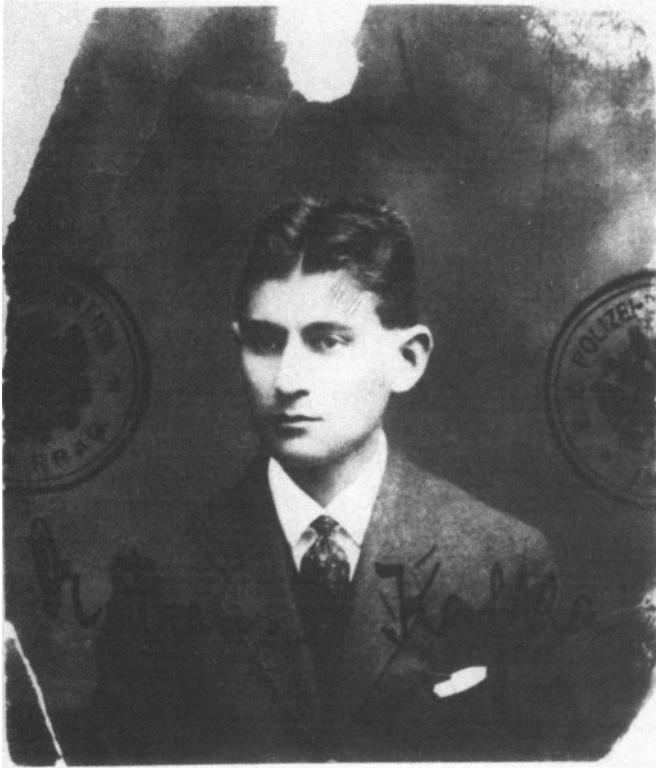


*Reading Kafka*



“Man has progressed so far that he stands erect: that he stands to attention. Whosoever is forced to stand to attention is already guilty.”

Herbert Kraft, *Mondheimat*

Kafka's novels *America*, *The Trial*, and *The Castle* constitute a trilogy of resistance.<sup>1</sup> In Karl Rossmann, Josef K., and K., the Land Surveyor, we are presented in each context with aesthetic depictions of self-awareness.

Karl Rossmann is entirely determined by the world outside him; he has the belief that the world is ordered in a way which is good; he has a will of his own merely as a feeling that there is much wrong in what happens to others and to himself.

Josef K. progresses to a will capable of differentiation; through the assault of the system this will is literally forced upon him in that he realizes that he must defend something: individuality—and not just his own.

K., the Land Surveyor, acts on the basis of a will which is his own; the conflict between individual and society is induced by none other than himself and aims at changing the social order.

Thus *America* tells the story of Karl Rossmann, who is the child and the loser-out—"Negro" is his name in the end—and who belongs amongst those in society who are ever deprived of all rights. *The Trial* tells the story of Josef K., who is the 'peace-loving' citizen and who is struck down therefore. *The Castle* tells the story of K., who is the "attacker" (Sch 93), his slogan 'rights against dominion';<sup>2</sup> the fragmentary nature of the novel withholds detail of his end.

What is reflected in the failure of all three figures is the reality of the historical subject; but out from

the aesthetic construct the latent possibilities thereof appear in the projection of a society in which people do not one day simply vanish without trace, for then 'negro' and 'person' will quite simply be synonymous; a society in which people will not be done to death, murdered, because social exploitation will be abolished; one in which people will find their identity even, because that quest will no longer be conducted only in resistance and refusal to comply.<sup>3</sup>

And what humanity already means is the casting off of all faith, as the process of individuation; not going along, as the resistance of natural man; the refusal to allow the other—and oneself—to go under, as the mode of existence of moral man; knowing, as reason's way, why someone goes under; to wish to dismantle the conditions under which he does go under, this is how the free man begins.