

THE HERO AS AN OUTSIDER IN FRANZ KAFKA'S NOVELS:

DER PROZESS AND DAS SCHLOSS

A THESIS

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By

RENATE KERWICK

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To: [unclear]
[unclear]
[unclear]

Approved for the Major Department

Howard Lewis

Approved for the Graduate Council

John E Peterson

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327680

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R. K.

PREFACE

Many Kafka scholars have approached the study of his works with the preconception that the artist's own experiences, emotions, and sentiments must be reflected in the creations, thereby denying from the start that the author was able to raise his work above the personal level. Other critics were determined to discover in Kafka's works certain characteristics and weaknesses which they believed to have discerned in the artist himself.

One must allow these critics their own views. Perhaps they are correct in the assumption that it is impossible to separate Kafka's life from his works completely. For it is certainly true that, particularly in two of his novels, Der Prozess and Das Schloss, he continues to use variations on the same theme. In both novels, the apparent concern is with man's attempt to integrate himself into the company of his fellowman. Both heroes, named K., strive for recognition: Josef K. in Der Prozess by establishing his innocence and K. in Das Schloss by wanting desperately to belong.

By presenting a brief sketch of Franz Kafka's life and considering the above-mentioned novels in the following pages, this writer hopes to prove that the

heroes, K. and Josef K., have been ostracized from the established institutions and processes of society and must seek justice and recognition from the outside just as had happened in the life of their creator.

It has been necessary to follow the plots of both novels very closely in order to bring into focus the philosophical and psychological implications of the narratives and finally to reach certain inevitable conclusions.

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Chapter 1

FRANZ KAFKA - THE MAN

Franz Kafka was born in Prague on July 3, 1883, into a Jewish family of Czech origin. His father, Hermann Kafka, was a successful merchant. The family came from Wosseck in Bohemia. Hermann's youth had been a hard one, but his capacity for work enabled him to lift himself out of his lowly origins, and maintain a business with "increasing financial success."¹

Franz was the oldest child of Hermann and Julie Kafka. The mother came from a distinguished Prague family of eccentric scholars and dreamers. Franz's sisters were born much later. Consequently, his childhood was a somewhat lonely one. At the proper age, Kafka was sent to German schools, where he was educated in German (as a German). His first school was an elementary school in the Fleischmarkt, after which he attended the German Grammar School in the Old Town Square, a school which Max Brod mentions as being "the most severe in Prague."² Even as a child, Kafka was weak and delicate. He read

¹Wilhelm Emrich, Franz Kafka, trans. Sheema Zeben Buehne (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1968), p. 509.

²Max Brod, Franz Kafka: A Biography (New York: Schocken Books, 1960), p. 13. (Further references to this work will appear in parentheses after quoted material.)

a great deal and seemed to be influenced greatly by the writings of Darwin, Hückel and Nietzsche. Wilhelm Emrich claims that the young Kafka "subsequently professed atheism and socialism."³ This view, however, is not shared by Max Brod, who believes Kafka to have been religious in his own way.

The young Kafka's relationship with his father was a complex one. A few lines from the "Letter to my Father" will give some idea of their author's impressions:

I was a nervous child, but I was certainly sulky, too, as children are; it is also true that my mother spoiled me, but I can't believe that a friendly glance, would not have got me to do anything that was wanted. Now at bottom you are a kind and gentle man (what I am about to say doesn't contradict this; I am talking only of the appearance you presented to the child), but not every child has the patience and the courage to go on looking until it has found the good side. You can only handle a child in the way you were created yourself, with violence, noise and temper, and in this case moreover you thought this was the most suitable way, because you wanted to bring me up to be a strong, brave boy.⁴

At the age of eighteen, Franz Kafka was admitted to Prague University where he studied law. This decision requires some comment, for Kafka suggested that he had given in to his father's demands and allowed himself to be defeated:

There was no real freedom of choice of profession for me, I knew. Compared with the main point

³Emrich, p. 510.

⁴Franz Kafka, Dearest Father, trans. Ernst Kaiser, Eithne Wilkins (New York: Schocken Books, 1954), p. 142.

everything will be as indifferent to me as the subjects I took in my secondary school, and so the only thing is to find a profession which will give me the widest scope for this indifference, without hurting my vanity too much. So the law is the obvious thing. Feeble oppositional attempts of my vanity, of senseless optimism, like my fourteen days study of chemistry, my half-year of reading German, served only to strengthen my fundamental conviction (Brod, p. 41).

It was at the university that Franz Kafka first met Max Brod, his friend for life and future biographer. As members of a student union, they attended meetings in the Section for Literature and Art, and it was through this group that Kafka's feeling for and interest in literature began to take shape and direction.

One day, Kafka read to Max Brod the first chapter of a novel Preparations for a Wedding in the Country. Brod, whose first book had already been published, was immediately impressed and delighted by this chapter:

I got the impression immediately that he was no ordinary talent speaking, but a genius. My efforts to bring Kafka's works before the public began from that moment - an endeavor that was stronger than myself, and which indeed I made no effort to fight against, because I considered it right and natural (Brod, p. 61).

In 1906, Franz Kafka obtained his doctorate in law at the University of Prague, and worked for the required period of one year in the courts. With his friend Max Brod he began to look for a job in an office which would not take up his entire day, so that there would be time for reading, writing, and so on. Eventually, in the year 1908, Kafka found such a position as a clerk with an insurance agency.

The job, however, required much of Kafka's energy. The tension mounted over several months until he was half-seriously contemplating suicide. In his letters about this period, one finds Kafka not only being bitter about the conditions under which he was forced to live, but also attempting to formulate a philosophy to guide him. It seems that he wrote because he wanted answers to the problems that tormented him. Life was chaos, and he had to put some order into it. A lonely, unsociable man attempting to force himself into the community life around him, somewhat in the manner of K.'s attempt to make contact in Das Schloss, that was Franz Kafka. And like the character in his novel, Kafka was not successful in this undertaking.

Kafka spent his leisure time with his friend Max Brod. One time, he made a trip in order to see an airplane flight for the first time. Max Brod recounts:

How false the view is that considers Kafka was at home in an ivory tower, a world of phantasies, far removed from life, and imagines him as an ascetic consumed by nothing other than religious speculations. He was entirely different: he was interested in everything new, topical, technical, as for example in the beginnings of the film; he never proudly withdrew himself, even in the case of abuses . . . (Brod, p. 102).

At this time, Kafka had not written anything for several months, until, with the help of Brod, he wrote the article "The Aeroplanes at Brescia." This was only the beginning of Brod's coaxing Kafka into writing.

Many of Kafka's interpreters are so used to the idea that the author's sex life was in a state of chaotic repression, which it undoubtedly was in the latter part of his life, that one perhaps finds it difficult to believe Brod's words, that the young Kafka often spent evenings in wine bars with pretty girls. According to Brod, Kafka was at one time infatuated with a barmaid by the name of Hansi. Yet even then there were difficulties in casual sex relationships. A sad letter written to Brod states:

I must go and look for someone who will only just give me a friendly pat so urgently that yesterday I went to a hotel with a whore. She is too old to feel melancholy any more; but she is sad, even though she doesn't wonder at it, that one is not so loving with a whore as one is with a mistress. I didn't bring her any comfort, because she didn't bring me any (Brod, p. 118).

In 1912, Max Brod and Franz Kafka traveled to Weimar. They had been studying Goethe together for years, and Kafka thought of him in great awe. In Leipzig, Brod, who was anxious for his friend to publish, introduced the latter to some publishers there. They agreed to publish Kafka's writings. Thus, shortly after returning to Prague, Kafka gathered the things he had written. Yet his attitude was very ambivalent, and he decided that everything he had written so far was worthless. Brod, the friend, reasoned with him; nevertheless, the material finally selected by the author made up a very small book indeed.

It seemed that with the publication of his first book some further creative flow was released in Franz Kafka: in the same year he began to work on his first novel, Amerika, and wrote one of his finest short stories, Die Verwandlung.

In the summer of 1913, Kafka had met a girl from Berlin, Felice Bauer, whom Max Brod refers to by her initials F. B., and with whom Kafka fell in love. When she returned to Berlin, they corresponded. At first, she appeared to return Kafka's affection. They even considered themselves engaged, but eventually Felice decided to break off the relationship. Kafka tormented himself with doubts and fears, and he was frantic when he did not hear from her.

