

The Gyrating Hierarchy in Franz Kafka's The Judgment, The Metamorphosis and In the Penal Colony

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Abstract

Franz Kafka (1883-1924), could never finish his major works; most of them were edited and published posthumously by his friend Max Brod. We know that Kafka's long sleepless nights were relieved by the aggressive Tuberculosis, perhaps a bit too soon in 1924. However, death could not take the manuscripts away and though unfinished, his works provided a wide arena for the vast multitude of critics who would later attempt to decipher the texts, through their very warp and weft.

Bureaucracy, claustrophobia and an abrupt beginning without any explanation, these are the accepted prerequisites of Kafkaesque. A reader prepares himself/herself according to these attributes while going through a work of Kafka. Coley Taylor asserts that the problems faced by Kafka's characters are identical to the hazards encountered by any ordinary person at the hands of bureaucracy. However, the specified positions of the bureaucratic hierarchy do not always remain the same. It is difficult to imagine a structure with its rapidly shifting constituents. In this paper, I have attempted to focus on the dynamic characteristics of the hierarchy presented in the three works of Franz Kafka, namely, The Judgment, The Metamorphosis and In the Penal Colony. My goal has not been to discover any hidden message of Kafka. I have attempted to provide a detailed picture of the shifting system of hierarchy presented in the three aforementioned works of Kafka to facilitate the imagination of the concerned readers.

Keywords: Hierarchy, Bureaucracy, Abrupt Beginning, Dynamic, Kafkaesque