

## Satire amidst Uncertainty and Transformation: A Comparative Study of The Metamorphosis and Gulliver's Travel

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Article Info	Abstract
<p><b>Article History</b></p> <p>Received: January 02, 2020</p> <p>Accepted: March 30, 2021</p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords :</b> Satire, Follies, Transformation, Uncertainty, Metamorphosis.</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> 10.5281/zenodo.4904796</p>	<p><i>Current research explores the phenomenon of satire in the works of Swift and Kafka along with transformation and uncertainty as key themes of both writers. Both are considered to be the greatest writers of their era as Jonathan Swift is a famous satirist and Kafka is considered to be the greatest existentialist of the 20th century. This paper will specifically analyze Kafka's 'The Metamorphosis' and Swift's 'Gulliver's Travel' as both texts are magnum opus of these writers. Close textual analysis along with the theme identification method will be applied to unearth the desired phenomena. Close textual analysis will help to understand the authorial intention and their project in creating satire in their literary pieces. Gulliver's Travel is a story that revolves around the voyages of a protagonist named Gulliver who encounters different civilizations and different sorts of people like dwarf and giants. He also came across civilized horses and floating islands. On the other hand, Kafka's The Metamorphosis is a journey of transformation of an unlucky travel agent who has been transformed into a gigantic bug and his life has altogether changed. Both texts have been researched rigorously and many aspects have been explored so far. Current research is mainly concerned with comparative study of the both texts from the angle of satire yet deals with in depth analysis of two key themes which are transformation and uncertainty.</i></p>

### Introduction

Jonathan Swift belongs to the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and is considered to be the greatest satirist. A Tale of A Tub (1704), The Battle of Books (1704), Gulliver's Travel (1726), and A Modest Proposal (1729) are chief contributions of Swift in the realm of literature (Cuddon, 1999, p.783). Gulliver's Travel is a masterpiece of Swift which has been written in four years. It was completed in 1725 and was published in 1726 (Greenacre, 1986, p.23). Gulliver's adventure explores the shortcomings of civilization and surfaces man's follies in a satirical manner (Gray, 1984, p.257). In these adventures, the socio-political environment of that era has been criticized and different elements like hypocrisy, pride and cruelty have been exposed (Cuddon, 1999, 783). Ronald Knox compares Swift with a child who is having a water gun to target his opponents but Swift's gun is full of venom. He also acknowledges Swift's role as a spiritual therapist whose satire is necessary for the reformation of society and curbing the evils of greed and pride (Cuddon, 1999, p.781).

Satire can be "literature which exhibits or examines vice and folly and makes them appear ridiculous or contemptible" (Gray, 1984, p.255). Satirist is not only concerned with aesthetic value of art but moral values are of chief concern for him. He tries to establish ideals of truth and virtue among the society but exposing follies and ridiculing them. Satirist is a sort of guardian of his society and tries to protect from indignation. As Ian Jack has put it very adroitly: "Satire is born of instinct to protest; it is a protest becoming an act" (Cuddon, 1999, p.780). Downie says that satire is a chief proponent of Gulliver's Travel which is bitter and quite plain in nature. Swift has identified many follies and exposed many corrupt practices in different institutions like law, religion, politics and others (Downie, 1984, p.264).

Franz Kafka is a German writer who is famous for his criticism of different government institutions in his fictional world belonging to a middle class family. "Kafka had been acknowledged for his shorter fiction in his life (Adnan & Ullah, 2021, p.2835)." He has been translated into nearly all languages of the world. Kafka's narrative style is far different from Swift as there are abrupt changes in plot and story-line that is experienced in the Kafkaesque world. Kafka's narrative is full of allegories and metaphors that make his fiction surreal. Due to his surreal technique, his fictional world is multi-dimensional which further enhances the possibility of multiple interpretations (Adnan, 2017, pg.1). Kafka's satire is coded within this complex narrative which enhances the severity of criticism. Kafka narrates the impossibility of crows in the premises of the castle in his novel, The Castle. Literal meaning of his name is crow and he advocates that a single crow can destroy heavens. It is seen that Mr K. is not allowed to enter the castle as crows always swarm outside the castle and are not able to enter.

