requests that a formal bond be established between the stories in accordance with their content:

> I have one request, which I have already mentioned in my last letter. "The Stoker", "The Metamorphosis" (which is one and a half times as long as "The Stoker"), and "The Judgment" belong together, both inwardly and outwardly There is an obvious connection among the three and, even more important, a secret one, for which I would be reluctant to forgo the chance of having them published together in a book, which might be called *The Sons*....You see, I am just as much concerned about the unity of the three stories as I am about the unity of any one of them. (*L*, pp.96-7)

Kafka's choice of the title *The Sons*, as representative of the "unity" of these 'relatives', conveys a distinctive interpretation of this period as one of not only a *consummation*, but also a *birth*, from which would come the only form of *offspring* that Kafka could produce. In Kafka's first diary entry in five months, he picks up where the diaries left off with a resumed exegesis of "The Judgment":

> While reading the proofs of "The Judgment", I'll write down all the relationships which have become clear to me in the story as far as I now remember them. This is necessary because the story came out of me like a real birth, covered with filth and slime, and only I have the hand that can reach to the body itself and the strength of desire to do so...(*DI*, p.278)[52]

Kafka would continue to articulate his writing through the metaphor of "birthing" and progeny. In a later diary entry he says,

> "The beginning of every story is ridiculous at first. There seems no hope that this newborn thing, still incomplete and tender in every joint, will be able to keep alive in the completed organization of the world, which, like every completed organization, strives to close itself off. However, one should not forget that the story, if it has any justification to exist, bears its complete

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continually veer back and forth between my aching temples, what I had almost forgotten during the last relatively quiet time became clear to me: namely, on what frail ground or rather altogether nonexistent ground I live, over darkness from which the dark power emerges when it wills and, heedless or my stammering, destroys my life. Writing sustains me, but is it not more accurate to say that it sustains this kind of life? By this I don't mean, of course, that my life is better when I don't write. Rather it is much worse then and wholly unbearable and has to end in madness. But that, granted, only follows from the postulate that I am a writer, which is actually true even when I am not writing, and a nonwriting writer is a monster inviting madness. But what about being a writer [***Schriftstellersein***] itself ?"

[52] Incidentally, "The Judgment" is the only work with which Kafka would perform such exegesis. Often, in his diaries and letters, we find very brief and specific references to other short stories, but they are mostly referred to with disgust and reproach; never does Kafka engage in a story with such hermeneutical fervor as he did with "The Judgment".

> organization within itself even before it has been fully formed; for this reason despair over the beginning of a story is unwarranted; in a like case parents should have to despair of their suckling infant, for they had no intention of bringing this pathetic and ridiculous being into the world. Of course, one never knows whether the despair one feels is warranted or unwarranted. But reflecting on it can give one a certain support; in the past I have suffered from the lack of this knowledge." (*DII*, p.104)

In these ecstatic moments of "real birth", Kafka relates himself as being no more than the vehicle through which this "birth" takes place, as he describes in a later letter to Felice, "Since that evening [of 'The Judgment'], I have felt as though I had an opening in my chest through which there was an unrestrained drawing-in and drawing-out." (*LF*, pp.20-21)[53] And yet, this "real birth" suspiciously occurs at the time when, in Kafka's first letter to Felice on September 20, 1912 (three days before writing "The Judgment"), their relationship (the only form of which would be - *letter writing*) was initiated, or more precisely, *consummated*. Indeed, this does not go unnoticed by Kafka, as he informs Felice in a subsequent letter that he has dedicated "The Judgment" to her. It is crucial that Kafka and Felice's relationship be perceived as a 'literary correspondence'. In light of the discussion initiated in the first chapter regarding Kafka's abhorrence toward the use of literature as a space of *unmediated* expression, and language as a tool for the *im*-mediate transcription of an author's phenomenal reality, we must address this 'literary correspondence' within the same distinctive "reality" as his fictions proper.[54] Significantly, it is through the *medium* of letter writing that Kafka and Felice not only *fall in love*, but give birth. The cogency of this activity of writing for Kafka, however, speaks for itself, for between September of 1912 and September of 1913, Kafka wrote, virtually without fail, to Felice at least once a day, and frequently two or three times. If one addresses the

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[53] This suggests a relation to writing , to language, in which Kafka, *himself*, is not the source. For Merleau-Ponty, this is an apprehension of language which "is a life, is our life and the life of the things....It would be a language of which he would not be the organizer, words he would not assemble, that of their meaning, through the occult trading of the metaphor - where what counts is no longer the manifest meaning of each word and of each image, but the lateral relations, the *kinships* that are implicated in their transfers and their exchanges."(e.a.,*VI*, p.125)

[54] Kafka says it most clearly, "For everything outside the phenomenal world, *language can only be used allusively*, but never even approximately in a comparative way, since, corresponding as it does to the phenomenal world, it is concerned only with property and its relations."(e.a., *DF*, p.40) It is the "allusive" dimension to this 'literary correspondence' with Felice which gives these letters their notably "fictive" strength.

sheer *quantity* of this commitment, this one year of correspondence accounts for more than half of their four year epistolary relationship. In fact, if one keeps in mind the absence of any other "works", properly speaking (besides the three mentioned in the first three months), in this one year period, Kafka's letters to Felice might, "properly speaking", fill that distinctly prolific and "fictive" gap.

Kafka's letter writing radicalizes the very *intermediary* nature of epistolary communication. The proximity of a distance necessitated through this form of engagement maintains the space of this bachelor's literary/bodily existence. Letter writing becomes his most pristine "bachelor machine".[55] The "function" of the bachelor machine appears only through its production of pure intensities. Its nature is necessarily fictive and ironic. And with Kafka, it is a machine which is primarily *literary*. In an early letter to Felice on December 7, 1912, Kafka tells her of a dream he had which he connected with her remark about being able to send a telegram directly from her office. He dreamt that he had such a telegram apparatus attached to his bed and "the apparatus was built in such a way that one had only to press a button, and at once the reply from Berlin appeared on the paper tape" (*LF* p.93). On the one hand Kafka described the experience with tremendous joy, but at the same time, the machine "was a particularly spiky apparatus and, just as I am afraid of making a telephone call, I was afraid of sending this telegram". And yet, "on account of some immense worry about you, and a wild desire of immediate news about you that was about to drive me out of bed," Kafka had to send the message. What is significant, however, is that he is never actually involved in the telegraphic consummation which in fact does take place. As he notes, "luckily my sister was there at once, and started sending the telegram for me". As a machine of communication which intentionally hinders the precipitous closure of an essential discontinuity necessitated through letter writing by its "particularly spiky" nature, it likewise stresses that discontinuity by refusing the bachelor any experience of the machine's more immediate form of consummation through the introduction a

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[55] "Eros and language mesh: intercourse and discourse, copula and copulation...., the seminal and the semantic functions." (George Steiner, *After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1975, p.39, also see Corngold, p.25)

third party (his sister, the witness). Felice, however, experiences that consummation, albeit vicariously, through the sister. An ecstatic device of intercourse is set in motion by the bachelor's "wild desire of immediate news" and the presence of the disinterested witness.[56]

These extremely articulate devices of translation and communication *execute* - which, while certainly suggesting an intent to initiate, set in motion, or consummate, also remains simultaneously akin to its double: to sever, disengage, or put to death - through writing the ecstatic crossing of a literary and bodily flesh. They perform metonymically the task of the paradigmatic epistolary bachelor machine. With the workings of this machine set in motion by Felice and Kafka's initial exchange, we see the first product of their "illicit union": "The Judgment". Through this short story we find the bachelor's machine of writing in its most active state.

The greatest difficulty in reading "The Judgment" arises when trying to come to terms with the intricately constructed relationships between the four characters: the father, Georg the son, the bride, and the son's bachelor-friend. It is intricate because as we will see, the definition of each character continually transforms throughout the story.

Georg is a young merchant working for his father's company which has steadily yet unexpectedly grown within the past two years since his mother's death. On a lazy Sunday morning, he sits by his window, after finishing a letter to his friend "who had actually run off to Russia

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[56] In letter to Milena Jesenská, more than seven years later, a similar "machine" is described, "Sometimes I have the feeling that we're in one room with two opposite doors and each of us holds the handle of one door, one of us flicks an eyelash and the other is already behind his door, and now the first one has but to utter a word and immediately the second one has closed his door behind him and can no longer be seen. He's sure to open the door again for its a room which perhaps one cannot leave. If only the first one were not precisely like the second, if he were calm, if he would only pretend not to look at the other, if he would slowly set the room in order as though it was a room like any other; but instead he does exactly the same as the other at his door, sometimes even both are behind the doors and the beautiful room is empty." (*LM* p.46) In his *Les Machines Célibataires*, (Paris: Editions Arcanes, 1954, pp.23-38) Michel Carrouges lists several literary bachelor machines, one of which is Kafka's torture machine from "In the Penal Colony". It is by no chance that this machine is similarly a "literary" one, that is, it literally *writes* and *re-writes*, through a bed of surgical needles, the "sentence" of the condemned man into his back, slowly descending with each written pass of the sentence until the last ecstatic moment when the man is finally able to read it, as the written word pierces through his chest, and the man dies.

some years before, being dissatisfied with his prospects at home"(CS. p.77). Georg's relation to his friend for the past three years was through epistolary communication only. And yet, "what could one write to such a man, who had obviously run off the rails, a man one could be sorry for but could not help", since,

> By his own account he had no regular connection with the colony of his fellow countrymen out there and almost no social intercourse with Russian families, so that he was resigning himself to becoming a permanent bachelor. (*CS*, p.77)[57]

What could one write to such a man? Georg could not tell him of his personal successes at home, which for two years since his mother's death, had taken an unexpected turn of "good fortune", while knowing that his friend's business abroad had "long been going downhill". His friend, who was "wearing himself out to no purpose in a foreign country, the unfamiliar beard he wore did not quite conceal the face Georg had known so well since childhood, and his skin was growing so yellow as to indicate some latent disease", would not be capable of bearing such an insult. Was one to urge him to come home, or would that just be throwing salt on his friends wounds, so he could "be gaped at by everyone as a returned prodigal"? Was he, most importantly, this time to tell his friend of his recent engagement to "a Fräulein Frieda Bradenfeld, a girl from a well-to-do family"? No, the nature of Georg's writing was to be clear:

