



FRANZ KAFKA'S EMPLOYMENT OF ANIMAL CHARACTERS: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Animal characters play a prominent role in Franz Kafka's writings. Kafka's propensity and empathy for animals led him to write many tales in which central characters are thinking animals, human animals hybrids. These stories have been demonstrated allegorically, as fables that reduce human condition to its elementary and uncanny attributes. The objective of this study is to understand the roles played by non human animals in Kafka's works. The paper investigates the themes of humanity's self-alienation and his critique of social power in 'The Metamorphosis'.

KEYWORDS : animal creatures, self-alienation, social power, The Metamorphosis

Franz Kafka, a Jewish insurance official and writer in Prague. Born in 1883 and belonged to a middle-class family of German-Jewish extraction, he grew up in the shadow of his authoritarian father, in relation to whom Kafka not just shaped his own self worth but also the protagonists of most of his novels invariably trapped in the claws of an abstract authority. As a writer, Kafka was unknown during his lifetime. Kafka left about forty complete texts to readers. And all these texts add up to about 350 printed pages in the critical edition of his writings that is conventionally considered classic.

Kafka's affinity and love for animals led him to write numerous tales in which protagonists are thinking animals, human-animal hybrids. In Kafka's works, animal characters play very important role. His preoccupation with animals illuminates to the readers about his core concerns; the nature of power; the inescapability of history and guilt; the danger, promise and strangeness of alienation endemic to modern life; the nature of authenticity, family life, Jewishness and the nature of language and art.

Both readers and scholars of Kafka very well know that nonhuman creatures exist in large numbers, both in his fiction and non-fiction works. Many times it has pointed that the name 'Kafka' the Czech version of which is 'jackdaw' that was actually a first step "toward Franz Kafka's imaginative identification with insects, ape, dog, rodent- species show as borrowed as terms of abuse.

The functioning of these beings in Kafka's works is open to various interpretations. It has been identified that non human creatures used in various ways by Kafka. These individual beings regardless of their usage, are part of many of his endeavours. His animals impose upon us questions about who we are, who they are and also about how our understanding of all his works directs our treatment of our animal others.

His writings make it very easy for the readers and the scholars to rethink and animal nature challenging us to look again and to redefine our unarguable pretensions about human uniqueness, superiority and righteousness. To reconsider this could be our initiative toward conquering over modern human alienation from the natural world- an estrangement which is as well a self-estrangement, for we are animals ourselves and toward imagining the outline of an ethically import "human and animal community".

Kafka narratives do speak for the animal and also speak as the animal, and more accurately to use human language to pretend to speak as the non human animals. Kafka wrote at the time of development of Avant-garde art. Avant-garde art was considered the emblem of modernism. This art made a number of fundamental or extreme choices for portraying nonhuman states. Kafka's essential medium for appealing nonhuman motif is by withholding human language and models of rational human thinking. Kafka's choice in his works is restricted to hostile plots, the content

shift begin with the human and work by the process of modification deduction and withdrawal.

Kafka has his animal figures thinking or speaking through untenable rationality gestures toward animal being by acting out the erasure of the signs and markers that attend the human being. This is in testimony in four Kafka pieces- The Metamorphosis, A Report to an Academy, Investigations of a Dog, and The Burrow-through which one can outline the progressive deconstruction of the human in the concern of on regaining an imagined animal sensitivity that in turn reflects back a subversive and problematic image of the human as seen through animal eyes.

The Metamorphosis and A Report to an Academy portray a creature in transition between two species, like the degeneration of the clerk, Gregor Samsa, into an insect in former one and elaborative narrative of Red Peter, the ape turned human in the latter one.

The Metamorphosis is the story of a hardworking salesman, a young bachelor still living at home as a sole support of his parents and sister, wakes up one morning only to discover that he has been turned into an insect. The animal eyes and voice in Kafka's fiction become mirrors in which human is reflected back to itself in oppressive and unflattering guise. The alienating animal reflection of the human is depicted in the most direct and clear-cut way in 'The Metamorphosis'. Kafka's friend Max Brod reports a diary entry from November 24, 1912, "Kafka read to us at Baum's his glorious short story about a noxious insect." The readers would definitely argue to the fact that The Metamorphosis is evenly an insect's story of noxious humans. This can be said from the story when Gregor appear to his family members as an insect, his father shoos him back into his room with a stick all the while hissing at Gregor like a venomous snake. Gregor quickly discovers the difficulty of moving with numerous legs as well as contended of new abilities he discovers in himself over time. He especially enjoys hanging suspended from the ceiling; it was much better than lying on the floor; one's body swayed and rocked highly, and in the almost blissful absorption induced by the suspension. It could happen to his own surprise that he let go and fell plump on the floor". As a narrative shifts from the human to an insect, it becomes evident that the story is not only psychological and subjective but also ethical, for the fact that it reveals to the readers the actual human being nature-the parents, the sister, and the charwoman-as being indifferent.

Franz Kafka, in his fiction and non-fiction novels investigates the boundaries of human power to assign nonhuman points of view, revealing the necessary ambiguity of animal consciousness. Kafka demonstrates animal ethology as directed by an intelligent, speculative, quizzical consciousness that imagines for the animal a rich, complex, emotional and affect inner life. This inner life is responsible for natural and cultural environment and the effects of

human beings upon the animals.

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