AN ENGLISH KAFKA?

A READING OF REX WARNER'S THE PROFESSOR AND FRANZ KAFKA'S THE TRIAL

by

RICK RAUSER

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Author:

(signature)

Richard Rauser

(name)

April 6/94

(date)

APPROVAL

Name: RICHARD RAUSER

Degree: MASTER OF ARTS

Title of Thesis: AN ENGLISH KAFKA? A READING OF REX WARNER'S THE PROFESSOR AND FRANZ KAFKA'S THE TRIAL

Examining Committee:

Chair: Dr. Paul Budra
Assistant Professor

Dr. Jery Zaslove
Associate Professor
Senior Supervisor

Dr. Michael Steig
Professor

Dr. John Cooper
External Examiner
Assistant Professor
Department of English
University of British Columbia

Date Approved: April 5/94.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparison of Rex Warner's The Professor (1938) and Franz Kafka's The Trial (1925). Its premise is that Rex Warner deserves a place in literary history greater than the insignificant niche he currently occupies, and that the important parallels between The Professor and The Trial show not only Kafka's influence on Warner, but also Warner's depth and sophistication as a writer. This study compares the two novels in terms of four thematic areas: the portrayal of authority, the isolation of the individual, the role and function of sexuality, and the conception and use of the dream state. The thesis also addresses Warner's views of Kafka, which raise important questions of conscious influence. Two important essays, Warner's "Reflections on Franz Kafka" (1948) and "The Uses of Allegory" (1943), both show Warner's appreciation for, and understanding of Kafka's technique and thematic concerns.

In terms of critical material, this thesis makes use of the two major studies of Warner's novels, James Flynn's Politics in the Novels of Rex Warner (1974) and N.H. Reeve's The Novels of Rex Warner: An Introduction (1989). It also addresses the importance of Marian McLeod's excellent introduction to the Warner collection, Personal Impressions: Talks on Writers and Writing (1986). The approach to Warner and Kafka is by way of a reading, and as such its use of secondary material on Kafka is limited primarily to Theodor Adorno and Ronald Gray. The thesis shows the parallels between the novels and how my own reading

experience with these texts establishes a basis for their affinity and direct relationship.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: WHY WARNER?

Rex Warner (1905-1986) wrote eleven novels, as well as a collection of essays entitled The Cult of Power (1946) and two collections of poetry: Poems (1937) and Poems and Contradictions (1945). His novels divide into two main groups: from 1937-49 he published The Wild Goose Chase, The Professor, The Aerodrome, Men of Stones, and Why Was I Killed? (also published as Return of the Traveller), a group of allegorical novels which have as a unifying theme the horror of war, fascism, and militaristic authority and its crushing effect on the individual. N.H. Reeve describes these early works as "novels-of-ideas" (Reeve 2). Warner's later works, published between 1958 and 1967 (The Young Caesar, Imperial Caesar, Pericles the Athenian, and The Converts) are historical novels, the first two dealing with the life of Caesar in an "autobiographical" framework, while the hero of Pericles has his life narrated by the philosopher Anaxagoras, and The Converts, though also a historical novel, has a fictitious narrator. Warner also published a boy's adventure novel, The Kite (1936), and an attempt at humorous satire, Escapade (1953). The few critics who have studied Warner agree that his most successful and compelling novels are the five political allegories; of these I find The Professor to be the most structurally sound, thematically articulate, and emotionally powerful.

There are two major studies of Rex Warner's novels; the

first is James Flynn's Politics in the Novels of Rex Warner (1972), the second N.H. Reeve's The Novels of Rex Warner: An Introduction (1986). In addition, Marian McLeod has edited an important but obscure collection of Warner's talks entitled Personal Impressions: Talks on Writers and Writing, and her introduction to this volume gives important insight and information on Warner's literary abilities and his critical reception. Reeve writes that in the late thirties "[Warner's] works are for a time keenly awaited and quite widely read, and their public profile helps in his eventual enlistment as a more trustworthy Establishment figure" (Reeve 1). Reeve also notes that by the mid-forties in England "the notion of Warner as an 'English Kafka' began to gain credence" (Reeve 16). In 1945 the first issue of Focus, a new literary journal, featured fourteen critical essays in a symposium comparing the two authors.

In this study I intend to explore this interesting question of whether Warner can be called an "English Kafka" under the light of critical scrutiny. To do so I have chosen to compare Warner's The Professor and Kafka's The Trial in a close reading of both novels.

In his introduction to the 1986 reprint of The Professor Arnold Rattenbury says of the novel, "There is practically no description of person or place and few names, few details in place of names even, so that even the smallest detail -- so rare is it -- acquires pikestaff significance" (4). He thus provides just a small example of a statement which could easily be made about either Warner's novel or Kafka's The Trial without any

modification and presents one of many parallels that may be drawn from these two novels, so similar in their method, theme and scope, and yet different in important and interesting ways. The idea of comparing the two works first came to me the moment after I had read The Professor -- two years after I had first read The Trial. I saw such a striking similarity in the way both novels presented their ideas -- and in the ideas themselves -- that a comparison seemed like a task that would be almost too easy, or at best, too obvious.

It was when I learned of Warner's almost complete obscurity as a literary figure that I decided a comparision with Kafka would not be as easy or as obvious as I had assumed, but that it would instead be challenging, fascinating, and, above all, important, for it would have to face the underlying reality that while Kafka has assumed a world-wide literary importance -- to the extent of being considered one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century -- Warner has remained virtually unknown, and when his work is discussed, he is usually somewhat belittled by being simplistically classified as a "political allegorist". What I share with the few literary critics who have studied Warner is both a deep interest in this British writer and his novels, and a sincere belief that his writings deserve to be rescued from obscurity and given a secure and significant place in the recognized literary canon. I am not seeking to compile an exhaustive and accurate study of Warner's historical and critical reception, nor am I attempting to answer the difficult question of why Warner has languished in obscurity. Rather, by setting The

Professor alongside Kafka's great novel, The Trial, I wish to show the depth and complexity of Warner's work, as represented through The Professor.

Warner is usually considered a political allegorist and it is another of my aims to show that his writings extend beyond the realm of political allegory -- and I have chosen what is probably Warner's most overtly political novel to illustrate this point. My reading of the novel will focus less on its treatment of politics -- and the picture of Warner as a political allegorist that results from such a reading -- and more on its understanding of the basic human condition, an understanding which is strikingly similar to that of Kafka's The Trial. The idea of the "human condition" as I attempt to present it is not an easy concept to define, but it relates on a general level to the position of an individual within his or her society and the struggle between reason and emotion (an idea central to The Professor) as well as personal conditions such as isolation, persecution, or a confusion about the nature of existence. Political ideology is only a part, or perhaps a symptom, of the deeper, more basic human struggle. With these ideas in mind as points of study, a comparison of these two novels will show that Warner certainly deserves a level of attention and critical respect which he has not received throughout the years. The thematic and stylistic similarities of The Trial and The Professor are a clear indication of Warner's abilities as a writer.

The question of why I have chosen to compare The Trial and

The Professor as opposed to any other novels is perhaps more difficult to answer, but is certainly not unapproachable. To start with, I feel that both novels best illustrate the literary and artistic concerns that occupied the minds of their respective authors. The novels present fascinating parallels in storyline, narrative styles, character, and thematic concerns. Both involve a naive protagonist who stumbles through a dream-like world while being pursued and overshadowed -- and ultimately destroyed -- by an overpowering and omnipotent force, a force that the reader knows from the very beginning will emerge triumphant. In fact, the novels are almost challenging us to consider why we even bother to read them, since it seems to be apparent from the start what their melancholy endings will be. Joseph K. and the Professor are isolated, manipulated, and deluded. Their futile struggles and their very existence are incomprehensible, confusing, and, at the center, fundamentally absurd. An interesting point of comparison lies in the fact that the Professor's world is far more comprehensible to us than Joseph K.'s, although it is not comprehensible to the Professor.

In spite of the similarities in their struggles, my responses to both characters are quite different. Towards Kafka's Joseph K. I feel complete sympathy, attraction, and understanding. I can easily picture myself wandering through The Trial's bizarre landscape, doing the same things that Joseph K. does, and responding to my environment in the way he responds. For the Professor, whom I encountered over two years after Joseph K., my feelings are mixed, because although at times in The

Professor I do feel great sympathy for the protagonist (such as the Professor's betrayal by Clara, which I will discuss in depth in Chapter 8), at other times I feel very little sympathy or affection for him and find my strongest emotional reaction to the Professor's predicaments to be annoyance and frustration. I cannot see myself doing what the Professor does and I constantly wondered as I read the novel why he didn't make the obvious choices that (in my view) he should have made. This difference in response to characters who seem on the surface to be so similar is a very interesting issue and I hope that through the course of this thesis I will be able to answer the question of why the responses are so different, and whether it is due to the novel, or what I bring to the novel, or a combination of both factors.

In terms of critical approach, I have chosen to compare the novels in their treatment of four key thematic areas which are fundamental to both works and which provide the basis for the strong parallels between them. The first is the idea of an overpowering authority which persecutes the individual who resists it. This authority is impossible to understand, identify, or struggle against. In The Professor the authority is presented in (but certainly not limited to) political terms; in The Trial it seems to be more metaphysical in nature. The second area of comparison is the two novels' similar concept of sexuality, which is dependent upon and controlled by the vision of authority. In these novels, sexuality is related to power, not love. Love is unattainable in these worlds; power is a

fundamental feature of existence. The third point is that both Joseph K. and the Professor are isolated and alone, although the illusion is created (more for them than the reader) that they have allies. Finally, the novels share the use of a dream-like state which provides one possible key to the novels' treatment of absurdity. The individuals are moving through dream worlds; their existence cannot be understood because existence is a dream. Joseph K. wakes up from a sound slumber into a nightmare; in Warner's novel, the Professor's bizarre dreams are ironically the most rational and clearly presented aspect of his world.

Having briefly touched upon these four themes, I must note that they all function on different levels and are part of the larger theme of the individual versus society. The concept of an overpowering authority provides us with a picture of society, while the themes of sexuality and isolation are crucial in their shaping of the individual and their effect on him in his struggle against society. The idea of the dream and the dream-state assumes importance because it establishes an environment in which this struggle can take place without being fully understood by the characters, while sapping the reader (and eventually the protagonists) of any sense of hope that the struggle will be overcome. The dream state is the key to the novels' absurdity, and is the central feature which seems to define the "Kafkaesque"; it is as such fundamental to the effectiveness of The Trial. As we shall see in Chapter 10 of this study, the dream sequences in The Professor are what give this novel its psychological complexity.

Having established these basic premises, I shall move into a brief discussion of Warner's views on Kafka, and on the notion of an intertextual relationship between the two writers as I approach the question whether Warner really can be considered an "English Kafka".

CHAPTER 2

WARNER ON KAFKA: "REFLECTIONS ON FRANZ KAFKA" AND "THE USES OF ALLEGORY"

In her introduction to the 1986 volume Personal Impressions: Talks on Writers and Writing, a collection of manuscripts of some of Warner's talks on literature, Marian McLeod gives us some idea of Warner's importance to his literary and historical period, at least in the eyes of C. Day Lewis:

> In the same month Aldous Huxley published a pamphlet, What Are You Going to Do about It? (which he described as "a case for constructive peace"), that considered contemporary problems - especially as they concerned the growth of German militarism - and possible solutions. The Left Review commissioned C. Day Lewis to write a response, but he found himself unable to do so. (This was not the first time that he had experienced difficulty in meeting a writing commitment. In The Buried Day, his autobiography, he records that when he was asked by Charles Fenby to write a review for the Westminster Gazette, he had a "block": "I read the book; then, for hour after hour, I sat trying to think of something to say about it. I could not. Not a single word. My brain seized up. In the end, Charles had to write the review himself.") Lewis approached his friend Rex Warner to write the reply to Huxley, and in November 1938 We're Not Going to Do Nothing appeared: though written by Warner, it had Day Lewis's name on the title page. (McLeod 1)

McLeod goes on to give further evidence of Lewis' great respect for Warner as well as of Warner's own depth as a writer:

> The following year Warner contributed an essay, "Education", to an anthology edited by Day Lewis, The Mind in Chains: Socialism and the Cultural Revolution. The essay was not restricted to a consideration of pedagogy or educational structure; rather, it covered a wide sociological spectrum and again impinged on those topics that - with their obvious corollaries - became, over the years, the

> principal concern of the author. The gist of his thinking can be grasped immediately from some brief quotations: "In the fascist countries there is an open and deliberate attempt to arrest culture"; "Self-expression cannot be substitute for sociological training"; "Devoted and uncritical service to British imperialism no longer commends itself to the best and most sincere minds as an ideal for life"; "The stifling of criticism is always a sign of weakness"; "Our job now is ... to insist patiently on following up the approved principles of reason and morality." There are, of course, many more equally aphoristic statements. (McLeod 2)

What is of primary interest to this study, of course, is Warner's essay "Reflections on Franz Kafka", also included in Personal Impressions. In this talk Warner outlines his basic impressions of Kafka's stylistic and artistic concerns as a writer, and not only shows his great respect for Kafka but also gives insight into the basis for a comparison between Kafka and himself. Warner begins his discussion by referring to what he calls Kafka's stylistic "strangeness" (Warner, "Reflections on Franz Kafka" 21) *. Warner argues that the key to this style is that through it, Kafka has succeeded in dealing with aspects of contemporary life in which "more ordinary writers" have failed. He attributes this to Kafka's "novel use of words and images" (21). Warner clearly has a respect for Kafka's style which extends beyond aesthetic appreciation; he believes that a style of "strangeness" is necessary if one is to fully understand and deal with fundamental aspects of our existence. The ordinary will not suffice; something "stranger" is required, and Warner

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* All subsequent references to "Reflections on Franz Kafka" will give page numbers only.

has certainly ahcieved his own degree of thematic and stylistic strangeness in The Professor.

Another interesting element of Warner's talk is his outright scorn for the notion of a final truth in literature, and he again praises Kafka's writing for its very refusal to arrive at such a final answer. He says: "To my mind, the greatest interest in Kafka's way of writing is that he uses his words and images as exploring feelers or tentacles groping into the kind of reality that is just outside the barriers of ordinary thought and language" (22). This notion of the inadequacy of language to express ideas and experiences is important in both Kafka and Warner's writings and is one reason behind the deliberate understatement of detail in both their fictional writings. There is also for Warner a clear connection between a work's unwillingness to arrive at a final answer (at least as expressed in language) and the stylistic features of allegory, as he argues, "[T]he whole essence of this allegorical technique is to explore rather than define, to hint rather than to state" (22).

Warner goes on to recognize Kafka's fundamental concern with exploring man's relation to God, as well as with what Warner describes as man's "limitations and frustrations". This is what I would term a spiritual or, perhaps, a metaphysical level within a thematic approach, which is dealt with in The Professor as well as The Trial. Warner says that Kafka expresses "the desire of the individual to find security (or a home or a connection) between his own deepest feelings and the reality outside himself" and then shows his reader "a complete (or almost complete)

failure to attain this state" (22). This is perhaps the most striking parallel between Warner's understanding of Kafka's fiction and Warner's own fiction. The individual's struggle to deal with an external reality and the inevitable failure to do so is a central theme in both The Trial and The Professor, and it is this general idea which I have described as the individual versus society, perhaps better put (more in Kafka's case than Warner's) as the individual versus reality, or the individual attempting to deal with reality. This idea is further elaborated upon when Warner talks about the land-surveyor in Kafka's The Castle, describing him, and those characters in Kafka's fiction who serve a similar role, as "representatives of the world of the misunderstood, of the exile, of the displaced person, of the individual's weakness before the increasing abstraction of his surroundings" (23). It would be difficult to find a better phrase that describes both Joseph K. and the Professor. Isolation and weakness are two central ideas underscoring these characters, and these ideas set the tone for the characters' struggles throughout the novels.

Warner makes the point that Kafka finds in "the figure of Fate" something that cannot be understood but must be respected. The law in The Trial and the invading forces in The Professor both seem appropriate manifestations of this "Fate". Warner then states that this "metaphysical" tendency places Kafka "closer to the living reality of our times" than those concerned with issues such as social reform or "rational understanding". Warner seems to be viewing himself as one of those who, like Kafka, struggle

to understand this metaphysical Fate, and who go beyond issues of "mere stupidity, 'the law delays', remediable injustice, administrative inefficiency" to arrive that much closer to "the living reality" (23). As will later become obvious from Warner's discussion of allegory versus "realism" in "The Uses of Allegory", he seems to feel here that those writers such as Kafka (and himself) who grapple with issues that lie just outside the scope of language are, through the very process of this struggle, arriving at a deeper understanding of the basic truths of existence, which others may attempt to understand through political, social, or economic ideas. Warner not only sees a profound complexity in Kafka's spiritual themes, but also a basic relevancy. The Trial is not just an eerie tale about Joseph K.'s ultimate death at the hands of the law; it is far closer to our understanding of life than we can perhaps even realize. The Professor comes close to our understanding in a similar way. Both of these novels speak to us today just as they did when they were written; the timelessness of the individual's struggle is what makes it such an important theme.

In one important section of Warner's talk on Kafka he rejects those interpretations of Kafka's work which reduce his fiction to mere expressions of his past, family life, and personal beliefs. Warner feels that such an approach (such as seeing Kafka's father in the Law or the Castle) has little bearing on "the main problems of truth or of excellence in writing" (23). Warner does, of course, acknowledge that Kafka's tulmultuous past certainly had a significant impact

on his writing. Yet he makes an important point when he says, "It would be the greatest vulgarity of criticism to belittle Kafka's art simply because it springs, in part, from family frustrations and irritations that most people escape during adolescence. The psychiatrist's ideal man is not often an artist, and there are evidently occasions when what to a psychiatrist is maladjustment may be to an artist a positive source of inspiration" (25). Thus, while Warner realizes that the connection between Kafka's life and his fiction is a very significant one, he at the same time attacks those who would find this connection to be one that limits the definition of Kafka's works as art, and Warner in fact feels that the harshness and suffering in Kafka's life are in part what have made his works so great by providing a "positive source of inspiration". Warner not only recognizes the greatness of Kafka's artistic achievement, but he also seems to display an inherent interest in the works as works of art, rather than as historical or biographical representations. He is interested in the writing itself, and the "truths" that a detailed study of such writing can produce. This is also my aim in this study of the two novels.

Warner goes on to argue that writers should aim for what he describes as "a balanced view of the world" but, with reference to Kafka, he concludes that "there is something to be said for a certain lack of balance where one is interested in the world of the concentration camp and the atomic bomb" (25). Considering some of the military and political aspects of Warner's own

novels, it is certainly possible that he is referring to his own writing as well as Kafka's.

Warner closes his essay by again stressing the artistic merits of Kafka's work: "[H]is works, even when incomplete, are very much works of art. In this kind of symbolical poetic writing the utmost care in construction, the utmost precision and flexibility of language are required" (26). Warner also states earlier that the truth and beauty of Kafka's writing "depend, like poetry, on a kind of exaggeration and on an unusual emphasis" (25). Rex Warner himself has thus provided us with statements which seem to apply equally well to himself as well as Kafka. The flexible and abstract use of language, and the exaggeration and emphasis of detail are stylistic features of both The Professor and The Trial, among other novels by Warner and Kafka. Considering the degree of admiration with which Warner viewed Kafka, one cannot help but wonder to what extent Warner himself recognized the parallels between the two writers.

Warner further explores these parallels in "The Uses of Allegory" (which in The Cult of Power is titled "The Allegorical Method"). In this essay, he attempts to deal with the question of allegory, and Kafka is one of several writers whom he discusses in terms of their stylistic and thematic approach to allegory. Warner opens the essay with a discussion of common misconceptions about allegory, and dismisses the criticisms that "realist" critics often make of the form. Warner thus makes clear his belief in the significance of the message and the relevancy of the voice in the allegorical style and method. He

discusses what he believes to be the roots of the distrust of allegory, which he divides into two general categories:

> On the one hand is a reasonable and proper mistrust of the "high-falutin," of pretty abstractions which are unrelated to reality; but on the other side is the sheer philistinism of the pseudo-scientist, the crazy belief in a mechanical universe consisting of discreet parts, all of which can be catalogued, their functions analysed, put together again and understood.
>
> (Warner, "The Uses of Allegory" 140) *

This picture of the "pseudo-scientist" is an interesting one, which seems to manifest itself in the character of the Professor, who constantly attempts to catalogue, analyze, and understand the political and social turmoil around him. Joseph K. does the same thing, but in a less systematic or intellectual way.

