

Unconsciousness and Survival: Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*

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Introduction: Literature as revelatory of psyche

On the edge—the theme of crisis.¹ The survival of our species is in doubt. As Jung said in response to the atomic bomb, “It is now a question of existence or non-existence . . .” (“Epilogue,” *Essays on Contemporary Events* 90). In addition to the possibility of nuclear holocaust, we face the human threats to earth’s life-support systems. Distinguished Jungian thinkers have offered hopeful responses to these crises. At the 2010 joint IAJS and JSSS Conference, for example, Roger Brooks detailed the healing potential of communal grief, and Jerome Bernstein articulated his vision of the evolution of psyche as it compensates the power-engorged Western ego through the development of “borderland personalities.” We know Jung’s prescription. After acknowledging that “the principal and indeed the only thing wrong with the world is man” (“After the Catastrophe,” *Essays* 72), he placed his hope in the development of consciousness in individuals, in particular development of self-consciousness about one’s own shadow. He writes: “But in reality only a change in the attitude of the individual can bring about a renewal in the spirit of the nations. . . . We must begin by breaking [the power principle] in ourselves” (“Epilogue,” *Essays* 75). Daunting as this hope is, I am presenting even bleaker visions of human survival through Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* and Tadeusz Borowski’s *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*.

Imaginative literature as a field is seemingly far removed from issues of species survival. As a literary critic, my path to formulating this topic has been a long one. When I first began analysis, I discovered that the methods I had learned for reading literature worked for interacting with dreams—that is, a symbolic perspective that ponders the exact sense representations of the images and words, their narrative sequences and juxtapositions, textures and moods, allusiveness. This discovery led me back to literature, but this time literature understood as itself a revelation of what had been unconscious, either to me personally or perhaps to the collective. This approach was confirmed by authors who claimed that they served as channels for materials that came to them from within.² Eventually, the idea that

was to determine my future relations with literature took shape: the idea that literature is to the collective as dreams are to the dreamer. When I read Jung's *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, I found theory to buttress this idea. Jung proposes that imaginative literature is, to use his words, "rooted in the immensity of the unconscious," that the artist is a "collective man, a vehicle and moulder of the unconscious psychic life of mankind" ("Psychology and Literature," *CW* 15, pars. 135, 157). He conceives of visionary art as "constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking." Through this compensatory process, art, he claims, "represents a process of self-regulation in the life of nations and epochs" ("On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," *CW* 15, pars. 130, 131).

As a theoretician, however, Jung concentrated on historical manifestations of psyche, such as the writings of alchemists, rather than literature, although he did in his writings upon occasion refer to specific authors and specific literary works, most notably Goethe and his *Faustus*. Most of those studying and writing about Jung's works have been therapists, and thus even their forays into literature have been oriented toward the work of healing.³

In addition, Jung privileged myth over imaginative literature. In order to account for powerful patterned forces emerging from unconscious sources, Jung postulated the existence of archetypes and sought to understand them through myths. Jung's use of myths emphasized the transcendent, universal, and transformative. Given this understanding of myth, literature offers certain advantages in the exploration of psyche.⁴

Advantages of literature vis-à-vis myth

One advantage actually disenchanting some of myths' power to affect how we relate to psyche, thus inhibiting cultural moments from becoming "naturalized." Once a story attains the status of myth, it takes on an aura of authorless divine revelation, of numinosity, suggesting a realm beyond human limitation. This aspect of myth can make our lives feel meaningful and purposeful. The shadow of this power, however, is the universalizing of cultural moments of myth as if they apply to all human experience, thus naturalizing or even divinizing a particular cultural moment, thereby creating a brake on what is considered human and natural. Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths*, regardless of whatever details might be controversial, certainly makes clear that stories about mythic characters are multiple and often contradictory. The repressive potential in the use of myths lies in certain moments of mythic stories becoming iconic for later cultures.⁵

Imaginative literature, in contrast, comes to us as the creative work of specific individuals who live and write in particular cultures and times, thus allowing for contextual understanding. The two works considered in this study, Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and*

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Gentlemen, lack myth's transcendent framing. They therefore do not offer the kind of hope we can reap from visions that place human life in transcendent contexts.⁶ Let me call their vision post-transcendent, a perspective that has been common at least since the failure of meaning Jung addresses so continuously in his writings. Still, if imaginative literature actually does carry aspects of psyche of which we have been unconscious into a form in which collectives may become conscious of them, then even stories such as these should yield us some new understanding.

