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## **Absurdity and Social Alienation in Kafka's Works (The Metamorphosis, The Trial, and The Castle)**

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### **Abstract:**

This study aims to explore the themes of absurdity and social alienation in Franz Kafka's works by examining their connection to individual identity, isolation, and their cultural and social significance in contemporary societies. Additionally, it seeks to understand the social shock that these works can induce in readers by utilizing the analytical approach and drawing upon the theories of Freud and Camus. The primary research question revolves around how Kafka embodies the concepts of absurdity and social alienation in his works. The research concludes that Franz Kafka's works primarily delve into the concepts of absurdity and social alienation. These concepts manifest in several characteristics within his novels, reflecting the individual's sense of isolation and solitude in a mysterious and convoluted world. The main characters often find themselves trapped within themselves or in an environment that appears incomprehensible, showcasing the absurdity of the individual's experience. Kafka also extensively addresses the themes of bureaucracy, enigmatic laws, and irrational procedures. The characters face challenges in attempting to understand or comply with these laws, portraying the bureaucratic system as arbitrary and inhumane. Moreover, the concept of absurdity can also be seen in the characters' failure to effectively communicate with others, with dialogues often filled with misunderstandings and misinterpretations, leading to their isolation. Additionally, Kafka describes strange and unexpected transformations in the main characters, reflecting the instability and uncertainty of human existence and the world. Kafka also leaves many mysteries unresolved in his works, which can create a shock for readers accustomed to literature with clear and definitive endings. Kafka employs the concepts of absurdity and social alienation as literary tools to understand the impact of bureaucracy, isolation, and individual identity in a complex and ever-changing world.

**Keywords:** (Kafka - Kafkaesque - Absurdity - Social Alienation).

## Chapter 1

### 1-1. Research Problem:

"Franz Kafka's works are considered one of the most prominent literary records of absurdism in the twentieth century, addressing complex and perplexing themes related to individual identity, isolation, bureaucracy, and the enigma of human existence. The current research focuses on exploring the embodiment of these absurd concepts and their social impact in Kafka's works, as well as how these elements contribute to creating social shock in the reader. This research problem opens the door to a profound analysis of the individual's relationship with society and the role literature plays in expressing this relationship."

### 1-2. Significance of the Research:

The significance of this research lies in understanding Kafka's works and their social and cultural impact, as it can contribute to:

1. Expanding our understanding of absurd literature and its influence on global literature and culture.
2. Identifying how Kafka uses elements of absurdism and social shock in shaping his characters and narrative.
3. Shedding light on the role of literature in embodying experiences of isolation, identity, bureaucracy, and human mystery.
4. Clarifying the social impact of Kafka's works on readers and their ability to create emotional and intellectual effects.

### 1-3. Research Questions:

Research questions that will be emphasized may include:

- How is the concept of absurdity embodied in Kafka's works?
- What is the social shock that these works can induce in readers?

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- How are absurdity and social shock related to individual identity and isolation in Kafka's works?
  - What is the cultural and social role of Kafka's works in contemporary societies?

#### **1-4. Objectives:**

- Understand how the concept of absurdity is portrayed in Kafka's works.
- Uncover the social shock that these works can create in readers.
- Identify the connection between absurdity and social shock with individual identity and isolation in Kafka's works.
- Reveal the cultural and social role of Kafka's works in contemporary societies.

#### **1-5. Research Methodology:**

The research methodology will involve a detailed analytical study of Kafka's works with a focus on the aspects of absurdism and social shock. Literary and cultural criticism will also be used to guide the analysis and understand the cultural and social context of Kafka's work. Surveys may also be conducted to understand the impact of Kafka's works on readers and their experience of social shock.

## **Chapter 2**

### **2-1 - Franz Kafka:**

#### **2-1-1. Life Journey and Literary Legacy**

##### **Introduction:**

Franz Kafka is one of the most important writers of the twentieth century and one of the prominent novelists of absurdism in literary history. He is known for his works that blend mystery, isolation, bureaucracy, reflecting his

personal experiences and unique worldview. His life history and literary achievements represent a complex and intriguing journey.

### **Early Life:**

Franz Kafka was born on July 3, 1883, in the city of Prague, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time. He was one of six siblings and grew up in a German-Jewish family. His father, Hermann Kafka, was a successful merchant, and his mother, Julie Löwy, was a figure reflecting ambition and cultural values.

### **Adolescence and Education:**

Kafka attended a public school in Prague and later joined Charles University in Prague, where he studied law. He took his studies seriously and obtained a doctorate in law in 1906. He then worked in an insurance office before embarking on his professional career in insurance.

### **Literary Achievements:**

Despite his busy work schedule and societal pressures, Kafka wrote his most famous literary works during late hours of the night. Some of his notable works include:

1. "The Trial": The novel was published in 1925 and reflects an individual's experience in confronting a nightmarish bureaucratic system.
2. "The Castle": Published posthumously, it tells the story of a man trying to reach a mysterious castle but facing numerous obstacles.
3. "Metamorphosis": This short novel is one of his most famous works, depicting the story of Gregor Samsa, who transforms into a giant insect.