Nevertheless, he proposed to Felice, and she did not refuse. The official engagement lasted for only one week, but the affair lasted for years. World War I began, and Franz Kafka was busy on two books: Der Prozess and In der Strafkolonie. He also saw Felice during that time, and in a letter to Brod he wrote:

Now it is all different and all right. Our compact is, in brief: Get married shortly after the war is over; take two or three rooms in a Berlin suburb; leave each one only his economic worries; F. will go on working as before, and I, well, that I can't say yet (Brod, p. 152).

Back in Prague, Kafka made the experiment of living away from his family and taking rooms elsewhere. It is possible in Prague today to see some of Kafka's apartments.

The psychological and economic obstacles to his marriage proved too much for him. He had gone so far as to take an apartment, and to make the necessary plans. The couple even paid a formal call on Max Brod. He recalls: "The sight of the two, both rather embarrassed, above all Franz, wearing an unaccustomed high stiff collar, had something moving in it, and at the same time something horrible" (Brod, p. 157). And then, catastrophe struck. Kafka began to cough up blood. Brod notes: "Steps taken in the matter of Kafka's illness. He insists it is psychic just like something to save him from marriage" (Brod, p. 162).

Catarrh of the lungs was diagnosed. There was danger of tuberculosis; marriage was out of the question. A year or so later, Felice married someone else.

It was after the war, when Kafka was staying with his sister and her family at a Baltic seaside resort, that he met a girl, Dora Diamant (who worked in the kitchen of the Berlin Jewish People's Home).

Kafka was studying Hebrew and Dora was a Hebrew scholar. His interest in her rapidly deepened, and it was not long before he decided to leave Prague forever, and live with the girl in Berlin. To the surprise of all who knew him, he actually did this. For the first time he seemed at peace. Brod says: "At last I saw my friend in good spirits; his bodily health had got worse, it is true. Yet for the time it was not even

dangerous" (Brod, p. 197). Kafka had finally found the independence he had always longed for. He was able to sleep soundly for almost the first time. He was able to write, for example, "Der Hungerkünstler" and Das Schloss.

But the cheerful period was not to last. The post-war inflation made life difficult, and Kafka's small pension was inadequate to support him properly. Also, he earned very little from publications of his stories, and only at times of desperate need would he accept money or food parcels from his family in Prague. His health began rapidly to fail, and by March 1924 it was obvious that his situation was extremely serious. Max Brod and an uncle of Kafka's, who was a doctor, brought him back to Prague, followed by Dora Diamant. He became worse, and had to be moved to a sanatorium near Vienna. Tuberculosis of the larynx was diagnosed.

By this time, Kafka was in great pain. A month or so later, his physician advised Kafka to go home to Prague, for they could do nothing for him. He was in such a condition that all that could be done was to relieve the pain by administering morphine. Slowly he passed through sleep into death on June 3, 1924.

Chapter 2

DER PROZESS: MAN'S ATTEMPT TO COME TO TERMS WITH HIS WORLD

Franz Kafka's novel, Der Prozess, shows reality to the reader from the standpoint of the one man who, by his awareness, has been cut off from the world he has known and thus stands alone. Unlike K., the main character in Das Schloss who, coming from outside, tries to penetrate into the Schloss, Josef K. remains within his own physical surroundings. Yet he, too, is an outsider because his inner point of view has changed. He is perplexed by the new face of reality that has suddenly been exposed to him through his awakening and thus feels alienated from his world.

Most men never undergo this moment of awakening and thus never become consciously aware of their guilt. Living from day to day, they never step back and pause to reflect on the many ways the individual becomes guilty. Caught within the system, they regard everything as perfectly natural. In Der Prozess the situation is different. Thrust out, somehow, of the context of everyday life, the main character, Josef K., suddenly views reality from a point from the outside. Hence, he is the only figure in the Prozess to whom the processes of the Court

seem strange; everyone else takes them for granted, just as he had, prior to the moment of awakening.

This moment of awakening occurs with the sentence that begins the Prozess: "Jemand musste Josef K. verleumdet haben, denn ohne dass er etwas Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet."⁵ With this piece of information, a tragic parable of the human condition is set into motion. One may understand it as the process of a fatal disease,⁶ or as man struggling with his original sin,⁷ or as a neurosis worsening into psychosis.

Despite the nightmarish quality of the events described, the style of Der Prozess is one of realism. Josef K., a Prokurist in a bank, is arrested on the morning of his thirtieth birthday. "One's thirtieth birthday," Wilhelm Emrich points out, "is an obvious time to attempt, as it were, to justify the life one has led and the life one is still to lead."⁸ If Mr. Emrich is correct in this assumption, and this is happening to Josef K., then Josef K. faces the same dilemma as Oskar Matzerath, the

⁵Franz Kafka, Der Prozess (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1958), p. 7. Subsequent references to this work will appear in the text in parentheses.

⁶Rene Dauvin, "The Trial: Its Meaning," Franz Kafka Today, ed, Angel Flores and Homer Swander (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), p. 145.

⁷Adrian Jaffe, The Process of Kafka's Trial (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967), p. 76.

⁸Emrich, p. 330.

hero in Grass' novel Die Blechtrommel. Oskar, too, had not been aware of any human responsibility prior to his thirtieth birthday. After thirty years of his life, however, the threat of it becomes very evident to him.⁹

While being legally detained, Josef K. has two guards who cannot or will not tell him why he has been arrested. Their job is seemingly to make him doubt his innocence and security. Josef K.'s nervous collapse is under way. Perhaps other men would not have complied peacefully with the will of their persecutors, would not have questioned themselves as Josef K. begins to do. And "if he truly were convinced of his innocence he would have laughed at the whole business."¹⁰ Thus, Josef K. must be vulnerable to the conditions under which this persecution can function.

With Josef K., Kafka seems to be portraying a man, who, upon reaching a certain stage in life, suddenly, and for the first time in his life, begins to question the meaning of his own existence. Up to now he has lived within the system, safe in the security of his job, his clients, and office assistants. But on awakening one morning, he suddenly asks himself "What is the meaning of my life?" and that question precipitates the novel.

⁹Günter Grass, Die Blechtrommel (Hamburg: Fischer Bücherei, 1960), p. 493.

¹⁰Eliseo Vivas, "Kafka's Distorted Mask," Kafka, ed. Ronald Gray (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 138.

Whatever Josef K.'s guilt may be--his lack of love for other human beings,¹¹ or his "ignorance of the Law,"¹² or the misuse of his whole life,¹³ or something else--Josef K. himself is not aware of it. But one does not need to look far for evidence of guilt feelings within him. Up to the time of his arrest, he had lived "within his constricted shell . . . without any idea of the entanglements and guilt that usually accompany human existence."¹⁴ This, however, has now changed. Thus, when he comes home on the evening following his arrest, he finds it necessary to apologize to his landlady for the trouble he has caused her that day. He concludes the conversation by exclaiming: "Wenn Sie die Pension rein erhalten wollen, müssen Sie mir zuerst kündigen" (Der Prozess, p. 22). Shortly afterward he apologizes to his neighbor Fräulein Bürstner, for the fact that her room was used earlier that day for his "hearing":

Ihr Zimmer ist heute früh, gewissermassen durch meine Schuld, ein wenig in Unordnung gebracht worden, es geschah durch fremde Leute gegen meinen Willen und doch, wie gesagt, durch meine Schuld; dafür wollte ich um Entschuldigung bitten (Der Prozess, p. 23).

¹¹Max Brod, Verzweiflung und Erlösung im Werk Franz Kafkas (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 1959), p. 44.

¹²Emrich, p. 316.

¹³Martin Greenberg, The Terror of Art (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. 132.

¹⁴Herbert Tauber, Franz Kafka (New York: Haskell House, 1967), p. 79.