Bureaucracy, which is ruling the castle, does not permit common folks to be in touch with higher authorities. This sort of marginalizing behavior is all prevalent in Kafka's fiction throughout (Heller, 1988, p.149).

#### Problem Statement

This research explores satire amidst uncertainty and transformation which are key themes in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travel*. This study further elaborates the points of convergence and divergence of satirical patterns prevalent in both narratives.

#### Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature as it uses a subjectivist paradigm. Theme identification method is used to configure different phenomena like transformation and uncertainty. Repetitions, similarities, transitions, linguistic connections, analogies, and theory related material are methods by which themes have been identified and this method was propounded by Gery Ryan and Russel Bernard (2003 p.90-95). Along with the theme identification method, close textual analysis is applied to assess desired themes and their contribution towards impact of satire which is a key element in both texts. Textual analysis enables deciphering narrative structures of the texts and provides insight into context too. Context is important to decipher the satirical patterns because authorial intention becomes more relevant in this situation. Satire is a way to correct the follies of the society by providing criticism so it is necessary to know what is considered fair or foul according to the author. Authorial intention and intended meaning of the text can be grasped from close textual analysis of the text.

#### Analysis and Discussion

Swift exposes the gap between actual and ideal by disrobing characters from their hypocrisies in *Gulliver's Travel*. He also unfolds the discrepancy between happenings and their moral legitimacy. This logical inquiry leads him towards misanthropy when he claims rationality of horses in comparison to humans (Downie, 1984, p.266). Swift is annoyed by the irrationality of his human race yet Kafka criticizes capitalistic and materialistic trends that are robbing man from his core human value. Kathleen William observes this satirical pattern in *Gulliver's Travel* and comments that "the satirical basis of the voyage to Lilliput and Brobdingnag is the conception known as relative size, and regarded purely as a satirical device which is apt and successful: man is seen clearly and with more detached when seen from a far lower or far higher physical position (1986, p.38).

Swift documents this irrational attitude on the part of executives when ministers and princes are involved in the malpractices. He says that "sometimes the corruption of ministers, who engage their master in a war in order to stifle or divert the clamor of the subject against their evil administration" (2005, p.263). These wars and controversies have been generated from petty issues like determining the color of coat which is more suitable, berry is a fruit or blood and whistling is a good or bad practice. These trivial matters cause a war between princes and masses. Many precious lives have been lost in these just for nothing matters.

"All of Swift's satire was written in anger, contempt, or disgust" (Holt Monk, S. 1955, p.48) due to his realization of irrationality of human race. Lameel Gulliver goes through uncertain time in his all four voyages. In Lilliputians, he is entrapped among dwarfs and in Brobdingnag, he is circled in giants. Gulliver's experiences are satire on different aspects of human race which are physical, philosophical, ethical and political in nature. In first voyage, Swift criticizes the practices of Whigs and Tories by representing Tramecksan and Slamecksan in Lilliputian regime. Sir Robert Walpole is portrayed through the character of Filmnap. Swift ridicules the little differences of high heels and low heels which have captured the intention of political intelligentsia. These small differences are still prevalent in the world in religious sects and political quarters which are causing damage to world peace. Religious conflict between Catholic and Protestant is depicted by Big-Endians and Little-Endians.

In second voyage of Gulliver, Swift's satire becomes more bitter and pungent as he makes fun of all government institutions and exposes all malpractices of government officials before the King of Brobdingnag who further concludes that Gulliver's country is suffering from the evils of rebellion and conspiracies. King further comments that all these ills are the result of cruelty, hatred, lust and rage. Destruction caused by gun powder is also highlighted which is scorned by the King.