## **Early Departure and Death:**

Kafka lived a tumultuous and highly isolated life. His father passed away in 1931, an event that greatly impacted him. Kafka died of tuberculosis on June 3, 1924, at the age of 40. Before his death, he spent most of his time in isolation and did not publish many of his works.

## **Literary Legacy:**

Although Kafka did not witness great success during his lifetime, he later became one of the foremost novelists of the twentieth century. His works had a significant impact on absurd literature and global literature. His style is characterized by mystery and complexity, leaving multiple interpretations of his works. His novels and stories symbolize human isolation and existential anguish.

## **Conclusion:**

Franz Kafka's life and works were filled with complexity and mystery, making him one of the most important writers of the twentieth century. He left an unforgettable literary legacy that dealt with the themes of human experience and the individual's relationship with society in a unique and profound way, continuing to stimulate readers and researchers to contemplate these issues intensively.

## **2-2- Kafka's Stories**

### **2-2-1. "The Metamorphosis" by Kafka:**

"The Metamorphosis" is one of the most famous and important works by the Austrian writer Franz Kafka. It was first published in 1915 and is considered one of the key works of twentieth-century absurd literature. The story follows the life of Gregor Samsa, a young man living in Prague who works as a traveling salesman.

The story begins with Gregor Samsa undergoing a mysterious and sudden transformation into a giant insect when he wakes up one morning in his bed. He finds himself trapped in a strange body and unable to control his movements in a natural manner. Events unfold, and his life and his relationship with his family become significantly complicated.

The story revolves around the reactions of the family and society to this strange transformation in Gregor, as relationships and conflicts develop. Gregor finds himself isolated and vulnerable in the face of life's experiences and developments.

The story addresses various themes such as identity, isolation, alienation, dependency, and bureaucracy. It allows the reader to understand the psychological and social impact of Gregor's transformation and how it affects his relationship with the external world and his family.

In general, "The Metamorphosis" is considered one of the classic literary works that deserve to be read and studied. It remains a literary masterpiece that provides readers with a unique journey into the mind and soul of the writer Franz Kafka.

### **2-2-2. "The Trial" by Kafka:**

"The Trial" is one of the most important and famous works by the Austrian writer Franz Kafka. It was published posthumously in 1925 and is considered one of the greatest works of twentieth-century absurd literature. The novel presents a mysterious and terrifying vision of bureaucracy, the legal system, and society.

The story follows the journey of Josef K., a man who is arrested suddenly and without a clear reason, and is brought to trial without a clear understanding of the charges against him. Josef finds himself trapped in a mysterious and complex legal system, where laws, regulations, and procedures are illogical.

He embarks on a desperate journey to understand the system that gradually consumes him.

During his trial, Josef encounters a variety of strange and enigmatic characters, including lawyers, judges, and witnesses. He feels isolated and experiences the eternal trial of self-judgment and transformations in social relationships.

The story reflects a deep exploration of themes such as justice, identity, power, isolation, and the individual's relationship with authority and laws. "The Trial" is considered a symbol of the struggle

### **2-2-3. Kafka's "The Castle" Story:**

"The Castle" is one of the most famous and important works of the Austrian writer Franz Kafka. In this novel, elements of absurdity and narrative are intertwined to create a mysterious and intriguing world.

The story follows the young man K., an engineer who wanted to move to a small village located next to a massive castle. K. arrives in the village and attempts to communicate with the local authorities to obtain permission to live in the castle or to find out the purpose of his invitation to it. However, he finds himself trapped in a web of bureaucratic complexities and mysterious laws that govern the castle and the village.

As the story unfolds, K. encounters a variety of strange and enigmatic characters, such as the priests, officials, and peasants. He begins to search for his identity and his role in this strange world and questions the true purpose of his presence in the castle.

The story addresses themes such as bureaucracy, identity, the search for meaning, isolation, and failed communication. It is characterized by Kafka's mysterious and exciting narrative style and alludes to the human experience in the face of power and social and psychological complexities.

In general, "The Castle" is considered a profound literary work and a masterpiece by Franz Kafka. It provides readers with an opportunity to explore its strange world and to contemplate complex themes related to humanity and society.

## Chapter Three

### 3-1. Analysis Results

#### 3-1-1. Answer to Question One:

The embodiment of the concept of absurdity in Kafka's works is an essential part of his literary and cultural style. This concept is manifested through several aspects and techniques in his works, including:

1. Isolation and Mystery: Kafka's works reflect the individual's sense of isolation and solitude in a mysterious and complex world. The main characters in his novels often find themselves trapped within themselves or in an environment that seems incomprehensible. This sense of isolation and mystery demonstrates absurdity in the individual's experience.
2. The Insignificance of Bureaucracy: Kafka extensively deals with the theme of bureaucracy and its mysterious laws and irrational procedures. The characters face challenges in trying to understand or comply with these laws, and the bureaucratic system seems to control their lives arbitrarily and inhumanely.
3. Failed Communication: The concept of absurdity can also be seen in the characters' failure to communicate effectively with others. Dialogues in Kafka's works are often filled with misunderstandings and misinterpretations, leading to the isolation of the characters and their difficulty in communication.