Warner gives us another glimpse of the dangers of "pure" realism two paragraphs later: "It is becoming clear that if pure fantasy, unrelated to reality, is dangerous, lunatic and irresponsible, pure observation, undirected by imagination or moral impulse, is almost meaningless" (140). This is an important comment, considering the element of Warner and Kafka's fiction which strikes us as fantastic and "unrelated to reality", as Warner puts it. As in his talk on Kafka, Warner is raising the question of the relevance of the allegorical method, this time setting allegory against the pure, objective, "rational"

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* All subsequent references to "The Uses of Allegory" will give page numbers only.

approach to literature which dismisses allegory as meaningless fantasy.

Kafka comes into the essay when Warner attempts to show the different ranges of allegorical method and technique. He describes Bunyan as "obvious" allegory, and contrasts Bunyan's style with Melville, Dostoevsky, and Kafka, whose allegory Warner labels as "vaguer and indeed obscure" (142). He then goes on to discuss a "variety of mixed types", which include Dickens, Plato, Cervantes and Rabelais.

Warner eventually discusses the importance that allegory convey a sense of truth. As he puts it, "[U]nless the allegory is in some sense true it will be flat. Unless the author's imagination has extended to something that is or can be really and rightly felt by other men, then, with all his skill, his work will be in vain" (144). This is a point Warner discusses many times: the idea of relevance, of relating the allegory to the reader in a meaningful way. The Professor certainly succeeds in this regard due to its universal message of isolation, struggle, and the individual versus society. It is safe to say that these basic human conditions can be understood by many, if not all, readers. This is where I think the politics of the novel become less important than the struggle of the main character. The Professor suffers persecution, isolation and self-alienation; politics is only one of many factors contributing to his demise.

On the last page of his essay, Warner shows us his true understanding of Kafka: "In Kafka's world the hero is always lost. The commonest scenes are strangely monstrous and

significant, as they were to the young David Copperfield" (148). This mixture of the common and the monstrous, of the ordinary and the fantastic, is perhaps the central idea in understanding Warner's and Kafka's approach. It is as Warner says of Dickens and Dostoevsky: "On the face of it they [Dickens and Dostoevsky] are not dealing with monsters but with ordinary men and women. Yet these men and women represent often spiritual and social forces which are more powerful and significant than a simple individual in his ordinary relationships" (147). Here again is the basic premise on which my thesis is based: the individual versus society, and as Warner illustrates, the ordinary becoming the monstrous, and the commonplace revealing powerful forces we cannot understand or overcome.

One of Warner's closing remarks about Kafka provides an excellent summation of a reader's best approach to not only Kafka's fiction, but Warner's as well: "Yet, though we cannot perfectly grasp his [Kafka's] meaning intellectually, we feel it intensely, and feel it to be true" (148). And so it is with The Professor: we may not understand the struggle of its protagonist in rational or intellectual terms, but a part of us grasps fully the implications, and knows the message to be true.

Warner closes the essay by praising Kafka's style as represented through the Muir translation (I have chosen for this reason to use the Muir translation in this study, rather than the newer Scott and Waller translation). He says that Kafka "invests his strange and nightmare scenes - the snowy village by the Castle, the faces of the Assistants at the window - with an

unearthly beauty" (148), and though he is referring to The Castle, the comment certainly applies to The Trial as well. There is an unearthly quality in The Professor that is also beautiful, and it is the intention of this thesis to demonstrate this quality as it runs throughout both Kafka's and Warner's worlds, worlds that are in their presentation ordinary, fantastic, significant, and monstrous.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT IS THE LAW? AUTHORITY IN THE TRIAL

In The Creative Element Stephen Spender describes the totalitarian world of 1984 as one of "metaphysical claustrophobia" (Spender 133), a description that perfectly describes the mood created by the overpowering presence of the Court in The Trial. The Court and the Law it represents are much more difficult to understand than the National Legion in The Professor, primarily because the Court does not appear to resemble any known law or political ideology. One thing that is clear is that the more Joseph K. tries to find out about the Court, the more he realizes his complete ignorance of the Court and the Law itself. In the opening pages we realize how difficult it is to identify or understand the Court:

> Who could these men be? What were they talking about? What authority could they represent? K. lived in a country with a legal constitution, there was universal peace, all the laws were in force; who dared seize him in his own dwelling? (Kafka 4) *

It is clear that K. has never before faced anything like these two warders and the authority they represent. The entire novel, in fact, is one of discovery, in which K. and the reader encounter the Law for the first time, as if we have moved into an entirely new country whose laws and procedures are unknown to us.

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* All subsequent references to The Trial will give page numbers only.

That the reader should be confused by the Law is understandable, but that K. should be equally confused is surprising, for this country is not new to him; he has lived here all this life, and has a very fixed and established routine, all of which is to be overturned as K. becomes obsessed with understanding the details of the Law and his case, something he will never be able to do. If there is one point that must be made about the Law it is that the Law is confusing and cannot be understood in rational or straightforward terms; there is an underlying sense of strangeness in what we encounter. In his book Franz Kafka Ronald Gray discusses this strangeness of the Court:

> The strangest thing about K.'s "accursed trial", as they call it, is that although it is a matter of life and death it is presented as something trivial and faintly ridiculous (at his death, K. thinks it appropriate that second-rate opera-singers are sent to kill him). (Gray 106)

The idea of the "faintly ridiculous" coupled with the confusion and irrationality of the Court is a recurring theme throughout the novel, as dark humour seems to interject itself at the most seemingly inappropriate times. Consider the passage in the opening pages of the novel when K. contemplates telephoning his lawyer:

> "Hasterer, the lawyer, is a personal friend of mine," he said. "May I telephone him?" "Certainly," replied the Inspector, "but I don't see what sense there would be in that, unless you have some private business of your own to consult him about." "What sense there would be in that?" cried K., more in amazement than exasperation.

The passage continues with K. berating the warder for his

seemingly irrational questioning of why K., an arrested man, would want to telephone his lawyer, and ends in these lines:

> "But do telephone all you want to," replied the Inspector, waving an arm toward the entrance hall, where the telephone was, "please do telephone." "No, I don't want to now," said K., going over to the window. (12-13)

These lines seem comical on the surface due to K.'s somewhat immature behavior and I see a humorous note in his child-like declaration that he no longer wishes to telephone his lawyer. Yet there is a deeper sense of the utter frustration that results from trying to deal with the irrationality of the Court and its representatives, for it is strange that the warders would question why K. wishes to telephone his lawyer, and K.'s irritation is understandable. Yet as K. is to discover repeatedly, the Court does not function in any sensible or rational way that one could possibly understand.

We get a further sense of the way the Court confuses the individual later in the chapter:

> Then K. remembered that he had not noticed the Inspector and the warders leaving, the Inspector had usurped his attention so that he did not recognize the three clerks, and the clerks in turn had made him oblivious of the Inspector. (16)

K.'s feeling of paranoia comes through clearly here, and though we are only halfway through the first chapter he is already being tormented and confused by the officials of the Court. One can picture K. darting his head back and forth, trying to keep an eye on both the Inspector and the clerks, and in his frantic attempt at watching all of them he in fact sees none of them and is left

alone to contemplate the morning's events.

If there is another overpowering feature of the Court it is its dizzying bureaucracy, which is the extension of its irrationality and which gives the Court such incredible power. The narrator gives us a hint of this bureaucratic nightmare in chapter seven when he describes what happens when a case takes a turn so that it is out of the lawyer's reach:

> The case and the accused and everything were simply withdrawn from the lawyer; then even the best connections with officials could no longer achieve any result, for even they knew nothing. The case had simply reached the stage where further assistance was ruled out, it was being conducted in remote, inaccessible Courts, where even the accused was beyond the reach of the lawyer. (123)

K. gets a sense of this never-ending trial when he visits the Law offices in the third chapter. He is initially disdainful of the Law Court Offices, which are housed in an attic in a building that contains "the poorest of the poor" and he believes that the situation of the Law Offices "was not an arrangement likely to inspire much respect" (60). Inside, however, K. is given a horrifying look at the future for accused men when he asks one of the accused what he is waiting for:

> [T]his unexpected question confused the man, which was the more deeply embarassing as he was obviously a man of the world who would have known how to comport himself anywhere else and would not lightly have renounced his natural superiority. Yet in this place he did not know even how to reply to a simple question and gazed at the others as if it were their duty to help him, as if no one could expect him to answer should help not be forthcoming. (64)

These accused men have all been reduced to confusion and timidity

by the Court, and sit humbly on a bench in a crowded stuffy hallway, with no end to their waiting in sight. The usher encourages the man to answer K.'s question, but the most the man can say is "I'm waiting -" before lapsing into silence.

Finally, he does compose himself and tells K. that he had handed in several affidavits for which he was awaiting a reply. K. argues, "I am under arrest too, but as sure as I stand here I have neither put in any affidavit nor attempted anything whatever of the kind" (64). These lines seem to suggest that K. believes himself to be uninterested in his case, and in fact he takes pride in his refusal to put in affidavits or "anything of the kind". He seems to feel himself superior to these other accused men and his attitude is that of a distant observer. Yet the fact that K. is visiting the Law Court Offices and is talking to these men shows how concerned he is with his case and how obsessed he has become with finding out about the Law. His case is beginning to take control of K.'s entire life without K. even realizing it. As Henry Hubert argues:

> [T]he novel deals precisely with the problem of Joseph K.'s inability to recognize his trial not as isolated hearings before a group of individual judges, but as an ever expanding reality encompassing an ever greater part of his existence, until it becomes the exclusive condition of his life--which is his death.
> (Hubert 61)

Hubert's idea of the "ever expanding reality" shows that the Court becomes an entity that assumes not only an importance in K.'s life, but the primary importance. K. becomes obsessed with and oppressed by the Court.

The more time K. spends in the Law Court Offices, the more

confused and disoriented he becomes. K. is joined by a male usher and a girl who "were actually gazing at him as if they expected some great transformation to happen to him the next moment, a transformation which they did not want to miss" (67). They are not disappointed, for K. is soon overcome with nausea due to the constant, stifling presence of the Law, nausea later repeated in Titorelli's studio. Yet as is typical of K.'s encounters in the novel, it is the woman who seems to understand him: "But the girl was the first to see that K.'s behavior was really caused by a slight feeling of faintness" (67). The oppressive presence of the Law is so stifling that it actually takes a physical toll on K., reducing him to "dumb immobility" (67). This is the transformation that the girl and the usher were expecting, for they are well aware of the effect the Law has on the ordinary individual. The girl goes on to assure K., "That's nothing out of the common here, almost everybody has an attack of that kind the first time they come here" (67). "Attack" is an appropriate term, for K. is truly under assault by the Court's stifling bureaucracy. The girl goes on to explain that the dizziness is caused by poor ventilation, but the explanation is little more than a surface attempt at giving a "realistic" answer to what is essentially a metaphysical question: why does the Law have such a torturous effect on the physical body? Whatever the reason may be, it is clearly not due to ventilation.

When the girl tells K. that they must move on, his situation worsens: "[T]he farther he went the worse it must be for him"

(68). All K. can think about at this point is escaping the building, fleeing from the withering gaze of the Law. But so ill is he at this point that he needs the assistance of his two companions to even stand up: "Will you have the goodness, then, to let me lean upon you a little, for I feel dizzy and my head goes round when I try to stand up" (69). The usher and the girl then take K. by the arms, in a scene that foreshadows K.'s execution. What is so significant at this point, however, is that K. has become completely dependent upon the Court, to the point where he needs the assistance of his two companions (servants of the Court who, like Willem and Franz earlier, now represent the Law) to even stand up. K. is like a helpless child, and his earlier boasting to the accused men that he has not filed any affidavits now rings very hollow. The man begins laughing and K. sinks into "vacant melancholy and apparently expected no explanation" (69). The mere act of walking through the Law Court Offices has reduced K. to a melancholy physical wreck. There is little question of the Court's power at this point in the novel, nor is there any question of its effect on K. K. is then taken past the accused man that he had questioned earlier, and we are told, "K. felt almost ashamed before the man, he had stood so erect before him the first time; now it took a couple of people to hold him up" (71).

When his two escorts take him outside, however, K. sees an interesting turn of events. He thanks his companions, but "They could scarcely answer him and the girl might have fallen if K. had not shut the door with the utmost haste". K. realizes that

they "felt ill in the relatively fresh air that came up the stairway" (73). Thus we see the Law Court Offices as an enclosed world so complete and different from the outside world that those who serve inside its walls cannot function outside, just as those who are not accustomed to the building cannot function inside. It is clear that the Court is a complicated and many-faceted animal; K. has stumbled around in the Law Court Offices and barely escaped with his health intact. There is a strong suggestion that K. may very well end up sitting on the bench inside the building with the other accused men, so strong is the influence of the Court's bureaucracy which threatens to swallow him up.

When K. encounters the Whipper in the fifth chapter we see new complexities in the structure of the Court. Franz and Willem cry out, "Sir! We're to be flogged because you complained about us to the Examining Magistrate" (84). K. then recognizes the men for who they are: the warders who had placed him under arrest and caused him such frustration. The fact that they are about to be whipped by a higher authority than themselves introduces a new element of complexity, as we see that the Court's hierarchy has its own victims and that the Court is not a complete, faceless entity. The fact that the warders, who had represented the Court's power and authority, are now being punished to the extent that they beg K. for assistance, shows that K. cannot be certain which faces of the Law are truly his enemies, and which are in fact victims themselves. There is also a suggestion that K. is unable to prevent himself from harming others, that he himself is

unwittingly bringing undeserved suffering to the warders. These realizations add to K.'s uncertainty and paranoia ("paranoia" not in a clinical sense, but in layperson's terms, the idea of an irrational fear of relentless persecution) when trying to understand the Law. He later declares, "For in my view they are not guilty. The guilt lies with the organization. It is the high officials who are guilty" (86). No longer does K. associate the warders with the organization, although he certainly did so when he was arrested. It is as if K. has cut away one layer of bureaucracy in removing the warders from the Court -- but the "higher officials" will remain forever elusive.

This question of guilt seems to be the defining feature of the Law, and the connection between the Law and guilt is one of the central themes in the novel. The narrator seems to establish from the very beginning that K. is not guilty: "Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning" (1). Hubert argues that "the first sentence of the novel shows how his mind excludes the very possibility of his guilt before the Court. Rather than even entertaining the possibility of guilt, he rationalizes that someone must have traduced him" (Hubert 67). This view is problematical, because Hubert seems to leave open the door for the possibility that K. is in fact guilty, when in reality we cannot possibly know for certain whether he is innocent or guilty of anything. The absurdity of the novel lies not in the fact that K. is "innocent" and accused of a crime he did not commit, but rather that he is told he is guilty, but

never told what he is guilty of. He then goes on to attempt to prove his innocence of a charge, without even knowing what the charge is. Also, Hubert attributes these opening lines to K. himself, where I tend to view them as objective commentary by a distanced narrator, the same narrator who gives a lengthy commentary on the Court in chapter seven. Ronald Gray points out that during K.'s initial arrest "there is never any definition even of the kind of guilt that might be in question" (Gray 104) but only that the warders assure K. that the Court is attracted to guilt and that the Court is presumably infallible. One of the most important questions the novel raises is why the Court has decided that K. is guilty, and whether he is in fact guilty of anything. These are questions, however, that cannot be answered by the reader anymore than they can by K. His innocence or guilt seems to become less and less of an issue as the novel unfolds, for the Court seems determined to persecute him regardless of what he has or has not done.

Hubert seems to genuinely believe K. to be guilty, and he sees the root of this guilt lying in the fact that "[K.] has broken the law of life which states that life cannot become reduced to the stasis of rational order" (Hubert 74). While the theme of rationality will be discussed later in this study, it is sufficient to say here that K. does attempt to understand the Court through reason and rationality, and that he fails. Hubert seems to view this as a fault in K. and in so doing is being too judgemental, because by giving a reason for K.'s guilt Hubert seems to be undermining the absurdity of the novel, which lies in

the fact that there is no guilt, other than the fact that the Court has declared guilt to exist. By arguing that K. is guilty of a specific "something" (in this case rationality) one creates the supposition that K., by changing his behavior, could have done something to prevent the trial altogether, which seems very unlikely given the nature of the Court and the fact that all the cases brought before the courts are "foregone conclusions" (62) as the usher assures K.

Theodor Adorno in "Notes on Kafka" gives an interesting reason for K.'s alleged guilt:

> The heroes of the *Trial* and the *Castle* become guilty not through their guilt - they have none - but because they try to get justice on their side. "The original sin, the ancient injustice committed by man, consists in his protest - one which he never ceases to make - that he has suffered injustice, that the original sin was done against him." It is for this reason that their clever speeches, especially those of the land-surveyor [from The Castle], have something of the insane, doltish, naïve about them - their sound reasoning strengthens the delusion against which it protests. (Adorno 270)

This is, I think, the root of the matter. If K. is guilty then it is not because of rationality but perhaps because, ironically, he desires justice. If he were "guilty" of having no interest or desire to seek justice, then perhaps the Court would view him as innocent. This paradox is essential if the novel is to retain its tone of despair, frustration, and absurdity. K. cannot be guilty of any actual wrongdoing, because if he were, it would be too easy to view the Court as at least partially justified in its actions, which would destroy the entire theme of the novel. K.

is not guilty by any standards other than the Court's, standards that no one outside the Court can possibly understand.

Once the Court decides that K. is guilty, of course, he is doomed. He struggles without hope to understand the charges against him, and grows only more and more confused, until his execution. Although K.'s struggle and death will be dealt with later in this study, it is enough to see at this point that the Court presents a horrifying vision of authority, which crushes K. under the premise of assumed guilt from the outset of the novel. As we shall see, Warner presents a similar picture of authority in The Professor, although there are important differences between the National Legion in Warner's novel and the mysterious Court in Kafka.

CHAPTER 4

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL LEGION? AUTHORITY IN THE PROFESSOR

In the first chapter of The Professor, a young student interrupts the Professor's lecture on Sophocles and declares "I happen to know that you are not very much in favour of our Leader" (Warner 23) *. This brief, fleeting reference to the Leader is the only one in the novel and as it is presented here it is almost insignificant, for the young fascist's point is not to discuss his leader, but to stress his respect for the Professor. Yet throughout the entire novel we are reminded of the Leader as personified by the forces of fascism: planes, soldiers, angry demonstrators, and riotous mobs. The Leader is the force behind fascism in the novel, just as the Law is the force behind the Court in The Trial. And, as in Kafka's novel, it is very difficult to see much distinction between the force and the force behind the force. What is made clear, however, is that although the National Legion is a political representation in a way that the Law in Kafka is not, they both are strikingly similar in their characteristics, manifestations, and in the way they present themselves to the protagonists. An examination of the vision of authority in The Professor will also show a concern in the novel that transcends politics. While the oppressor may very well be dressed in the robes of fascism, it is not, at its

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* All subsequent references to The Professor will give page references only.

heart, a political entity, but rather a concept that is much closer to the basic truths of human existence, with politics and fascism being but one of many manifestations. Although Warner does not actually use the term "fascism" I have chosen to describe the National Legion as fascist because of Vander's emphasis on physical conflict, irrationalism, and patriarchy. In addition, the National Legion stands as an ideological opposite to the Reds, the army of the workers, whom we can assume to be communists.

One of the most significant distinctions between Warner's National Legion and the Law in Kafka is that while in Kafka the Law is an omnipresent force which thrusts itself upon K. from the very beginning in the form of Franz and Willem, the National Legion and the invading fascist forces in Warner are almost unnoticeable at the beginning of the novel, and their full presence grows steadily until they are literally roaming the streets near the end. The main reason for this difference is that in The Professor there is more than just one vision of authority presented. The Professor himself appears to be a powerful figure after he becomes Chancellor (powerful at least in theory if not practice) and heads a government that, while weak and ineffective, is nonetheless a government and thus represents a rival power structure. In The Trial there is no such "rival"; Joseph K. is an individual struggling against the Law which is the only authority in the novel, and it is certainly made clear in Kafka's world that there is no room for resistance. In The Professor we see the Professor's government as well as the Reds

(the communists) as representing potential rival power structures. However, as in Kafka's novel, resistance to the oppressor is futile, and the rival authorities exist only as potential rivals, and never as actual challenging opponents.