> .. supposing one wanted to keep up correspondence with him, one could not send him any real news such as could frankly be told to the most distant acquaintance...(he) confined himself to giving his friend unimportant items of gossip such as rise at random in the memory when one is idly thinking things over on a quiet Sunday. (*CS*, pp.78-79)

In this vein of "unimportant items of gossip", Georg had actually on three separate occasions "in three fairly widely separated letters...told his friend about the engagement of an unimportant man to an equally

[57] Kafka's fascination with "Russia" immediately offers an insight into the nature of this "friend's" inexplicable identity. Kafka writes in his diaries, "The infinite attraction to Russia. It is best represented not by a troika but by the image of a vast river of yellowish water on which waves - but not high ones - are everywhere tossing. Wild, desolate heaths upon its banks, blighted grass. *But nothing can represent it, everything rather effaces it.*" (e.a., *DII*, p.115) We are reminded of all of Kafka's creatures which "cannot be depicted...not even shown from a distance". Although this "permanent bachelor" is given a clearly identified position in this story, that identity, as Kafka would later define it, was "hardly real" (*LF*, p.267).

unimportant girl, until indeed, quite contrary to his intentions, his friend began to show some interest in this notable event." Georg "preferred to write about these kinds of things", and yet, after a discussion with his bride-to-be, who remained upset over the possibility of not meeting this often discussed friend, Georg thought it "could not really involve him in trouble were he to send the news to his friend". Hence, even when Georg resigns to tell the "truth", the essence of his correspondence, is ironically born of *deceit* and must end in lies.[58] An apparently insignificant and minor form of deception, and yet (as we have seen before through other trivial modes of deception with Kafka's characters), as the narrative continues, Georg's "innocent" form of writing becomes precisely the tool which defines his "guilt".

On his way to mail the letter, Georg stops by his father's room to inform him of his intention to tell his friend of his engagement.

> His father is sitting by the window in a corner hung with various momentoes of Georg's dead mother, reading a newspaper which he held to one side before his eyes in an attempt to overcome a defect of vision. (*CS*, p.81)

The father appears to greet his son virily as "his heavy dressing gown swung open as he walked and the skirts of it fluttered around him", as Georg exclaims to himself, "My father is still a giant of a man". Georg tells his father that he is sending news of his engagement to his friend in St. Petersburg. "'Oh yes. To your friend,' said his father, with peculiar emphasis." The "peculiarity" continues as the father suddenly shouts:

> Georg,...listen to me! You've come to me about this business to talk it over with me. No doubt that does you honor. But it's nothing, its worse than nothing if you don't tell me the whole truth...about this letter, I beg you, Georg, don't deceive me. Its a trivial affair, its hardly worth mentioning, so don't deceive me. Do you really have this friend in St. Petersburg? (*S* p.82)

[58] As Stanley Corngold so aptly describes it, "[Georg's] concern is not the truth of what one could say but the shrewdness of what one ought to say. For him, the impossibility of communication is a question of social tact. Yet it is precisely Georg who, in the course of writing his meaning to his friend and then stating his meaning to himself, tells lies." (*The Necessity of Form*, p.27)

Georg passes off his father's abrupt comment by talking to him about his health and condition at length, and how there must be a "radical change" in his living habits, as a slow and incomprehensible metamorphosis momentarily takes over this "giant of a man": "He carried his father to bed in his arms. It gave him a dreadful feeling to notice that while he took the few steps toward the bed the old man on his breast was playing with his watch chain. He could not lay him down on the bed for a moment, so firmly did he hang on to the watch chain." (CS, p.84) Presently, somewhere between an infant and a child, the father is tucked tightly into bed by Georg, as the father intently asks him twice if he is "well covered up". Georg affirms the question and with that the father suddenly cries, "No!", and springs to his feet on the bed with "only one hand lightly touching the ceiling",

> 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. And now that you thought you'd got him down, so far down that you could set your bottom on him and sit on him and he wouldn't move, then my fine son makes up his mind to get married. (CS, p.84)

The tool of deception is now explicit although in such an exaggerated space that our discomfort subsides to the point of believing the appropriateness of such a space. The father reveals as well, the important condition of Georg's marriage : *the bachelor* (in Russia) *must be debilitated.* In order for a conjugal union to occur, Georg must relinquish himself from the bachelor through his deceit. Everything which was deceptively close to his son is systematically stripped away by the father, including the bride and bachelor,

> Just take your bride on your arm and try getting in my way! I'll sweep her from your side, *you don't know how!* (e.a., CS, p.86)

> How you amused me today, coming to ask me if you should tell your friend about your engagement. He knows it already, you stupid boy, he knows it all! *I've been writing to him,* for you forgot to take my writing things away from me. That's why he hasn't been here for years, he knows everything a hundred times better than you do yourself, in his left hand he crumples your letters unopened while in his right hand he holds up my letters to read through!(e.a , CS, p.87)

The father is by now a giant figure again standing "quite unsupported and he kicked his legs out. His insight made him radiant"; Georg daydreams momentarily; he shrinks "into a corner" by a distance from his father which is immeasurable; the father gestures strangely to his nightshirt to inform Georg that "I have all your customers here in my pocket"; in astonishment, Georg briefly ponders his father as "an impossible figure for all the world", but "*only for a moment did he think so, since he kept on forgetting everything* (Remember K and the difference with Gregor). Within this pristine *Kafkan* space, devoid of any material or temporal dimension, Georg is not permitted any form of reflection. He is stripped barer than bare by the father, stripped of any remaining emaciated concepts of his humanity, composed ironically and justly of *innocent deceit*. Hence the judgment.

> *An innocent child*, yes that you were, truly, but still more truly have you been a devilish human being! - And therefore take note I sentence you now to death by drowning! (e a , CS, p 87)

Georg is expelled from the room and in a fury, as the distinctly cynical and mocking last word issues forth from the house,

> he rushed down (the staircase) as if its steps were an inclined plane, he ran into the charwoman on her way up to do the morning cleaning of the room "***Jesus!***" she cried, and covered her face with her apron, but he was already gone (e a , CS, p 87)

As the ironic and sacrificial lamb of humanity, Georg utters his final words while dangling from the railings of a bridge:

> "Dear parents, I have always loved you all the same " and let himself drop (CS, p 88) [59]

The transformations which unfold before the reader in "The Judgment" are expanded further by Kafka himself in a most unexpected and detailed interpretation of his own story, five months later in his dairies:

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[59] A distinctly different emphasis than in the last words of the paradigmatic Christian sacrificial lamb, "Father, why have you forsaken me?" Georg's sacrifice is meaningless, in fact, his "sentence" (*Urteil*) befits his crime Christ's last words reflect his "human" incomprehensibility of such a sentence Georg's last words indifferently confirm his guilt with his final weak attempt at the "truth"

> The friend is the link between father and son, he is their strongest common bond Sitting alone at his window Georg rummages voluptuously in this consciousness of what they have in common, believes he has his father within him, and would be at peace with everything if it were not for a fleeting, sad thoughtfulness In the course of the story the father, with the strengthened position that the other, lesser things they share in common give him - love, devotion to the mother, loyalty to her memory, the clientele that he (the father) had been the first to acquire for the business - uses the common bond of the friend to set himself up as Georg's antagonist Georg is left with nothing, the bride, who lives in the story only in relation to the friend, that is, to what the father and son have in common, is easily driven away by the father since no marriage has yet taken place, and so she cannot penetrate the circle of blood relationship that is drawn around father and son What they have in common is built up entirely around the father, Georg can feel it only as something foreign, something that has become independent, that he has never given enough protection, that is exposed to Russian revolutions, and only because he himself has lost everything except his awareness of the father does the judgment, which closes off the father from him completely, have so strong an effect on him (*DI*, pp 278-79)

What is revealed most significantly through this entry, beside the fact that Kafka is simply trying to come to terms for himself with the source from which this story came and what "unforeseen possibilities" of this difficult "birth" it might hold, is that the friend, who is specifically defined as a "permanent bachelor", is a construction which, although never present, is situated as the hinge, joint, or more appropriately *jig*, which stands between all other characters and events in the story.[60] The centrality and at the same time marginality of this friend is articulated further in a letter to Felice:

> The "Judgment" cannot be explained Perhaps one day I'll show you some entries in my diary about it The story is full of abstractions, though they are never admitted *The friend is hardly a real person*, perhaps he is more whatever the father and Georg have in common. The story may be a journey around the father and the son, and the friend's changing shape may be a change in perspective in the relationship between father and son I am not quite sure of this either (e a)[61]

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[60] We make this more precise distinction between *jig* and joint or hinge, because the "jig" and this "permanent bachelor" are both specifically understood as *constructional devices* of mediation, i.e , hermeneutical devices consciously constructed for the sole purpose of *trans-lating* the space between polar identities, devices which, at the end of a process of making or narration, remain suggestively absent and disturbingly silent A more detailed discussion of the *jig* in itself, as a mediating concept between Kafka's work and the architectural work, is provided in the conclusion

[61] This was written on June 10, 1913, (*LF*, p.267) nine months after his initial exegesis in his diary, and four months after the detailed exegesis above of the characters and their relations

Different from psychological readings which concentrate their interpretive efforts on the "father and son" figures and how they relate *im-mediately* to Kafka's own life, we find that the issue lies precisely in-between these figures with the *mediating* construct of the bachelor. The complexity of these "relations" surmount, however, when we consider that there are *two* bachelors to contend with; and most importantly, when we ask what distinguishes them. Stanley Corngold provides an intriguing image of Georg Bendemann

> This writer is, as "Bendemann", inescapably a "Bindemann", the man who forms ties According to Max Brod, Kafka knew a great deal of etymology, and the old Indo-Germanic root *bhendh* yields the modern *Binde* - or "binding" Indeed the reflexive form *sich binden* yields the precise meaning of "to become engaged". [62]