From this point on, Josef K., who perhaps had never felt responsible for misfortunes that befell others, has now grounds of feeling guilty. After he complains to the Court of the behavior of his two guards on the morning of his arrest, he feels responsible for the beatings they receive from the Prügler. Still later, his uncle warns him that he is harming his whole family by his behavior: "Josef, lieber Josef, denke an dich, an deine Verwandten, an unsern guten Namen! Du warst bisher unsere Ehre, du darfst nicht unsere Schande werden" (Der Prozess, p. 71). And he learns that he is responsible for the illness of his lawyer Huld: "Du hast wahrscheinlich zu seinem vollständigen Zusammenbrechen beigetragen und beschleunigst so den Tod eines Mannes, auf den du angewiesen bist" (Der Prozess, p. 83). By his attention, he endangers the wife of the court page; at the bank he is negligent regarding the affairs of his clients.

At this point, Josef K. begins to think back over his entire life. Up to now he had felt no need to justify his behavior or existence. Now, however, he begins to to so:

Öfters schon hatte er überlegt, ob es nicht gut wäre, eine Verteidigungsschrift auszuarbeiten und bei Gericht einzureichen. Er wollte darin eine kurze Lebensbeschreibung vorlegen und bei jedem irgendwie wichtigeren Ereignis erklären, aus welchen Gründen er so gehandelt hatte, ob diese Handlungsweise nach seinem gegenwärtigen Urteil zu verwerfen oder zu billigen war und welche Gründe er für dieses oder jenes anführen konnte (Der Prozess, p. 84).

And a little while later, roughly halfway through the novel, halfway through his thirtieth year, Josef K. decides: "Vor allem war es, wenn etwas erreicht werden sollte, notwendig, jeden Gedanken an eine mögliche Schuld von vornherein abzulehnen" (Der Prozess, p. 93). Rather than accept any guilt and act accordingly, he henceforth rigorously disclaims any guilt whatsoever.

Josef K., after being told of his arrest, is still able to go to his job at the bank. Yet he is no longer himself. All his interest concentrates on his trial. He is like the man in Der Mann vom Lande, in a parable related by the priest toward the end of the novel, who approaches the Law and finds himself completely in the power of a guard standing at the door, and K., the main character of Kafka's novel, Das Schloss, who is in the power of the Schloss. So is Josef K. completely at the mercy of his trial, which changes his life completely.

Josef K.'s attempt to refer to the normal laws of the "Rechtsstaat" and to prove himself as a normal citizen of such state, is a failure. A guard comments immediately about the papers which Josef K. presents: "Was kümmern uns denn die?" (Der Prozess, p. 10)

Josef K.'s illusion during an episode in the chapter "Erste Untersuchung" lasts longer. He has been summoned to a preliminary inquiry concerning his case which is held under the most peculiar circumstances. He has great difficulty in finding the court room.

Finally, a washerwoman on the fifth floor gestures to him through a door:

K. glaubte in eine Versammlung einzutreten. Ein Gedränge der verschiedensten Leute--niemand kümmerte sich um den Eintretenden--füllte ein mittelgrosses, zweifenstriges Zimmer, das knapp an der Decke von einer Galerie umgeben war, die gleichfalls vollständig besetzt war und wo die Leute nur gebückt stehen konnten und mit dem Kopf und Rücken an die Decke stiessen. K., dem die Luft zu dumpf war, trat wieder hinaus und sagte zu der jungen Frau, die ihn wahrscheinlich falsch verstanden hatte: "Ich habe nach einem Tischler, einem gewissen Lanz gefragt?" "Ja," sagte die Frau, "gehen Sie, bitte, hinein." K. hätte ihr vielleicht nicht gefolgt, wenn die Frau nicht auf ihn zugegangen wäre, die Türklinke ergriffen und gesagt hätte: "Nach Ihnen muss ich schliessen, es darf niemand mehr hinein." "Sehr vernünftig," sagte K., "es ist aber jetzt schon zu voll." Dann ging er aber doch wieder hinein (Der Prozess, p. 32).

It is only by accident that he has located the court; by accident or by instinct. Josef K. addresses the court, delivering himself of a long and accusing speech. He tries to convince those present of his innocence. He had been addressed by them as a housepainter, and the fact that he was not seemed irrelevant to them. He receives what seems to be applause as he presents his argument. He claims his innocence, ridicules the court, and at the end accuses as the unjustly accused--not because he has need for such accusation:

"Was mir geschehen ist, ist ja nur ein einzelner Fall und als solcher nicht sehr wichtig, da ich es nicht sehr schwer nehme, aber es ist das Zeichen eines Verfahrens, wie es gegen viele geübt wird. Für diese stehe ich hier ein, nicht für mich" (Der Prozess, p. 35).

Yet these words of Josef K.'s are met by indifference; they have no effect upon the huge assemblage.

He would like to have everyone believe that the inquiry has really nothing to do with him. He is only concerned for those who are in the same predicament: "Ich will nicht Rednererfolg," he continues--he who in reality wants all to be on his side--"was ich will, ist nur die öffentliche Besprechung eines Misstandes" (Der Prozess, p. 36).

His speech is interrupted by loud shrieks from the back of the court room, not calmly interrupted, "but shouted down by the lustful shrieks of an official, who, in the corner of the room, is clasping in his arms a woman who has just come in," claims Tauber, who continues that this interruption of Josef K.'s speech "shows the vanity of human logic as compared with the basic phenomenon of guilt."¹⁵

By now, Josef K. is deeply involved in the legal process. Although he receives no legal summons for the following Sunday, he makes his way to the court anyway and finds no one there but the washerwoman who had been responsible for the disturbance the week before. She allows Josef K. to look at the "law books" in the empty court so that he may gain a more profound insight into the processes of the court. The first two he looks at, however, turn out to be pornography and cheap fiction. The woman offers to help Josef K. since she has influence

¹⁵Ibid., p. 101.

over the examining magistrate who is attracted to her. Josef K.'s physical desires are also aroused by the woman who is the wife of the court page and the mistress of the examining magistrate.

Josef K. wants to take revenge upon the examining magistrate, and he reasons that the quickest way to do this is to make the woman his mistress. Yet his attempt at some form of relationship with her, intended to bolster his flagging self-respect, is a failure, just as his attack on Fräulein Bürstner proved to be unsatisfactory when he tried to make love to her after apologizing to her for using her room on the evening of his arrest. One questions whether he is attempting to establish his innocence by a futile sexual attack or whether he is arrested in his sexual development and that at the age of thirty he has not grown up sexually. Perhaps he wants to prove quickly, with the help of these women, that he is sexually mature and that the charges against him are groundless. If that is so, he does not succeed. His own introspection has begun a process of self-appraisal, and he is powerless to stop it. Charles Neider goes along with this theory. He believes that "Josef K. is in search of his masculinity . . . and the role of the females is to arouse K.'s genital awareness."¹⁶

¹⁶Charles Neider, The Frozen Sea (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), p. 164.

The third woman to whom Josef K. is drawn is Leni, the nurse and housekeeper of Advocate Huld. Leni, however, "does not love him for himself, for his own peculiar glory but simply because he is accused,"¹⁷ for she is attracted by all the accused who come to the house; she finds them all beautiful. She has erotic relationships with all of them. "Sie hängt sich an alle, liebt alle, scheint . . . auch von allen geliebt zu werden" (Der Prozess, p. 134). And Josef K. is no exception: he also is an accused man. "This is what makes the lost ones extremely attractive; this is what promises exceptional pleasure in domineering them."¹⁸ She attempts to make Josef K. renounce his fiancée Elsa, of whom the reader knows very little. Josef K. carries a photograph of Elsa, but neither shows any great concern for her nor appears to expect any in return. When Josef K. kisses Leni, she exclaims: "Sie haben mich für Elsa eingetauscht" (Der Prozess, p. 82). Perhaps he has; none of his relationships with women last very long.

As Josef K. is talking with the washerwoman about his trial on his second visit to the court, their talk is interrupted by a red-haired law student who eventually carries the woman off without a struggle on her part to the examining magistrate who wants her. And Josef K.

¹⁷Tauber, p. 104.

¹⁸Emrich, p. 341.

is left feeling worse than before. Again, in his own eyes, he becomes nothing more than someone accused.