As already mentioned, Warner gives his reader only brief glimpses of the menace represented by the National Legion and its fascist allies. In addition to the young man's mention of "the Leader", there are also several references to the planes that fly overhead:

> A squadron of aeroplanes was flying across the sky over their heads. Some members of the audience, their attention attracted by the swelling drone, looked upwards but, if they thought anything, there was no expression of thought in their faces. The big bodies of the bombers passed behind the trees. (43)

It is very significant that the people assembled have "no expression of thought in their faces", as Warner is showing us early on the apathy and confusion of the masses, making them easy victims for the fascist takeover. The bombers fly easily overhead, then quickly pass behind the trees, and are forgotten, yet only for the time being.

Later in the novel when the Professor is walking back from the President's Palace to the College he sees "a compact body of men marching down a side street towards him" (95). Again we are seeing a glimpse of the fascists who will soon overrun the country. We are told:

> The bluster of the wind seemed to snatch into the air and scatter both the rattling of their drums and the few shouts of protest or anger with which people in the road or from their houses saluted the marching Legionaries. (95-96)

Again, the picture is a subtle one, yet chilling in its implications. Where in Kafka the Court maintains a strong, consistent presence, in Warner the Legion seems to move from a shadowy obscurity to a raging storm, going from one extreme to the other. Warner's Legion gives us more of a sense of being an angry, physical being, whereas the Court is far more mysterious, spiritual, and immortal.

Where the higher officials of the Court are mysterious figures whom K. never sees (and never can see, as the priest's parable of the Law tells him) Julius Vander presents a strong, thoughtful, and very human mouthpiece for the ideals of the National Legion. In his Ph.D. dissertation Politics in the Novels of Rex Warner James Flynn says of Vander:

> [I]t is clear that Vander has a complexity, both as a character and as the spokesman for a philosophical point of view, that makes a simple assertion that the contest between him and the Professor is a contest of "good vs. bad" an oversimplification. (Flynn 108)

One of the first things we learn about Vander is the power he represents as a member of the Legion. When the Professor sees Vander we are told, "There was something ponderous about the jaw, something brutal in his thick lips, too much flesh on the cheeks, but eyes and forehead showed both resolution and intelligence" (103). The physical strength and intelligence are enough factors to cause the Professor to be intimidated, but Vander shows the full power of authority when he declares, "You were thinking . . . that it was strange to find a man of my brains wearing this uniform" (103). The Professor agrees that this is exactly what he was thinking, and we thus have a suggestion that Vander can

read the Professor's thoughts, that not only is Vander the Professor's physical superior and intellectual equal, but also that he knows how the Professor thinks and what type of situations the Professor will react to. This idea is strengthened when Vander replies with, "May I alter, or reinterpret your thoughts?" (103). There is a suggestion of mind control here, and although the Professor can withstand Vander intellectually, we have a sense of a spiritual or metaphysical power on Vander's behalf which the Professor cannot match, the power to predict situtations, to understand completely the thoughts of another with abilities that transcend the intellect as well as morality, as Vander's amoral philosophy places his actions beyond the reach of the "moral power" or the moral justification for action of liberal democracy.

When Vander begins to outline the philosophy of the National Legion, we begin to understand the raw emotional appeal of the fascist movement: "[I] would rather have power, a good drink, and plenty of women than international peace" (105). Interestingly, Vander then attacks the Professor for his lack of religious faith:

> You haven't even got the medieval faith in some almighty God who will, some time or other, step in and do something about these "ethical ideals" which are supposed to have emanated from him. (105)

Vander's ideas are clearly based in pleasure, power, and emotion. His attack on the Professor regarding lack of religious faith is interesting because it suggests that Vander sees that without some kind of religious hope the Professor will have no hope at

all. Yet Vander himself certainly doesn't seem to have religious faith, primarily for the reason that the Legion itself is a god-like entity, which perhaps sees itself as the founder of a "new religion" based on power and sensuality. However, Flynn points out that "to assert that Vander is representative of an evil religion is to resort to little more than name-calling, while the book seeks to test the validity of two opposing intellectual positions" (Flynn 105), and while he stresses that Vander cannot be labelled simply as "evil" -- which I agree with -- Vander and the National Legion are a type of religion nonetheless. To the extent that it represents a powerful belief system based in metaphysical principles we can perhaps also consider the Court and the Law to be a religion of sorts (we even have a Court chaplain). In this sense the chaplain's parable of the Law in chapter 9 of The Trial can be seen as a sort of religious text. One notable difference between the Legion and the Court is that the Court does not attempt to argue its philosophical position to K. as Vander does to the Professor. K. hears several arguments and receives a great deal of advice regarding the Court, but it serves to do nothing more than confuse him further. Vander, by contrast, presents a clear and straightforward philosophical position -- though it is equally frightening in its implications. It should also be noted that while the Court chaplain, the lawyers, and the court officials are but representatives of various aspects of the Court, and certainly cannot be said to be the Court or the Law itself, Vander is fascism, meaning that rather than representing fascism in one form or another, he is

personifying it. Thus the Professor is literally viewing fascism face to face and directly hearing the oppressor's arguments and philosophies. K. has no such opportunity in The Trial, but is only confused by various servants and officials of the Court.

Like K., the Professor's attempts at arguing with the oppressor are in vain. First of all, as we have already mentioned, there is a sense that Vander knows the Professor's thoughts. After Vander's comment regarding the Professor's lack of faith in God we are told that the Professor believed the argument "was pursuing a course that was perfectly familiar to him" (105) but in fact we are then told "Julius seemed to have divined his thoughts" (106). Later, Vander declares, "I know quite well the arguments which you have ready for me at the tip of your tongue, and it will save us time if I dispose of them at once" (109). Although K. is never really told this by the representatives of the Court in such a direct fashion, there is a similar sense that his arguments and strategies for dealing with his case are all known in advance, and that in fact his every action is known in advance, such as the priest who tells K. "I had you summoned here" (Kafka 210). What hope can there be of debate or discussion when one's opponent knows one's every thought and action? The irony, of course, lies in the fact that both the Professor and K. seem unaware of this tendency for their thoughts and actions to be known in advance -- though they may suspect it to be true.

The second reason the Professor is helpless before Vander's arguments is because Vander has elevated himself above the level

of rationality and instead appeals to basic instinct. "Will I put anything in the place of your ideals?" he tells the Professor, challenging both the Professor and the reader to consider the implications of one's ideals being opposed by so strong a force, "Yes, I will. I will put their direct opposites in their place. And, what is more, people will like it" (107). We cannot read these lines without believing that Vander is speaking the truth, for the horror and despair of Warner's allegorical world demand that Vander be correct and that resistance to Vander's ideas be in vain. The Professor is helpless against Vander's basic appeal to mob instinct. As N.H. Reeve argues in The Novels of Rex Warner:

> [T]he Professor persists in treating Vander as if both men were adhering to the conventions of rational debate, and as if their opinions, however divergent and deeply-held, were adjuncts of their characters, open to comment and modification, rather than their sole substances. He is shaken by what he has heard . . . But he is shaken still more by the abrupt intrusion of violence - threats, peremptory demands, shootings, blood - into what he thought of as the arena of debate.
> (Reeve 65)

Vander is not rational, nor is he peaceable. In this way we see another strong parallel between the National Legion and the Court -- neither can be understood or dealt with in rational terms. The difference, however, is that while we know why the National Legion cannot be rationally dealt with -- due to its fixation on emotion, power, and the mob instinct -- we cannot understand why the Court cannot be approached rationally. The only answer available is that the Court and the Law are just as inaccessible to all of humankind as they are to the traveler in the priest's

parable of the Law in chapter nine of The Trial.

During the course of the debate, Vander grows more and more aggressive, mirroring how the Legion forces will become increasingly aggressive for the remainder of the novel. He begins to violently reduce the Professor's philosophy to hyprocrisy, declaring, "Oh, come off it, Professor. Why not admit that you're living off other people just as I am, and that you like it?" (111). Vander's interest here is not only in showing the Professor that the Legion's philosophy is more appealing to the masses, but also in showing the Professor what Vander believes to be the Professor's hypocrisy and, ultimately, guilt. There is a sense of moral justification on Vander's part, that he feels that the Professor is morally inferior to the National Legion. Vander later condemns the Professor further when he says, "You say you want to make men brothers. What you really want is to make them ants" (116). The notion of guilt is perhaps more significant in The Trial than it is in Warner's novel, because K. is obsessed with the very question of guilt, whereas the Professor's concern seems to be more with the question of how his own philosophy relates to the people of his country in light of the Legion's presence and, to a lesser extent, the presence of the communists. Although the Professor is affected by guilt as he sees the fascists roaming the streets later in the novel, he does not seem to be affected at this point.

Vander then delivers his most aggressive and disturbing speech of the chapter. "War is a condition without which real fellow-feeling could not exist", he declares, foreshadowing the

violent conflict to follow. "Men are only men when they add to their manhood by proving themselves superior to others" (114). There is a strong sexual undertone to this line, suggesting that masculine sexuality is closely connected to violence. As will be discussed later in this study, sexuality and power are closely related in both The Trial and The Professor. Vander further emphasises this point by saying, "What fun would there be in having a woman whom no one else wanted?" (114).

So aggressive is Vander at this point that the Professor "had involuntarily looked at the poker in the fender, his eyes rather than his mind having been in search of some instrument of defence" (114). One of his final declarations to the Professor is a perfect summation of the Legion's dark philosophy: "[W]e appeal not to intellect, or even to immediate self-interest, but to the dark, unsatisfied, and raging impulses of the real man" (119). When Jinkerman kills Vander, the Professor notices "the thickening stream of blood that by now had reached the leg of his writing desk" (125). The blood in this passage is one of the most significant symbols representing the National Legion in the novel and it also gives important insight into the struggle between reason and emotion in the Professor, which will be discussed in detail in chapter six. For the time being it should be noted that the blood, which represents raw emotion, is creeping towards the Professor's writing desk, which symbolizes the Professor's intellect and rationality. The Professor cannot help but realize, on a subconscious level, the process by which base emotion and raw power will destroy his intellectual

liberalism, but he cannot stop it. Ironically, Vander's death causes this "flow of blood", symbolically unleashing the full power of the National Legion against the Professor and ensuring his downfall through Vander's own death. It is as if Jinkerman, by shooting Vander, has annoyed the giant, which will proceed to tear the Professor limb from limb. Jinkerman, appropriately, flees the room.

From this point the Legion slowly takes over not only the Professor's existence, but the entire country's as well. This is another point of comparison with the Court, which seems to focus its efforts exclusively on Joseph K. (although we see other accused men in The Trial there is never a sense that they are real characters, but rather grim portraits of what Joseph K. could potentially become). In Warner's novel the fascist movement takes over the entire country but still the focus is on the Professor and the torment he endures. And as is the case in The Trial, the various characters floating in and out of the novel seem to be representations of the Professor rather than citizens of an actual country. Clearly, the Court and the National Legion are concerned with persecuting the individual: Joseph K. and the Professor.

Once the fascists have invaded, they are far more violent and visible than the ghostly figures of the Court. The Professor is in the home of the elder Jinkerman when the air begins to scream with the sound of the airplanes, "as though a squadron of planes were about to alight on the roof of the house" (236). The Professor escapes the house to see mob violence, persecution, and

the triumphant marching of the National Legion. By taking over the Professor's country the Legion has in fact taken over the Professor himself. By this point there is nothing left but for the Professor to be betrayed, captured, and executed. It is only by the novel's end that the Professor begins to see the full horror of the terrifying vision of authority the Legion represents:

> In horror he began to imagine the vision of Vander as a reality, a whole world governed in complete contravention of what to him had seemed the self-evident demands of reason, justice, kindliness, and fellow-feeling. He saw himself as some pig-headed scholar clinging to the interpretation of a manuscript whose text has been proved corrupt, defective, or forged. (290)

Just as in Kafka, the authority cannot be defeated and permeates the protagonist's entire existence. However, in Kafka the authority is the dominant force throughout the novel, whereas the Legion in Warner begins the novel without power, with its presence steadily strengthening until the final violent overthrow of the Professor's government. Yet there is very little difference between the Court and the National Legion in terms of the final effect achieved. The Court is spiritual (i.e., metaphysical, or beyond conscious understanding), mysterious, and seems to reveal itself only on occasion, as if through a thick fog. The Legion, by contrast, is violent, physical, and dominantly expresses its presence. In the end, however, the effect is the same: both have crushed not only physical resistance, but the human spirit as well. The victory is thus not only physical, but spiritual. Perhaps the Professor himself

best sums up the tragedy of the defeat when he states: "I have inherited a civilization, but have failed to hand it on to posterity" (268).

CHAPTER 5

ISOLATION AND PERSECUTION: THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE TRIAL

One of the strongest parallels between The Trial and The Professor lies in the complete isolation of the main characters. Joseph K. and the Professor are alone in their struggles against the oppressor, and although they are led to believe that they have allies it is soon made apparent that no one is truly on their side. The struggle of the individual versus society is just that: the individual versus society, alone and unaided. This is perhaps the one respect in which the novels are most similar and, at the same time, most disturbing.

From the moment K. is arrested we see the theme of false allies in The Trial. Willem the warder tells K:

> If you would only realize your position, and if you wouldn't insist on uselessly annoying us two, who probably mean better by you and stand closer to you than any other people in the world. (6)

There is an obvious irony inherent in the fact that the warders of the Court who have come to arrest K. are declaring themselves to be his friends who "stand closer" to him than anyone else. And although K. is not convinced of their sincerity, when he goes on to encounter the Inspector we see the first instance of K. reaching for an ally. When the Inspector asks K. if he is surprised at the morning's events, K. replies "Certainly". Then we are told that K. "was filled with pleasure at having encountered a sensible man at last, with whom he could discuss the matter" (10). One thing made obvious is that K. is

struggling for rationality and structure and approaches his potential allies in this fashion. Clearly, K. is hoping for assistance from the Inspector, and his desire for help from the very man who is in charge of his arrest is testimony to K.'s frustration and fear of his circumstances. It also shows K.'s tendency towards naivete, which becomes further evident as the novel progresses. Shortly after we learn of K.'s joy at finding "a sensible man", he soon discovers that the Inspector is just the opposite, driving K. to frustration and anger. K. wonders, "Was he to be taught lessons in manners by a man probably younger than himself?" (12). Perhaps the Inspector best sums up K.'s desire for help when he says, "You are laboring under a great delusion" (11).

One point of interest is K.'s tendency to seek help from women, a tendency criticized by the priest in the Cathedral. Ronald Gray argues, "It is from women that K. expects to find relief or comfort or explanation of the nameless arraignment that hangs over him all the time" (Gray 115). Of these women allies, the first we encounter is Frau Grubach. K. feels comfortable talking to her about the warders and his arrest, and feels he can confide in her. He thinks to himself, "I couldn't mention it to anyone but this old woman" (19). However, in spite of the fact that Frau Grubach seems to feel that their discussion is of great importance, as she speaks "with tears in her voice" (20), it is not long before K. dismisses her as unimportant in his struggle against the Court. First is his realization that "she had not understood all that he had said" and then when Frau Grubach asks

K. not to take it so much to heart, we are told that K. felt "suddenly tired and seeing how little it mattered whether she agreed with him or not" (20). Appropriately, the next question he asks is, "Is Fräulein Bürstner in?" K. has dismissed his landlady as a potential ally through the simple realization that she has nothing to offer him either intellectually or emotionally, and she certainly has no insight into the workings of the Court. In fact, later in the novel when K. is asking Frau Grubach questions about Fräulein Bürstner's mysterious friend we are told that K. was "exasperated" by Grubach's "dumb helplessness, which outwardly had the look of simple obstinacy" (77). Clearly, Frau Grubach has little to offer K. in his struggle, but it can also be argued that one reason K. is annoyed by Grubach's helplessness is that he sees his own weakness and vulnerability reflected in her.

Fräulein Bürstner becomes an obsession of K.'s in the very first chapter before he even begins to understand the extent of his helplessness. His obsession with speaking to Fräulein Bürstner is made apparent in the following lines:

> He felt no special desire to see her [Fräulein Bürstner], he could not even remember exactly how she looked, but he wanted to talk to her now, and he was exasperated that her being so late should further disturb and derange the end of such a day. She was to blame, too, for the fact that he had not eaten any supper and that he had put off the visit to Elsa he had proposed making that evening. (23)

The fact that K. feels "no special desire to see her" but then goes on to blame Fräulein Bürstner for disrupting his day by not being present to see him is typical of the way K. deceives

himself about the situations surrounding his trial. When he finally does speak with her, he assures her of his innocence, to which she replies that she cannot commit herself to such a verdict, with "so many possible implications". She goes on to declare that "it must be a serious crime that would bring a Court of Inquiry down on a man" (25). Fräulein Bürstner's refusal to agree with K. about his alleged innocence is unnerving, and her affirmation of the seriousness of the inquiry is even more so. K.'s feeling of guilt which is being forced upon him by not only his supposed allies but also by the Court itself is made apparent when he then says that "the Court of Inquiry might have discovered, not that I was innocent, but that I was not so guilty as they had assumed" (25). It is interesting that when Fräulein Bürstner refuses to consider that K. might be innocent he immediately tries to redeem himself in her eyes by declaring that he may very well be guilty -- just not as guilty as the Court had assumed. Fräulein Bürstner, without realizing it, is making K. see himself as a guilty man.

K. cannot resist Fräulein Bürstner, partially because of a sexual attraction (to be discussed in chapter seven) but also because she informs him that in spite of her admitted ignorance of the law she will soon be "joining the clerical staff of a lawyer's office" (25). K. is delighted and asks her to be his advisor. It is when she asks for the details of the case that her true position as an ally becomes clear, for K. tells her that he doesn't know, to which she is "extravagantly disappointed" (26). K. goes on to implore, "I'm not making fun of you. Why

won't you believe me? I have already told you all I know. In fact more than I know, for it was not a real Court of Inquiry." He then tells her that he was not interrogated but arrested by a "Commission". The effect of these lines on Fräulein Bürstner is somewhat discouraging for K.: "Fräulein Bürstner sat down on the sofa and laughed again" (26). Based on this lengthy exchange, the first thing we can say about Fräulein Bürstner is that although she doesn't know what to make of K. it does seem clear that she doesn't take him seriously. In fact, when he goes on to give her a recreation of his arrest we are told that she listens "with amusement" (27). It is also debatable whether she even believes that he is speaking the truth. And in spite of the fact that she claims she will be working for a lawyer in the future, it seems clear that she doesn't have any legal knowledge at the time, as she even admits to K. Fräulein Bürstner is, in this sense, a typical "ally" for K.: she has nothing to offer him and is incapable of truly helping him. Yet K. is obsessed with seeking her aid, as he is with seeking help from anyone he thinks can assist him with his case.

K.'s uncle and the lawyer both initially appear to be powerful and resourceful allies. It is K.'s uncle, of course, who arranges the meeting with the lawyer, and who seems to have great knowledge about the Court and the functioning of the Law. At one point he tells K. "You ask questions like a child" (103), a line which seems to affirm the uncle's role as a powerful father-figure. The lawyer also appears to be an invaluable ally. He tells K., "I move in legal circles where all the various cases

are discussed" (103). But K. has suspicions about the lawyer from the beginning. He listens to the lawyer talk of his connections and his knowledge of legal circles and thinks to himself, "But you're attached to the Court in the Palace of Justice, not the one in the attics." This is a statement that K. "wanted to say yet could not bring himself actually to say it" (103). What are the implications of this? It seems clear that K. mistrusts the lawyer because he sees him as being connected to the Court in the Palace of Justice, or the "real" court which K. knows and understands. Of the other Court -- the mysterious entity which conducts its affairs in the attics -- K. assumes that the lawyer knows very little, if anything. However, both the lawyer's knowledge and the mystery of his practices seem apparent, as he goes on to tell K., "You must consider that this intercourse enables me to benefit my clients in all sorts of ways, some of which cannot even be divulged" (104).