Georg's character is built from and revealed through his activity of writing. Its general orientation for Georg is aimed at mastering the contrary forces of marriage, an essentially productive and progenitive existence, with an affirmation from - and yet ultimate debilitation of - the purely ascetic, "foreign", and withering existence of "permanent bachelorhood". News of this engagement must be controlled and manipulated through corridors of temporal and spatial deception most advantageous to his "binding" project. Writing for Georg deceptively attempts to connect him to the world, through "the most social act" The father becomes the primary antagonist to this form of "strong ego".[63] He condemns his son because he cannot stand for his "lies", "lies" which for Kafka are the marks one is branded with when one attempts to complete the infinite "allusive" dimensions to writing. Contrary to this form of writing, the father reveals, through the friend, the kind of correspondence which, as the narrator notes "touched [Georg's] imagination as never before. Lost in the vastness of Russia he saw him. At the door of an empty, plundered warehouse he saw him. Among the wreckage of his showcases, the slashed remnants of his wares, the falling gas brackets, he was just standing up."(*CS*, p.85) The image of the friend, for the first time becomes momentarily

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[62] Corngold makes the case that Georg be considered primarily in relation to his activity of writing, that is, letter writing The friend is similarly perceived in light of this activity Where they differ as "writers" is where they differ *essentially* as "bachelors" *The Necessity of Form*, p.36

[63] Ibid, p.38

transparent to Georg, as the father asserts that "*I've been representing him here on the spot!*"(e.a.) Georg's writings reify him, that is, transform him into a static and impossible figure stopped dead in his tracks of literary deception, as the horrifying image of the bachelor crumpling Georg's letters unopened confirms. The bride is immediately severed from this impossible form of existence, and yet "lives only in relation to the friend". It is significantly through the friend, the figure who is *transfixed* through his writing, through this *bachelor machine*, that any relation to the bride may occur.

Within this most potent and obscure "thought landscape" of "The Judgment", characters metamorphose into dematerialized conceptual bodies of interpretation, "which, without losing in precision, harbors all the riches, varieties, and dramatic elements characteristic of 'real life'".[64] Kafka constructs these interpretive bodies in order to test conceptions of the "writing self" which had and would continue to plague him. Georg understands writing as a tool to connect himself with the world, "by having the world serve it". His writing is directly linked to his engagement. The crucial relationship between *writing* and *engagement*, however, ironically takes place between the friend and the bride. The "permanent bachelor" is an *ally* of the writing self which maintains a "proximity of a distance" with the bride, holds the bride equally transfixed, and *consummates* a parallel engagement with the "writer" and the "body". [65]

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[64] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p.13.

[65] " the friend is the only mode in which Kafka has so far known the life of literature " *The Necessity of Form*, p.39 It is important to note that when Kafka refers to the "bachelor" figure in his diaries and letters, he does so with disgust, opposing it to "the most social act" of marriage. With "The Judgment", we see, however, *unwittingly* the only form of "bachelor", capable of living in-relation-to the bride "Unwittingly" because prior to "The Judgment", Kafka, in his diaries and letters, had occasionally pondered over whether the paradigmatic "human" continuity implied through marriage might in fact aid him in his discontinuous experience with the world in the space of literature The more profound implications which are suggested through these relational characters, however, do not connect directly as a form of "self help" to Kafka's life Rather, through an essential "proximity of a distance", Kafka *perceives* or *intuits* a form of *selfness* with which he had not come to terms previously (we should keep in mind that "The Metamorphosis" - and all the implications involved in a "monstrous self" which are *intuited* here - is written directly after "The Judgment") And it is precisely through this 'coming to terms', this 'coming to language', "with such a complete opening of body and soul", that this sense of self is revealed, and yet simultaneously "foreign" through the figure of *this* bachelor It is explicitly not a self which is *conceived* as an object of Kafka's subjective reflection, but *perceived* through the "*mean*" of the *writing* body, "the *milieu* in which opposites like

The specificity of a "coincidence" in Kafka's life and literature appears most poignant at this stage, since in Kafka's life, any engagement with Felice could only be understood in relation to this being who was "made of literature". The essential debate for Kafka was not between "a projection of Kafka's social personality on the one hand, and his hopes as a writer on the other",[66] for, as one "made of literature", never did he see himself as even momentarily separated from that existence "Marriage or literature" was never the issue. For Kafka to be *engaged* to be married primarily meant to be *engaged* in a prolific literary correspondence with his *bride* - "...the one mode of [Felice's] absence/presence issued into letters..."[67] A "coincidence" of life and literature will always remain tenuous for Kafka, can never be completed. His "life" with Felice issues from the same *fictive* possibilities of writing as does the "life" of his literature.[68] Kafka's "body" is effectively re-constituted and re-qualified through language, through his epistolary bachelor machine.

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interiority and exteriority, as well as subjectivity and objectivity, intersect "(Taylor, *Altarity*, p 69) The "proximity of a distance" which Kafka's language (writing) maintains with the phenomenal world, through its "allusive" dimensions, is the same "proximity" with the "bachelor" is placed in relation the bride "Distance is not the contrary of proximity [but] is in profound accord with it I experience - and as often as I wish - the transition and the metamorphosis of the one experience into the other, *and it is only as though the hinge between them*, solid, unshakable remained irremediably hidden from me "(e a *VI*, p 135)

[66] *The Necessity of Form*, p 39

[67] Ibid As Kafka would articulate it to Felice, "It does seem to me sometimes that this communication by letter, beyond which I have an almost constant longing for reality, is the only kind of communication in keeping with my wretchedness (my wretchedness which of course I do not always feel as wretchedness), and that the transgression of this limit imposed on me would lead us both to disaster " (*LF*, p197)

[68] Merleau-Ponty's words at this "crossing" are particularly poignant, for within his notion of a "hyperdialectic", a complete coincidence or fusion of opposites is impossible (*VI*, p.94) In Merleau-Ponty's attempts to reconsider modern interpretations of subjectivity, he resituates "the body" as a crossing, or *chiasmus*, of identity and alterity, "neither subject nor object", neither "in itself" nor "for itself"(*Phenomenology of Perception*, [*PP*], p 198-212) He addresses this condition primarily through a variety of metaphorical images such as a "hinge", "joint", "articulation", "the zero of pressure between two solids", "hiatus" and most articulately as "*flesh*" All refer to and form "a body" which he had earlier related as "the pivot of the world "(*PP*, p 82) The issue of "coincidence" is crucial in relation to these images, for in a "hyperdialectic", a "structure of *implication*" folds opposites into each other in such a way that poles are implicated in a "reversibility" which doesn't allow for the domination of one over the other (*PP*, p 149) Similar to the hands which are always "on the verge" of touching, this *chiastic* structure affects "a coincidence always past or always future, an experience that remembers an impossible past, anticipates an impossible future. "(*VI*, p.122-23)

When we question, therefore, what kind of "body" Kafka offers Felice, we appropriately find one with little weight, even less physical strength - a generally atrophied, translucent, appearance:

> I am the thinnest person I know (and that is saying something, for I am no stranger to sanatoria) (*LF*, p 21)

Kafka's obsession with his own body is frequently referred to in his letters and diaries.[69] Each description articulates one facet of Kafka's essentially insubstantial body and "...frail ground or rather altogether non-existent ground on which I live"(*L*, p.333). Often, Kafka links the distorted and emaciated appearance of his body to an insubstantiality encountered in other parts of his life.

> It is certain that a major obstacle to my progress is my physical condition Nothing can be accomplished with such a body My body is too long for its weakness, it hasn't the least bit of fat to engender a blessed warmth, to preserve an inner fire, no fat on which the spirit could occasionally nourish itself beyond its daily need without damage to the whole How shall the weak heart that lately has troubled me so often be able to pound blood through all the length of these legs It would be labor enough to the knees, and from there it can only spill with a senile strength into the lower parts of my legs But now it is already needed up above again, it is being waited for, while it is wasting itself down below Everything is pulled apart through the length of my body What could it accomplish then, when it perhaps wouldn't have enough strength for what I want to achieve even if it were shorter and more compact (*DI*, p 160)

Kafka's "literary constitution" appears to necessitate a body which is *virtually present*.[70]

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[69] An early reference to the appearance of Kafka's body can be found in a letter to Max Brod on Oct 26, 1907 where Kafka mentions a doctor's visit at which they will be "looking at my body merely for the fun of it "(*L*, p 36) The editors inform us that this visit was "in connection with his new job [at Assicurazioni Generali] Kafka had undergone a detailed medical examination on Oct 1, 1907 He was found 'healthy' but 'fragile', almost 6 feet tall and weighing 134 lbs Apparently a second examination was required "(*L*, p 431) In another letter to Brod, while vacationing in Jungborn, Kafka says, "I have the silly idea of wanting to make myself fat, and from there on curing myself in general As if the latter, or even the former, were possible at all!"(*L*, p 80)

[70] The contemporary context and use of the term "virtual" in relation to computer "space", is precisely *not* the sense in which we employ it. The concept of a "virtual reality" unnecessarily and unfortunately confuses the issue of "virtuality", for it places the "virtual" in competition with "reality" It is perceived either as a second derivative of the "real", or ultimately as an *eventual* real, that is, at some point in time, its "spatiality" will be, not virtually but *literally* indistinguishable from "real space" The irony with such flagrantly naive dialectics (besides the immense chasm opened and abandoned in the word "reality") is that if it is "only a matter of time",

> When it became clear in my organism that writing was the most productive direction for my being to take, everything rushed in that direction and left empty all those abilities which were directed toward the joys of sex, eating, drinking, philosophical reflection, and above all music I atrophied in all these directions This was necessary because the totality of my strengths was so slight that only collectively could they even half-way serve the purpose of my writing (*DI*, p 211)

Kafka offers Felice the only form of "body" he knows, one which is *transfixed* through writing.[71] His corporeality is that of the "permanent bachelor's" - which, while "hardly real", substantiates itself most definitively as *intermediary flesh.*[72] Kafka's "atrophied" physical images are the signs of a body in perpetual transition, on the verge of ephemerality, weightless and translucent[73] Such ephemerality is