Further, because imaginative literature is produced in different historic times, it is able to reflect experiences that people living in earlier ages had not experienced. Take the bourgeois family or the concentration camps of World War II, for example. While it is possible to read Sophocles's Oedipal myth into Kafka's 1912 account of the bourgeois family,⁷ earlier writers such as Sophocles had no way to imagine the effects of a capitalist economy on family dynamics, nor could Homer anticipate the kind of collective collusion in the interest of survival in extermination camps that Borowski details in his 1946 account of Auschwitz.

I am offering Borowski's account as one portrait of collective unconsciousness relevant to current crises. That is another advantage of imaginative literature—the continuous unfolding of portraits of psyche, each portrait taking a psychological understanding, say, Jung's concept of shadow, and portraying it with a specificity of context and power of symbol that extends the range of our grasp of the idea exponentially. Each individual's psyche is unique, and the portrayals of what we have in common, such as shadow, in terms of how it manifests and plays out in the unique character, resists the tendency of concepts to rigidify and exclude. Further, each portrayal amplifies and enriches the meanings of the concept. Thus we can utilize a dialogic relationship between literature and psychological theory. Literature can offer new psychological insight leading to new concepts; psychological concepts can also open gateways into understanding literature; literature can then help elaborate psychological concepts.

Collective unconsciousness: continuity vs. differentiation

As an academic attempting to bring Jung's ideas based upon inner facts to an academy that attributes factuality only to what can be measured and replicated, I have made frequent use of the concept of "collective unconsciousness" because, as opposed to "the collective unconscious," it is rather easily demonstrable. Any reality of which any collective has been unconscious serves as proof—say, collectives unconscious that their imposition of themselves, (e.g., Americans' appropriation of Native American lands under the rationalization of "Manifest Destiny") or of ways of life upon others (e.g., missionaries imposing cultural ways under a presumption of religious duty), or of vengeance (e.g., political extremists

killing innocent people under a claim of required retaliation) are all public manifestations of collective unconsciousness; such claims to righteousness depend upon collectives' remaining unconscious that their actions are being fueled by desires for power. The existence of collective unconsciousness and the history of humanity's slow development of consciousness provide a foundation for the concept of psyche as encompassing both unconsciousness and consciousness.

The concept of collective unconsciousness serves as a bridge to my premise that literature is revelatory of the immeasurable realm of unconscious psyche. This idea, however, does not have the same emphasis as Jung's idea of the collective unconscious. Jung envisions the collective unconscious as the unifying cause of the similitude of contents and experiences across time and cultures, a vision that stresses continuity in human experience. In my conceptualization of the unconscious dimension of psyche, I emphasize psyche's potential for differentiation. To my mind, the idea that there exists a collective unconscious functioning as a repository leading to reenactments of human history⁸ is less demonstrative of psyche's existence and impetus than the continuous unfolding of the immeasurable, incomprehensible variety of human experiences historically and culturally. The incalculable variety of human experience and the continuing uprisings of new ways to experience, today most manifest in the ways technology affects our experiences, seem to me to call for a hypothesis such as psyche, an *autonomous force of unimaginable plenitude of possible experience driven to manifest*. My sense of psyche's unconscious realm is as a matrix of all human potential, including all the horrors and loves humans are capable of. This perspective underlies my premise that literature also is a continuous unfolding of aspects of collective unconsciousness, one available to reading collectives of different times and cultures for development of new understanding.

Choosing Kafka's and Borowski's stories

While we privilege Jung's approach to unconscious psyche in ways that we think beneficent—as with his concept of its providing what consciousness lacks, his concept of the Self, and his theory of the transformative powers of individuation—the crisis of human survival as a species recalls us to the passages in which Jung wrote passionately about the destructive powers of the unconscious. In “Psychology and Religion,” for example, he writes: “As a matter of fact, we are constantly living on the edge of a volcano, and there is, so far as we know, no way of protecting ourselves from a possible outburst that will destroy everybody within reach” (*CW* 11, pars. 23ff., cited in *Essays* 78).