Gulliver, in his voyage to Laputa, observes irrational and futile efforts of mathematicians and scientists. Mathematicians are busy in defining every phenomena of nature in terms of mathematics which is totally meaningless and baseless activity. Mutton is cut in triangles yet it is suggested to cut beef pieces into rhomboids. The servants are supposed to cut bread into cones and cylindrical shapes. In short, everything is shaped after mathematical shapes and formulations (Swift, 2005, p.176). According to Kathleen, Swift introduces insecurities prevalent in his era in the very first voyage of Gulliver (1986, 38). Sense of insecurity and estrangement is prevalent in both texts which further forces develop an aura of uncertainty for characters of both texts. Swift's satire is bitter but true in nature as he ridicules the Royal Society of England which was engaged in many superficial projects. Third voyage documents so many irrational projects as scientists are busy constructing houses from roof to ground. Some projectors are trying to extract sun-rays from cucumber and some are busy gaining silk from cobwebs. These all projects picture the pseudo-scientist attitude of Swift's era.

Swift's bitterness, cynicism and misanthropy reach its peak in the fourth voyage of Gulliver when he encounters rational horses ruling over mankind. Swift justifies the rule of horses as they have been depicted as far superior and rational in comparison to human beings. Human race, in the shape of Yahoo, is seen as debased

and degenerated with no ethical foregrounding. No appreciable qualities of mankind are present in those men like creatures. In sum, human's desire for power and riches are root causes of all these ills of society which have made humans degraded and debased beings.

Depiction of Houhnhnms, as rational and sophisticated ones, further enhances the intensity of harshness of satire. Houhnhnms are peaceful and friendly creatures and directly opposite to human beings. This attitude has made their land free from all evils. Gulliver finds no fault or shortcoming in the kingdom of Houhnhnms that's why he does not want to leave that place when he has an opportunity to return back. He is so impressed by their attitude that he starts to consider himself as Houhnhnms. On his return, he isolates himself from his family and friends. He thinks to make them refine like Houhnhnms and help them to leave their present state of Yahoos. Swift becomes so exaggerated in his satire at this level. Yet, Swift's satire is not limited to exaggeration as can be witnessed from close reading of all these voyages. He also employs irony, absurdity, paradox and metaphors in developing his satire.

Kafka's text gives rise to a new type of knowledge from the uncertainty (Adnan & Ullah, 2021, p.2847) which embodies intense satire on political, social, spiritual and economic issues. Kafka deciphers the debacle of modern civilization and different ethical concerns prevalent in the modern world. Human emotions and values have been commoditized by capitalist exploiters. As a result, alienation is prevalent, causing tension and frustration. This psychological and philosophical trauma resulted in the transformation that is happening with GregorSamsa. Under enormous stress, Gregor is transformed into an insect and has left the world of activity. This satirical transformation amid uncertainty poses many existential questions pertaining to ethics of the era which has become so commoditized. These questions give vent to materialistic entrapments that are curbing human emotions and leaving no choice except transformation (Howe, 1926, IX).

The Kafkaesque world portrays severe criticism of bureaucracy and executive class. The Trial presents a botched up investigation in which the main protagonist is unaware of his crime yet he has been sentenced to death. Whole narrative exposes the irrationality of government institutes that are causing disturbance for people on a grand level. Joseph K.'s futile struggle against corrupt judicial practices cost him his life (Steiner, 1926, p.IX). Kafka narrates this irrational and absurd situation and says, "logic is doubtless unshakable, but it cannot withstand a man who wants to go on living. Where was the Judge whom he had never seen? Where was the High Court to which he had never penetrated? (2003, p.250-51)."