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then it already exists On the contrary, when we speak of the "virtual presence" of Kafka's body, we mean it as an *approaching* or *proximate* presence For Merleau-Ponty, this virtual or "proximate" presence is "the approach of the remote as remote "(*VI*, p 102)

[71] The relational significance of Kafka's "body" to his "writing" is echoed in the repeated insistences of Merleau-Ponty that language and the body are not simply intimately related "concepts", but are two aspects of the same "pivot of the world" (*PP*, p 82) Both reveal a "corporeality" which "if we were to make completely explicit the architectonics of the human body, its ontological framework, and how it sees itself and hears itself, we would see that the structure of its mute world is such that all the possibilities of language are given in it "(*VI*, p 155)

[72] The term which encompasses all of Merleau-Ponty's liminal images of the body in his later thought is "*flesh*" In a general sense, "flesh" is no less than the "a label for that most basic problem running throughout the history of philosophy the problem of sameness and otherness, identity and difference "(Madison, "Flesh and Otherness", *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, p 29) But even more generally, "flesh" stands for *intermediacy*, per se It is, as Merleau-Ponty described, "an element" in the classical sense of the term, "an 'element' of Being midway between the concept and the experience "(*VI*, p 139) As this "midway", the "flesh" is precisely not a *thing*, but rather a *relation, the* relation Similarly, the body, as "flesh", in the "flesh" of language, is, in a significant sense, *insubstantial*, "not a nothing", as Merleau-Ponty cautions, but also not "something" Our definition of "the bachelor" as "intermediary flesh" may therefore read as redundant

[73] This "translucent" body can be contrasted to the "transparency" of the *subject* who, in constituting and constructing *his* world, appears *clearly* refined, defined and *self evident*, as well, the "opacity" of the *object* under the subject's gaze can offer no "light" of its own. The metaphor of light traverses Merleau-Ponty's texts primarily as critique of the "clarity" of this subject and its "ideas", and to provoke these "ideas" as always "veiled in shadows" "At the moment one says 'light', at the moment that the musicians reach the 'little phrase, there is no lacuna in me, what I live is as 'substantial', as 'explicit', as a positive thought could be - even more so a positive thought is what it is, but, precisely, is only what it is and accordingly cannot hold us."(*VI*, p 151) And yet, this "I" which cannot be held in its substantiality and transparency, metamorphoses the moment it is released, "At the same time that the body withdraws from the objective world, and forms between the pure subject and the object a third genre [or gender] of being, the subject loses its purity and

perplexing if we consider that "love is a matter of weight, bodies are involved; bodies have to be there, it is ridiculous if a nonbody asks for love."[74] And yet, Kafka's "body" is fundamentally *mediated* through writing, which while stretching the limits of a *thin* existence, simultaneously *fills* his appearance in *literary form*. As Canetti notes in relation to Felice, Kafka "...comes forward with what is peculiarly his own: the fullness of what he has seen...This fullness *is* his body."[75]

Kafka's body was *lived* as "a being of porosity"(*VI*, p.149), which, as Merleau-Ponty suggests through his notion of the 'body', "is to be compared not to a physical object, but rather to a work of art."(*PP*, p.150) As a "comparison", the status, or *dis-position* of both the "body" and the work of art for Kafka (as well as Merleau-Ponty) is revealed by virtue of an *implicit* mode of engagement in the world.[76] For Kafka, "the most social act" of marriage was one possibility of existence - executed only through writing - and yet impossible, because it involved a form of engagement which forged an *explicit union* between "self" and "world". The profound irony of this 'explicit union' rests in the presupposition of a "self" which is precisely *not* "always already" social, and must, in this lack, strive to complete itself by *engaging*, or *binding* itself to the "world"; hence, paradoxically reversing the initial assumption of the "most social act" of marriage, since the dialectical structure of "self" and "world" will forever maintain that not only is the "self" absolutely other to a "world", but it is *opposed* to a "world"; "I remain the sole ipse".[77]

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transparency ' (*PP*, p 350) And yet, equally, it does not gain a "purity" in 'opacity' either It becomes "transfixed" and "translucent"

[74] Canetti, Elias, *Kafka's Other Trial*, p.22

[75] Ibid, p 23

[76] Richard Kearney, in his detailed study of the significance and demise of the human imagination in "post-modern" culture(*The Wake of the Imagination*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1988) appropriately positions his thesis of resituating "some notion of a properly *human* imagination"(p.360), in relation and response to the innumerable "deaths" pronounced in the last century (the author, the imagination, history, art) While he recognizes the importance of a "de-centering" of the constitutive self, there must also remain "some notion" of *position* from which the 'self" acts, indeed, an unlikely *position* "In this light one might argue that when the deconstructivist asks 'who is this I?', it may well - perhaps unbeknownst to itself - serve the ethical purpose of decentering the epistemological subject as *self-position*, thereby opening it to an awareness of its debt and duty to the other-than-self. Here we might recall the original sense of *ethos* as *dis-position* "(p.451)

[77] Merleau-Ponty has given a most devastating critique of these fundamental existentialist assumptions of the self in *The Visible and the Invisible*, and specifically

The central paradox of Kafka's prolific *Letters to Felice* is that through "marriage" their *co-respondence* would be destroyed; through the union, Kafka's *response-ability* would be debilitated It is the same paradox which appears through the "bachelor/writer" figure in "The Judgment", yet in reverse: a *co-respondence* only occurs between bride and bachelor/writer when the "union" is sacrificed. Contrary to a figure of "refuge" or "escape" *from* the world, the "bachelor/writer" is ironically and most distinctly *implicated* within a world, "always already" other, certainly a monstrous figure of self.

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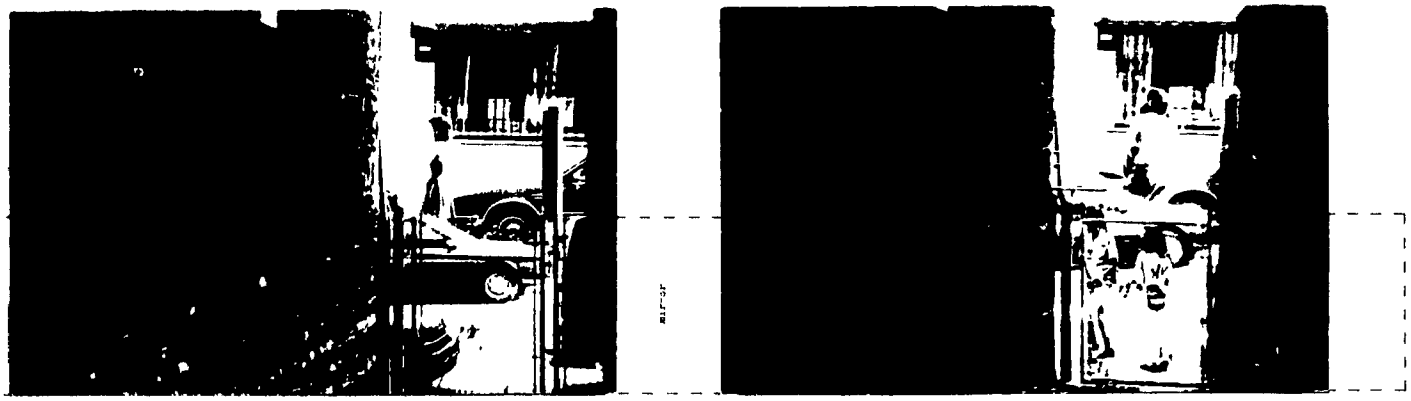
in his section regarding Sartre. Sartre conceives of the self, initially, as *void*, as emptiness. This is necessary in order for the self to receive "the plenitude of the world"(*VI*, p 52) The self *is* absolute negativity, and the other is "absolute plenitude and entire positivity"(Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p 15), it is, at base, *nothingness* "Action", therefore, is in response to that which I *lack*, and which is completely outside of me "I will never live any but my own life and the others will never be but other myselves "(Ibid, p 71) The consequences which arise out of a self which is *nothing* are great at the level of the individual *Shame* is born from the self, being nothing, under the gaze of another in which I am completely opened up, naked to him" . instead of my shame constituting the whole sense of the other's existence, the other's existence is the truth of my shame "(Ibid p 73) But as Merleau-Ponty notes, "From the moment that I conceive of myself as negativity and the world as positivity, there is no longer any interaction."(Ibid) One sees clearly the importance of this critique of Merleau-Ponty's earlier colleague given Merleau-Ponty's more "chiastic" self developed in further chapters.

We had said previously that writing for Kafka was lived as a "limit condition" As "lived", that meant frequent bouts at the threshold of sanity (*LF*, p 156), frequent debates as to whether he could even be considered "human" (*LF*, p 287, 288); and occasionally statements which punctuate the tragic and ecstatic beauty of it all "Hesitation before birth...My life is a hesitation before birth "(*DII*, p.210) It is through his work, however, that these "threshold", "limit" and "delay" conditions appear most disturbingly. They are repeatedly transformed and presenced through Kafka's temporally disjunctive narratives which seem to exactly hold its heroes hostage within a fictional *delay* before birth These "heroes", equally disjunctive, dispositioned and disfigured "monster", "double" and "bachelor" figures, spiral around the *limits* of a human existence, always approaching *something human* in the process This "something" is essential, for "limits", whether engaged philosophically, poetically, or mathematically, primarily imply an activity of *tending-toward* or *approaching* "values" and questions which are precisely unknown and unknowable.

Efforts in this study have undoubtedly "prowled around the question" of these *limits*, with the intention of (dis)positioning the mediating "techne" of *monstrosity* perceived throughout all of Kafka's work. We say "(dis)positioning" because what the "monster" reveals about human existence, it equally conceals.