K.'s isolation and vulnerability seem heightened in the lawyer's house. Amidst the discussion between the lawyer, the Clerk of the Court, and K.'s uncle, we are told that "K. could observe everything calmly, for nobody paid any attention to him" (105). This is a line that shows K.'s isolation even in the presence of his supposed allies -- he is insignificant and ignored by those who are presumably discussing ways to assist him. K. is so alienated from his uncle and the lawyer that he is eager to leave the room when Leni gives him an excuse by breaking the crockery. It seems strange that K. would leave these three men who seem to hold so much influence in the Court, but perhaps

K. feels that to co-operate in any way in his defence would be akin to admitting guilt, something he is struggling against doing. Instead, he seeks help from Leni who also, ironically, urges him to plead guilty: "[Y]ou can't fight against this Court, you must confess to guilt" (108). K.'s isolation is thus apparent, as those around him who pretend to be allies are all trying to make him admit guilt without having any reason to believe guilt exists, outside of the fact that K. has been accused. K.'s role with the lawyer and his uncle is one of a stubborn child who perceives that the adults around him do not care at all about his well-being but are merely playing the roles demanded by society. In this case, the child is correct.

Leni shows K. the lawyer's office, which on a symbolic level not only represents the lawyer's mind, but acts as a gateway to the Law, such as the doorway in the priest's parable of the Law. After K. sits down we are told that "K. still kept looking round the room, it was a lofty, spacious room, the clients of this 'poor man's lawyer' must feel lost in it" (106). The overpowering presence of the Law in the lawyer's office is stifling, just as it was in the Law Court Offices. K. views the lawyer's office as being so large that his clients must surely feel lost, in the same way as they feel lost due to the size and complexity of the Law. The lawyer is not present to guide K. through his office, just as he does not guide K. through the Law for the remainder of the novel. Here again we see very little difference between the Law and K.'s allies, as the procedures by which the lawyer assists his clients are so confusing and

involved that the lawyer, in the end, becomes the same as the Law.

The portrait of the judge in the lawyer's office provides not only a terrifying vision of the Court, but also gives a strong suggestion of the lawyer's relation to the Court:

> It represented a man in a judge's robe; he was sitting on a high thronelike seat, and the gilding of the seat stood out strongly in the picture. The strange thing was that the Judge did not seem to be sitting in a dignified composure, for his left arm was braced along the back and side-arm of the chair; it was as if in a moment he must spring up with a violent and probably wrathful gesture to make some decisive observation or even to pronounce sentence. (107)

Of course, Leni informs K. that the judge is actually a dwarf, sitting on a kitchen chair with a rug propping it up. But the threatening aspect of the portrait is clear nevertheless, and as the novel progresses the lawyer becomes more and more of a threatening figure through his treatment of Block, the tradesman. It is also interesting to see the guilt K.'s uncle attempts to place on him as he berates K. for leaving the lawyer's bedroom to go off with Leni, as they leave the lawyer's house:

> [T]he poor sick lawyer felt it even more, the good man couldn't utter a word as I took leave of him. In all probability you have helped to bring about his complete collapse and so hastened the death of a man on whose good offices you are dependent. And you leave me, your uncle, to wait here in the rain for hours and worry myself sick, just feel, I'm wet through and through! (112)

This is a perfect example of one of K.'s allies. They are not really interested in him at all, but rather focus on themselves, and they constantly try to place guilt on K., whether knowingly

or not. It seems appropriate that the chapter ends with the uncle's speech, as Kafka does not let K. reply in his defence, for in the eyes of those who accuse him, K. has no defence and cannot utter a reply.

It is after this initial visit to the lawyer's home that K. begins having serious doubts about the lawyer as an ally. We are told:

> K. had no idea what the lawyer was doing about the case; at any rate it did not amount to much, it was more than a month since Huld had sent for him, and at none of the previous consultations had K. formed the impression that the man could do much for him. (114)

K.'s faith in his lawyer is eroding quickly, and we see that his allies are not allies at all. Where is his uncle at this point? It is interesting that he does not appear in the novel after the sixth chapter, when he takes K. to the lawyer. K. once again has been abandoned.

The more we learn about K.'s lawyer, the more we see a parallel between the way the lawyer treats K. and the way the Court treats K.:

> In such and similar harangues K.'s lawyer was inexhaustible. He reiterated them every time K. called on him. Progress had always been made, but the nature of the progress could never be divulged. The lawyer was always working away at the first plea, but it had never reached a conclusion, which at the next visit turned out to be an advantage, since the last few days would have been very inauspicious for handing it in, a fact which no one could have foreseen. (124)

The narrator then tells us that K. was "wearied" by the lawyer's volubility, and gives us further insight into K.'s eroding faith in the lawyer:

> Was the lawyer seeking to comfort him or to drive him to despair? K. could not tell, but he soon held it for an established fact that his defense was not in good hands. (125)

What is the difference between the lawyer and the Court in terms of the effect they have on K.? Both confuse him, both frustrate him, and both drive him to despair. The lawyer is not an ally at all, but merely another appendage of the Court. There is no help, comfort, or relief to be found in the lawyer's presence, but only a constant ordeal in which the lawyer will endlessly "harangue" (125) K. Leni is K.'s only relief during his visits to the lawyer.

Not only are K.'s allies of no help to him, but they actually do him personal harm. K.'s uncle and the lawyer drag K. into a tight interaction with the Court which has a profoundly draining effect on K.'s energy and personal life:

> The contempt which he had once felt for the case no longer obtained. Had he stood alone in the world he could easily have ridiculed the whole affair, though it was also certain that in that event it could never have arisen at all. But now his uncle had dragged him to this lawyer, family considerations had come in; his position was no longer quite independent of the course the case took, he himself, with a certain inexplicable complacence, had imprudently mentioned it to some of his aquaintances, others had come to learn of it in ways unknown to him, his relations with Fräulein Bürstner seemed to fluctuate with the case itself - in short, he hardly had the choice to accept the trial or reject it, he was in the middle of it and must fend for himself. To give in to fatigue would be dangerous. (126, emphasis added)

K.'s allies are wearing him down and have bound him firmly to his case. I have emphasized the sentence "Had he stood alone . . ." because it is of special importance to the idea of K.'s

isolation. In this passage we see clearly that K. would be far better off if he were free of his ruinous connections with the lawyer. K.'s desire to "stand alone in the world" does not contradict my argument that he is isolated and only believes he has allies, for my point is that although he is surrounded by those whom he believes are helping him, he is in fact alone in his struggle against the Law, alone and with no assistance from those around him, who are in fact hindering rather than helping. His isolation culminates at the end of the novel when no one stands by his side save his executioners. K.'s desire to "stand alone" demonstrates his frustration and despair with the way the lawyer and his uncle have dragged him into a tight embrace with his case and the Court; K. believes -- perhaps mistakenly -- that if he had never had such "allies", that his case would never even have come to be.

Titorelli the painter is one of the most interesting potential allies that K. encounters throughout the novel and yet in the painter we again see a character whom K. believes to be an ally, but who in fact does nothing to help him. K. is referred to the painter by the manufacturer, who feels that Titorelli could be of assistance to K. due to his connection with the Court:

> Titorelli might be of some use to you,
> he knows many of the Judges, and even if
> he can hardly have much influence himself,
> he can at least advise you how to get in
> touch with influential men. (136)

It is interesting to note the number of qualifications there are on Titorelli as an ally. There is never even the promise of direct help from anyone, but rather all aid is to be attempted

through the painter's various connections.

However, K. is not blindly optimistic as he has been in the past. He takes the letter of recommendation, and the following passage describes his subsequent doubts:

> K. took the letter, feeling dashed, and stuck it in his pocket. Even in the most favorable circumstances the advantages which this recommendation could procure him must be outweighed by the damage implied in the fact that the manufacturer knew about his trial and that the painter was spreading news of it. (137)

K.'s fear about the painter "spreading news" about his trial is a justified one, for does he ever encounter a potential ally who turns out to be apart from the Court? Titorelli, as we are to discover, is very closely linked with the Court, and K. seems to have a natural distrust of anyone even possibly connected to the Court. One thing that becomes more and more clear as the novel unfolds is that it is not possible to be knowledgeable about the Court without becoming consumed by it; K.'s complete ignorance of the workings of the Court are what prevent him from becoming assimilated by it. His ignorance leads to his death, but knowledge would lead to slavery. Ironically, however, the "slaves" such as Titorelli, the chaplain, and the lawyer really don't seem to know much more than K. They seem to talk in circles and there is never any evidence that they can truly do anything to help K. Their knowledge is more illusory than real, and the pursuit of this knowledge is what leads to enslavement to the Court, just as the traveler in the chaplain's parable waits until his death outside the gates to the Law, never able to glimpse inside.

After speaking with the painter for a short time, however, K.'s attitude changes as Titorelli convinces him of the way judges can be easily influenced:

> If a judge could really be so easily influenced by personal connections as the lawyer insisted, then the painter's connections with these vain functionaries were especially important and certainly not to be undervalued. That made the painter an excellent recruit to the ring of helpers which K. was gradually gathering round him. (151)

K.'s desire for knowledge is what drives him to such optimism. There is also the fact that the painter appears, on the surface, to be a true "outsider" in a similar sense that K. is, with the exception that the painter has connections in the Court. However, K. has not yet realized the extent to which the painter is a part of the Court and, therefore, not a true ally.

K. soon suffers from the stifling heat in the painter's apartment, which echoes K.'s nausea in the Law Court Offices building: "[N]ow that he was reminded of the heat he found his forehead drenched in sweat. 'It's almost unbearable'" (155). What is unbearable to K. is the constant bombardment of complicated and confusing information about the Court which Titorelli, a functionary of the Court, is lavishing upon him. We again see a symbol of the hopelessness of K.'s struggle against the Law when K. asks if a window can be opened to which the painter replies, "It's only a sheet of glass let into the roof, it can't be opened" (155). K.'s nausea then approaches the same level as it was in the Law Court Offices: "The feeling of being completely cut off from the fresh air made his head swim" (155). Without realizing it, K. is being cut off from hope, and the

false allies he surrounds himself with are, either consciously or unconsciously, suffocating him with despair.

Titorelli is yet another of K.'s allies who attempts to place guilt on K., for when the painter describes the process of filing an affidavit of innocence we are told: "In the eyes of the painter there was a faint suggestion of reproach that K. should lay upon him the burden of responsibility" (157). K. leaves the painter's studio with nothing more than a pile of "old pictures" (163), all of which are identical. Just as the painter offers K. nothing more than identical paintings, so does he offer K. identical solutions: slavery to the Court through various procedures and methods. In the end, K. has been taken advantage of, both emotionally and financially, by Titorelli.

It comes as no surprise that the second door of the painter's studio opens into the Law Court Offices. As the painter explains, "There are Law Court offices in almost every attic, why should this be an exception?" (164). Indeed, hope and a helpful ally are the exception in the novel: a painful lesson that Joesph K. has yet to fully learn.

CHAPTER 6

INTELLECT AND ISOLATION: THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE PROFESSOR

Like Joseph K., the Professor faces his struggles in isolation. Unlike Joseph K., however, the Professor initially possesses a great deal of power once he is named Chancellor of his unnamed country early in the novel. Yet he quickly falls into a vicious cycle of isolation and intellectual torment as he sees that what power he possesses slowly erodes away; we see the power as being more illusory than anything. The Professor is isolated by his intellectual and rational approach to reality in a way that doesn't enter into Joseph K.'s actions to the same degree. Where Joseph K. is rational to the extent that he wants to make sense of the confusing world around him, the Professor adopts rationality as a philosophical position which excludes emotion or chaos as possible realities and which places logic as its defining idea. The question of physical and spiritual isolation in The Professor is also more apparent than it is in Kafka's novel, for where Joseph K. seems to have people around him up until the very end, there is a sharp transition in The Professor from community to isolation as Professor A. sees his friends and allies very quickly falling away from him leaving him alone to his face death in the end of the novel, in an execution sequence that is strikingly similar to K.'s.

We have a sense of the Professor's intellectual isolation from the very beginning of the novel during his lecture to his students. When the Professor's son and the young fascist have an

argument that arouses "half a dozen" other students to stand up with "shouts of protest" the Professor has the following reaction:

> The smile on his lips as he looked at the angry excited faces showed his wish to understand and to help rather than any real understanding or ability to resolve emotional conflicts which, though he admitted them to be genuine, could not but seem to him somewhat indecent. (24)

Here we have a sense of the Professor's emotional isolation from his students as he stands above them with a condescending smile on his lips, dismissing their emotional reactions as "indecent". The Professor is such a creature of intellect that he cannot relate to forces of emotion -- one factor, perhaps, that leads to his demise.

When the Professor leaves the university to walk through the park our narrator gives us another glimpse at his isolation when explaining the Professor's views on demonstrations by the Reds and the National Legion:

> Yet the Professor would argue stubbornly against anyone who proposed a ban on such demonstrations. The only interference which he would support would be a regulation by which no party should be allowed to spend more money on propaganda than any other party. (41)

These lines indicate a truth about the Professor that will become evident again and again during the course of the novel: he does not take sides. Not only is his intellectual objectivity illustrated in the above passage, but we also have a strong sense of his refusal to commit to a cause. What is the Professor's liberalism, that banner that he can hold up as his own cause? It is little more than a philosophical abstraction. When confronted

with the reality of the political movements around him, the Professor refuses to stand on one side or the other, and keeps himself in complete isolation. The folly of the Professor's position is shown when he is confronted by an old man who occupies "a rather important position" in the Reds organization. He assures the Professor that "your devotion to abstract justice - what I regard as your fatal weakness - will, in this instance, be of service to the concrete justice of my cause" (56). This contrast between the concrete and the abstract is a very important theme in the novel, and it is clear that the Professor alone represents the notion of the abstract, standing alone in isolation from the practical thinkers around him.

When the Professor meets with the fellow members of his government we again see his isolation. The entire mood of this meeting is one of disunity, and the Professor's role is one of an observer as he watches the men give their speeches and suggestions. The Professor of course gives his input but we begin to realize that he has far less control than he believes. For example, when the Professor learns that the assassination attempt was a hoax intended to help the Professor's popularity, he considers dismissing the Chief of Police: "I have half a mind, sir, to demand your resignation" (60). Yet the Chief reminds the Professor of the danger that may result from a reorganzation of the force, and the Professor sees the truth in this suggestion:

> The Professor was not mollified; but he realized that a split in the Police Force at such a time would indeed be dangerous, and he was actually willing to believe that Colonel Grimm's conduct, dishonourable as it was, had yet been prompted by a kind of

patriotism. (61)

The Professor is thus unable to dismiss the Chief and unable to act on what he believes he should do. It is of course due to the political unrest caused by the National Legion and its foreign allies that the Professor cannot dismiss the Chief, an example of how the oppressor is controlling the Professor's actions.

When the Chancellor appoints the Professor to the Chancellorship it appears as though the soon-to-be ex-Chancellor may be a potential ally in the future, helping the Professor to deal with the political and social unrest with his experience and wisdom. But in fact just the opposite is true. The Chancellor is just as helpless and powerless as the Professor and in fact leads the Professor to his death, just as K. leads himself to his own death by struggling against the Law. The Professor is in a sense tricked into his own demise, with more subtlety than in The Trial, in which K. is overtly persecuted from the beginning.

The Chancellor's mention of the Ambassador gives us a suggestion of the dangers to come: "I mentioned your name, Professor, and I am afraid that the Ambassador did not appear altogether pleased to hear it" (67). There is also a hint of what lies ahead in the Chancellor's next words: "[I] hope that you will be more successful in this difficult position than I have been" (67). The very way this speech is presented and the way the Professor has handled himself thus far makes it clear that he will not be any more successful than the previous Chancellor, and in fact the narrator establishes this point from the start by telling us that the "last week enjoyed, or rather

experienced, by Professor A." (13) is about to be recounted. Bearing this in mind, the Chancellor's words have a tone of grim ironic foreshadowing, for we know that the Professor is doomed to failure, yet we have the Chancellor's wish that he will succeed. On the surface this appears to be similar to The Trial in which we are told that without having done anything wrong, K. was arrested. However, the complexities in Kafka's novel run deeper than these opening lines may suggest. From the outset, it may appear that Joseph K. is indeed innocent, yet how can he be innocent or guilty when he is not even charged with a specific wrongdoing? When the narrator tells us that he is innocent we must ask ourselves the obvious question: innocent of what? When the Court declares K. to be guilty, we must ask, guilty of what? Either way we are never told and thus we see in The Trial that these opening lines are not a simple case of foreshadowing but rather an expression of the complexities about to be explored by the work.

When the Professor accepts his new appointment as Chancellor, we begin to realize what a terrible burden he is about to carry as the narrator recounts, in a somewhat darkly humorous tone, the reaction of the ex-Chancellor:

> The ex-Chancellor, now that he had relinquished his power, was much more cheerful. He began to polish his spectacles vigorously and spoke brightly, almost as though he had something amusing to say. (68)

The ex-Chancellor has every reason to be happy; he has just freed himself of the burden of responsibility and placed it squarely on the shoulders of our protagonist. Any doubts about the ex-

Chancellor's role are now firmly erased: he is in no way an ally of the Professor's, but rather a rat deserting a sinking ship. An interesting point of comparison with Kafka's novel lies in the fact that the Professor is actually given the burden of responsibility which eventually becomes a burden of guilt, whereas K. is given such a burden from the moment he wakes up "without having done anything wrong". The Professor accepts his role as Chancellor, implying, obviously, that he could choose to reject it. K. is given no such opportunity, but is simply assumed to be guilty from the very start. What both men have in common, however, is that they carry their burdens alone.

On his way to Clara's apartment the Professor provides another example of his rationality which, in this instance, is carried to the point of absurdity. To himself he whispers, "Justice that can be demonstrated mathematically, that is what I have to give" (76). How can justice ever be demonstrated mathematically? The Professor does not encounter a single character throughout the narrative who would agree with his reduction of justice to a mathematical truth, and it is these types of beliefs that are the motivating force in the Professor's action as Chancellor. The Professor thus gives but one of many examples of his intellectual isolation -- how his relentless focus on logic, reason, and abstract notions of justice have completely divorced him from the living world. It seems ironically appropriate that as he reduces justice to a mathematical science he is on his way to visit Clara, his deceitful lover.

Later, when Clara and the Professor confront the Professor's son and his female companion, we see further evidence of the Professor's intellectual isolation. The Professor's son declares:

> It is not simply a question of there being a greater percentage of good people on our side than on the other. It is more the case that we are under the terrible and necessary dictatorship of an idea. (88)

The Professor's son is unknowingly describing the sheer foolishness of the Professor's philosophy. The Professor himself is under the dictatorship of an idea -- and this idea and the pure rationality it represents isolate the Professor from Jinkerman, the Professor's son, and everyone else who could become a potential ally.

Later in this encounter the narrator gives us a very clear image of the Professor's complete isolation from the reality that the two represent:

> [F]or a moment it seemed most surprisingly to the Professor that the sinking splendor of the sun, the scattered notes of birds, the light breeze in the branches formed together with the pain of this boy and girl a whole scene or a consistent mood, and that it was he himself, with Clara, who was standing outside the picture. (93)

In this sense the "picture" represents not only the pastoral scene before him, but also the entire world in which the Professor is attempting to understand the forces surrounding him. And as the reader discovers much sooner than the Professor himself, Clara is not truly by the Professor's side as he believes, but is instead one more instance of betrayal and deception, another instance where the Professor believes he sees

an ally, but in fact sees an enemy.

The Professor's foolishness and naivete become further apparent in his encounter with Vander. One of the Professor's most fatal mistakes throughout the novel is his failure to understand and appreciate the gravity of the threat facing his nation in the form of the National Legion, and his tendency to underestimate his opponents is evident here:

> Indeed, as he observed Julius help himself to another drink during the course of his first few sentences, he began to feel that the views which he had heard expressed were the result of some secret grievance, exacerbated by an excess of alcohol, rather than a sincere statement of any coherent plan of life. (107)

What the Professor refuses to recognize as a coherent plan of life and instead dismisses as an alcohol-induced state of mind is very much a coherent plan of life, a brutal, cynical philosophy with the power of a huge organized movement behind it. Yet the Professor does not see this; he only sees Vander's consumption of alcohol. That the Professor, of course, is underestimating Vander is in large part due to the Professor's faith in his "mathematical" notion of justice. As Reeve argues, "Jinkerman regards this faith as a fantasy no less ludicrous than those of the park speakers" (Reeve 57). It is the Professor's faith which also isolates him from those around him, who all see his belief in liberalism and the "self-evident justice of his cause" (Reeve 57) as either fantasy, like Jinkerman, or as laughable, like Vander. This is another similarity between K. and the Professor, since both fail to truly understand the powers that are working so insidiously against them. However, the difference lies in the

fact that the Professor is foolishly underestimating his opponent, while K. is struggling to understand the Court and the Law. K.'s entire struggle arises from his failure to understand the charges against him despite his best efforts to do so. The Professor's struggle is his failure to even attempt to realize the necessity of understanding his opponents. So while K. tries to understand and fails, the Professor does not even try. The irony is heightened by the fact that while K. has many people around him who seem to possess great knowledge and insight about the Court, in the end they lead him nowhere, and seem to know very little of actual value. The Professor, by contrast, does have two potential allies whom we believe really could help him understand the fascist threat: his son and Jinkerman, the Chief of Police. Where K. would be endlessly asking these two characters for help and information, however, the Professor has no real interest in understanding their ideas or exploring their potential as allies. This is perhaps one of the sharpest contrasts between the two characters: K. earnestly seeks allies yet is unable to find any that can truly help his cause, while the Professor does not seek allies, assuming perhaps that his unshakable devotion to liberalism and abstract justice will naturally draw allies and victory to his side. K. has no such faith in justice or ultimate victory; his struggle is motivated by desperation. In the end, of course, both men die alone, isolated and defeated.