The works I have chosen to explore the edges we naively stride along, Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, lack any sense of an effective, benevolent force such as the Self in unconscious psyche, which raises the question of why I have chosen them. I could,

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after the fact, offer such reasons as the dehumanization that Othering in each of them details and could draw connections to the Othering and its dehumanizing that we experience in our current familial and world conflicts. To be candid, however, these stories chose me. When I first heard of the theme of the IAJS-JSSS conference, “On the Edge,” these stories came to me somewhat as a dream does. They are both stories that affected me forcefully upon first reading and whose call I did not fully understand. Considering them as my subject, at first I thought my unconscious was suggesting them to me because of how they portray the edge between consciousness and unconsciousness. Kafka’s story portrays the consciousness of his characters as invincible, impenetrably incapable of taking in that of which the characters are unconscious. Borowski’s tale offers a portrait of the volcano’s having spilled into lived reality. Each of them is ripe for the framework of shadow interpretation. But while working with them, I found that the theme of the relationship of unconsciousness to survival, not just individual survival, but our collective survival, inexorably demanded my attention and reflection in spite of my reluctance. I have learned to note that kind of resistance and to seek to understand its causes. Consequently, I pursued the focus that the stories impressed upon me, a focus that can be articulated in the questions: What is the portrait of collective unconsciousness in each work, and what do these portraits suggest about our collective survival? In order to reach generalizations about collective unconsciousness, however, it is necessary to attend to the unconsciousness of the individuals making up the collective.

Kafka’s portrait of Gregor’s unconsciousness

I anticipate common familiarity with the plot of Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, the main complication of which is given in the famous opening line: “When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling [restless]⁹ dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin” (3). From the opening line, Gregor is having a problem with his body, so to speak, (recall Jung’s definition of a problem as a division within oneself in *CW* 8, par. 757).¹⁰ Gregor’s unconscious problem is literalized in his being possessed by the body of a species normally conceived of as other, but apparently, to our horror, latent within the human. As a salesman, Gregor has neglected his body’s needs for food, rest, companionship, and sex. He describes his life as a salesman as “the torture of traveling, worrying about changing trains, eating miserable food at all hours, constantly seeing new faces, no relationships that last or get more intimate” (4). Gregor is Jung’s too-civilized man: a “sick animal” (*CW* 7, par. 32). Worse, Gregor is a hopeless example of that human inadequacy Jung termed the “*failure to recognize a moment of crucial importance*” (*CW* 9.1, par. 245; italics in original). And this last is why Gregor and his

unconsciousness, while being horrific and even fatal, are also profoundly humorous.

At the opening of the story, there lies Gregor, seeing that his bedcover is about to slip off the dome of his brown belly, watching his pathetically thin legs “waving helplessly before his eyes” (3). He simply wants it all to go away and tries repeatedly to turn onto his right side, where he routinely sleeps, but cannot get his body to turn and finally gives it up as his side starts to ache. Frustrated, he begins to think—not about his sudden bodily existence as a verminous species but about what a difficult job he has as a salesman! Gregor’s clumsy attempts to work with his new body, followed by his total failure to concentrate on what has happened to him are ridiculous, thus funny—and revealing.

The first revelation is that a metamorphosis has occurred, one revealing an unimagined and horrifying latent potential hidden within the human form. Yet the person to whom it has occurred is absurdly unable to relate to it, is incongruously concerned about all the wrong questions, is, in sum, utterly alienated from his own carnal life. He is so distanced from it that he actually considers that he might be able to catch the next train to work. It all depends on whether the others, his parents and sister, his boss, once they’ve seen him, take what’s happened to him, as he puts it, “calmly” (10). Gregor depends on no inner guide such as a Self for his sense of who he is and what he might do. Indeed, his transformation cries out to be read as an expression of his unconscious, as symptom of a fundamental aspect of who he is that he has not made conscious. As Lucy Huskinson emphasizes, Jung thought of the body as “the outward manifestation of the life of the spirit” (95).¹¹ Instead of attending to his shocking new body and reflecting on what this change might mean, Gregor continues to gather his self-evaluation from how the collective sees him. In other words, Gregor is a portrait of a human so invincibly unconscious that even if an unconscious identity is revealed to him through a literalized transformation, he continues to garner his sense of who he is from without rather than from within.