A thin space between two buildings is not a "place" in the city, categorically speaking It floats between the boundaries of "places" , or rather, deforms the boundaries between places It is represented by the thickness of a line on a site plan, a paradoxical chunk in the urban fabric which is neither visible nor audible to the tagged senses of an urban dweller, a kind of "spatial delay" Re-presenting it would require a conscious recognition of something behind the thickness of a line It would also require that in speaking, that "something" is not lost It would mean that if one closes the limits of the paradox, it's the end of the paradox

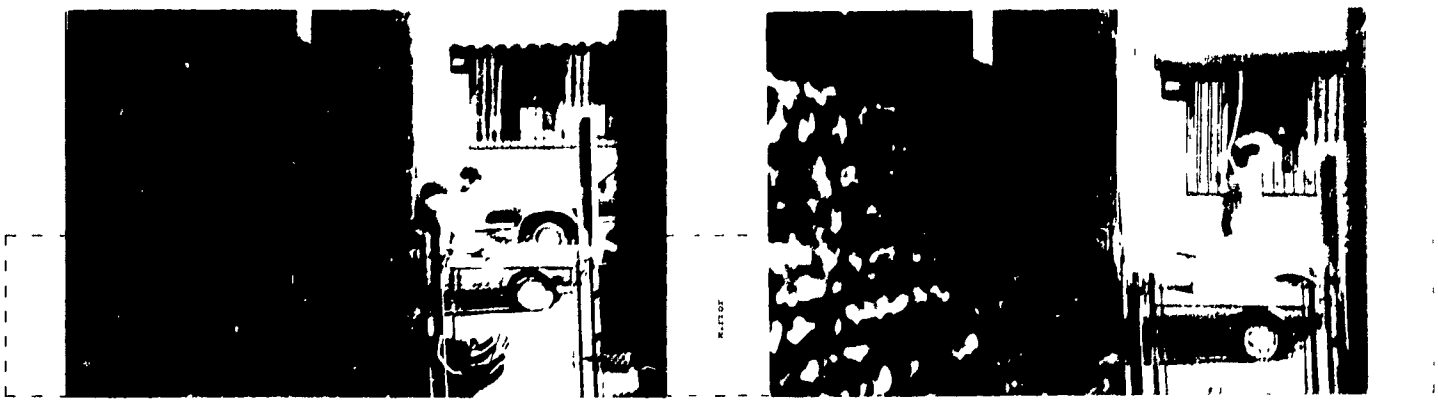


"mirror photo 5" *"mirror photo 6"*

The "monster" is precisely *in-visible*, i.e. *in-the-visible*, and yet "one cannot see it there and every effort to *see it there* makes it disappear, but it is *in the line* of the visible, it is its virtual focus"(*VI*, p.215) The "monster" *translates* the in-visible, does not simply declare it as "another visible", but stresses rather that it "is at the horizon and must be thought of as such; it is only by remaining at a distance that it remains itself"(*VI*, p 122) Both literature and architecture are precisely engaged in this *in-visible* Like the monster, both narrate upon the hyphen, upon the "horizon-line", not in order to "make visible the invisible", to erect the invisible "into a second positivity"(*VI*, p.149), but rather, to engage in the very *limen* (*threshold*) of visibility, where *possibility* is neither finite nor infinite, but *indefinite*, and human action, whether in literature or architecture, necessarily and always entails a risk - the risk of the indefinite *approach*, the risk of an indefinite throwing, the risk of the *indefinite self.*

Monstrosity, therefore, is not an historical "concept" to be overcome or surpassed, but is the very *hinge* of an historical experience That "*monsters*" do not hold the same measure of "reality" for contemporary man which they had previously held in the Greco/Roman world is no secret, no more than it is a secret that the "real" itself is not held in the same measure. "Reality" is by definition an historical and, as such, precisely *metamorphic* human experience; i.e., it is (if we may re-turn Frascari's words on the "monster") the "principle of other [*realities*]".

Photographing moments in the glances of people as they pass by as in a cinematographic space where the only moment one 'reality' connects with another is through the chance glance But the space is open at both ends and the camera is only one eye hence the mirror photos in which the space of this interface is collapsed or rather 'hinged' into one plane Subtle distortion between the top half of the photo and the bottom is what betrays the 'hinging' Participators on the far end of the street deny the perspective rule of diminishing by metamorphosing into giants, while others transform into perched mites The interstitial nature of this place is revealed only through such a metamorphosis and yet it remains humbly silent within the city Most poignant, however, is the "horizon line" which appears between the top and bottom of the photo, for at this "virtual focus", the two realities subtly merge and are subtly distinguished It is again, only through the "hinging" of this space that one is able to speak where speech is impossible

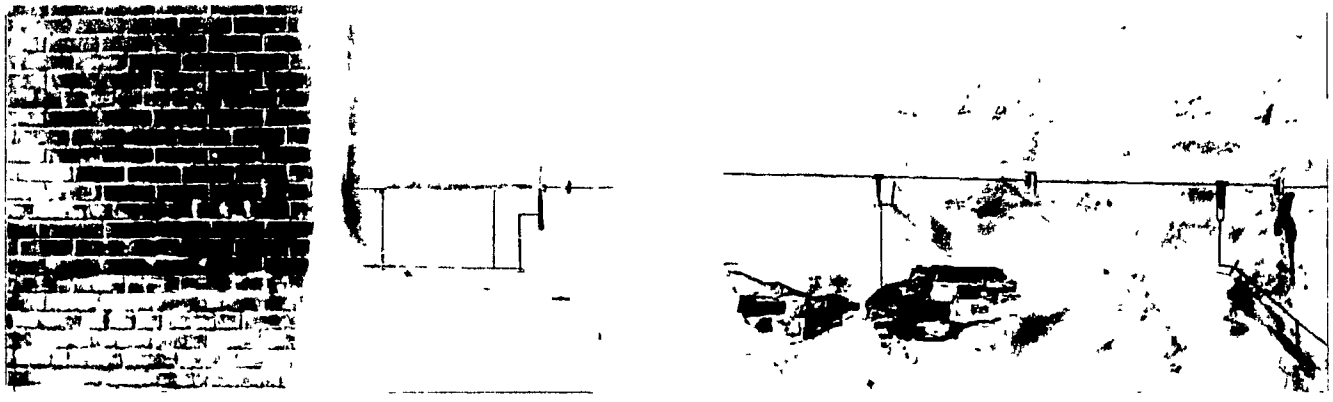


"mirrorphoto 1" *"mirrorphoto 1"*

The issue for contemporary thought and activity is not whether "monsters" have *died*, as if they were timely *beings* or *things*. "Monsters" have no more and no less to do with the "reality" of *beings* than does the *other*. The issue is whether *monstrosity* can offer any insight into our readings of the "self", the "present" and a "work" which mediates them. *Monstrosity*, as a hinge of historical experience, explicitly reads "history" as a plurality of narrative fields which are "hinged" to, enfolded within, and rediscovered in-time by the conscious "reader" and "writer". A debate as to the "historicity" or "a-historicity" of the *monster* is like all dialectical debates. They only "defer the question and beguile our hunger"(*VI*, p.121). When we "read", "write", "*make*", we are always translating, "re-reading", "re-writing", "re-making", never not translating, never not precisely *in* or *out* of time - so the *monster*, like the *other*, occupies the very *limits* of temporality.

What we say of *monstrosity* is given by virtue of *metamorphosis*. "Metamorphosis", likewise does not *die* with the gods, any more than *hermeneutics* does. "Death" is, in fact, the *ruse* of all three. It is precisely a *form* of death which occurs in the monster through metamorphosis. Equally, it is the *form* of hermeneutics which initiated this "science" of translating *the Word* of God which dies with the death of *the* definitive *Form* of God. Hermeneutics itself must be translated otherwise. *Metamorphosis* is, in fact, precisely the *time* of hermeneutics. Its activity is primarily *translational*.

From the "mirror-photos", an articulation of "horizon-line" emerged, and yet once it has reached the wall of an abandoned building, that articulation cannot remain static and can only re-emerge through the specificities of the wall, and in this case, through its ***de-formations****, that is, rents in the wall's surface becomes the sites of the "horizon line's" structural supports*



"horizon-line" de-tail

Through a "change in form" lies the gift of a secret, an offering which invites, in fact *begs* for an other reading: "What is interesting is not an expedient to solve the 'problem of the other'....It is a transformation of the problem"(*VI*, p.269). *Metamorphosis* lives in language, de-monstrates the intrinsic, transformative and translational *flesh* of language. *Metamorphosis* and *monstrosity* are as "real" as is the human imagination

When we speak, therefore, of a *monstrous self*, we do not mean to describe the *being* that one *is*, or even *becomes*, but rather, the *limit condition* through which one intrinsically experiences the world As a *limit condition*, this *monstrous self* cannot be held objectively, but is approached only as a *relation*. The complexity and paradox of this *self* arises not only from coming to terms with the layers of its historical weight, but from the very fact that in language, "self" reads as a constitutive and "subjective" grammatical construct "used to name a person, thing, state, or quality", which we still cannot *grasp* through language, "since what there is to be grasped is a dispossession"(*VI*, p.266). As we have said, to address this *self* "head-on" is to run the risk of identifying *it* as a generalized *self-thing*, hence our insistence - following Merleau-Ponty - on the "veering around peering timid, prowling around" the question of *self* which the framework of *monstrosity* allows to best *approach* this experience

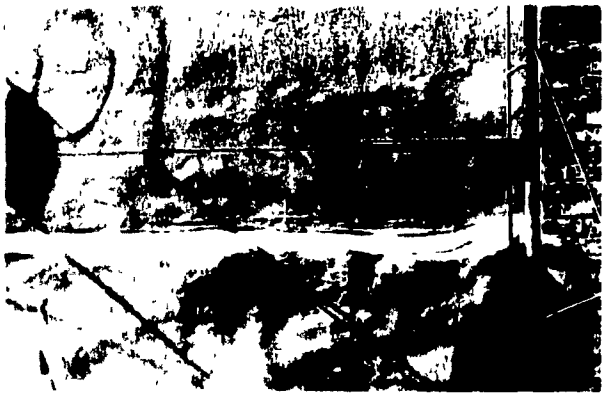
We read Merleau-Ponty's notion of the *flesh* - in relation to the body, language, time and the self - as addressing all that is *monstrous* in human perception, experience, and thought.