After the Professor endures a series of tormenting and confusing dreams in the sixth chapter he is visited by the

members of his government -- the Trade Union Leader, "several of his colleagues", and the Commodore. The Commodore and the Trade Union Leader engage in a bitter argument which is more comical than anything; at one point the Commodore tells the Trade Union Leader "You can boil your face, sir" (143). However, the encounter becomes far more serious when the Trade Union Leader resigns: "[I] must beg you to accept my resignation at once" (143). What follows is a barrage of name-calling; the Professor calls the Trade Union Leader "childish" and the Commodore brands him a "sissy". These names only strengthen his desire to resign: "What you have said strengthens my resolution to leave the Government" (144). The Professor then becomes a truly comical figure, dressed in his silk dressing gown and "brandishing his stick as he stood before the fire" (144). Throughout this scene Warner shifts from the comic to the serious, as we see that the Trade Union Leader's resignation could have serious consequences, yet it is difficult to view the situation without noting the comical and child-like behavior of the participants.

Warner shifts back to a more serious tone when the Commodore then promptly resigns:

> I'll resign, too. I never wanted to be in the Government anyway and, if you ask me, it's getting a bit too risky nowadays. And I don't think much of your Plan either, sir. I shouldn't wonder if that fellow who wrote the pamphlet isn't quite right. Good-bye, sir! Damn you, sir! (145)

A note of humour underscores the fact that this emotional display results from nothing more than the Professor telling the Commodore "don't be a fool". Yet there are much more serious

implications. First of all, the most obvious result is that the Professor is becoming more and more isolated. In spite of the comic treatment Warner gives this scene it is serious in the way it shows the Professor quickly losing the few allies he thought he had, and even worse, losing them over nothing more than name-calling.

Yet there are more significant factors at work. When the Trade Union leader repeats his decision to leave the Government he does so in "the gentlest of voices" (144) as if he knows on some perhaps unconscious level that the Professor is doomed and as if he feels that he should treat the Professor -- the sentenced man -- with a measure of respect. This "gentlest of voices" stands out in this scene because it is in sharp contrast to the name-calling and yelling that has taken place to this point. Perhaps the gentle voice is more the narrator's than the Trade Union Leader's, who realizes that at this point in the narrative the Professor's fate is becoming increasingly barren, and as the narrator knows that the Professor's ultimate demise is certain, he choses to give the Trade Union Leader a quiet voice of respect. This of course stands in sharp contrast to the Professor's own "authoritative voice" which follows, and which does nothing more than alienate the Commodore as well.

In addition to the Professor's isolation, the significance in this scene also lies in the fact that it displays the erosion of the Professor's authority. As both men leave the Professor's room we are told:

> They saluted, but their action was marked by the slightest hesitation, for the sudden

> appearance of the Professor in crimson silk had evidently not corresponded with the pre-conceived idea of him which they had in their minds. (145)

The silk robe -- given to the Professor by Clara -- represents not only a mockery of the Professor's position as Chancellor and the impotence he has brought to it, but it also foreshadows the de-sexing the Professor will suffer (and already has suffered) at Clara's hands. The robe also indicates the Professor's inability to command respect and shows how powerless and weak he has become. The dead Vander is growing stronger. There is a final sense that, as the Professor stands alone in his silk robe, he is not only isolated and alone, but isolated in absurdity and shame.

Once the Professor is alone we are told:

> He went into his bedroom and with a sense of relief deposited the silk dressing-gown on his bed. While he put on his clothes his mind was moving rapidly, for he was already becoming aware that as things now stood every second of his time was precious and every moment dangerous. (145)

This is one of the few moments in which the Professor displays a genuine sense of understanding the true horrors that await him and of at least having the earnest desire to do something about it. Yet as with K. and his struggles against the Court, the Professor's fear and desire for prudence is futile. It is significant that he deposits the silk robe "with a sense of relief", showing that he is certainly well aware of the mocking effect it has on his authority. What the Professor has not yet realized, however, is that his entire government is cloaked in a silk dressing gown, and its authority has been weakened from the moment he was chosen to be the new Chancellor. The silk dressing

gown is just a symbol of the Professor's weakness and isolation, not the cause of it. In the same manner K. seems to have a difficult time commanding the respect of his supposed allies and colleagues, although the effect is less apparent and perhaps less important for K., since the Professor's foolishness represents the downfall of a government, where as K.'s represents the downfall of the individual. It can be argued that while K. and the Professor both die in isolation, the Professor has the added burden of having taken his entire nation with him.

From this point the Professor becomes increasingly isolated from the people of this nation as well. In the beginning of the eighth chapter the Professor sees the three groups of demonstrators, the National Legion, the demonstration led by Rev. Furius Webber, and the demonstration of the workers. We are told that the Legion was dealing "affably" (166) with the police, while the police were roughly struggling with the other two groups. The police in this instance can be seen to represent the Professor himself; as literally the arms of the state, they are acting in behalf of the state, of which the Professor is now the head. There is a suggestion of the Professor's deep understanding of the principles of fascism, and perhaps his realization of the emotional "rightness" of the movement in spite of its moral vulgarity. The three groups can be said to represent different aspects of the Professor's being; the National Legion epitomizing an irrational pleasure principle and a wish for power, both of which the Professor subconsciously desires, while the Webber demonstrators show what the Professor

aspires to, a desire for peace. The workers symbolize what the Professor really is, a friend of the working class, though he himself does not realize it.

The Professor, however, is detached from the entire scene and his eyes become the eyes of the narrator; seeing, yet not commenting. His isolation is made more apparent by Jinkerman, who seems to function as both the Professor's guardian angel and as a physical representation of the Professor's conscience. Jinkerman says:

> If you had eyes you might see who your real supporters are. It is a whole class whose existence and life you may theorize about but have never understood. You talk pedantically of the state as though it were a sum of individuals. You have no comprehension of the mass and force represented by these individuals in their collective groups. (167)

Jinkerman perfectly sums up the Professor's dilemma. He is completely isolated from the world of reality and instead is living in a dream, a world of abstractions and ideals. Our sense of his isolation is heightened by the fact that he does not even recognize it exists, and cannot see his real supporters -- the workers -- as Jinkerman tries to point out to him. Jinkerman then goes on to say, "You refuse to arm them; you refuse to arm your own ideas" (167). This again is a striking difference between the Professor and Joseph K., for the Professor really does have the power to arm his ideals, yet is too foolish and idealistic to even consider doing so. Joseph K., however, really has no ideals as such to arm (save a desire for justice which is his downfall) and certainly does not have the power to arm them if he had any. The Professor seems more a victim of failed

potential, or wasted opportunity, while Joseph K. utilizes every potential situation and opportunity that is presented to him, yet it is all in vain.

In spite of all that happens to him, the Professor never fully realizes how completely he is isolated until his betrayal by Clara. On his way to Clara's apartment we see the completeness of the Professor's isolation as he looks at the deserted streets: "There was not even so much as the sound of a football in the street, for in this quarter of the town the windows of the houses had their shutters up and the inhabitants remained indoors" (253). When passing by the University the Professor glances at "the walls within which he had spent the greater part of his life" (262), just as K. had spent the greater part of his life in his office and his small apartment. The Professor also gives us a sense of his lonely intellectual isolation as the narrator tells us, "The Professor began to wish that there were more people in the country who possessed a knowledge of Greek" (263). Yet he is really the only one, and the ideals and aspirations represented by the ancient Greeks have become, in this world, meaningless.

Upon arrival at Clara's apartment, of course, the Professor's betrayal and isolation are complete. Clara comes out of the bedroom from which the two Legionaries have emerged and she is "dressed in a loose dressing-gown and carried in her hand a glass half filled with champagne" (272). So foolish is the Professor and so unaware is he of his complete isolation that he "winked at her in a conspiratorial manner" (272) as if Clara was

being forced against her will to drink champagne with the two young Legionaries and was waiting for the Professor to come and rescue her. My sympathies with the Professor are strongest at this point, as it is all too obvious what Clara is about to say:

> "Well," she said, "if it isn't my little Professor," and while the men drew their revolvers from their sides she advanced to the door and threw one arm round the Professor's neck. No action of hers, not even if she had spat in his face or slapped it, could have affected him more profoundly.

And lest there is any doubt, Clara goes on to say:

> I don't love you and I am a spy and I have betrayed you. (273)

This would seem to be enough to have crushed the Professor's spirit and to have made not only his isolation but also his oppression by the fascists complete. But Clara goes further in her torment, attempting to place guilt on the Professor in addition to anguish:

> "What about my heart?" she was saying. "What about my man? Julius Vander, one of the best fellows that ever stepped, killed by you and your police. Do you think that because I betrayed you I'd ever betray him? Oh no!" (274)

The Professor's isolation is complete after this humiliating experience. His only reply is "I have nothing to say" (274). The revelation of Clara's betrayal comes far later for the Professor than it does for the reader, yet it is inevitable just the same. The Professor's death will be discussed in detail later on, but it is sufficient to note for now that he dies just as K. does, isolated and alone, dragged out by two oppressors to be executed.

There is a sense that the Professor's downfall is avoidable

because he has potential allies in the workers and he possesses the power to arm them. There is no sense that K.'s downfall is avoidable because he has no allies nor any initial power. The Professor's death is the death of ideas, while K.'s is the death of humanity. My own experience in reading the novels is that when K. dies I myself die, yet when the Professor dies, another person dies, someone who represents ideas and philosophies rather than an actual human being. I think that the Professor is isolated from the reader for the same reason he is isolated from the other characters in the novel -- his intellectual foolishness and obsession with rationality and abstractions. K. is isolated because the Court singles him out without his "having done anything wrong". The Professor, in a sense, does do something wrong -- he does nothing. He is loved and respected at first but he does not act against the Legion when he has the opportunity, and therefore he is doomed. K. never can act against the Court, yet he is singled out anyway. K. is perhaps more sympathetic because he does not have the Professor's pretentions at wisdom and never has a hope of resistance. The Professor also has people around him who know the truth, yet he refuses to listen to them. K., by contrast, has no one who can really tell him the truth of his situation without confusing him further.

CHAPTER 7

K., LENI, AND THE COURT: SEXUALITY IN THE TRIAL

In his discussion of The Trial Henry Hubert argues that K. needs sexual expression in order to somehow "break away" from his rigid rationality. When Hubert discusses K.'s encounter with Fräulein Bürstner in which K. kisses her on the neck, he concludes, "It seems as though K. has a profound need for this non-rational activity" and goes on to describe the need as "sinister" (Hubert 72). While I don't agree that K.'s need for sexual expression is sinister (see page 77), I do agree that there is such a need driving his actions in the novel. Ronald Gray argues that the need for women that manifests itself in K. is caused by the feelings aroused in K. by Fräulein Bürstner:

> But although Fräulein Bürstner disappears from the narrative, the feelings she arouses in K. ensure that a number of women take her place, while at the same time K. begins to realise that all the officials of the Court are women-chasers, in other words that they are like himself. (Gray 108)

This connection between K., the Court, and sexuality is a very significant one and is a recurring theme throughout the novel, as we see K. attempting to use Frau Grubach, Fräulein Bürstner, the usher's wife, and Leni to help him with his case. Gray is certainly accurate in his realization that sexuality becomes manifested in the Court, as the Court is in many ways the controlling figure in the sexual encounters between K. and the various women in the novel.

One of the most basic ideas present in the novel is the

relation between sexual attraction and guilt, a connection which the Court in some way creates and encourages. There are several references in the novel to the sexual attractiveness of accused men. The Lawyer tells K.:

> [A]ccused men are always the most attractive. It cannot be guilt that makes them attractive in anticipation, for they aren't all guilty, and it can't be the justice of the penance laid on them that makes them attractive in anticipation, for they aren't all going to be punished, so it must be the mere charge preferred against them that in some way enhances their attraction. (184)

He goes on to stress that even "that wretched creature Block" is attractive because he is an accused man. During K.'s conversation with Fräulein Bürstner, she tells him, "A court of law has a curious attraction, hasn't it?" (25). K. later "seized her, and kissed her first on the lips, then all over the face, like some thirsty animal lapping greedily at a spring of long-sought fresh water" (29). It is the next sentence in this passage that causes Hubert to argue that K.'s sexual motivations are "sinister": "Finally he kissed her on the neck, right on the throat, and kept his lips there for a long time" (29). There are of course connotations of vampirism and an almost cannibalistic, murderous animal passion, but the dominant sensation seems to be that of desperation, which K. is certainly seized with throughout the novel and for this reason I can't agree that his urges for Fräulein Bürstner are sinister. In spite of his desperation, however, K. becomes more and more aware as the trial progresses of his strange sexual appeal: "K. wished to exaggerate nothing, he knew that Fräulein Bürstner was an ordinary little typist who could not resist him for long" (81). Like many of the sexual

encounters in the novel, these lines suggest control and manipulation. And whether obvious or not, the Court is always present as an underlying agent in the sexual power struggles in the novel.

The Court's role is nowhere so obvious as it is in the third chapter when K. struggles with the student for control of the usher's wife. After he meets the usher's wife in the opening of the chapter in the courtroom, it isn't long before K. discovers that she is attracted to him as are so many women to accused men. She says:

> I've been told that I have lovely eyes too, but yours are far lovelier. I was greatly struck by you as soon as I saw you, the first time you came here. (52)

K., however, makes it clear that he requires more from a woman than a sexual encounter. He replies, "[T]o help me effectively one would need connections with the higher officials" (52-53). The connection between sex and power in K.'s eyes is thus made obvious; he is drawn to women as helpers, but only if they have the power or knowledge to help him in his case. Their sexuality is important, but the potential influence and power their sexuality offers is even more valuble.

Soon the law student who is obsessed with the woman appears. The woman's subsequent words to K. make apparent the connection between sexuality and power. She whispers:

> Don't be angry with me, please don't think badly of me, I must go to him now, and he's a dreadful-looking creature, just see what bandy legs he has. But I'll come back in just a minute and then I'll go with you wherever you like, you can do with me what you please, I'll be glad if I can only get

> out of here for a long time, and I wish it could be forever. (56)

The woman is clearly desperate and appeals to K. in her desire to leave her present life, offering him her body in exchange for his assistance. However, so obsessed is K. with his own situation with the Court that he doesn't even consider altruism. Instead, he decides that he should yield to the attraction he feels for her because "there could be no more fitting revenge on the Examining Magistrate and his henchmen than to wrest this woman from them and take her himself" (56). The woman is thus little more than a valuble prize in K.'s fight with the Court. K. has entered into a sexual power struggle with the Court for control of a woman whose name he does not even know, nor is her name relevant to him. What matters is only his position in relation to the Court.

The student soon picks the woman up on his shoulders and carries her away. K. is frustrated and afraid of the possibility of losing the power struggle with the student, for it would in one part mean that his attractiveness to women is not absolute, and it is this attractiveness which he uses as a means of furthering his case. He runs after the woman and asks if she wishes to be freed, to which she replies that she does not. She then tells K., "He's only obeying the orders of the Examining Magistrate and carrying me to him" (58). K. lets her go, "furious with disappointment" and we are then told:

> K. slowly walked after them, he recognized that this was the first unequivocal defeat he had received from these people. (58)

Up to this point K. has understood that his attractiveness is an

accused man as an important asset, and the student's victory in carrying the woman away symbolizes one of many victories the Court is to win over K. as he sees his attractiveness to women fade as the novel progresses. The Court's complete control over sexuality is furthered when K. then encounters the usher and recounts what had taken place, only to have the usher tell him, "they're always carrying her away from me" (61) in a calm tone of resignation. The usher realizes that the Court's dominance extends into matters of sexuality as easily as anything else, but K. has yet to discover this fact for himself, though he is beginning to realize the implications of the Court's power.

Leni represents K.'s most significant and emotionally powerful sexual encounter. K.'s uncle takes an instant disliking to Leni, describing her at one point as a "witch" (102) and his hatred for her is best understood as a hatred for what she represents: attraction to accused men. K.'s uncle detests the thought that his nephew is accused and, by implication, guilty, since as K.'s relative that guilt would naturally reflect on him. Leni's importance as a sexual creature and as a subsequent determiner of guilt is thus obvious; since women seem to be most attracted to accused and guilty men, then those to whom they are attracted are inevitably guilty. The prospect has terrifying implications.

When K. is later seated with Leni in the lawyer's office their exchange is strikingly child-like and suggests an element of power struggle:

> "But you didn't like me at first and you probably don't like me even now." Liking

> is a feeble word," said K. evasively. "Oh!" she said, with a smile, and K.'s remark and that little exclamation gave her a certain advantage over him. So K. said nothing for a while. (107)

It is interesting that K. is evasive when confronted with his feelings for Leni, because the fact is that he cannot love her, for his entire emotional focus is directed towards himself and his case. On one level it appears that K.'s inability to love anybody or anything is not a personal failing, but rather the result of the Court's relentless persecution of him and its erosion of his humanity. Yet this idea begs the question of whether K. could love before his trial. How "human" was he before the warders dragged him out of bed? His complete fascination with women suggests an almost child-like ignorance of both the opposite sex and relationships in general; he seems amazed anytime a woman in the novel is receptive to his advances, suggesting he has never had anything like an intimate relationship before. It seems that K.'s inability to love is not caused by the Court, but rather made more apparent by his circumstances. There is no evidence that he has ever loved anyone before so it seems pointless to blame his lack of empathy on his trial. Perhaps K. is "guilty" of an inability to love, if he is indeed guilty of anything.

The women K. encounters seem to need constant reassurance of their worth to him, and Leni is no exception. As K. studies the painting of the Judge, Leni tells him, "But I'm a vain person, too, and very much upset that you don't like me in the least" (108). K. puts his arm around her and she "leaned her head

against his shoulder in silence" (108). The image is very similar to that of a child being comforted and there is a sense that Leni's identity (and the identity of all the women in The Trial) is defined by her interactions with accused men. This ironically seems to give K. a measure of power, but it is not power that he is able to put to any use in his own defence, and it is power that is revealed to be more illusory than anything, similar to the Professor's initial power as Chancellor.

So strong is the connection between guilt and sexuality that Leni urges K. to plead guilty to the Court, because K.'s acceptance of his guilt would serve to strengthen the sexual bond between them. So strong is the necessity for K. to accept guilt before he can realize sexual expression that Leni refuses to help him unless he pleads guilty (109). It is at this point that K. again begins to realize the attraction that women have to him:

> I seem to recruit women helpers, he thought almost in surprise; first Fräulein Bürstner, then the wife of the usher, and now this little nurse who appears to have some incomprehensible desire for me. She sits there on my knee as if it were the only right place for her! (109)

K. finds Leni's desire for him "incomprehensible" because he cannot understand sexuality or sexual desire except as it relates to himself. In other words, so obsessed is K. with his case that although it is obvious to him why he needs Leni, he cannot understand why she seems to need him. The necessity for women helpers and the sexual connotations of these encounters is a direct result of the Court's persecution of K. Thus, the Court not only makes K. attractive by accusing him, but it also forces

him to seek help through using women for their sexuality.

When Leni shows K. the web of skin connecting her two middle fingers, his response indicates his view of her as an object. He declares "What a freak of nature" and "What a pretty little paw!" (110), responses that seem both demeaning and insensitive. Yet Leni "looked on with a kind of pride" while K. examines the fingers. Again, it is as if her self-worth is dependent on her usefulness to K., and his "astonishment" at her fingers makes her feel as if she is valuble to him, even if only as amusement. The Court has thus created an environment in which emotion is a tool for self-gratification and sexuality brings with it a natural struggle and manipulation between individuals. As Adorno notes of Kafka, "His entire work, however, is permeated by the theme of depersonalization in sex" (Adorno 263).