Although Josef K. continues to attempt some control of his actions, he has already lost. When he is shown around the law offices, which occupy the attic in the same building, Josef K. finds the atmosphere so stifling that he almost faints and has to be helped outside. In the outside world, the world of daily business, he feels well; the air he breathes does not sicken him. But his life is overthrown by the court; he loses control over his mind and his body. Even the official of the court offices whom he meets and who actually helps him to leave the premises is a deeply disturbing figure to Josef K. Nevertheless, Josef K. needs help. He is caught in the atmosphere of the court's offices as in a dream, and when the possibility of the awakening occurs, he needs assistance. And, although momentarily he is thrust out from the court's offices into the real world, he is already losing his grip on that reality. His gaze is increasingly an introspective one. If only he could, perhaps, with sufficient love, see something in the external world, something outside his own condition; it is possible that he would be saved. But the chances that he will ever look meaningfully enough at the world around him are lessening day by day.

The position of the fifth chapter, "Der Prügler," is persuasively disputed by Charles Neider. He feels

that it should precede Chapter 3. Josef K.'s action, his sudden brutality towards one of the other accused whom he meets, could then be seen as being under the influence of the sadism of the "Prügler" episode.

In "Der Prügler," Josef K. is about to leave the Bank one evening when he hears groans from behind a door of a storeroom. He looks in, and sees three men, stooping over somewhat because of the low ceiling:

Der eine Mann, der die anderen offenbar beherrschte und zuerst den Blick auf sich lenkte, stak in einer Art dunkler Lederkleidung, die den Hals bis tief zur Brust und die ganzen Arme nackt liess. Er antwortete nicht. Aber die zwei anderen riefen: "Herr! Wir sollen geprügelt werden, weil du dich beim Untersuchungsrichter über uns beklagt hast." Und nun erst erkannte K., dass es wirklich die Wächter Franz und Willem waren, und dass der dritte eine Rute in der Hand hielt, um sie zu prügeln. "Nun," sagte K. und starrte sie an, "ich habe mich nicht beklagt, ich habe nur gesagt, wie es sich in meiner Wohnung zugetragen hat. Und einwandfrei habt ihr euch ja nicht benommen" (Der Prozess, p. 64).

Josef K. is appalled and attempts in vain to bribe the Prügler to let them go. And, although "he rejects any responsibility" for his complaints about the men, "he cannot wash his hands of the affair,"¹⁹ because the guards' punishment is the result of Josef K.'s complaint.

This episode is the first intimation Josef K. has had of the sadistic physical violence in which the court apparently indulges. When Josef K. tells the Prügler that he would never have complained about the guards

¹⁹Tauber, p. 107.

had he known they would be punished, he is told that that makes no difference. They would have been punished in any case. But maybe it is Josef K. himself who wants to punish the guards, who is ready to experience the same sadistic fantasy over and over again, for on the following evening, he witnesses the same horrible scene again.

Until now, the world of the law court had not infringed upon Josef K.'s daily world of the Bank, for he had been summoned to appear before it only on weekends. There were two different spheres of influence, two completely separate layers of consciousness. But now, behind a harmless door in the Bank, the court has set up a punishment chamber. Josef K.'s condition is deteriorating. The threat of the court is looming over his ordered daily world. Simply by opening a door, he finds his safe and solid reality is nothing more than a thin shell. The image of the whipping chamber is now terrifyingly close to his consciousness.

Since Josef K. is unwilling to accept responsibility, he constantly seeks helpers to aid him in his case. He surrounds himself with a variety of mediating figures who stand between him and his own responsibility. This is all the more conspicuous because Josef K., at the beginning of the novel, feels a distinct reluctance to accept help from outside. When he goes to the first session, for example, he decides to walk:

Es war irgend ein Trotz, der K. davon abgehalten hatte, zu fahren, er hatte Abscheu vor jeder, selbst der geringsten Hilfe in dieser seiner Sache, auch wollte er niemanden in Anspruch nehmen und dadurch selbst nur im allerentferntesten einweihen (Der Prozess, p. 29).

But as Josef K. becomes more deeply involved and confused, his initial impulse toward independence gives way to the desire to enlist outside assistance, especially from women.

In the first chapter he had already decided that Fräulein Bürstner might be of assistance to him, perhaps because she was soon to become a secretary in a legal office. Later he appeals to the washerwoman.

After these unsuccessful attempts help seems again near, for Josef K.'s uncle, who lives in the country and who has heard about the case, comes to town to assist him. He has an old friend, Huld, a lawyer, who might be able to help, so Josef K. is taken to him.

The uncle's concern is really less for Josef K.'s misfortunes than for the possibility of family scandal. Huld's interest is a purely professional one. It is through him that the prevailing haphazard actions of the court are taken in hand and turned into something resembling a real legal trial, although a secret one. Josef K., on the other hand, does not accept the lawyer's advice.

Though he rejects the firsthand advice of Huld, he hopes to get somewhere with the aid of the nurse Leni:

Ich werbe Helferinnen, dachte er fast verwundert, zuerst Fräulein Bürstner, dann die Frau des Gerichtsdieners, und endlich diese kleine Pflegerin, die ein unbegreifliches Bedürfnis nach mir zu haben scheint (Der Prozess, p. 81).

Invariably, he takes the indirect approach, hoping thereby to put his responsibility on someone else. When Josef K. leaves Leni, he finds his uncle impatiently waiting:

"Junge," rief er, "wie konntest du nur das tun! Du hast deiner Sache, die auf gutem Wege war, schrecklich geschadet. Verkriechst dich mit einem kleinen, schmutzigen Ding, das überdies offensichtlich die Geliebte des Advokaten ist, und bleibst stundenlang weg" (Der Prozess, p. 83).

Josef K. is by now so immersed in his trial that he apparently does not even reply to his uncle's angry words. Nevertheless, he is still capable of fighting; he still wants desperately to believe in his innocence. And he accepts the services of the lawyer for a while, visiting him for consultations and seeing Leni at the same time.

Josef K. finds the lawyer's advice virtually meaningless. And his comfort is certainly cold. Josef K. learns that there is no recognized form of procedure in the court, that its officials are corrupt, and that there is no exact way of finding out the nature of the charge. Understandably, his work at the Bank suffers. Faced with interviewing a client, he finds himself neurotically unable to concentrate. When he is relieved of his interview by the assistant director, he can react

only by staring out of the window in a state of agonized indecision. This same client claims a little while later that he may be able to help in some way. He advises Josef K. to get in touch with a painter named Titorelli who occasionally works for the court and who knows several of the judges. Josef K. wonders if Titorelli is the one who can give him the peace of mind he so much desires; and if he is the one who can help him to come to terms with the world.

Titorelli promises to "remove K. from the trial himself, but only on the condition that he is really innocent."²⁰ At any rate, he feels confident that he can get Josef K. acquitted; not by presenting evidence, or pleading a case, but by using his influence with the judges. His reasoning makes sense to Josef K.:

Waren die Richter durch persönliche Beziehungen wirklich so leicht zu lenken, wie es der Advokat dargestellt hatte, dann waren die Beziehungen des Malers zu den eitlen Richtern besonders wichtig und jedenfalls keineswegs zu unterschätzen. Dann fügte sich der Maler sehr gut in den Kreis von Helfern, die K. allmählich um sich versammelte (Der Prozess, p. 111).

But Titorelli also confuses Josef K. by pointing out to him that there is more than one kind of acquittal; in fact, there are three. Definite acquittal is unheard of. Ostensible acquittal and postponement, when explained, sound like a nightmare. Ostensible acquittal allows

²⁰Ibid., p. 114.

the defendant to continue to live his life under the constant threat of a new arrest. This is the condition in which the vast majority of civilized mankind exists. Postponement allows one to come to terms eventually with the infinite, to defer payment of punishment in the temporal world.

Despite the confusing statement of the painter, however, Josef K. feels drawn to him. Emrich agrees: "Because Titorelli is a 'private person,' Josef K. feels free and unconstrained in his presence--not under suspicion, observation, or surveillance."²¹ Josef K. reasons that Titorelli, although he lives in close proximity to the court, can be a welcome helper and at the same time present no threat to him.

Josef K. is now determined to take his case out of the lawyer's hands, particularly after meeting another of Huld's clients, a man named Block, whose life appears to have been ruined not so much by his case as by his complete and slavish dependence upon Huld:

For Block, the trial has already become the dominant factor in his external life. He employs five lawyers and is about to engage a sixth. His business has declined. He spends whole days in the maid's room to decipher the unintelligible documents of his trial . . . All his activity is directed to inquiries about this justice--life itself dwindles to a minute residue.²²

²¹Emrich, p. 330.