Samsa family’s unconsciousness regarding dependence

Prior to his transformation, Gregor has sought self-esteem from thinking of himself as the caretaker of his family, an identity that his family at first welcomed with praise. The issue of dependence in this family is one of the dynamics that throughout the story remains unconscious. Gregor’s father’s business failed, leaving him in debt, and Gregor has taken as his purpose the earning of money to pay off that debt and to support his father, mother, and sister. As a result, at the time of his transformation, Gregor’s mother suffers from asthma and is basically a useless invalid; his father has become fat and hardly able to walk, what we would nowadays call a couch potato, although his entertainment was newspapers rather than television; and his sister is a seventeen-year-old whose most active contribution to the world is her practicing of her violin. All three of them are utterly

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dependent on Gregor for their upkeep. He has chosen their apartment, pays for a maid and for all their bills, and fully although secretly intends to send his sister to study at a conservatory. Gregor's sense of his family's dependence on him fuels his desperate efforts not to lose his job just because his body has suddenly become that of a vermin. In response to his boss (who has improbably appeared at the Samsa household within an hour of Gregor's not having appeared at work to discover why Gregor is late), Gregor injures his jaws turning the doorknob to his room, reveals himself, and then chases after his horrified boss to reason with him about why he should stand up for him back at the office. He engages in a long disquisition, in insect squeak, about the prejudices held against salesmen that might work against his being allowed to keep his position. He begs him to indicate at least partial agreement with him. All this unintelligible argumentation is of course absurd in that Gregor could not possibly continue to work as a salesman given his new body. His boss escapes, crying "Agh" (14).

Note the humor in this scene, a humor actually made slapstick as Gregor's mother backs into the breakfast table, sits on it, and knocks the coffee urn off it, causing Gregor momentarily to forget his boss and clack his jaws at the spilling coffee. Kafka's humorous tone is a subject I will return to.¹²

Although Gregor has taken on the heroic labor of supporting his family, he has not kept control of his paycheck. He has regularly turned it over to his father, keeping only a small amount for his own expenses. He has depended on his father to use the money to reduce his debt and speed the day when Gregor might give up the job he hates. While he is lying in bed trying to figure out how to get out of it without smashing his head on the floor, Gregor lets himself think about how in fact part of him would like to get fired, wonders if that "wouldn't be a very good thing for me" (4). He acknowledges that "[i]f I didn't hold back for my parents' sake, I would have quit long ago" (4). What keeps Gregor in his job is his father's debt. He thinks, "once I've gotten the money together to pay off my parents' debt—that will probably take another five or six years—I'm going to do it [quit] without fail" (4).

But his having turned over control of his paycheck to his father has supported the realm of family unconsciousness about the issue of dependence. On the very first day of his transformation Gregor overhears his father discussing the family's economic situation and discovers that not only did his father have some capital left over from the collapse of his business, but also that he has been saving part of Gregor's earnings and has compiled a "tidy principal" (21). Surprisingly, Gregor experiences this news as "pleasant" (20). He is "delighted at this unexpected foresight and thrift" (21). The thought that he might have "gotten rid of" his job sooner does occur to him but is subordinated to his judgment that "now things were undoubtedly better the way his father had arranged them" (21). The text makes

clear that Gregor's father never mentioned his having been able to save some of his money from the company's collapse and that Gregor never asked him about it. The unspoken relations between them, relations being acted out in terms of Gregor's labor, his hope for identity as valued provider, the money resulting from his labor, and his father's secret handling of that money, did not begin with Gregor's transformation but have been the basis for the unconscious dynamics concerning dependence between them.