When K. kisses Leni's fingers her reaction is one of the most significant in the novel in terms of the theme of sexuality. Her elation and desire shows the possessiveness involved in sexuality and her need for self-affirmation:

> "Oh!" she cried at once. "You have kissed me! She hastily scrambled up until she was kneeling open-mouthed on his knees. K. looked up at her almost dumbfounded; now that she was so close to him she gave out a bitter exciting odor like pepper; she clasped his head to her, bent over him, and bit and kissed him on the neck, biting into the very hairs on his head. "You have exchanged her for me," she cried over and over again. "Look, you have exchanged her for me after all!" Then her knees slipped, with a faint cry she almost fell on the carpet, K. put his arms round her to hold her up and was pulled down to her. "You belong to me now," she said. (111)

The strong sexual imagery of Leni "kneeling open-mouthed" on K.'s knees is obvious in its image of fellatio, and when she kisses and bites him on the neck she echoes K.'s treatment of Fräulein Bürstner, the suggestion being that there is only one possible mode of sexual interaction, a possessive, hungry, somewhat violent manner of sexual expression created by the Court. That Leni's scent is "a bitter exciting odor like pepper" seems to suggest something dark and negative ("bitter" in a moral sense, or bitter as a nightmare is bitter to the dreamer) yet at the same time desirable and stimulating. This is a perfect summary of K.'s sexual encounters; they are bitter, yet exciting, and most of all, they are necessary. Due to his misplaced belief that women can offer him genuine assistance in his case, K. is possessed by the need to engage in these sexual encounters which have nothing to do with love, but rather with possession and control. Leni falls to the floor, as if crushed under the weight of K.'s control over her. She then says, "You belong to me now" but only after K. is pulled down to her. The encounter is complete; both souls have struggled for dominance and control, both seeking some significant reward. K. comes away with a sense that he is furthering his case (and perhaps compensating for the loss of the usher's wife) and Leni perhaps with a sense of self-affirmation or satisfaction in what she perceives as power over an accused man, a power that echoes that of the Court. Hubert suggests that Leni's motivation is "only to trap K. for the lawyer Huld." He goes on to argue that "She is thus a prostitute herself, letting herself be used by both Huld and K." (Hubert

82). It is certainly feasible that Leni's only motivation in seducing K. is to trap him for the lawyer, but to suggest that she is "prostituting herself" is to underestimate the power of the Court. One thing that seems apparent in K.'s interactions with women is that neither they nor K. have any choice in the roles they play. Leni has neither the ability nor the opportunity to leave the lawyer or K. Just as K.'s role is that of an accused man, so is Leni's role that of his lover. To suggest that she prostitutes herself is to imply that she has some control over her actions, but in reality neither Leni nor K. seem to have any choice in what they do.

Hubert also argues that "the exchange of Elsa for Leni is completely in keeping with the character of K., whose very existence is predicated upon the prostitution of others for himself" (Hubert 82). I agree with Hubert here, but only in part. It is true that K. is using not only Leni but all of the women (and men) that he encounters, unless he learns that they have no connections with the Court, in which case he disregards their assistance altogether. However, Hubert seems to be suggesting that K. is in some way to blame for this "prostitution" of others or that K. should be held accountable for it. This seems too harsh a judgement and again assumes, as with Leni, that K. has some control over his actions. It is true that K. uses Leni, but he does so out of loneliness, fear, and a driving necessity in the face of his case, not malice or lust. Certainly K. and Leni use each other, but they are not to blame. It is the Court that creates the necessity.

After their passionate exchange, Leni's final words to K. are: "Here's the key of the door, come whenever you like" (111) which foreshadows the discussion of the door in the parable of the Law of which the priest tells K. in the Cathedral. If K. really believes that he has the key, he is deceived; his use of sexuality brings him no help, in spite of what power he initially believes it gives him.

CHAPTER 8

CLARA, VANDER, AND THE PROFESSOR: SEXUALITY IN THE PROFESSOR

Sexuality seems to play a slightly less obvious role in The Professor than it does in The Trial, but the Professor's relationship with Clara and her ultimate betrayal of him give important insights into both the role of sexuality and love in the Professor's world and the Professor's own attitudes towards love, emotion, and his own humanity. As in Kafka, sexuality in Warner's novel is completely devoid of love, but unlike The Trial the element of betrayal is far more obvious and the Professor, unlike K., doesn't even try to win the sexual power struggle, but accepts his own inadequacy with passivity, whereas K. continues to try and use sexuality to his advantage.

The Professor's conception of love and sexuality is made apparent in the first chapter of the novel when he thinks about his first wife:

> He remembered how, as a young man, he had likened her in his letters to the golden Helen or, when bathing, to a Nereid. Both views, he now recognized, had been profoundly mistaken. She had been a woman in no way remarkable for intelligence and understanding, and what had been most important to her had been her womb. Before long the Professor had come to love her as a farmer might love a favoured cow. He thought of her kindly, and with gratitude, but with little excitement. (32)

The Professor's early tendency was to view his first wife as a mythological figure, worshipping her as an ideal Helen or Nereid. He soon realized that she was not worthy, in his mind, of such worship because her intellect was not sufficient for his respect.

His characterization of her as a "favoured cow" has obvious demeaning and sexist connotations and the Professor's criticism that her womb was most important to her suggests that the Professor felt in competition with their child, as if his wife was more of a mother figure to him than a lover, and he thus had to compete with their child for her affections.

It is Clara, of course, who has allowed the Professor to regain "the excitement of his youth" and unlike his first wife he is strongly attracted to Clara's intellect:

> [W]hat was new to him was the delight he found in loving her for her ready and sympathetic mind, her wit, her competent enthusiasm for his own ideals. (32)

The Professor's love for Clara is not only idol worship, as will become apparent later, but it is also a form of self-worship, because Clara's supposed love for the Professor's ideals is what makes the Professor love her, so in reality he is loving his ideals as he sees them in Clara. There is of course a supreme irony when the narrator tells us that the Professor felt that Clara's face looked "honestly" at him from a photograph. The Professor "had no idea whatever of the real situation" (33) involving Clara, because instead of looking at her, he is focusing all of his sexual energy on the ideas that he believes she represents. Of course, we soon discover that she has nothing but scorn for these ideas and she becomes completely de-romanticized in even the Professor's eyes, though not until the very end of the Professor's struggle, when he is betrayed by Clara and arrested. In this sense there is a strong parallel between the Professor and K., in that both are drawn to women

because of what the women can offer them. In K.'s case, the attraction is for women whom K. believes can help influence the high officials. The Professor's love for Clara is based largely on the Professor's love for his own ideals, and in Clara he sees them represented as in a beautiful sculpture which gives him great aesthetic pleasure. The main difference that is immediately apparent, however, is that although neither K. nor the Professor has anything to give in terms of emotion or sexuality, K. has something that women genuinely find attractive -- his identity as an accused man -- whereas the Professor is only being deceived by Clara, and there is never even a suggestion that she truly feels anything for him but scorn.

Although sexuality is certainly present in The Professor, love is as absent from the novel as it is in The Trial. The Professor's son, when speaking with his lover in the park, gives important insight into this fact. He argues, "I tell you for the thousandth time that to-day, now, in this country, love between two people is impossible, except as a drug, and so is peace" (86). The Professor certainly uses Clara as a drug, a drug which calms him and assures him of the moral rightness of his ideals. In the same way K. is using the women around him as drugs, trying to find the most powerful and effective prescription to help him with his case, and discarding those that cannot; K. is also using women to help him deal with his loneliness, as he seeks an almost maternal comfort in the face of persecution. The Professor, of course, is appalled by his son's cynicism and he clumsily bursts through the bushes, urging his son and his son's

lover to accept love as a reality. He bows to Clara, saying, "I am not too old for love" (92). Ironically, the Professor is proving his son's point, since Clara has no love for the Professor whatsoever, and their entire relationship is in reality a deception. By holding up his relationship with Clara as an example of love, the Professor is unknowingly proving that love cannot exist in the present time. What seems certain is that the Professor believes in love or, at the very least, he wants to believe in love. One difference between Warner's novel and The Trial is Warner's constant references to love and the Professor's seemingly earnest belief that love exists. Although the Professor's conception of love is based on the worship of both himself, his ideals, and mythology, a conception of love at least exists, as doomed as it might be. In The Trial there is never even an attempt at defining or understanding love; the novel is dominated by the Court to such an extent that the characters don't even consider emotional love as they engage in what Hubert describes as the "prostituting" of themselves and others.

While K. and Leni struggle for control over each other, there is little doubt that the Professor has no control over Clara, for she is clearly the dominant force in their relationship. Early in the novel we are told, "The Professor himself was surprised at the strength of her hands' pressure on his arms" and that Clara was "taller than he was" (79). Her physical dominance is like nothing seen in Kafka and mirrors the control she has over their entire relationship, based on the underlying fact that there is no relationship to speak of, except

in the Professor's mind. Their entire time spent together is a lie, and this knowledge alone gives Clara enormous power over the Professor.

The Professor clearly idolizes Clara. After the assassination of Dr. Tromp Clara visits the Professor and we are told that he desires nothing more than a few minutes of conversation with "this upright, beautiful, and understanding woman" (179). The subsequent passage suggests how the Professor places Clara on a pedestal:

> He observed at once that she was either anxious or distressed. Below the dark green hat her face was pale and her lips seemed to have contracted their fullness into a line of red. Particularly he remarked the tawny hair that, escaping from the compression of her hat, hung about her ears; for to-day it seemed lifeless, wilted, like parched plants. He had never seen her before unless alight with vivacity or else reflective in a kind of healthy and powerful calm; and now the sight of her without her gaiety and her confidence was to him most pitiful, for he had imagined her to be, so far as her feelings were concerned, beyond the reach of misfortune. (179)

Not only does the Professor describe her physical features in intricate detail, as if describing a painting or a statue, but we are also told that he had imagined her to be "beyond the reach of misfortune", as if she were an angel in high places, safe from the cares of the world. The Professor is astonished to see her distressed because he can't imagine how any cares could possibly weigh down his perfect, idealized woman. That the Professor is so puzzled by her anxiety shows how out of touch he is with her humanity. He sees Clara as a Greek goddess, as a divine

manifestation of his ideals, and he cannot reconcile this vision with her "lifeless, wilted" hair. This is a striking difference between the Professor and K., because while the Professor seems to need this idealized female image for its intrinsic value, K.'s approach to women is more utilitarian. He is sexually attracted only to those women whom he feels can help him, either by giving him advice about the law or comfort and companionship, and even when he is with them he is constantly thinking about his trial. The Professor, by contrast, has placed all his emotion, mind and soul into Clara, and worships the divine vision he has created in her image.

The exchange that follows shortly after is one that causes me to despise the Professor's foolishness. Clara tells him, "I have some friends who must have been very slightly implicated in some plot against the Government. Please do not ask me their names, because I can assure you they are very unimportant people" (180). It should be shocking that, in a time of political upheaval and potential revolution, the Professor's mistress is confessing to having friends who have plotted against his government. But the Professor is completely naive. He replies, "Certainly, certainly. Your word is quite sufficient" (180). This is an amazing response to Clara's confession and it shows how the Professor's idolizing of Clara is the worship of what he sees as innocent perfection. He cannot even conceive that she could be doing anything wrong, because he sees his own ideals embodied in her and he cannot accept that his ideals might be flawed. Instead, he deifies Clara and takes her word for

anything, assuming her trustworthiness and moral purity, even when she admits to being friends with revolutionaries. Clara goes on to ask the Professor about a friend of her friends, a "dangerous character", by the name of Julius Vander. How can the Professor be so foolish as to not have the slightest suspicion aroused by this inquiry? His mistress is confessing that she knows, even if indirectly, the man who had tried to kill him, a man who is a friend of her friends, yet the Professor is completely undisturbed by the fact that she has connections with Vander and instead calmly tells her of Vander's death and the attempt on his own life.

Clara's reaction is one of extreme distress: "Her face was so white that he feared a fit of fainting or hysterics" (182). We are also told that the Professor found the sight of her distress "moving". Although the Professor believes that she is grieving for his narrow escape, the reality is that she is mourning the death of Vander, a supreme irony which is revealed near the end of the novel. The Professor is, in this sense, far more deluded than K., for K. knows that he is attractive to women but he also does not believe that there is any underlying emotional bond inherent in the attraction, but rather that the attraction is merely for his guilt; in both assumptions he is correct. The Professor, however, is deluded in two ways: first in the assumption that the idealized goddess figure of Clara exists in reality, and second by his belief that the Clara who does exist feels anything for him at all other than contempt.

The closing lines of the chapter do nothing to increase the

Professor's respectability in the eyes of the reader:

> Clara's agitation had endeared her to him all the more, and it was with a subtle sense of sweetness lingering in the back of his mind that he now prepared to demonstrate the strength and fidelity of the Government. (183)

As if he were fawning over a pet, the Professor is endeared to Clara by her agitation, which he finds cute and charming. Not only is this demeaning to Clara, but it is also demeaning to the Professor, because he is making it painfully obvious that his life seems to derive its meaning from his worship and idolization of a woman who only exists in his mind. The nation's downfall lies in the fact that the Professor bases his emotional strength for running his government on the "subtle sense of sweetness" that Clara gives him. Since Clara is a lie, and since the Professor's idealized conception of her is an illusion, there is nothing to base his strength on. His government and the liberal democracy it stands for become as much of an illusion as his love for Clara.

Clara, of course, turns out to be an agent for the National Legion and, even worse, Vander's lover. When the Professor is arrested by the two Legionaries Clara unleashes a biting attack on his masculinity the likes of which K. never endures in <u>The Trial</u>:

> Do you think that just because I betrayed you I'd ever betray him [Vander]? Oh no! Do you think that just because I'm a bit drunk now I didn't love him? Oh no! He was a man. He knew what he wanted. He didn't talk nonsense. And he's dead, dead because of you, you blasted thin-skinned ape, you silly dabbler, you old clergyman! (274)

There is an obvious allusion to celibacy and impotency when Clara calls the Professor "old clergyman" and her entire tirade serves to strip him of any sexual identity he may have possessed to that point. Even worse, her words serve to enforce Vander's philosophy of brute strength and brute sexuality. The Professor is not a "man" in Clara's eyes, meaning that he lacks charm, wit, strength, and sexuality. He is, instead, an "old clergyman." In this regard K. may seem to be sexually superior to the Professor due to his manipulation of women in The Trial. To take Hubert's argument to Warner's novel, Clara is prostituting herself for Vander, and were K. in the Professor's position, Clara would certainly be "kneeling open mouthed" before him, just as Leni does. Yet there is a difference between sexual power and attractiveness, especially if the attractiveness arises only from one's guilt, as it does for K. The women in The Trial are attracted only to K.'s guilt; he has no intrinsic qualities they find desirable, nor does he have anything to offer them in terms of emotion, empathy, or companionship. And the "sexual power" he may possess due to his guilt begins to erode when K. is successfully challenged by the law student for the usher's wife. K.'s "sexual power" is an illusion, and in reality he becomes as weak and impotent as the Professor, that "old clergyman". The Professor does not even have the illusion of sexual power.

The Professor realizes that he must finally reject the image of Clara after her betrayal, and with her rejection of the Professor comes the Professor's realization that he is sexually incompetent; he realizes that Vander is more of a "man" than he

is: "He found nothing strange in her preference for Vander over himself" (274). This appears on the surface to be a difference between K. and the Professor, for while the Professor is not surprised that Clara prefers Vander to him, K. is very surprised (and frustrated) when the usher's wife is taken away from him by the student, or when he suspects that Leni is sexually involved with Block. And yet K. may certainly feel doubts about his own sexuality, both in these and other occasions in the novel, perhaps due to the simple fact that he <u>is</u> losing these later sexual power struggles after losing the very first. The Professor is dependent on Clara for his sense of self-worth and identity, and when she betrays him, his realization of his own sexuality crumbles. Similarly, although K. seems well aware of his own sexuality he must certainly feel doubts about his true self-worth and his sexual appeal to women simply because he knows that it is defined completely by his guilt. It is true that K. is sexually attractive to women in a way that the Professor never is to Clara, yet K.'s attractiveness is hollow and based on an accusation rather than his individual qualities, and in reality he is revealed to be as sexually incompetent as the Professor.

For the Professor, sexuality is a means of idol worship. Clara becomes a physical manifestation of the Professor's philosophical ideals, the principles of liberalism that he worships. Her betrayal echoes the failure of liberalism, which as an ideology betrays not only the Professor, but the entire nation. Neither K. nor the Professor is capable of love. K. is unable to love because his entire emotional energies are directed

towards his case; it could be argued that if K. loves anything, it is his trial. The Professor cannot love because he is completely obsessed with the worship of an idea, an idea that he sees as having a physical manifestation in Clara. In the end, of course, both the Professor and Joseph K. are betrayed by women, but where the betrayal in The Trial is much more subtle and suggested (in the final scene of the novel K. sees Fräulein Bürstner walking ahead of him and his executioners) the betrayal in The Professor is obvious. It can also be said that K. is betrayed by women through the simple fact that they cannot or do not prevent his death; the Professor, however, is betrayed by Clara because she turns out to be in love with the ideas and philosophies that are in complete opposition to his own. The Professor had placed a heavy burden of both liberalism and a goddess-like goodness on Clara, and it isn't until the end of the novel that he realizes that she has cast it down. All that remains for the Professor is death, because his identity is based so strongly in his conception of Clara. One of the Professor's last thoughts before his imprisonment certainly should endear him to any reader, however: "[H]e could not see now where he would find another human soul to share his feelings" (274). This is one of the most sympathetic lines in the novel due to its expression of loneliness and isolation, and it is this kind of insight that makes the Professor a real character, rather than a mere allegorical representation of liberal democracy. His feeling that there is nothing strange in Clara's preference of Vander over him is equally powerful, as we see the degree of

self-loathing the Professor has been reduced to. If sexuality is a strong force in both novels it is present at the expense of this opportunity to share with another human soul. Sexuality is a powerful force in the novels, but it is based on power, control, idolization, and on conquering, not love or sharing the human soul. In The Trial we see that even when given (through guilt) a measure of what seems to be sexual power in attractiveness, one is still ultimately powerless. In The Professor we can observe that among other things, fascists make better lovers than liberal democrats, one more example of the failure of liberalism as Warner portrays it. As the Professor concludes, "He found nothing strange in her preference for Vander over himself" (274). The Professor also finds nothing strange in the overwhelming takeover of his country by the invading forces, just as Joseph K. is not surprised when he is taken out to be executed in the last chapter of The Trial.

CHAPTER 9

THE PRIEST, THE WHIPPER, AND KAFKA'S WORLD: THE DREAM STATE IN THE TRIAL

In "Notes on Kafka" Theodor Adorno makes some of the best observations regarding what I am calling the dream state in Kafka. He argues:

> The attitude that Kafka assumes towards dreams should be the reader's attitude towards Kafka. He should dwell on the incommensurable, opaque details, the blind spots. The fact that Leni's fingers are connected by a web, or that the executioners resemble tenors, is more important than the Excursus on the law. (Adorno 248)

This notion of the opaque details or the "blind spots" as Adorno describes them is a very important idea to both The Trial and The Professor. These are the small, important flashes of insight that the reader suddenly glimpses as he or she explores the allegorical narratives presented by each author. The Trial presents us with countless occurences and situations that seem bizarre by "realistic" standards, such as the whipper who remains in the closet the next day, the warders who arrest K. but then leave him by himself, without even mentioning a charge, or the priest who had sent for K. without K.'s even realizing it. Even the protagonist's name -- Joseph K. -- seems like a name from a fable or an allegorical tale. Why do we only know his last initial? For that matter, why does the narrator consistently refer to him as "K." rather than as "Joseph"? Although we can certainly speculate that "K" stands for "Kafka" and this is

probably an accurate approach, the underlying answer seems to be that his identity is never significant, and his name is thus unimportant. He is a dreamer who is moving through a nightmare; neither his name nor concrete details and labels are relevant to the strange events that unfold around him.