²²Tauber, p. 113.

All else is subordinate to his trial, even the eventual verdict will seem irrelevant to Block. Existence has come to be centered around the problem of his guilt: he has become a fanatic. Josef K. fears the same fate.

It is obvious that Josef K.'s case cannot continue in this strain indefinitely, though it is equally obvious that there can be very little possibility for further significant development. The trial could continue endlessly; the end, when it comes, will be absolute. Josef K. has already been driven to irrationality in his daily behavior: his situation is desperate, and perhaps he now begins to realize it. The novel has been almost as exhausting an experience for the reader as the events described in it have been for its protagonist. But even at the end of his emotional endurance, Josef K. still looks for possible helpers.

Josef K. has been given the job of showing one of the Bank's Italian clients the art treasures in the cathedral. The reader will find out, however, that this is a device of the court to get him there. In the otherwise empty cathedral Josef K. finds a priest. He is about to leave when suddenly the priest's voice calls his name.

Josef K. had searched for outside help during the process of his trial. This had continued until the scene in the cathedral:

"Was willst du nächstens in deiner Sache tun?" fragte der Geistliche. "Ich will noch Hilfe suchen," sagte K. und hob den Kopf, um zu sehen, wie der Geistliche es beurteile. "Es gibt noch gewisse Möglichkeiten, die ich nicht ausgenützt habe." "Du suchst zuviel fremdt Hilfe," sagte der Geistliche missbilligend, "und besonders bei Frauen. Merkst du denn nicht, dass es nicht die wahre Hilfe ist?" (Der Prozess, p. 154)

One can make two general statements. First, the seeking for sources of help is an important part of the novel. For it is clear that Josef K.'s course is not determined by any attempt to move directly toward the court or to shoulder his own responsibility in the world. He moves, instead, from one source of help to the next. He uses resource people outside the normal channel of legal procedure.

Second, Josef K.'s search for helpers is senseless. For, in the parable related later, the helpers that the man from the country enlists in his campaign against the doorkeeper are the fleas in the doorkeeper's fur collar. With this, the priest is trying to show Josef K. the absurdity in his search for helpers: just as the man from the country cannot receive help from the fleas, so Josef K. cannot gain any worthwhile help from other persons.

It has taken Josef K. some months to understand that, although, in theory, innocence is an admissible concept in law, the court which is dealing with him has never known an innocent person, has certainly never admitted anyone to be innocent.

In fighting the court, Josef K. has apparently been fighting the appointed instrument of divine justice.

Yet:

Owing to the constant affirmation of his innocence, K. is not at all open to receive the divine word . . . The level of K.'s consciousness, from which a true understanding might develop, the same level on which the unrest is based, is constantly crowded out by him, and that is why he gets to know only of the empty threat, and not of the prophecy.²³

One must ask, then, what hope there can be for him. Poor Josef K. is beyond redemption. The law is everything; and it has washed its hands of him:

"Willst du nicht noch etwas von mir?" fragte K. "Nein," sagte der Geistliche. "Du warst früher so freundlich zu mir," sagte K., "und hast mir alles erklärt, jetzt aber entlässt du mich, als läge dir nichts mehr an mir." "Du musst doch fortgehen," sagte der Geistliche. "Nun ja," sagte K., "sieh das doch ein." "Sieh du zuerst ein, wer ich bin," sagte der Geistliche. "Du bist der Gefängniskaplan," sagte K. und ging näher zum Geistlichen hin, seine sofortige Rückkehr in die Bank war nicht so notwendig, wie er sie dargestellt hatte, er konnte recht gut noch hierbleiben. "Ich gehöre also zum Gericht," sagte der Geistliche. "Warum sollte ich also etwas von dir wollen? Das Gericht will nichts von dir, Es nimmt dich auf, wenn du kommst, und es entlässt dich, wenn du gehst (Der Prozess, p. 161).

Josef K., thus, awaits the end. And it comes when, on the evening before his thirty-first birthday, exactly one year after his arrest, two men arrive at his boarding house. Although he has not been told to expect them, Josef K. is sitting quietly in an armchair, dressed in black. "A year ago the warders had insisted

²³Tauber, p. 116.

that he wear a black coat and had enforced their order against his objections . . . now he is voluntarily dressed in black."²⁴

After the unsuccessful attempt to resist the men on the street, Josef K. "gives up arguing, harping on his innocence, and the pathos he had previously displayed in his defense."²⁵ Josef K.'s thoughts as he marches on are dulled, resigned:

Das einzige, was ich jetzt tun kann, ist, bis zum Ende den ruhig einteilenden Verstand behalten. Ich wollte immer mit zwanzig Händen in die Welt hineinfahren und überdies zu einem nicht zu billigendem Zweck. Das war unrichtig. Soll ich nun zeigen, dass nicht einmal der einjährige Prozess mich belehren könnte? Soll ich als ein begriffsstutziger Mensch abgehen? Soll man mir nachsagen dürfen, dass ich am Anfang des Prozesses ihn beenden wollte und jetzt, an seinem Ende, ihn wieder beginnen will? Ich will nicht, dass man das sagt. Ich bin dafür dankbar, dass man mir auf diesem Weg diese halbstummen, verständnislosen Herren mitgegeben hat und dass man es mir überlassen hat, mir selbst das Notwendige zu sagen (Der Prozess, p. 163).

Outside the town, the two men make it clear to Josef K. that he, himself, is expected to guide the knife into his chest:

The Law expects from him a sacrificial death, a self-execution, which is, after all, only another word for suicide. He has to rise to the occasion and do his duty; failing to commit suicide, he would disobey once more, prove guilty, vindicate his arrest, and justify his execution.²⁶

²⁴Heinz Politzer, Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 212.

²⁵Ibid., p. 214.

²⁶Ibid., p. 215.

But this responsibility he silently insists on leaving to the two men. Thus, he is struck down like a dog. It is possible, however, that Josef K., too late as the man from the country before the Law was too late, has a glimpse of the light streaming through the door just prior to the final thrust of the knife which ends his life, for at the last moment a window is opened somewhere. It seems like the flashing of a light, and it is the last flicker of hope. Yet it was "zu spät, fürs Leben zu spät."²⁷ Josef K. dies under the blade of the knife which is turning in his heart.

It is, of course, no accident that Josef K. dies "wie ein Hund" in the last sentence of the book, for he refused to the end to accept responsibility for his actions (Der Prozess, p. 165). As the two men pass the knife back and forth over his head, he senses that it is his responsibility to plunge it into his own heart. But Josef K. refuses. "Die Verantwortung für diesen letzten Fehler trug der, der ihm den Rest der dazu nötigen Kraft versagt hatte" (Der Prozess, p. 165). Even here Josef K. continues to project his guilt.

Throughout the year Josef K. has tried to establish his innocence, has tried to come to terms with the world. Yet throughout his year of trial Josef K. has not reached

²⁷ Hermann Pongs, Franz Kafka: Dichter des Labyrinths (Heidelberg: Wolfgang Rothe Verlag, 1960), p. 34.

the state of human freedom and responsibility. He has experienced an awakening, he has been thrust out of his everyday life, yet he has changed little during that year. Josef K. still clings to futile hopes of delaying his proceedings, of thrusting the responsibility upon others. Hence he dies like a dog in the awareness that his shame will survive him.

He was an individual who was seemingly right in his struggle for his freedom from the oppression of "justice." However, he could not gain vindication of his "guilt" from the establishment and turned to the outside. In doing so, he was condemned to defeat.

Chapter 3

DAS SCHLOSS: THE ATTEMPT TO BELONG

Franz Kafka's last and, as many Kafka critics believe, most important novel, Das Schloss, is unfinished. Kafka's inability to bring any of his longer works to a conclusion did not correct itself. And, as with his other novels, it ostensibly ends with the death of K., the hero of the novel. In an additional note to Kafka's book, Max Brod writes:

Kafka never wrote his concluding chapter. But he told me about it once when I asked him how the novel was to end. The ostensible Land Surveyor was to find partial satisfaction at least. He was not to relax in his struggle, but was to die worn out by it. Round his death-bed the villagers were to assemble, and from the Castle itself the word was to come that though K.'s legal claim to live in the village was not valid, yet, taking certain auxiliary circumstances into account, he was to be permitted to live and work there.²⁸

Das Schloss starts with K.'s arrival, late one winter evening, at a small, snow-covered village whose houses huddle around a castle on top of a hill. He finds the village inn still open, is told there are no rooms available, but that he can sleep in a corner of the inn.