Kafka unfolds the pessimistic picture which depicts the egotistical and narcissistic viewpoint of materialistic society in which generosity is nearly impossible. The Metamorphosis narrates the tale of not only Gregor's transformation but there is metamorphosis of his relation with others around him like his employer and family. Gregor's situation changes from one page to the next and every move he makes depends on how all the other characters are reacting to his condition. Rhodes and Westwood suggest that there is extreme demand for generosity from Gregor as he cannot reciprocate in his new state but there is no help forthcoming for him. GregorSamsa is now totally dependent on others and he cannot reciprocate others too. In the past, he bore the burden of family alone after the collapse of his father's business and also worked hard to pay debts. He never availed a single leave in his entire career of fifteen years (2016, p.247).

GregorSamsa has been victimized by the society at large as he is a good son who is busy working in order to pay off his father. He plans his sister's education and works hard to collect money for expenses. He literally hates his job and wants to quit it but he does not do so because he is a responsible member of his family. He is also considerate about his boss and tries to pay off with dedication and zeal. In the end, after his sorry transformation, nobody is ready to reciprocate what he has been serving for such a long period of time. Greenberg identifies his spiritual deterioration as his job makes him a mechanical puppet in the hands of a corrupt capitalistic society which has no ethics left (2007, p.31).

Gregor himself suffers from double standards and dual personality. Gregor's intentions and his movements, his mind and body, are clearly divided and disharmonious. Not only does he lack the ability to control his actions, he can neither see nor tell the parts that make up his body; he is unaware of their design and function. This double nature leaving Gregor's will disassociated from his insect body highlights the psychological division between outer world and inner world which manifests in his metamorphosis. Through Gregor's body travels about, riding trains and sleeping in hotels, performing his exhausting job, he does not like his work and certainly would not choose to do it. His actions are beyond the control of his will and out of touch with his emotions. It is only later, as Gregor grows accustomed to his transformation that his emotional state, his will, and his actions come into a harmony of mutual existence. He soon learns that he is able to crawl on the walls and when eventually he had his body much better under control than formerly (Politzer, 1982, p. 233).

Grete (Gregor's sister) sense of justice is dictated by little more than selfishness. She ultimately abandons and betrays her brother for her own self-interests after he becomes an inconvenience. In his financially unproductive state he does, after all, make it difficult for the Samsas to afford their large apartment selected by Gregor, and he scares off the lodgers they take to help sustain it. At first, Gregor laments about the effect of his transformation on Grete. As Grete becomes empowered and individualized, her former obligations to her brother dissipate. He is no longer a necessity to her lifestyle; in fact, in his arthropod form, he becomes a burden that she is no longer

willing to accept. She pronounces the condemning words that spur Gregor to his final decision. After the lodgers leave in disgust, she implores her parents to take action, finally explicitly commanding Gregor's expulsion. As Gregor imagines it, Grete's pleasant life appears stagnant and childish in comparison to the progress she makes after her brother's metamorphosis. The absence of his financial support leads her not only to emerge from her home and become a working citizen, but also to expose herself to learning and motivation for improvement.

In Gregor's memory, his father is only able to raise his arms in greeting, but now, amidst his rebirth, he brandishes his once feeble feet which could barely support his standing. Gregor recognizes the threat his father poses, and does not risk standing up to him as Gregor considers his own inability to stand off the floor. The description of Herr Samsa's banking uniform emphasizes his reclamation of the family provider role as if to affirm Samsa's monetary worth and control of the family finances. While Herr Samsa once lived off the work of his son, the roles of parasite and provider are switched after Gregor's metamorphosis. Like Grete, after Gregor's transformation Herr Samsa emerges as a powerful figure, re-claiming the masculine role of the family provider that his son formerly filled. Herr Samsa becomes infuriated after Gregor's mother is upset at the unhidden sight of her insect son. As Gregor pokes his head out of his room with the intention of calming his father, Herr Samsa's restored power and authority is apparent that dictates Gregor.