The question becomes whether the project is a de monstration of a wall or a "horizon line". Either/or is misleading, for it is through the deformities of a wall that its doings may be told, and that a mechanical "horizon line" may be supported and activated. Similar to the site of the "mirror photos", it was only through the "hanging" of a wall that a "horizon line" silently speaks

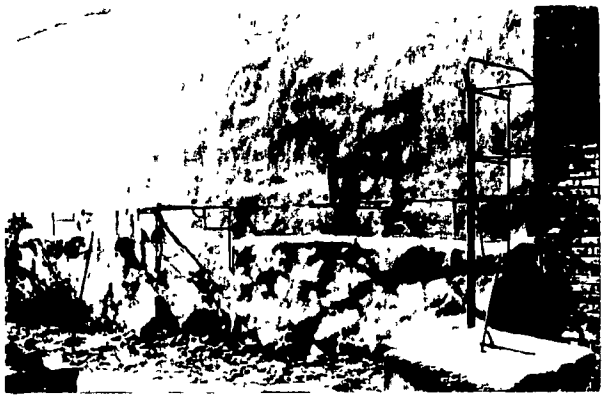
"horizon-line" de-tails

The fragments collected in *The Visible and the Invisible*, are provoking in that their apparently "philosophical" orientation borders on the "literary", especially regarding the section 'The Intertwining - The Chiasm" where Merleau-Ponty portrays most translucidly his narrative of *flesh*. Labyrinthian "characterizations" of *flesh* are recounted through the "hinge", the "fold", the "joint", the "edge of being", and most encompassing, the "*chiasm*" Analogous to the "monster", "double", and "bachelor" for Kafka, the *flesh* is involved in a perpetually *chiastic reversibility* of human experience, language and thought in which "every relation with being is simultaneously a taking and a being taken, the hold is held, it is inscribed and inscribes in the same being that it takes hold of"(*VI*, p.266). These characterizations of "flesh" are as *hard* for Merleau-Ponty as the "monster", "double" and "bachelor" are for Kafka. They are not *conceptual* devices from which to view the self "in itself", but *hermeneutical* devices which "replace the notions of concept, idea, mind, representation with the notions of dimensions, articulation, level, hinge, pivots, configuration. ."(*VI*, p 224). If taken *objectively*, these "devices", for both writers, may read as *techniques* of writing, of self realization, *means* **to** the self. On the contrary, they are the *means*, or *intermediaries* **of** self. The *technical* risk of objectification always looms heavily in language when terms such as "devices" are not engaged ironically, or analogously in a work, whether literary or architectural As noted in the last chapter, while these literary "devices", perceived as such provide a form of 'narrative hinging' between polar identities in the story, they are also "characters" themselves; articulate constructions composed of the very intricacies of their dual characters. As Kafka refers to the intermediary "He", "For it is not only the two protagonists who are there, but he himself as well, and who really knows his intentions?" (*GWC*, p.160-61) More specifically than 'hinging', "He", like the other devices, *articulates*, or rather, *jigs* between characters.

(Action the participant opens a door, which is only a frame, at the street facade of the building The door is connected by way of a hinge to a series of steel rods also connected by hinges, and all resting at eye level In the opening of the door, what is perceptible at eye level is only the motion of the hinges passing horizontally from right to left and vice versa, since they are the only vertical elements projecting above the horizontal plane of the rods.)



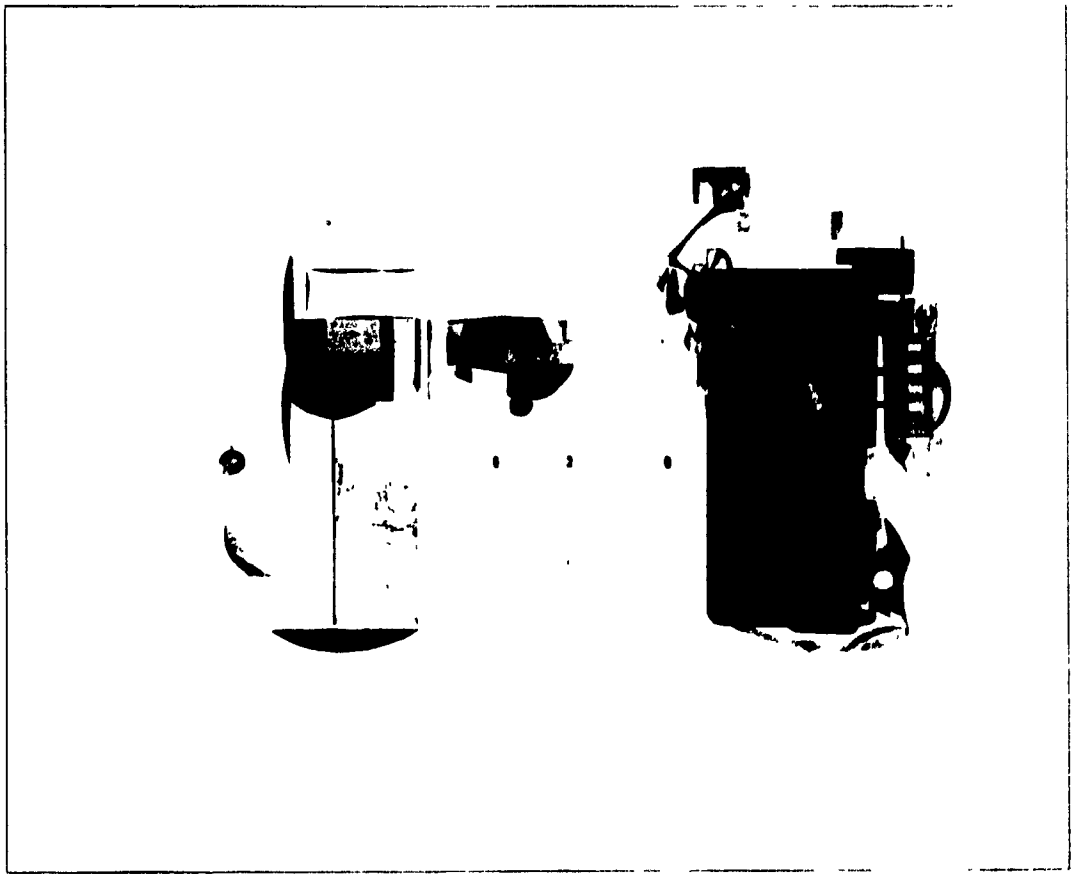
"horizon-line" tete de tete



"horizon-line", full view

The kinship which the literary "devices" of the "monster", "double", "bachelor" and "flesh", hold in relation to the constructional "device" of the "jig" is primarily understood through their analogous processes of *jigging, mediating* or *crossing*, "characteristics" of a work, or narrative. Precisely what a "jig" *is*, is as difficult to objectify as the "monster", "double", "bachelor" and "flesh". The Oxford English Dictionary conveys that the origin of the term "jig" is "*unknown*". And yet, "jigs", "jiggers", and "jigging" occurs throughout a surprising number of disparate disciplines. In the discipline of engineering, for instance, it is defined as "a device which maintains the proper positional relationship between the material and the machine that is working on it". That may seem somewhat disconnected from an alternate use of the term as "a rapid, springy dance", but by looking through other definitions one finds that the gap between them quickly diminishes. To dance a *jig* is to "move with rapid up-and-down motions". Miners "jig" ore from denser minerals by "shaking it up-and-down in water in a large perforated container".

Collage or 'collaging' as an activity is synonymous with 'jigging', and yet there are subtle nuances which allow us to speak of both independently. It might be more appropriate to say that 'collage' is one form of 'jigging'. Collage has a very well documented and accessible history associated with it for 'collage' is greatly an activity which produces artifact. Its history is quite tangible. And yet, as one form of jigging, is historically and ephemerally bound to the silent offices of artifacts.

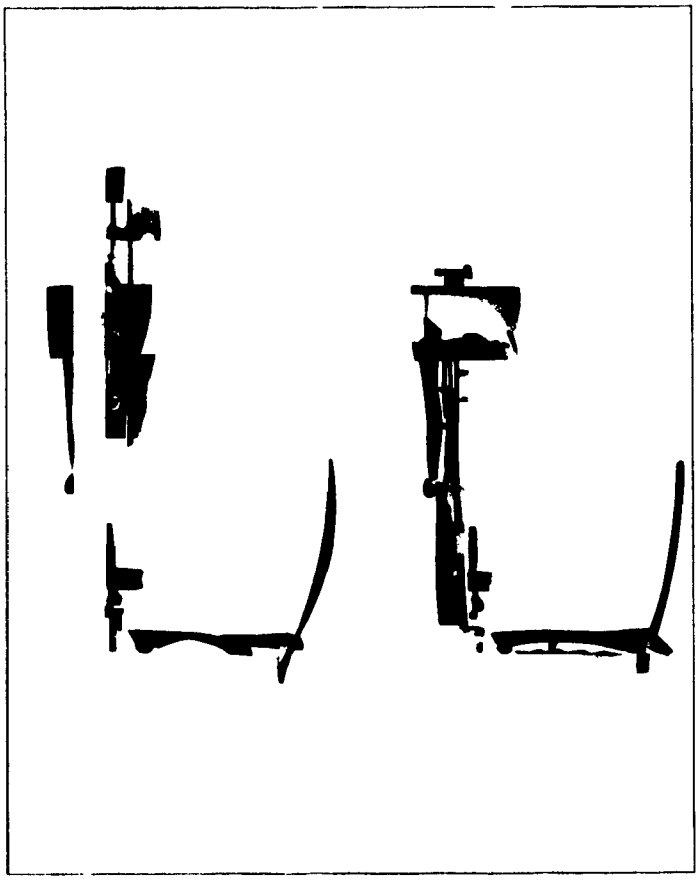


Elevation of One Story Wall Collage

A jig is also a "small container used to measure whiskey and other spirits". in pottery it is nothing less than the "lathe carrying a revolving mold, for shaping clay with a profile", while in billiards it is simply "a support for a cue" It carries a directional connotation in both nautical and golfing terms It is both "a small sail stepped to a jigger mast", and "an iron with a narrow, fairly well-lofted face, used for *approaches*". What can be said to be common between all of these definitions? The jig is seen to have "positional", "gestural", "supportive", and "directional" implications associated with it. Yet in each case, there is either a subtle or overt degree of *intermediacy* at work. The sail captures both the wind and its direction, *mediating* between the water and the air. The golfing iron's "well-lofted face" houses both the *anticipation* of a specific swing and a specific distance and direction. A cue is able to *stand* mediated by a holder. A circular motion is *translated-through* a jig to give clay form. A jig *distinguishes* ore from other minerals, and dance is man's primordial *mediation* with the gods In each case, the jig remains a *mediating* device.