²⁸Max Brod, "Additional Note," The Castle, Franz Kafka, trans. Edwin and Willa Muir (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 329.

He falls asleep, only to be awakened by a young man who tells him:

Dieses Dorf ist Besitz des Schlosses, wer hier wohnt oder übernachtet, wohnt oder übernachtet gewissermassen im Schloss. Niemand darf das ohne gräfliche Erlaubnis. Sie aber haben eine solche Erlaubnis nicht oder haben sie wenigstens nicht vorgezeigt.²⁹

K. claims, then, to be a land-surveyor whom the Count is expecting, and a telephone call is put through to the Castle to confirm this.

Is K. really the land-surveyor sent for by the Castle? Already on the second page the careful reader becomes aware of the discrepancy in K.'s claim that he is expected. The introductory lines are as follows:

Es war spät abends, als K. ankam. Das Dorf lag in tiefem Schnee. Vom Schlossberg war nichts zu sehen, Nebel und Finsternis umgaben ihn, auch nicht der schwächste Lichtschein deutete das grosse Schloss an. Lange stand K. auf der Holzbrücke, die von der Landstrasse zum Dorf führte, und blickte in die scheinbare Leere empor (Das Schloss, p. 7).

The author's method of narration is such that he lets the reader know what K. thinks, feels or does. Therefore, it appears that on his arrival in the village, K. seems to know of the existence of the Castle, why else would he be gazing into the emptiness above him. It seems strange, then, when K. acts only a short time later as if he were completely unaware of the existence of the Castle: "In welches Dorf habe ich mich verirrt?"

²⁹Franz Kafka, Das Schloss (Berlin: Fischer Verlag, 1958), p. 7. (Future references to this work will be given in parentheses.)

Ist denn hier ein Schloss?" (Das Schloss, p. 7) There is nothing about this statement that makes it coincide with the opening lines of the narrative.

Seemingly, K. is not too concerned with telling the truth. Thus, he does not have the trust of the reader when he, a little while later, claims to have been summoned to this village by the owner of the Castle himself. Perhaps K.'s last statement is nothing more than a lie borne out of necessity to insure himself a place to sleep.

This theory finds support a little while later. K.'s claim has made an impression upon the villagers in the inn, but it has failed to convince them of its truth. The telephone call to the Castle is therefore put through. At first it seems that the Castle has denied all knowledge of a land-surveyor, and the now distrustful reader is not surprised. But the phone rings a second time; K. is expected. There now can no longer be any doubt in the reader's mind. K. is a fraud, for the Castle's response appears to disturb K.:

Das Schloss hatte ihn also zum Landvermesser ernannt. Das war einerseits ungünstig für ihn, denn es zeigte, dass man im Schloss alles Nötige über ihn wusste, die Kräfteverhältnisse abgewogen hatte und den Kampf lächelnd aufnahm. Es war aber andererseits auch günstig, denn es bewies, seiner Meinung nach, dass man ihn unterschätzte und dass er mehr Freiheit haben würde, als er hätte von vornherein hoffen dürfen. Und wenn man glaubte, durch diese geistig gewiss überlegene Anerkennung seiner Landvermesserschaft ihn dauernd in Schrecken halten zu können so täuschte man sich; es überschauerte ihn leicht, das war aber alles (Das Schloss, p. 10).

The reader is plunged into these events in the first pages of Das Schloss. What is one to make of K.'s reaction to the Castle's afterthought concerning him? It is extremely doubtful that one is meant to believe that K. is really a land-surveyor. K.'s first drowsy words to the young man who awakens him in the name of the Castle, and his disquiet at eventually having his story accepted by the Castle authorities at the other end of the phone are those of a trickster whose bluff has been called.

On the following day a second surprise awaits K. K. had stated on the evening of his arrival that his two assistants were to come the next day with the necessary instruments. And, indeed, the following evening two young men are looking for K.:

"Wer seid ihr?" fragte er und sah vom einen zum anderen. "Euere Gehilfen," antworteten sie. "Es sind die Gehilfen," bestätigte leise der Wirt. "Wie?" fragte K. "Ihr seid meine alten Gehilfen, die ich nachkommen liess, die ich erwarte?" Sie bejahten es. "Das ist gut," sagte K. nach einem Weilchen, "es ist gut, dass ihr gekommen seid" (Das Schloss, p. 22).

K.'s explanation on the evening of his arrival that his assistants were to follow him with the necessary instruments is incorrect, because he accepts the two men the Castle had sent him without argument. This proves two things. First: he does not expect the arrival of other assistants, for he does not have any. Second: he cannot possibly be a land-surveyor, or at least not one the Castle had asked to come.

If K. is a trickster in any sense, he is no ordinary one. But his identity can and should be questioned. Perhaps his journey is a search for identity and for acceptance. This interpretation finds acceptance by Thomas Mann, to whom the village represents "life, the soil, the community, healthy normal existence and the blessing of human and bourgeois society," and in which K. is seen as "driven on . . . by a need for the most primitive requisites of life, the need to be rooted in a home and a calling, and to become a member of a community."³⁰

Why should the Castle's recognition of K. as the land-surveyor he claims to be make his skin prickle? As the reader progresses into the narrative, he finds himself probably sympathizing with K. in his vain quest, but one ought not lose sight of one's own initial doubts about him. One should remember K.'s first reaction to the Castle's confirmation of his claim; his challenge was taken up by the Castle. And:

the term "challenge" used by K. in this context, shows that he does not expect to step into a promised position but that he comes with the purpose of fighting the Castle and forcing it to yield something to him, either the coveted office or something else. It is clear that he was never appointed land surveyor and called to the Castle. He is a stranger

³⁰Thomas Mann, "Homage," The Castle, Franz Kafka, trans. Edwin and Willa Muir (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. xii.

who . . . "challenges" the Castle to submit to his unfounded claim.³¹

Das Schloss is, among other things, a study of relationships, of individual to society, perhaps of sickness to health. Josef K., the passive victim of Der Prozess, has become K., the aggressive protagonist of Das Schloss. "Josef K. verbirgt sich, flieht--K. drängt sich auf, greift an."³² K. has nothing to fear from the Castle but non-recognition of his identity as Walter Sokel believes, "however, K. knows he has no call and is, therefore, nothing."³³ He uses his stay in the village to reach the Castle by continuously scheming and plotting, hoping to enlist the help of the villagers, but they, neither hostile or friendly, refuse to take him to it. He never tires, and "wie im Prozess hält sich K. an die Frauen, die ihm den rechten Weg . . . zeigen sollen."³⁴ Like Josef K. had done, so K. "sucht Bundesgenossen, erwartet Hilfe von Frauen in seinem Kampf."³⁵ Although

³¹Walter Sokel, "K. as Impostor: His Quest for Meaning," Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Castle, ed. Peter Neumeyer (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1969), p. 33.

³²Max Brod, "Nachwort," Das Schloss, Franz Kafka, p. 314.

³³Sokel, "K. as Impostor: His Quest for Meaning," p. 34.

³⁴Meno Spann, "Franz Kafka," ed. John Geary and Willy Schumann, Einführung in die deutsche Literatur (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 425.

³⁵Max Brod, "Nachwort," p. 315.

there seems to be no visible obstacle, K. never succeeds in his attempt to reach the Castle. This is already apparent in his phone call to the Castle, because as he asks when he will be allowed to call there, the response is: never. But he is not able to break away from the Castle again. Even when Frieda, his fiancée, pleads with him to leave the village with her, so that they might have a happy and peaceful life together, he can only reply that he cannot go.

Why should K. have the desire to stay in this desolate country? Homer Swander warns of the danger involved in answering such a question. He believes that it is wrong

to resolve the contradiction which he K. --and perhaps Kafka as well--did not resolve because he could not; for part of the meaning of the novel surely rests in there being no satisfactory answers to some of the most overwhelming questions.³⁶

Like the man from the country (in the parable of Der Prozess), who spends his life fruitlessly in front of a seemingly closed door, so K. spends his life in vain trying to reach the Castle.