Though Gregor's truth is difficult to acknowledge, he finally recognizes his real familial role, merging his unconscious feelings with his thoughts and expressions for the first and last time. Gregor faces the certainty that his family does not rely on him or need him any longer, but he has become, in fact, an unwanted burden to them. Despite all he has been through at their expense, he selflessly thinks of his parents and sister and recognizes the reality that they would be better off without him. Though Gregor continues in his vein of sacrifice, this is the first time he makes one based on reality, rather than imagined circumstances. He is convinced that his family does not need his support, nor do they even miss it. He faces the harsh truth that to them he exists only as a burden. This realization and the intention to carry out the best solution to this realized truth frees him from his transformed body, which has served as a symbol of his desire to escape and avoid reality. After his meditation and before his death, Gregor sees, or maybe feels broadening light in the world for the first time. This is his ultimate moment of realization, but instead of following fairytale tradition and ending his tale with Gregor's transformation back into his original human form. Kafka assigns Gregor to a fate of death, the physical fulfillment of his character's epiphany.

This miserable state of affairs can be witnessed in Kafka's life too. Kafka's diary is a detailed account of his miserable and baffled life. It is a comprehensive source to analyze his life's activity thoroughly. It contains each and every minor and major event which nourished his mind. I have focused on his last entries from 1921 to 1923, as it was a time when he was fighting with his life. He had tuberculosis and was already on the last stage of the disease. He was working on his novels as well which, due to severity of disease, were not completed until his death yet his friend and biographer, Max Brod, with help from his diary and personal meetings wrote endings of those masterpieces. He was an established writer till that time but his major works still had to come. *The Castle*, *The Trial* and *Amerika* were published after his death. *A Hunger Artist* was under publication shortly after his death. His life, like K., Joseph K., Gregor Samsa, Hunger Artist, and Josephine, is a constant striving for his identity and being. He had very few moments of happiness in his life. He abandoned his married life for the sake of writing. Yet in his entry of 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1922, he accepted his longing for family and children: "the infinite, deep, warm, saving happiness of sitting beside the cradle on one's own child opposite its mother" (Kafka, 1948, p.401), but he was unable to fulfill his desire.

#### Conclusion

Swift's main purpose is to reform his society by representing light hearted criticism of prevailing evils in the society. In this process, he becomes so harsh and bitter as his understanding of his surroundings develops. *Gulliver's Travel* is a journey of reformation in which Gulliver not only finds faults with his civilization but he gradually understands the difference between right and wrong. He masters and champions so many new things in his voyage which are contrary to his society like his visit to Houhnhnms make him altogether a new person. He takes inspiration from that culture and envisions the same practices in his country but he does not take any practical steps. From the life of Swift, it is evident that he takes few practical steps like publication of *Tale of A Tub* which is satire on literary personnel of his age. He contributed in politics to achieve certain goals.

Kafka's satire lies deep in the pessimistic portrayal of human condition which has attained the position of helplessness before executives. Kafka's own life is full of subjugation and subordination yet careful study of his provides hints to evade this conundrum put forth by power corridors. Kafka is not short Sisyphus in his life's quest for meaning. In his devastating expedition, he adopts the ethics of stories and becomes a misogynist. He longed for marriage but for the well being of his writing career he sacrificed his urge of reproduction. He was condemned to existence like his characters yet like Nietzsche's *Urbmensch*, he struggled to create his own value system and ethical outlook of society. Yet in his strife, he destroyed himself mentally and physically as he said on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1921: "it is astounding how I have systematically destroyed myself in the course of the years...." (Kafka, 1948, p.393). His life is parable of door keeper, presented twice; once in the *Trial* and then in *Before the Law*. He is also waiting for a leader (messiah) to take him out of the web mapped by his very

existence. Felice comes as a rescuer but he prefers to take refuge in his intellectual activity. He devoted his whole life to art and, in the end; he became able to establish K (a significant word that draws one's attention to awards Kafka directly). In this way, transformation is complete amidst uncertainties which were causing so many lacking already discussed under umbrella terms of satire.

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