The collagist perceives a world in flux Each object which contributes to the stuff of the world exists at various times, scales and forms simultaneously The banal is not elevated to higher value, because for the collagist everything is banal, and nothing is The collagist does not sit in judgment over the stuff of the world, but merely collects and re-cords And yet, this collecting is significantly understood as a severing, a slicing and disengaging from a conte t which assumes too mu h With the collagist's razor, a world of matter - whether printed or not- is coaxed into believing itself to be otherwise A "door" for a collagist is a four letter word which is quickly perceived as an "oor" An "oor" for a "door", or a "door" becoming an "oor" are images which keep the collagist perpetually nourished.

Historically "jigging" has also been understood by the craftsman, sculptor and architect as an *intermediary* activity which aids or supports a construction in the process of making. The functional purpose of the jig for any craftsman, sculptor or architect, is such that it operates most distinctly at the level of a *translation* between the materiality of a "work" and the process through which it appears (stone cutting, wood working, steel forging, concrete forming) It should be distinguished from (although it's kin) a *mold* - the least subtle member of the jig family - for what is most characteristic of a mold is its purely *formal* relationship to the work, as well as its function.

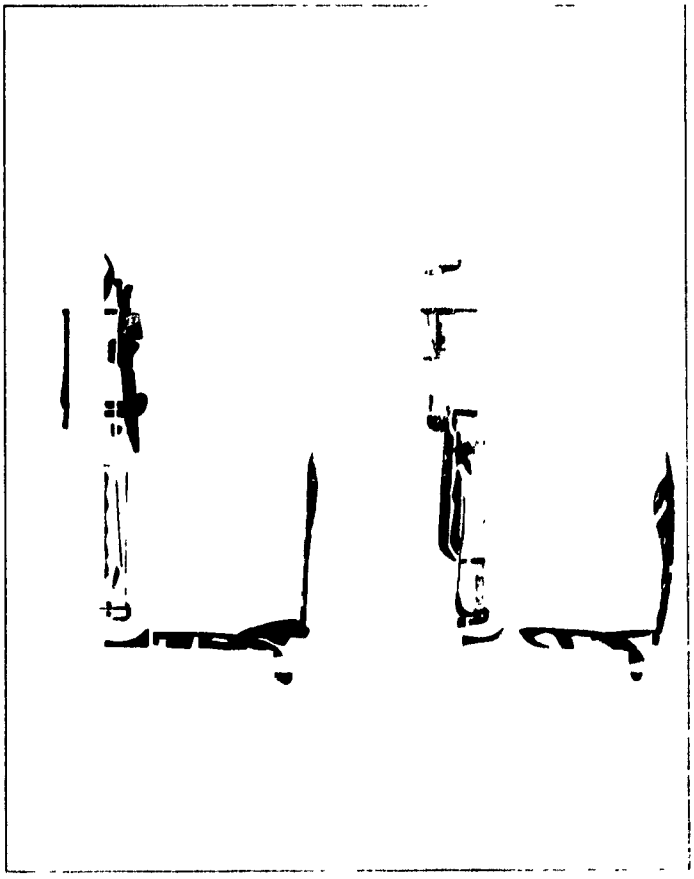


Sections taken through One Story Wall Collage

Molds are pedagogical jigs with nothing to hide - positive/negative - part of an overworked historical dialectic. The *jig proper* is ironically a device which, once asked to speak through its *form*, becomes much less didactic and vocal as to any origin, or purpose. The *jig proper* is perceived as a *joint* or *hinge* within the process of making. "Tools", which are understood as expedient "means" to an end product, are completely indifferent to the process of making. They are not primarily mediating "tools" of investigation, but inanimate "machines", *means* purely. *Form* is, indeed, the qualifying dimension of the "jig", for its form cannot be represented, but rather, *de-monstrates* the act and the work. Once removed from their purposeful contexts, "jigs" have no *identity*, remain disturbingly *silent*, read as fundamentally *monstrous*

As an architectural medium, collage appropriately opens issues of 'scale' context site and program by the fact that fragments of other works may be severed from their contexts and (in the case below) re-inscribed upon the tactile surface of an accurately scaled building. This juxtaposition is as appropriate as it is absurd. Absurd because the 1:1 scale of the collage contradicts the 1:x scale of the drawing of a building (and vice versa). And it is appropriate because through the tension, we see neither the scaled projection of a building nor the scaleless collage but rather the emergence of a 'monstrous site' of interpretation. An "idea for a 'door' was not considered in the collaging process, and consequently one must discover one

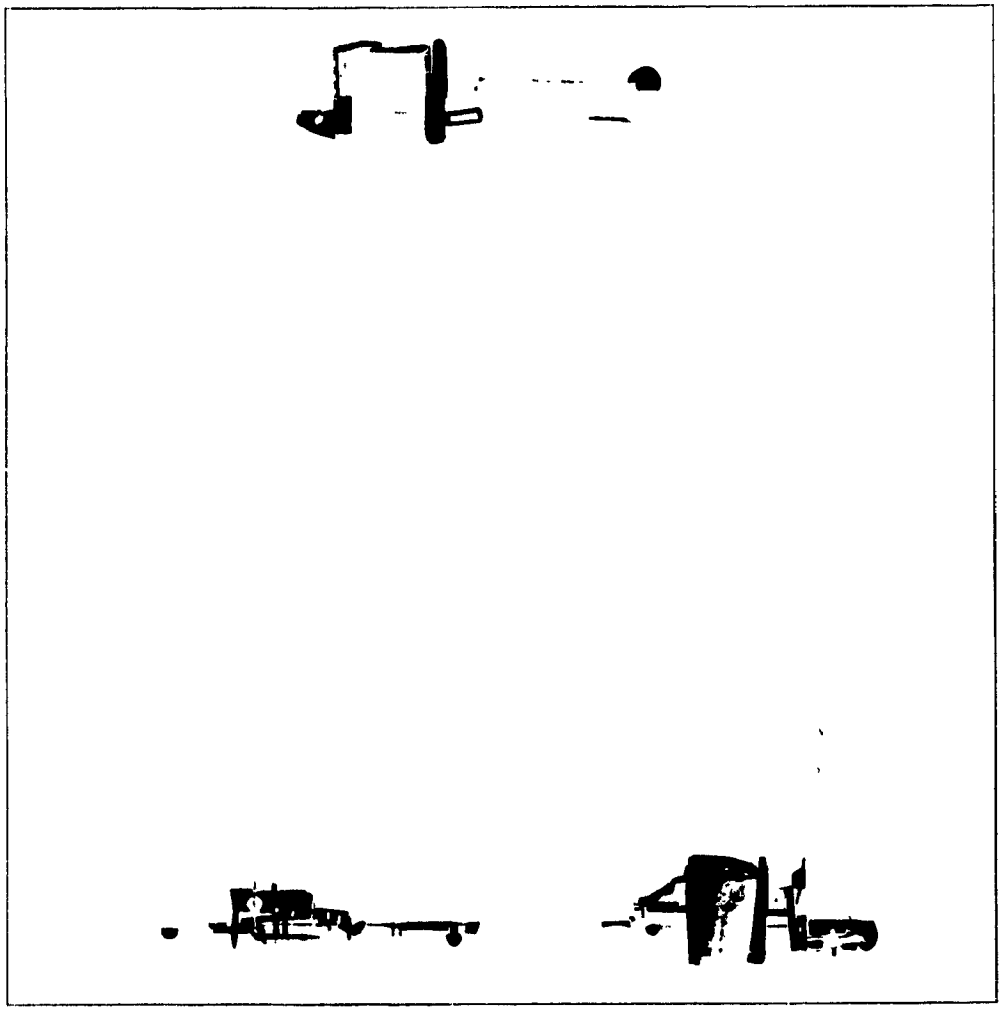
"Jigging" merely points an *intermediary* finger in the direction of all forms of architectural inquiry. The "jigger" is the most humble of artisans, is incapable of experiencing subjects vs. objects, reality vs. fiction, self vs. other; for the "jigger" is oriented only by way of *relations*. An "inter-subjective" world is not only self-evident to the "jigger", but also slightly misleading since it has been named as such. "Jigging" is very simply a mode of perceiving, thinking and translating the "flesh" of the world. It makes explicit the fact that "tools" (in relation to architecture: drawing, modelling, fabricating...) are most distinctly devices for translating, for the discovery and telling of a tale. "Tools", in this sense, are "jigs" which reveal the monstrous approach of and to any "work". "Jigging" no more *projects* a "concept" of a "work" into "reality", than it projects any concept of "self" into "reality".



Sections taken through One Story Wall Collage

A "jig", as one of its definitions reveals so articulately, is "used for *approaches*" The same should be said of all architectural media. Through the "jig" one finds not a pattern or prototype of either the work or the process, but rather an *approach* to both. It is through this enigmatic *(dis)position* of the "jig" that we analogously find the terms of one's own *(dis)positional* "approach" to a "work" Like the "jig", this *self (dis)position* is not a non-position in which the "I" is *disposed* of , nor is it a constitutive 'position' in which the "I" is definitively *posited* through the work. This very framework, is the stifling problem, for we are left grapling in apparent crisis when the work of an *individual* [architect] is understood as both an *expression* of a free thinking, perceiving, and imaginative self, and a reflection of one's *own responsibility* As such, the rift between *expression* and *responsibility* entangles [the architect] in the perpetual struggle of maintaining a distinct "*I*" in face of a *public*, and vice versa.