Adorno touches on this idea when he says of Kafka's stories:

> All of his stories take place in the same spaceless space, and all holes are so tightly plugged that one shudders whenever anything is mentioned that does not fit in, such as Spain and southern France at one point in *The Castle.* (Adorno 256)

Joseph K.'s full name would not "fit in", nor would concrete details about Leni, the usher's wife, K.'s uncle, the priest, the painter, the whipper, or any of the characters K. encounters in his trial. What does Adorno mean by "spaceless space"? He seems to be referring to the idea of the events in the stories seeming as if they shouldn't be occurring in spite of the fact that they obviously are. The worlds in which these events take place shouldn't exist, yet they do. This is the key to the absurdity in Kafka. The human condition should not have to exist in places like Kafka's Law Court Offices or in the dark confines of The Trial's Cathedral, yet it does. Even worse, it must. Adorno writes that Kafka's subject "passes from one desperate and hopeless situation to the next" and that "In the absence of contrast, the monstrous becomes the entire world" (Adorno 265). This is a perfect way to describe K.'s nightmare, for he is awakened into a nightmare at the beginning of the novel, and it is the nightmare that forms K.'s reality until he is executed. During the events of the novel he passes from hopeless situation

to hopeless situation, as in a dream where one is unable to run fast, or where one cannot see straight. The monstrous becomes the entire world for K., because nothing stands in contrast to the strange events that surround him. Everything seems the same: confusing, irrational, and inevitable. K.'s struggle to understand the charges against him can be seen as his struggle to awaken from the nightmare, or to escape the horror of this new reality.

There are repeated occasions of a dream-like structure throughout the novel, as if K. is unconsciously aware that he is, on some level, dreaming, or as if the narrator is trying to tell his reader that the events unfolding before K. can only be understood in the context of a dream. In the opening chapter, when K. is speaking with the Inspector, the Inspector notes that he has detained three of K.'s colleagues. K. is amazed and suddenly recognizes the three men for who they are -- subordinate employees of the Bank. "How could he have failed to notice that?" (15) is the question presented. It is as if in a dream, when one notices a person nearby and then suddenly realizes that all along they were actually looking at someone other than whom they thought.

The Law Court Offices also have a dream-like quality, and when K. surveys the crowd assembled it is an eerie description that ensues:

> What faces these were around him! Their little black eyes darted furtively from side to side, their beards were stiff and brittle, and to take hold of them would be like clutching bunches of claws rather than beards. But under the beards -

> this was K.'s real discovery - badges of various sizes and colours gleamed on their coat-collars. They all wore these badges, so far as he could see. They were all colleagues, these ostensible parties of the right and left, and as he turned round suddenly he saw the same badges on the coat-collar of the Examining Magistrate, who was sitting quietly watching the scene with his hands on his knees. (47)

The physical description alone makes one think of a nightmare, especially the beards like "bunches of claws" and the "black eyes" darting "furtively". However, K.'s realization that each figure wears a badge is also a dream-like revelation, as is his discovery that the right and left sides of the crowd -- whom he had supposed up to this point were opponents -- are actually colleagues. K. realizes that his entire speech has been in vain, and all his efforts to persuade the crowd of the corruption of the Court has fallen on deaf ears, for he is speaking to Court officials. The entire scene rings of dream-like absurdity, as if K. is running as fast as he can, only to remain in the same place.

When K.'s uncle arrives in the sixth chapter we learn that K. commonly refers to him as "A ghost from the past" (92) which suggests dream elements. When talking with his uncle to the lawyer, K. is suddenly made aware of another dream-like figure:

> He looked round uncertainly; the light of the small candle did not nearly reach the opposite wall. And then some form or other in the dark corner actually began to stir. By the light of the candle, which his uncle now held high above his head, K. could see an elderly gentleman sitting there at a little table. He must have been sitting without even drawing breath, to have remained for so long unnoticed. (104)

As if in a dream, this elderly gentleman appears from the shadows, and as one reads this passage one wonders how many more ghostly figures are going to appear from the various corners and shadows of the lawyer's bedroom.

Later in the novel when K. is in his office there is again a suggestion of the presence of the dream. K. is speaking to the manufacturer when he notices "the Assistant Manager, a blurred figure who looked as if veiled in some kind of gauze". We are then told that "K. did not seek for the cause of this apparition, but merely registered its immediate effect, which was very welcome to him" (131, emphasis added). K. then begins picking up documents and slowly raising them up, with "no definite purpose, but [he] merely acted with the feeling that this was how he would have to act when he had finished the great task of drawing up the plea which was to aquit him completely" (131). Again, the sense is that K.'s world has its own strange rules, and K. is trying to understand these rules by feeling or instinct. As in a dream, his actions have "no definite purpose" but happen almost arbitrarily, as when K. picks up a document "at random".

The most significant instances of the dream state occur with the whipper and the priest, both of whom give K. important insight into the workings of the Court and the dream-like nature of the reality before him. After K.'s initial encounter with the whipper and the two warders, he is deeply disturbed the next day:

> All the next day K. could not get the warders out of his head; he was absent-minded and to catch up on his work had to stay in his office even later than the day before. As he passed the lumber-room again on his way out he could not resist opening the door. And what confronted

> him, instead of the darkness he had expected, bewildered him completely. Everything was still the same, exactly as he had found it on opening the door the previous evening. (89)

K. is obviously horrified at this apparent hallucination. Even worse, the warders again cry out to him. His response is to slam the door shut and "beat on it with his fists." He then "ran almost weeping to the clerks" (89). This entire encounter has the sense of a recurring nightmare and there is certainly no attempt to reconcile this repeat encounter with the whipper with a realistic vision of the world. K. is shocked, but not to the extent that he perceives the appearance of the whipper as being incomprehensible. Rather, his surprise and horror are based in the extreme guilt he feels at the sight of the suffering warders, which seems clear from his beating on the door with his fists, as if trying to drive his conscience away. The continuous presence of the three men in the lumber room can be seen as an overpowering reminder to K. of the eternal suffering inflicted by the Law on its victims, and its result is to overwhelm K. with guilt, which is one way that the Law torments him.

It is interesting to note that this scene, while certainly bizarre, does not have a notably "unrealistic" appearance on the surface; after all, all that is happening is that the men are being whipped, as they were the day before. The horror and dream-like quality of the scene arise from the fact that "everything was still the same" as it was the previous day, as if the warders and their tormenter have been suspended in time. This is what Adorno means by "spaceless space", for we can also describe Kafka's world as being "timeless time", as in a dream

which can take only a few seconds yet which seems to last for hours. As Adorno writes, "It is not the horrible which shocks, but its self-evidence" (Adorno 248). The scene with the warders is very significant in its effect on K. The consistent presence of not only the scene but what it represents to K. -- the self-evident truth of the power and torment inflicted by the Law -- are what make the scene truly horrifying. Ronald Gray describes the impact of the scene on K. as follows:

> It hurts him, then, to turn his back on the warders, and the whole scene may well appear to be an illustration to a saying of Kafka's that "you can shut yourself off from the suffering of the world...that is the one suffering you might spare yourself." But the totally pessimistic note in that aphorism should not go unnoticed. If one does withdraw, one will suffer all the same, as K. shows when he is close to tears; there is only suffering in one form or another, no relief. (Gray 113)

It is important to note that K.'s extreme suffering is brought on not by the initial encounter with the whipper, but through the realization that the whipper and the warders are still in the room the next day, which suggests that the scene is in fact a nightmare, one that finally overwhelms K. with guilt and torment. In other words, while the initial encounter does torment K., the nightmare of the whipping which K. is faced with the next day pushes him to the limits of anguish. He does not display the type of emotion he does in this scene anywhere else in the novel, which is a testimony to the power of the dream.

The ninth chapter, "In the Cathedral", is a fascinating section which seems completely dream-like in its structure and approach, and the parable of the law, which the priest imparts to

K., can be seen as a dream within a dream, or perhaps as a vision one has in a dream. From the beginning, the priest seems to have control over K. "I had you summoned here to have a talk with you" (210) are his initial words to K. The priest also seems to have full knowledge of K.'s case, as he goes on say, "Do you know that your case is going badly?" (210). The sense is that the priest knows everything there is to know about K., although K. has never met him before, and the narrator notes that "[N]owadays people he had never seen before seemed to know his name" (210). It is as if K. is in a dream, encountering people who know all about him and his case, their knowledge resulting from the fact that they are intimately aquainted with the mind of the dreamer. Privacy and anonymity are no longer possible for K.; it is as if he has become part of a collective mind or entity.

The priest tells K. what the reader should already know: "Your guilt is supposed, for the present, at least, to have been proved" (210). K.'s fate is sealed, which can be seen as at least partially resulting from his dismissal of the lawyer -- although there is little to suggest that K. would be any better off had he kept the lawyer. It is interesting to see the priest criticize K. for seeking help from women, of which the priest says, "Don't you see that it isn't the right kind of help?" (211). K. believes in the sexual power of women over the judges, yet the priest seems to recognize that the Court in fact controls sexual power and that women thus have no real influence although it may seem that they do. Fräulein Bürstner's appearance at K.'s execution also seems to suggest that women are another part of

the Law, though K. believes otherwise.

The parable of the law (which Kafka had published as a separate work entitled "Before the Law") is a confusing vision given K. by the priest, and the way the priest tells it it seems as if he were recounting a dream -- perhaps a dream that K. himself has had. The parable suggests that the Law is inaccessible, even though it may seem accessible, even to the point of one having one's own door. The priest, however, undermines the intellectual integrity of the theories which attempt to explain the parable by saying, "the comments often enough merely express the commentators' despair" (217), as if any attempt at understanding the parable is in vain and such theories are only reflections of hopelessness.

Roy Pascal in Kafka's Narrators argues that the priest's purpose in telling K. this parable "is to dissuade Josef from his protests and persuade him to admit his guilt" and that "Kafka is saying that so cruel a punishment may be visited on simple trust" (Pascal 151). This is an excellent point. During the complicated philosophical debate K. has with the priest over the meaning of the parable he is missing this simple truth, that the Law is cruel and inaccessible, and crushes simple trust. As with a complex dream that one tries to interpret endlessly to no avail, we have the sense that K. and the priest could debate the meaning of the parable forever. Yet in the end, the meaning of the parable, as Pascal argues, "is its lack of meaning, the deceiving of love and faith" (Pascal 153). The harder K. tries to understand the parable, the more confusing it becomes. The

Law seems to be playing with K.'s mind, and the priest certainly does nothing to prevent this, and in fact encourages K.'s confusion. The final effect of the parable and the discussion about its meaning does nothing but wear K. down:

> He was too tired to survey all the conclusions arising from the story, and the trains of thought into which it was leading him were unfamiliar, dealing with impalpabilities better suited to a theme for discussion among Court officials than for him. (221)

The priest has done K. far more harm than good. Pascal, in fact, argues that the priest is "hollow; his credit lies only in his office and the circumstances in which he speaks" (Pascal 152). Pascal goes on to argue that the priest is a "bureaucrat for whom these spiritual issues are enjoyable intellectual playthings and who is quite incapable of understanding that for Josef K. they are matters of life and death" (Pascal 152). I disagree slightly with Pascal when he argues that the priest doesn't understand that the spiritual issues are life and death issues for K., because I think the priest is aware of the seriousness of K.'s situation and he seems to know all about K.'s case. However, the priest certainly is a bureaucrat and he is obviously not on K.'s side. After K. lapses into exhausted silence we are told that the priest "suffered him to do so and accepted his comment in silence, although undoubtedly he did not agree with it" (221). It is as if the priest has accepted K.'s death as inevitable and has decided to stand aside and let it take place, as if out of some ironic respect for the dead -- ironic because the priest is a part of the murderous agency, and K. is still alive, although

he is "as good as dead" at this point. It is appropriate that the priest then seems to cast K. out of the Cathedral into the darkness. His final words, "The Court wants nothing from you. It receives you when you come and dismisses you when you go" (222) seem to be another premonition of K.'s death. The Court has dismissed him; he now has only to die.

The tenth chapter, appropriately titled "The End", also has the tone and mood of a nightmare. K. is instinctively "dressed in black" (223) for his own funeral, and when his executioners arrive he says to himself, "Tenth-rate old actors they send for me" (224), as if the scene about to take place is an inevitable and absurdly scripted play about to unfold, or a dream being recollected. The men do not answer him; like ghosts they stand in silence. As the three men walk down the street we are told that they walked so close together that "it was a unity such as can hardly be formed except by lifeless matter" (224). K.'s life is already over; in a sense it was already over from the beginning of the novel. Fräulein Bürstner then appears, although K. "was not quite certain that it was she, but the resemblance was close enough" (225). Identity has become less important than ever; the mere fact that the woman resembles Fräulein Bürstner is sufficient to show K. the subtle treachery of his supposed allies and in addition, we see reality growing more and more unclear. As in a nightmare where one cannot move or scream, K. "realized the futility of resistance" (225).

Just before he is stabbed, we are given another indication of not only the scene's dream-like quality, but also its dark

humour, as both men stand over K., handing the knife back and forth with "odious courtesies" (228). Their intention is for K. to stab himself, but he has no strength left for such a deed, and his refusal or inability to do so may be seen as his final act of defiance against the Law, as we are told "he could not relieve the officials of all their tasks" (228).

K.'s last moment of life sees him glimpsing a solitary figure in the top story of a nearby house, and we see K. struggling to find meaning in the figure, as attempting to interpret his nightmare:

> Who was it? A friend? A good man? Someone
> who sympathized? Someone who wanted to help?
> Was it one person only? Or was it mankind?
> Was help at hand? (228)

Help, of course, is not at hand, and K. dies "Like a dog!" in "the final act" (229) of this drama of absurdity. He has struggled to make meaning of his impending death but has failed, and his death is subsequently like that of a dog, pointless and unremarkable; it has no meaning. The tragedy of the death lies in the fact that we still have no idea why K. is killed. Does it relate to anything he has actually done or failed to do? Could his death have been prevented? It is impossible to know what the Court's motives are in K.'s death, or even if any motives exist.

CHAPTER 10

DREAMS FROM THE SILK DRESSING GOWN:

THE DREAM STATE IN THE PROFESSOR

The dream is more obviously present in The Professor than it is in The Trial for the simple fact that the Professor has a series of dreams in the sixth chapter, "The Silk Dressing Gown" which reveal his innermost struggles with ideology and identity. Unlike Kafka's novel, in which the dream-state can be said to be a part of reality or an extension or reality, the dream in The Professor is a means to understanding reality, similar perhaps to the priest's parable of the law in The Trial. K. wakes up into a nightmare, and the sense of the dream underscores the novel. In Warner's novel, however, the Professor's entire existence is a "dream" of foolishness and naive intellectualism and the actual dreams he experiences in the sixth chapter are the only time we can glimpse the reality of the Professor's existence and the truth behind his beliefs and actions. Ironically, the only time the Professor is awake occurs when he is dreaming. This is of course the significant difference in the function of the dream-state in both novels. In The Trial the narrative is presented in an ambiguous fashion which we can consider dream-like, and the structure of the dream is used to illustrate the absurdity and hopelessness of K.'s struggle due to the fantastical nature of the forces that oppose him. In The Professor, however, the dream is clearly presented in specific instances which are used to illustrate important truths about the main character and to

provide an ironic juxtaposition to the world of reality in which the Professor stumbles as though asleep.

Throughout The Professor there are references to dreams. When the Professor's son's female companion wonders if they can ever be happy, our narrator tells us, "It was as though she were resigning herself, almost with a sense of relief, to a defeat which had been represented to her in some dream as inevitable" (90). The inevitability of defeat and its manifestation in the dream state is an important theme in both Warner and Kafka and since neither Joseph K. nor the Professor realize until the very end the futility of their struggles, it can be argued that it is the reader rather than the protagonist who is realizing the inevitability of defeat through the dream. Just before Julius Vander's appearance in the Professor's apartment the Professor tells Jinkerman to leave the room (and thus leave the Professor unprotected). Jinkerman looks at the Professor with astonishment, "as though he were dreaming" (98). In this instance the "he" is referring to Jinkerman, not the Professor, and the suggestion is almost that the Professor has pulled Jinkerman, along with the entire government, into his dream world due to his foolish decisions while in power, such as ordering his bodyguard to leave him during dangerous political upheaval. Appropriately, Vander then appears to threaten the Professor's life.

After the Professor's failed attempt at a radio address Jinkerman appears with the news that the National Legion has taken over and the Chief of Police, working with the Legion, has

declared himself Chancellor. The Professor's reaction is, "No. It is impossible. You must be dreaming" (193). The irony is unmistakable, for the Professor is the only one dreaming as reality manifests itself violently all around him. Yet he attempts to dismiss the reality of his situation by accusing Jinkerman of the same detachment from reality that characterizes the Professor himself. The irony is furthered by the fact that in the Professor's dreams in the sixth chapter he glimpses the reality of his situation as well as the truth behind himself, so when he tells Jinkerman that he must be dreaming he is unconsciously affirming the truth of Jinkerman's statement. The Professor's dreams serve as revelations of the truth, even if the Professor's continual state of "dreaming" or being apart from reality does not. By placing Jinkerman in a dream, the Professor is unknowingly placing him alongside the truth, something the Professor cannot accept.

The sixth chapter, "The Silk Dressing Gown", is the most important in the novel for understanding Warner's use of the dream state. That the Professor is only exposed to reality in his dreams, is demonstrated by the opening lines of the chapter:

> The Professor was sleeping uneasily. For although in his waking life he had remained confident that no danger threatened so big that it could not be averted by his policy, yet at the back of his mind he must have known that, however true his calculations might be, the threat was there and the danger in suspense; and now perhaps, in his sleep, his apprehensions, freed at last from the barriers of will, returned to plague him with the production of dreadful images. (126)

There is no statement in The Trial which so clearly speaks of the

barrier between the dream and reality, the closest example perhaps being the parable of the Law, in which gaining access to the Law can be seen as gaining access to knowlege and, ultimately, reality. Here, however, Warner is clearly setting up the Professor's sleep as a gateway to the reality hidden in the dream. Warner seems more willing to seek possible answers than Kafka and more ready to present these answers to the reader in one form or another. Kafka's desire seems to be to keep the reader as uncertain as K., certain only that K. is doomed in his futile struggle.

The Professor has four dreams, each of which presents the reader and, in his unconscious, the Professor, with different perspectives on the reality of his situation, his beliefs, and ultimately his identity. In the first the Professor views a huge monument on a hill and an endless procession of people marching towards it with "a dull look of fixed determination" (128). The base of the monument is adorned with gold lettering which the Professor "remarked, without reading." The Professor is "overwhelmed with a feeling of pity for this huge gathering, with their rugged, perplexed, harassed, or indifferent faces, but this feeling gave away almost at once to one of horror" (129). The Professor realizes that as each invidivual reaches the base of the monument, they will tear out their heart and throw it on the ground. The Professor "could not bear to wait and see" and "opened his eyes quickly" (129).

This dream's significance lies in the monument, which represents the Professor's towering intellectual idealism and the

splendor and majesty with which he views his ideals. However, the fallacy of his view is made obvious when we are told that the Professor "sought vainly in his memory for the name of the person in whose honour the monument had been erected" (128) and that the Professor "remarked, without reading, the gold lettering which adorned its base" (129). The monument has no depth or complexity in terms of the human condition. It is a towering, impressive structure, but dedicated to whom? The Professor cannot recall; the monument is a tribute to nothing. Similarly, the lettering, although gold, is not read by the Professor. The message is empty and insignificant to his subconscious though the lettering is dazzling and valuble. The monument "shone with peculiar splendour" (129) because the Professor still loves his philosophy and rationality, even in the dream. Yet he soon realizes the reality of the suffering of the procession of people.

The straggling mass of people are the citizens of the Professor's own country and, on a larger scale, the masses of the world who are under the dictatorship of an idea. The "army" is so vast that the Professor feels "it would have been folly to have supposed that it was not marching to some useful end" (129). The truth, of course, is that the procession is not marching to any useful end, but rather marching out of enslavement to the towering monument of intellect and rationality. The Professor struggles to find rational meaning in the world even where there is none and his mind demands that the procession has a purpose because the Professor cannot accept the tragedy and absurdity of this "endless" procession marching with a "dull look of fixed

determination" (128) when their determination is in vain.

The Professor "was overwhelmed with a feeling of pity for this huge gathering" (129) because in his dream his emotions are not repressed and his humanity is able to express itself. Nevertheless, he is still horrified at the realization that each person will tear out his or her heart and continue "a much more ghastly procession than before" (129) once they reach the monument. The hearts represent the suffering and the emotion of the people and the ultimate pain of the human condition is expressed by the fact that the people will soon tear them out and cast down their humanity in the face of the overpowering dictatorship of rationality and unfeeling intellect. It is important to note that the Professor has knowledge in this dream, as he knows in advance that the people will do this, and in this sense he is not naive as he is in waking life. The dream is the door to reality.