The Castle has not only sent K. two assistants but also a messenger called Barnabas, whom K. again is trying to use in order to reach the Castle. The Barnabas family has something in common with K.: its members

³⁶Homer Swander, "The Castle: K.'s Village," ed. Angel Flores and Homer Swander, Franz Kafka Today (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), p. 177.

are also outsiders. Yet, it is easier to compare the family with Josef K. in Der Prozess than with K. in Das Schloss. The family is not aggressive and strong-willed like K. but passive like Josef K. Like the latter, it is part of a society that condemns it. It is found guilty and cast out of the village life. Although the family is innocent of a specific charge, it is convinced of its guilt, and it destroys itself.

That guilt was caused by Amalia, the sister of Barnabas, who has attracted the attention of a Castle official named Sortini. She receives a letter from him telling her of his wish to see her. The girl is enraged, she tears up the note and throws its remains into the face of Sortini's messenger. The consequences are disastrous. The insult leads to the expulsion of Amalia and her family out of village life, and they are forced to live in almost complete isolation.

Yet, Amalia was not condemned because the Castle wanted it, states her sister Olga later to K., "but because neither she nor the family was able to behave innocent. The punishment, although suggested by the villagers, was self-inflicted."³⁷ Unlike Josef K., however, who continuously tries to prove his innocence, the family is trying to prove its guilt so that it could be relieved

³⁷Neider, The Frozen Sea, p. 120.

of it by the Castle, "fantastic as it seems," which is a sign of neurosis.³⁸

Through this family K. becomes acquainted with another inn, the Herrenhof, where some of the Castle officials stay. One of the officials, Klamm, appears to be in charge of K.'s case, but K. is unable to contact him. He spends a night at the Herrenhof on the barroom floor which is covered with beer puddles, making love to the barmaid Frieda, who is Klamm's mistress. This seems to be the only time in his relationship with her that K. gets any kind of sexual satisfaction. "In the partial unconscious occurs K.'s only successful coitus during the action of the novel . . . And his lack of sexual potency is obvious from his weakened condition afterwards."³⁹

Frieda accompanies K. back to the inn and moves into the small room which he is already sharing with his assistants. Frieda is neither young nor pretty, yet K. continues his compulsive sexual sessions with her. The author writes about K. and Frieda:

Dort lagen sie, aber nicht so hingeeben wie damals in der Nacht. Sie suchte etwas und er suchte etwas, wütend, Grimassen schneidend, sich mit dem Kopf einbohrend in der Brust des anderen, suchten sie, und ihre Umarmungen und ihre sich aufwerfenden Körper machten sich nicht vergessen, sondern erinnerten sie an die Pflicht, zu suchen, wie Hunde verzweifelt

³⁸Ibid., p. 121.

³⁹Ibid., p. 139.

im Boden scharren, so scharrten sie an ihren Körpern; und hilflos, enttäuscht, um noch letztes Glück zu holen, fuhren manchmal ihre Zungen breit über des anderen Gesicht. Erst die Müdigkeit liess sie still und einander dankbar werden (Das Schloss, p. 49).

This passage seems to give additional support to Mr. Neider's statement.

K. is by now determined to see Klamm not only with reference to his gaining access to the Castle, but also--this he wants others to believe--in order to receive Klamm's permission to marry Frieda. In reality, however, his intentions are to get to Klamm through Frieda, for K. loves Frieda--if he loves her at all--entirely for Klamm's sake.⁴⁰ Swander observes:

K. for a while believes that merely announcing his intention to marry will make possible a face-to-face meeting with Klamm. In his conversation with Gardena, the landlady of the Bridge Inn, K. himself leaves no doubt that his motivation in the marriage proposal is his knowledge that Frieda was formerly Klamm's mistress and his belief that this makes possible an interview between the old lover and the new--an interview which can be arranged if not by K. himself then surely by Frieda for him.⁴¹

To be accepted is what K. really needs. Presumably he could, when he first arrived in the village, have walked up to the Castle and knocked on the door. If he accepts the myth of its impregnability, its strange power, it can only be because his real desires are more

⁴⁰Erich Heller, "The World of Franz Kafka," Kafka, ed. Ronald Gray (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1962), p. 115.

⁴¹Flores and Swander, p. 183.

complex than he imagines them to be. To force his way into the Castle as a stranger is not K.'s purpose. To be accepted, to be recognized, to be given a part to play is vitally necessary to him. This is why he continues to make his way to the Castle, accepting involvements at every turn.

The maze of involvement becomes more complex as the narrative progresses. K. manages, without too much difficulty, to obtain an interview with a comparatively insignificant official, the Superintendent of the village. He informs K. somewhat ambiguously that K. has been taken on as land-surveyor, but that unfortunately the village has no need of a surveyor as everything has already been surveyed and recorded.

K.'s hopeless fight for recognition now begins to be seen as a struggle to come to grips with reality. The reality of the Castle is surrounded, rendered almost unattainable, by the confusion of life in the village. The Superintendent places doubts in K.'s mind as to the reality of events which until now K. has taken for granted. The telephone messages from the Castle may or may not have been real, but they are almost certainly insignificant to the point of meaninglessness, due to the confusion of the exchange. K. has infiltrated himself sufficiently into the village life so that there no longer will be any question of his being forced to leave. But he can get no farther: he still cannot penetrate the Castle.

He differs from the villagers primarily in that they are not interested in defining their relationship to the Castle. They are aware of its existence, perhaps even slightly fearful of it, but it does not influence their daily lives. K., on the other hand, never loses sight of it. All else is subordinated to his image of the Castle as the ultimate goal of life. He has no option but to persist.

The landlady of the Bridge Inn confides in K. that twenty years ago she too had been Klamm's mistress. In fact, it seems usual for the village women to give themselves to the Castle officials. This seems to be the only kind of contact that exists between Castle and village.⁴²

K. is a lonelier being than Josef K. of Der Prozess who wanted to be restored to his condition of innocence. K., on the other hand, has a strong determination. He must act as he does, and one sees now that he is no superficial impostor as was suspected at the beginning, but a seeker who is willing to use the deceptive desires of the world in order to go on living in the world. Charles Neider elaborates on this in more detail.⁴³

At the instigation of the Superintendent, the village school teacher offers K. the temporary position

⁴²Herbert Tauber, Franz Kafka, p. 140.

⁴³Charles Neider, The Frozen Sea, p. 120.

of school janitor. K.'s first impulse is to refuse the offer, but Frieda persuades him to accept. It is, after all, only temporary, and it is recognition of a kind. But before taking up his duties, K. pays another visit to the Herrenhof. As he walks along the snow-covered village streets, he looks up at the dark, silent Castle:

Das Schloss, dessen Umrisse sich schon aufzulösen begannen, lag still wie immer, niemals noch hatte K. dort das geringste Zeichen von Leben gesehen, vielleicht war es gar nicht möglich, aus dieser Ferne etwas zu erkennen, und doch verlangten es die Augen und wollten die Stille nicht dulden. Wenn K. das Schloss ansah, so war es ihm manchmal, als beobachte er jemanden, der ruhig dasitzte und vor sich hinsehe, nicht etwa in Gedanken verloren und dadurch gegen alles abgeschlossen, sondern frei und unbekümmert, so als sei er allein und niemand beobachte ihn, und doch musste er merken, dass er beobachtet wurde, aber es rührte nicht im geringsten an seiner Ruhe, und wirklich--man wusste nicht, war es Ursache oder Folge--die Blicke des Beobachters konnten sich nicht festhalten und glitten ab. Dieser Eindruck wurde heute noch verstärkt durch das frühe Dunkel; je länger er hinsah, desto weniger erkannte er, desto tiefer sank alles in Dämmerung (Das Schloss, p. 101).

Thus the Castle is revealed as benevolent but unperturbed authority. K. looks at it as the young Kafka once used to look at his father. Just as Franz needed to be accepted, to be acknowledged by his parent, so K. desires the approval of the Castle and its acceptance of him as an important functionary in its service. And in order to gain this acceptance, K. decides that:

Nur als Dorfarbeiter, möglichst weit den Herren vom Schloss entrückt, war er imstande, etwas im Schloss zu erreichen, diese Leute im Dorfe, die noch so misstrauisch gegen ihn waren, würden zu sprechen anfangen, wenn er, wo nicht ihr Freund, so doch ihr Mitbürger geworden war (Das Schloss, p. 28).