"Being a collagist" is not simply understanding that collage destabilizes an object with its meaning, it is also understanding that collage destabilizes the position of a self to a work A collage/artist is not the same as the creator/artist The "artistic-self" enters into a precarious position with the collagist, for his creations are seen as humbling re-presentations, re-inscriptions of an "always already" meaningful order in fact, meaning is his game, not his project For the collagist, the world is choking on neat ideas and babbling "I"s that babble only because they have the unquestionable right to do so, that is, the unquestionable right to say, "I have something to say"

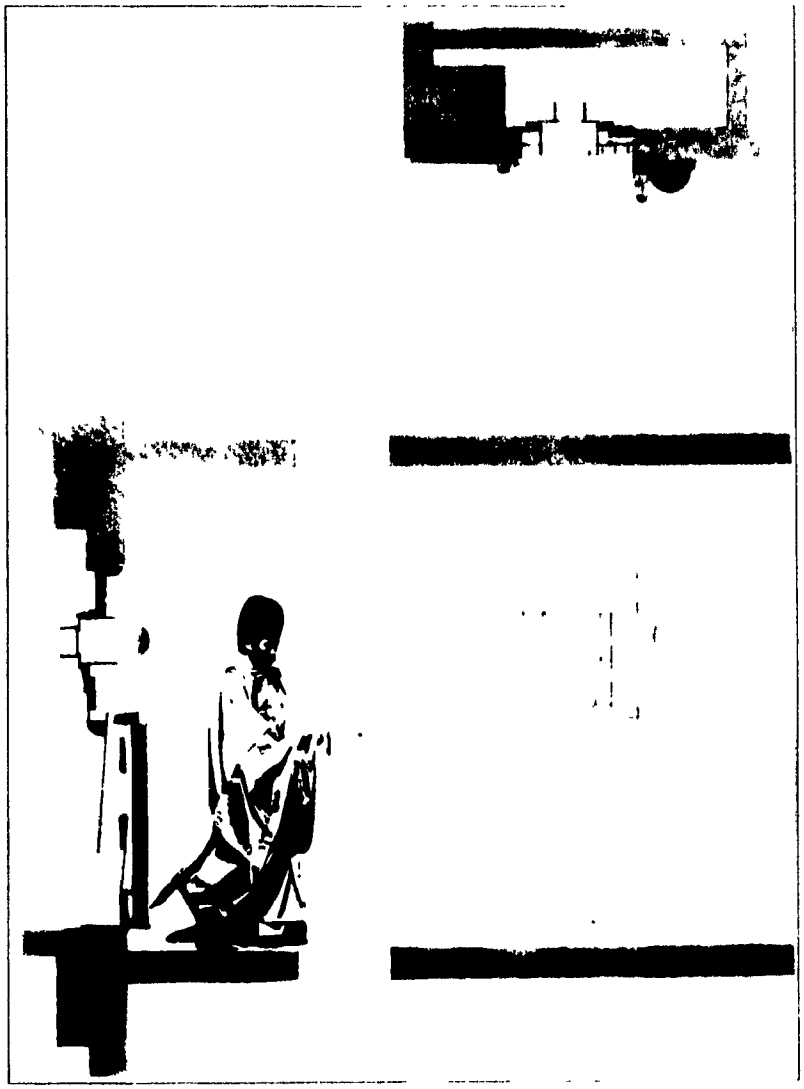


Plan taken through One Story Wall Collage

What is distinctive about the *(dis)position* of the "jig", like the "monster" is that it *crosses* such rifts, and in the process, metamorphoses apparently opposed terms like "self" and "public", "expression" and "responsibility" through each other. It is clear to the jigger that his/her *position* **is** this very relationship. The difference which "jigging" implies as an orientation to the work and world is the difference between an *approach* to architecture and a *project* of architecture. It distinguishes the position which perceives and thinks the work as a *crossing*, with the one which perceives and thinks the work as an endless *projection* of the self through the world.

An architectural 'program' is normally considered to be a generative structure. That is, it is understood as the apparatus which determines the building's space distribution. As a consequence (and a heralded one at that), it is what gives the architecture form and simultaneously content. Collage has a great deal to offer such platitudes, for it abolishes the facile dialectics of form/function, form/content, simply because it pays them no heed. The collagist likens such "modern" truisms as "form follows function" to a dog chasing its tail

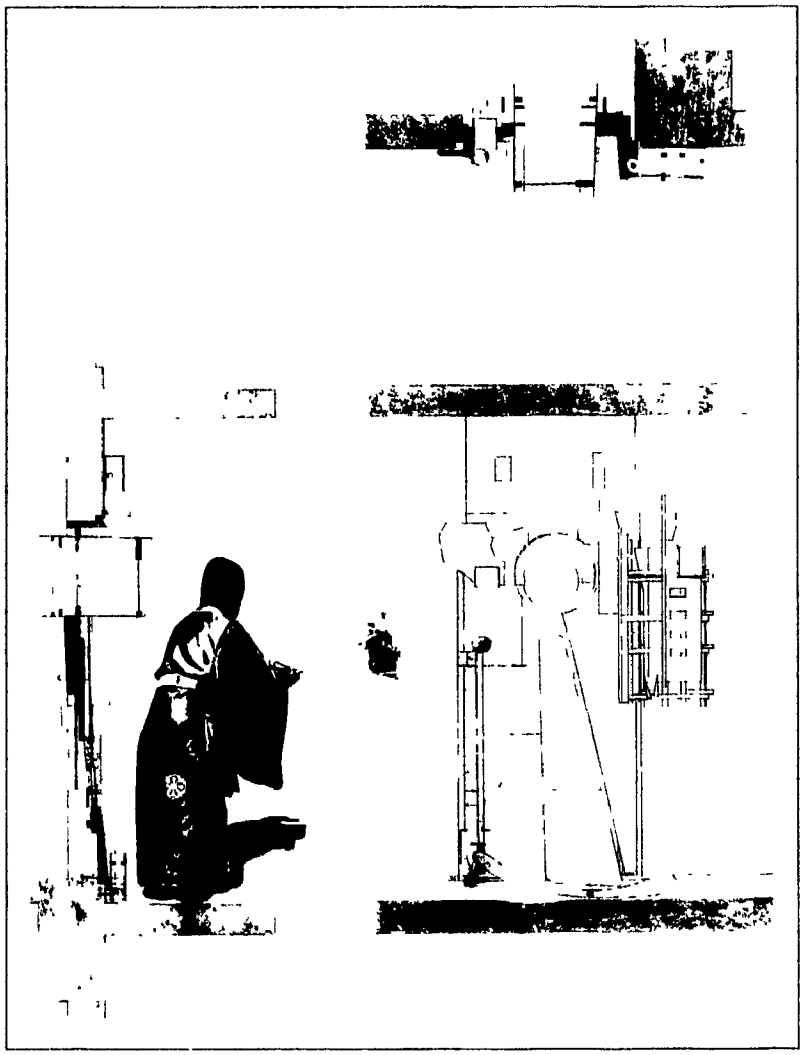
Kafka had once noted in reference to the act of writing, that the issue the writer faces is "not shaking the self, but consuming the self" (*DF*, p.87). While much has been said in this study regarding relational narratives of *self* which Franz Kafka's work suggests, the above quote centers not on the intermediary "position" of the self, but on an *activity* through which that "position" is experienced. A "self-consumption" takes place in the process of writing, which forever holds a *death* of the self in suspension. It involves a perpetual process of ingestion and digestion in the act of writing which precisely *nourishes* rather than undermines a "positioning" of self. For Kafka, a "shaking off" of the self is a "getting rid" of the self, a crime 'The Metamorphosis" so tragically demonstrates.



Initial transformation in plan, section and elevation of One Story Wall Collage

If we consider Kafka's reference to "consumption" in its most corporeal sense, what is suggested is that in the "consumption" of *oneself* through the act of writing, one literally and "metamorphically" *celebrates* in *one's* (the possesive is deceiving) *flesh*. Thus *flesh*, which is in effect "communally eaten", metamorphoses the moment it is consumed. Hence, the act of *consumption* is simultaneously an act of *consumation*, a communal and monstrous feast of the *flesh*. If we can say anything *is*, this *is* the "space of Kafka."

When drawings are then "drawn-from" the collages, we do not find a 'more-developed' door, but rather, the collage in metamorphosis The collages and drawings do not project a concept of a door, 'what it will be' once situated in the original site The processes are not to be considered generators for actualization, but "media" Each medium stands in a "vivid" present, does not project a future reality, revels in the activity of metamorphosis The 'door' is drawn-from the collage as much as the collage is drawn-from the 'door', and an "approach to architecture" is already in practice



Initial transformation in plan, section and elevation of One Story Wall Collage

FIGURES

A doodle from Søren Kierkegaard's handwritten manuscripts, reproduced in Mark C. Taylor's *Altarity*, p.310. Taylor notes that the doodle is, "A chiasmus: *X*'s graphed onto an *X* that either grows out of or covers an *O* or a circle."

Another Kierkegaard doodle. Taylor describes this one as, "A grid for the game of X's and O's, tick-tack-toe, modified to form four squares with an empty space in the center and a hyphen on either side "(p.310)

Kafka was also an inveterate doodler. This image comes from a letter to Milena Jesenská in which Kafka describes the image in this way ". I'm enclosing a drawing There are 4 posts, with poles running through the two middle ones to which the 'delinquent's' hands are fastened; poles for the feet are run through the two posts on the outside Once the man is thus secured, the poles are slowly pushed outward until the man is torn apart in the middle. The inventor is leaning against the column with his arms and legs crossed, putting on airs as if the whole thing were his original invention, whereas all he really did was watch the butcher in front of his shop, drawing out a disembowled pig." (*LM*, p 201)

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