The Professor, however, desperately needs rational control. Although the knowledge of the hearts is horrible, this knowledge "was less horrible to him than the uncertainty as to what in particular each person would do with his or her heart once it had been wrenched from the flesh" (129). It is this uncertainty of what will become of the hearts, and not the knowledge that the hearts are to be torn out, that causes the Professor to open his eyes. He "could not bear to wait to see" (129). The Professor believes he knows exactly what will happen to his country and his government. He cannot tolerate the reality that the future is uncertain and cannot be rationally or intellectually understood,

and he thus opens his eyes to escape the vision of reality presented by the dream, a vision too horrifying to bear.

The Professor soon drifts off to sleep again and his second dream is of a beautiful white panther "moving at a beautifully graceful trot" (130) through a forest. The Professor soon notices that a party of Indians is shooting arrows at the panther, causing blood to appear on the panther's beautiful white coat. The panther continues to steadily move forward, completely oblivious to the Indians, and once more the Professor's sympathy is aroused:

> The Professor thought to himself that the distance already traversed must be immense, and a feeling of pity for the wounded animal, whose delicate white was now deeply marked with red, flooded into his mind. Perhaps it was the unreality of the whole scene that brought it about that this pity, which he felt so acutely, caused him no pain but had on him a refreshing, soothing, and almost luxurious effect. (131)

The Professor is the panther, naive and ignorant of his tormentors, yet strong and graceful in his unshakable ideals. At the same time, however, he is completely powerless to prevent the assault of his opponents, and must endure every arrow the National Legion fires at his liberalism. The Professor's pity for himself (though he does not realize it as self-pity) is soothing and comforting because he is finally experiencing reality and the emotion that manifests itself as a result. To feel pity is a relief from the Professor's constant philosophical and intellectual abstractions. In this regard the Professor is close to Vander's ideals of the power of emotion, though the

Professor is experiencing love rather than Vander's overpowering hate, a liberation that brings tears to his eyes. The Professor's death is foreshadowed in the transition between his second and third dream, as we are told that "[T]he whiteness of the panther seemed to be changing entirely into red" (131).

The Professor now finds himself in a courtroom, dressed as a barrister, making a speech to a judge and jury separated from him by a cloth which resembles a "large white tent-like structure" (132). He is speaking in defence of Julius Vander and suddenly realizes that he has been speaking in Greek and that his entire speech has been lost on his audience -- an obvious foreshadowing of his future failed attempt at addressing the nation on the radio and a scene that also echoes K.'s failed attempt at addressing the members of the courtroom about the injustices of the Law. Suddenly the Professor realizes that the judge is Vander himself, but the Professor "did not know whether Vander would appear as alive or dead" (133). We are then told that he sees the naked form of Miss de Lune, who gives him a sheet of paper with the words "While you are attempting to escape", another foreshadowing of the Professor's inevitable death. At this point, the whole scene changes into the Professor's last dream.

The focus of this third dream shifts away from the Professor's struggle with emotion, which was the theme in his first two dreams, and instead moves to the Professor's conception of Julius Vander and the fascism he represents. As always, the Professor has the best of intentions, as we are told "He . . .

was in the middle of a speech" of which "the purport was so urgent that the actual words . . . made no impression at all upon his mind" (131). His intentions are urgent, yet the substance of what he is saying is meaningless, as in his first dream when he does not notice the actual wording of the gold letters on the monument. The most significant aspect of this dream lies in the fact that the Professor is speaking in defence of Julius Vander and therefore speaking in defence of the Legion. The Professor is thus exposed to the part of his psyche that loves Vander and the raw emotion he represents, and this dream perhaps serves as a warning to the Professor to avoid giving in completely to emotion and to seek a balance between emotion and rationality. However, no matter how much the Professor's subconscious may wish to defend Vander, his intellect will not let him do so, and thus he speaks in Greek, making the entire defence meaningless.

The Professor also realizes that although Vander is dead, the powerful authority he represents is only growing stronger. Vander, in fact, is the judge who sits over the courtroom, and the Professor realizes that "His [the Professor's] position was quite hopeless" (133). Justice itself is now in grave jeopardy, something the Professor has never fully grasped while awake. Now, however, he not only realizes the danger represented by the National Legion, but he also sees his devotion to liberalism as making him a conspirator in the assault on justice:

> [M]ore terrible than the thought of this was his uncertainty as to what he would see when the curtains were drawn back and the seat of justice exposed. (133)

Not only is there a sense of the Professor's guilt, but we are

also shown the ambiguity of Vander's death: "He did not know whether Vander would appear as alive or as dead" (133). The growing monster of the National Legion is not halted by Vander's death; the implication is that it is only made stronger. The naked Miss de Lune seems to serve little purpose other than provide the reader a rather obvious hint of the Professor's impending death while "attempting to escape," although it could also be suggested that her nakedness represents an erotic desire on the Professor's behalf which he has suppressed through his rigid intellectualism in waking life. In any event, the third dream makes the connection between fascism and pure emotion very clear, and complicates the issue of rationality versus emotion. The Professor's first two dreams can be seen as attacks on his unshaking faith in reason, yet the third seems to serve as a caution not to abandon reason altogether, lest Vander grow only more powerful. The underlying idea is that the Professor could prevent the National Legion from taking over the country -- as has been noted before, the Professor has the power to arm the workers, yet refuses to do so. Again we see a significant difference between the Professor and K., because K. has no power nor any chance at altering his fate. The Professor has the potential to change his future, suggested by the fact that he isn't sure if Vander will appear alive or dead. In other words, there is a possibility that if he acts wisely, he can indeed kill the fascism represented by Vander for good. If not, however, Vander will rise again. Joseph K., by contrast, can do nothing to alter his situation. The Professor can do something, but

doesn't. Both men are doomed.

The last dream seems less significant than the first three, yet it also serves an important thematic purpose. On the beach the Professor sees that he is "surrounded by women who were hopping and bouncing eagerly to and fro" (133) but then he realizes that "they were not women but birds" (134). The dream grows increasingly bizarre as the Professor sees the women or birds (he is never certain which they are) dancing "in a thick grey mist" while "the spider-like shape of crabs" (134) scurry by. All this time he is waiting for the poet Alcman.

The significance of the dream becomes more evident when we are told:

> Every now and again the Professor would recognize for a moment Clara in one of the dancers, but when he attempted to approach her she would vanish with a quick hopping motion among the throng, or else he would discover that the figure which he had mistaken for hers was really that of a stranger. (134)

This scene is directly parallel to K.'s encounter with the executioners that are led by a woman who appears to be Fräulein Bürstner, although K. is never completely sure it is her. The suggestion in both cases is the same: both K. and the Professor are glimpsing sexual betrayal. The Professor, however, has the power to act on his dream. K. only realizes the truth behind Fräulein Bürstner when it is too late. The Professor's dream is just that, a dream from which he awakens. K.'s dream is his reality, a nightmare which begins the moment he is awakened by the two warders.

The Professor then sees:

> [T]he incongruous figure of the Commodore, riding on a large bird with drooping tail, and brandishing above his head an umbrella. A single bird-like note, neither harsh nor particularly melodius, rose from the women. With one accord they rose, without wings, into the air and passed by the Professor looking, as they went into his face. There was now no doubt of their inhumanity, for their faces were the faces of owls, and as they passed him in quicker and quicker succession his feeling of perplexity gave way to an increasing sense of horror. (134)

The association of women and birds in this dream seems to suggest an association of sexuality with liberation, represented through flight. The Professor is attracted to this sexuality, yet he is never able to understand or control it, and in the end it appears as something inhuman to him that gives him a sense of horror, perhaps also due to the image of owls as predators, which fits perfectly with Clara's character. The Commodore is the Professor himself; surrounded by women and sexuality he appears as a clumsy, comical fool, as a "Peacock" (134) whose arrogance and egotism in his own beliefs makes him a laughable figure. This dream brings out the Professor's inability to understand love or sexuality and the difference between the Professor's weaknesses and K. is that K. never sees a need to understand love and although he is ignorant of women and relationships (as is the Professor) he does understand sexuality to the extent of being able to engage in sexual encounters to further his case. The Professor, as demonstrated by his horror at the women/birds, is completely ignorant of the opposite sex and the reality of love and sexuality. In this sense the Professor parallels K., who also seems ignorant of women and love, due to his entire

emotional energy being directed towards his trial and due to the ambiguity of K.'s humanity before the trial even begins. The Professor naively believes he has a strong understanding of love and sexuality, yet his complete misjudgement of Clara proves the opposite.

The tragedy portrayed in this dream chapter lies in the fact that as soon as the Professor wakes up he dismisses his dreams as meaningless and silly, rationalizing away any insight or truth the dreams could bring him:

> Though he had not rested well, he was glad to be awake, for he could now smile at the improbable terrors of his dreams, and in particular could satisfactorily explain to himself the strange intrusion of the Commodore into the world of his sleeping mind; for he could hear distinctly from the next room the booming note of that gentleman's voice. (135)

The Professor thus throws away all the knowledge and insight his dreams could have provided him and the reader is left to wonder why the Professor would disregard such important insight. An interesting point is that where the Professor ignores the potentially helpful messages in his dreams and does not take them seriously, K. eagerly listens to any and all advice from those whom he encounters in The Trial. The difference is that K.'s helpers have nothing to offer him, so the information he eagerly snatches up is worthless. The Professor's dreams have a great deal to offer him, yet he ignores them. Both men end up helpless, yet for apparently different reasons.

Like K.'s, the Professor's death bears strong resemblance to a nightmare. His first thought upon entering the cell is "to see

whether the narrow space contained a bookshelf and a writing desk." The narrator then bluntly tells us, "It contained neither of these articles" (275). Just as in his dreams, the Professor is faced with reality in this cell, the reality that his intellect and rationality, represented by his desire for a writing desk and bookshelf cannot help him out of his predicament and that hope is as absent as the writing desk and bookshelf. The Professor, however, is still unaware of the full hopelessness of his situation, because he takes out his pocket diary and begins to write, the obvious assumption on his part being that one day the diary will be read, that one day it will stand to be of great significance. However, the act of his writing seems futile and pointless, like a man about to be executed who refuses a last cigarette because he is trying to quit smoking. The Professor, in his imprisonment, deals with the situation the only way he knows how; through scholarship and intellect. He has not yet realized how powerless rationality is in the face of the National Legion. It is also significant to note the Professor's complete isolation in the cell:

> At the back of his mind, even while he was writing, he began to wonder whether he had been placed in an isolated wing of the prison or whether, what was most unlikely, only a few arrests had so far been made. (276)

Like K., the Professor's isolation becomes strongly apparent in the last few pages of the novel. Both men have struggled with the idea and belief that they have allies, yet the realization that they are ultimately alone does not come until the very end. For the Professor, however, it does not come as readily as it

does for K. As K. is marched to his death he seems to have full realization and acceptance of his isolation. The Professor, however, even in his cell believes that he is not alone. He raps on the wall of his cell in an attempt to convey "some message of encouragement or of fellow-feeling" (278) to an unseen fellow prisoner, and he actually believes that "public opinion in foreign countries would be interested in his safety". He goes on to think of "the names of several distinguished figures who, in the Press of their own countries, would certainly demand for him a fair trial" (286). The Professor cannot face the full horror of his situation, even when he is thrust in the middle of a nightmare such as imprisonment by the Legion. He seems to function on such an intellectual level that everything must have a logical explanation intended to make any terrifying situation seem palatable. K., by contrast, seems to accept his death in the last chapter of The Trial as a metaphysical necessity, and he willingly goes with his captors without the slightest attempt at rationalizing his situation or grasping at hope, except just before his death, when he wonders, "Was help at hand?" (Kafka 228).

The Professor does slowly begin to realize his powerlessness, however. After his severe beating by the four guards the Professor is confronted by Colonel Grimm, who asks the Professor to support the new regime in exchange for his freedom. However, just as K. takes a last stand against his oppressor by refusing to kill himself, so does the Professor show a strength of character that we have not previous seen as he refuses to

collaborate with the Legion, declaring "You are killing the spirit" (289). It is at this point that the Professor finally begins to realize the full horror of his situation:

> In horror he began to imagine the vision of Vander as a reality, a whole world governed in complete contravention of what to him had seemed the self-evident demands of reason, justice, kindliness, and fellow-feeling. He saw himself as some pig-headed scholar clinging to his interpretation of a manuscript whose text has been proved corrupt, defective, or forged. (290)

The tragedy, of course, is that the Professor realizes far too late that his attempts at governing had been based on a "corrupt, defective, forged" text, the text of liberalism as the Professor conceived it. He begins to again write in his diary, yet with the realization that "his thoughts, liberated too far from fact, could lead him only to terror and madness" (292). The weakness of rationality is finally becoming clear to the Professor, yet at a time when the realization does him no good.

His death is very similar to K.'s, and has the same nightmarish quality; he is taken out of his cell by four men, marched out into the night, and ordered to walk to the University. Although we know the Professor will never reach the University, it is unclear if he is aware of this or not, for we are told, "Perhaps his mind had already begun to turn with some hope to his son and to his few friends" (294). The fact that the narrator is actually uncertain of what the Professor was thinking suggests that he has abandoned his protagonist and is no longer inside the Professor's mind, faithfully conveying his thoughts to the reader. The Professor dies in isolation, alienated even from

the narrator who reconstructs the events of the last week of the Professor's life. K.'s death is equally nightmarish, dying on the outskirts of the city "like a dog". The Professor is shot in the back, a cowardly act by his executioners and one that leaves him with little dignity, as the newspapers the next day proclaim that he was shot while attempting to escape. The truth, as in Orwell's 1984, is created by the regime. The Professor's writings, struggles, and ultimately his death have no impact.

As a character, the Professor is symbolic of ideas. The ideas in this case happen to be political liberalism, the ideology that Warner is attacking as ineffective against fascism. But the Professor's death is more than the failure of a political ideology; it shows how any ideas can be crushed by an oppressor if the ideas are not tempered with reality. This is where Vander, the Professor's son, and the elder Jinkerman are so significant; despite their profound ideological differences, they all have a grasp of reality. K.'s death, as has been mentioned already, is not the death of an idea but rather the death of humanity, or the death of the spirit. His struggle is not one of intellect nor one of politics, but rather a struggle against spiritual forces that cannot be understood through reason or rationality. Although we cannot truly know why K. is killed -- or even if there is a reason -- perhaps it can be said that his death is caused by the fact that he struggles so hard to find justice. The Professor's death is caused by the fact that inadvertently, through both inaction and his naive faith in liberal democracy, he does nothing whatsoever to find justice.

Both men, however, believe in the rightness of their actions (or, in the Professor's case, inaction). The significant difference is not that both die unjustly and without cause, but rather that both men come to this similar end for opposite reasons. One is a creature of intellect, in the sense of a rigid aherence to the principles of rationalism, who refuses to realize the truth of his situation. One is a creature of humanity, in the sense that he represents a universal human struggle of spirituality, emotion, and the persecution of the individual, who cannot realize the truth of his situation in spite of his efforts to do so. In the end, however, both die humiliating deaths at the hands of their opponents, for no reason other than that their lives are considered no longer valid by the oppressive forces that oppose them.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION: AN ENGLISH KAFKA?

Having asked the question at the beginning of this study, it is worth trying to answer it. Can we truly call Warner an "English Kafka"? Is The Professor a work that merits such a title for its author? The answer is, I think, yes, but with some important qualifications.

First, we must recognize that Kafka and Warner really aren't doing the same thing. The difficulties in a comparative approach become clearer when we see that there are significant differences in the intentions of these novels. Warner's novel is dominated by the political realities of his contemporary world; the terror generated by The Professor lies in the fact that its readers would recognize that the very political instability in the novel was taking place in their world, and potentially in their own country. Kafka's novel is dominated by a metaphysical struggle against authority that is a universal experience not limited by political or historical context. The Professor's struggle against the National Legion does have universal implications, but we cannot escape the fact that The Professor is at its core a novel about fascism, and more specifically, a novel about fascism in the thirties. We see in this novel universal truths and struggles which subsequently all human beings can identify with, but the political and historical positioning of The Professor may present a problem for some readers who may be unable to see metaphysical implications beyond the politics.

One weakness in The Professor seems to be that Warner's characters wear allegorical labels too prominently; The Professor is at times less of a novel and more of a debate between conflicting philosophical and political ideologies which overtly present themselves as characters -- the novel of ideas. This same criticism cannot be made of Kafka. His characters are part of a complicated, interwoven spiritual web that precludes any charge of over-obvious allegory. Perhaps his characters are no more "developed" than Warner's, but it is far more difficult for us to determine who they are and what they represent. To accuse any novel of "mere allegory" it must be obvious (or overly obvious) what the allegory is and in the case of The Trial the only thing obvious is the that the novel is based upon ambiguity and that its intentions -- and the intentions of its characters -- are shrouded in mystery. The Professor, on the surface, seems obvious. Its protagonist is liberal democracy. Its antagonist is fascism. Old Man Jinkerman is orthodox religion. The Professor's son is communism, and so on.

Do we dismiss The Professor, then, as a political allegory lacking the ambiguity and spiritual complexity that make The Trial one of the twentieth century's most disturbing and influential novels? To do so is to do Warner and his novel an injustice. The agony and genuine emotion experienced by Warner's Professor and the psychological complexity of the Professor's struggle are what give The Profssor its richness. As a reader, I cannot help but empathize with the Professor as he comes to realize that Clara has betrayed him; the theme of betrayal by

women is perhaps more obvious in The Professor than in The Trial, and I think it is thus more powerful. As a reader, I feel the Professor's numb horror as he watches his books being burned by his former students and I feel the pain of his isolation as he sits in his cell at the novel's end. I also find myself frustrated again and again at the Professor's stubborn adherence to his idealism and his foolish faith in his government. Perhaps the Professor is the only character in Warner's novel whom we can truly care about, but the same can certainly be said for The Trial's Joseph K. If Warner's novel is occasionally hurt by its tendency to at times mask political speeches as fiction, it is strengthened by the genuineness of the Professor's struggle, his psychological complexity as revealed in his dreams, and the sympathy the novel demands for its main character as he personally faces continually overwhelming political odds. These are all factors that make The Trial such a monumental work, and the fact that they exist so clearly in Warner's novel is a testimony to his abilities as a writer, and to the affinity between these two works. Is Warner an English Kafka? If being an "English Kafka" means writing novels that speak to the heart of human struggles in an allegorical framework and to do so with sophistication, then yes, Warner is an English Kafka. Is The Professor a novel of equal brilliance to The Trial? No, for the reasons I have already discussed: the novel's tendency to wander into political speech making, the sometimes obvious nature of Warner's allegory, and the in some ways historically restricted subject matter. Thematically, however, Warner's novel does rise

at times to the brilliance maintained throughout Kafka's The Trial, such as in the Professor's psychologically complex dream sequences, the powerful emotion of his betrayal by Clara, the horror of the book burning scene, and the Professor's increasing isolation as the novel progresses. Whereas Kafka's novel is consistently great, Warner's sees moments of greatness.

Rex Warner was a novelist who attempted to bridge the concrete of the political and social reality with the abstract of the spiritual and psychological struggle using the form of allegory, and he was more successful than not. Warner's and Kafka's use of allegory do differ in many interesting ways; Warner's allegory is more realistic, as opposed to Kafka's fantastic and metaphysical approach. Warner lacks Kafka's tendency towards the bizarre, demonstrated again and again in The Trial through details such as the web of skin connecting Leni's fingers, the whipper in the closet, and the hunchback girls in Titorelli's attic. The Trial is a sort of anti-allegory, a philosophical statement about reality that refuses to be easily understood and pigeonholed (the way allegories sometimes can be), inaccessible in a way that The Professor is not. The question of how well Warner compares with Kafka is ultimately subjective, but what I have tried to demonstrate in this study after examining The Professor is that its author certainly deserves, if not a place alongside Franz Kafka, then a place in literary history far from the obscurity into which he has been unjustly placed. As Reeve says of The Professor: "Here was a work of fiction dealing strong-mindedly and with no

superfluous embellishment with matters of the first importance" (Reeve 48). Rex Warner, it seems to me, deserves the attention due an author of such a work.

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