4. Strange Transformations and Changes: In his works, Kafka describes strange and sudden transformations in the main characters. These transformations symbolize instability and uncertainty in human existence and the world.
5. Lack of Final Solutions: Kafka often writes in a way that makes the reader feel the absence of final solutions or clear answers. He leaves the endings of his works mostly open, allowing for multiple interpretations and multiple insights.

### **3-1-2. Answer to Question Two:**

In these ways and others, Kafka works to embody the concept of absurdity in his works, making his readers ponder about reality, identity, power, and human existence in general. Franz Kafka's works, which blend absurdity and mystery, can create social shock among readers in several ways:

1. Isolation and Solitude: Kafka's works describe the characters' feelings of psychological and social isolation. This description can be shocking to readers who find themselves reflecting on their own experiences of isolation and solitude.
2. Bureaucracy and Complexity: Kafka's works embody complex experiences and bureaucratic control, which can shock readers who see parallels between reality and Kafka's descriptions.
3. Strange Transformations: The bizarre transformations of characters in Kafka's works can be shocking to readers, as they find themselves questioning the meanings of these transformations and their impact on the characters.
4. Failed Communication and Language Ambiguity: Characters in Kafka's works often struggle to communicate effectively, creating a sense of

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shock among readers who perceive this failed communication as reflecting the challenges of communication in modern societies.

5. Lack of Final Solutions: Kafka leaves many puzzles without final solutions in his works, and this can create shock for readers who are accustomed to clear and definite endings in literature.

In general, Kafka's works allow readers to understand the complexities and difficulties that individuals can face in dealing with the world and society, and this can provoke shock and questions about reality and human existence.

### **3-1-3. Answer to Question Three:**

In Kafka's works, absurdity and social shock are deeply connected to individual identity and isolation, through the techniques, symbols, and characters presented by the author. Here's how this connection can be interpreted:

1. Isolation and Individual Identity: In Kafka's works, main characters often live in a state of isolation and detachment from the outside world. This isolation leads to a scrutiny of their individual identity and deep contemplation of their place and existence in society. The characters strive to understand who they are and how they can interact with the world around them, creating social shock due to the absence of clear answers.
2. Bureaucracy and Social Control: Characters in Kafka's works frequently encounter complex bureaucratic systems and social authorities that govern their lives. They face mysterious rules, regulations, and procedures that are difficult to understand or effectively navigate. This increasing social control leads characters to lose their individual identities and creates a sense of shock.

3. Failed Communication and Language Ambiguity: The characters in Kafka's works struggle to communicate effectively with others. Language misunderstandings and misinterpretations abound, making the characters feel isolated and detached.
4. Strange Transformations: Kafka's works feature bizarre transformations that affect the characters' identities and interactions with the world. These transformations enhance the sense of shock and alienation as individuals find themselves unable to comprehend or adapt to these mysterious changes.

In these ways, Kafka works to embody absurdity and social shock as literary tools for understanding the impact of bureaucracy, isolation, and individual identity on humans in a complex and changing world. This interaction between these elements creates a unique and profound quality in his works, making them a source of reflection and contemplation about the human condition and the relationship between the individual and society.

#### **3-1-4. Answer to Question Four:**

Franz Kafka's works play an important cultural and social role in contemporary societies in several ways:

1. Analysis of Bureaucracy and Power: Kafka's works shed light on the complexities of bureaucracy and power in modern societies. This insight stimulates discussions about how power affects individuals' lives and experiences.
2. Highlighting Social Tensions: Kafka's works focus on social tensions and conflicts between the individual, society, and the system. This promotes discussions on issues such as identity, discrimination, and social justice.

3. Emphasizing Communication and Isolation: The themes of failed communication and isolation in Kafka's works reflect the challenges of modern communication and the impact of technology and bureaucracy on human relationships. This raises awareness about the importance of effective and human communication.
4. Encouraging Absurdist Literature and Art: Literature and the arts have been greatly influenced by Kafka's works, especially the absurd. His influence continues to inspire contemporary writers and artists to explore concepts of mystery, complexity, and absurdity in their works.
5. Continuation of Literary and Cultural Discourse: Kafka's works remain a subject of literary and cultural discourse. This ongoing discussion allows contemporary societies to contemplate topics like identity, power, and communication in new ways and enriches cultural dialogue.

In general, Kafka's works serve as a source of inspiration and reflection on a wide range of topics and issues that are part of life in contemporary societies. His literary insights continue to stimulate readers to think about the challenges and human experiences in a complex and changing world.

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