Strategic considerations are uppermost here--his is no more than an attempt to win indirectly what K. has now begun to suspect cannot be won directly.⁴⁴

Arriving at the Herrenhof Inn, K. meets a young girl, Pepi, who is obviously Frieda's successor with Klamm, or at least (she) tries to be. K. restrains himself from making advances to her, although he is tempted to do so, not so much by personal charms as by her statement that formerly she had been a maid at the Castle. K., who by now has accepted "the fact that Frieda cannot help him toward his goals,"⁴⁵ sees that possibility in Pepi. Here is a direct link with the Castle: not a very meaningful one, it is true, but nevertheless a contact with it.

K. decides to wait for Klamm, but misses him and instead is forced to undergo being interviewed by Klamm's village secretary, a young man called Momus. K. tries to leave, but is detained by the man's shouting. The landlady, who had managed to be present, tries to impress K. with the importance of Momus and the significance of being interviewed by him:

Bedenken Sie aber, dass ihn Klamm ernannt hat, dass er im Namen Klamms arbeitet, dass das, was er tut, wenn es auch, niemals bis zu Klamm gelangt, doch von vornherein Klamms Zustimmung hat. . . . ich rede nicht von seiner selbständigen Persönlichkeit, sondern

⁴⁴Swander, p. 179.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 189.

davon, was er ist, wenn er Klamms Zustimmung hat, wie eben jetzt: Dann ist er ein Werkzeug, auf dem die Hand Klamms liegt, und wehe jedem, der sich ihm nicht fügt (Das Schloss, p. 118).

Momus, then, is an important intermediary. The way to the Castle is through Klamm, the way to Klamm is through Momus. It would appear that at least K.'s efforts are being channelled in the right direction, and that he is making some kind of progress. Yet even this is illusory. Momus is village secretary not only to Klamm but also to another official, Vallabene. His significance is thus somewhat spread out: he is a kind of crossroad which could as easily lead K. off in a wrong direction. He accepts a deposition from K., which he will place in Klamm's village register. But the importance of the village register is by no means clearly defined. As a repository of unconscious memory it may have some validity, but as a means of advancing K. toward the Castle it may be useless.

K.'s belief in the Castle never wavers. Side-tracked though he may be by village secretaries, by temporary jobs as school janitors, by his two absurd assistants or by Frieda, he is steadfast in his attempt to reach the Castle.

K. has no sooner left the Herrenhof than he runs into his two assistants who are accompanied by Barnabas. It appears that the Castle is mocking him, for Barnabas has a letter from Klamm congratulating K. and his assistants

on the surveying work K. has carried out, and insisting that they should continue in their task without interruption. K., of course, is in no condition to appreciate such a letter; he is simply made weary by it. He tries to persuade Barnabas to take a message back to Klamm at the Castle immediately, but it becomes evident that Barnabas has not yet delivered his last message, that he is under no compulsion to deliver messages promptly, and that in any case Klamm hates receiving messages.

On the morning of their first night at the school, K. and Frieda awaken to find the pupils around them. The woman teacher behaves hysterically, the school master himself sides with her, and an absurd scene develops in which K. is dismissed but refuses to accept dismissal. Frieda asks K. to take her away to the south of France or to Spain, but departure is something of which K. simply cannot conceive:

"Auswandern kann ich nicht," sagte K., "ich bin hierhergekommen, um hierzubleiben. Ich werde hierbleiben." Und in einem Widerspruch, den er gar nicht zu erklären sich Mühe gab, fügte er wie im Selbstgespräch zu: "Was hätte mich denn in dieses öde Land locken können, als das Verlangen hierzubleiben" (Das Schloss, p. 139).

K. will not leave the village, but Frieda herself leaves K. in order to look after one of the assistants whom K. has chased away. The narrative becomes more involved. Barnabas and his family assume a greater significance. Doubt is introduced as to whether the end will ever be attained. This, to K., is a paralyzing

blow though he does not immediately realize it. A message delivered by Barnabas leads him to believe that one of Klamm's chief secretaries, Erlanger, has asked to see the land-surveyor at the Herrenhof: "'Doch müsste er gleich jetzt kommen. Ich habe nur einige Besprechungen dort und fahre um fünf Uhr wieder zurück. Sag ihm, dass mir viel daran liegt, mit ihm zu sprechen.'" "

When K. arrives at the Herrenhof, he finds a small group of applicants waiting for Erlanger. K. misses him and instead sees a Castle secretary named Bürgel who, in long drawn-out fashion, tells K. how he can obtain admission to the Castle by unofficially accosting one of the secretaries by night when the official power of judgement suffers somewhat. "Of course, the seizing of this opportunity does not permit of being tired out by disappointments."⁴⁶ And K. unfortunately is by this time too tired to understand Bürgel correctly. At the crucial moment, when everything has become clear, when the only other thing that K. needs to do is to express his request--at that moment K. is asleep.⁴⁷ He does grasp, however, that he must by-pass the regulations in some way. And it is something of this that he tries to pass on to Pepi. Soon, the novel comes to an end: K.'s dilemma is still acute. He is demanding an entry

⁴⁶Tauber, p. 175.

⁴⁷Emrich, p. 478.

into a community whose laws and customs he has begun to despise. It is vital not only to his happiness, but also to his very existence that he should attain his impossible goal.

Brod has said that K. was, ironically, to die just as the possibility of acceptance, of some form of recognition by the Castle was to be granted him. To K. the Castle was the only aspiration. But the Castle was only another aspect of illusion, and it was precisely because it was illusive that it was unattainable. Happiness is illusive. And Kafka's own personality and temperament rendered it unlikely that he would be able to find any real equilibrium between village and Castle.

Chapter 4

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study has presented the life of Kafka as revealed by various biographers in order to inform the reader about the background of this man who made a significant contribution to the literary world of the twentieth century.

A chapter has been devoted to a discussion of Der Prozess wherein the actions and thoughts of the principal character, Josef K., have been carefully analyzed in order to show that he experienced an awakening which forced him to exist outside of the well-ordered world he had known prior to his thirtieth birthday. His inability to accept responsibility forced him to look for help outside of established legal procedures in order to seek the justice which he could never obtain from within. That he can be considered to be a hero, and is in this study, is based on the fact that he represents most people in their struggle for existence.

A chapter is used to discuss the significant episodes in Das Schloss that magnify again the struggle of the individual for recognition against insurmountable odds. Das Schloss is impregnable even though K., the

principal character, tries continuously to gain entrance into that closed society. He is always an outsider.

It can be concluded from this study that Josef K. in Der Prozess and K. in Das Schloss attempt to integrate themselves into the company of their fellowman; both feel the need to come to terms with their world. Josef K.'s failure to accomplish this is the refusal to accept his responsibility as a free man. After the initial awakening necessary for the recognition of guilt, it is important to return to one's world with this new dimension of awareness and to accept the responsibility that this awareness involves. This, Josef K. is unable to do, his attempts are, therefore, fruitless.

K.'s actions may be fruitless, too, but they are actions, nevertheless. He is not the passive masochist of the earlier novel: he may not have come to terms with the world, but he is aware of the necessity to do so in order to survive, and he constantly attempts to act upon his surroundings. "Was hätte mich denn in dieses öde Land locken können, als das Verlangen hierzubleiben" (Der Prozess, p. 139). By being brought to a condition where K. could bear to question himself in this way, he proves himself more capable of being acted upon by the external world than Josef K. in Der Prozess who, mentally unstable and impregnable, allowed only one thing to happen to him: a knife to be plunged into his chest. K. may never reach the Schloss, but he has reached an

advanced stage of self-discovery on the way, and to this extent he is less inflexibly egocentric a character than his predecessor in the earlier novel.

Perhaps it is a mistake to identify Kafka with his heroes. For Kafka, as an artist, actually achieved to some degree the release denied Josef K. and K. Yet their struggle was also the struggle of their creator, for man in the twentieth century faces the dilemma of alienation and helplessness, and Kafka, representative of his own generation, was no exception.

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