To summarize the unconscious relations among the family so far: 1) Gregor leeches a sense of importance from his family's dependence upon him; 2) his family leeches their material welfare from Gregor's labor, and they have unconsciously become atrophied with regard to their own abilities to take care of themselves;¹³ 3) Gregor's father has used Gregor's labor to support the family, traditionally his job, while secretly maintaining the prerogative of how to dispose of the proceeds; and 4) Gregor's misery in his job is not perceived by anyone but Gregor. Not only do all of these relations operate unconsciously, but even when Gregor learns of his father's perfidy, he still cannot take into consciousness that he has been used. As regards his father, he lacks teeth, a point about his new body that the text makes explicit, a point that in fact Kafka's revisions show he made certain was explicit (Corngold "Manuscript Revisions" 44-45).

The issue of dependence evolves throughout the story as the family members develop their capacity to earn money and become independent of Gregor. The mother begins to sew underwear, the father becomes a bank messenger, and the sister takes a job as a salesgirl. When Gregor, after months of isolation in his room, sees his father who has been working, he is amazed at the physical change in him. He has become strong and vital. Precisely in having ceased to be a leech upon Gregor, he has been transformed back into a physically formidable man. By the end of the tale, the family has taken charge of their own lives, never becoming conscious of how they scapegoated Gregor or of the benefit his becoming dependent upon them has afforded them for their own metamorphoses. As for Gregor, his living out of his dependence on those who cannot, will not see him (including himself), and who certainly do not love him results in his deterioration and, ultimately, his death. He, too, never becomes conscious of the dynamics concerning dependence and independence operating in the family.

Samsa family's unconsciousness regarding Gregor's sexuality

The dependence dynamic helps account for Gregor's transformation into a bug rather than, say, a bull or a goat, for the other obvious realm of shared unconsciousness in the family concerns sexuality. The level of taboo concerning sexuality perhaps helps account for the extraordinary fact that even though unconscious psyche has appeared among them in Gregor's transformation, not a single person asks why. Faced with this horrifying anomaly, they concentrate on

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surviving. Their first ploy is hiding from what has happened and hiding what has happened. Gregor's mother repeatedly hides her face in her hands, faints, and seeks unconsciousness—not only for herself but also for Gregor. In a pivotal scene when she is helping Grete to remove his furniture from his room, she worries that should he recover his human form, the loss of his furniture will make it less possible for him to forget, that is, stay unconscious of his experience as a vermin (33). Gregor's father first responds with a waved fist and tears, and then like his wife “shield[s] his eyes” (12). He forces Gregor into his room where the whole family colludes in keeping him—and keeping him a secret.

That Gregor's sexuality is a basic aspect of what is being kept secret is indicated in the very second paragraph in the tale. Gregor has just recently cut out a picture of a woman who was “done up in a fur hat and a fur boa, sitting upright and raising up against the viewer a heavy fur muff in which her whole forearm had disappeared” (3). Commentators have pointed out that Kafka had read the novel *Venus in Furs* whose hero is named Gregor.¹⁴ Such a ripe allusion to the goddess of love confirms the sexual suggestiveness of this picture, particularly as its existence and Gregor's having framed and hung it himself are juxtaposed immediately to his waking as a vermin. Thus alerted to the issue of Gregor's sexuality, one is not surprised to learn during the course of the story that he has had only a fleeting encounter with a chambermaid and a courtship that failed for being too reticent. The picture of the furred woman plays a crucial role in the turning point in his relationship with his sister, Grete, the object of his unconscious sexual longings.

Grete is not present in the scene in which Gregor is first seen by his mother, father, and boss. She has been sent to fetch a doctor when the family first hears Gregor's unintelligible efforts to explain himself to them. Her first encounters with him in his new state occur in her taking him food. He has, from the first morning, felt a great appetite, a sign of his new body. He even fantasizes having a huge breakfast before dealing further with his situation. Grete, who enters his room on the condition that he hide himself, brings him first milk, which disgusts him, and then a range of foods to discover his preferences. In this gesture, she attempts to relate to Gregor's new reality. Indeed, she at first relates to it more acceptingly than he, himself. While he hides himself under the couch so that she does not have to look at him, she cleans his room. Alert to his life, she recognizes that he likes the chair to be placed by the window and not only returns it there after cleaning but even opens the window for him. When she recognizes that he has been crawling up the walls and along the ceiling of his room, she thinks to remove the furniture to ease his ramblings. There is a slight hint that she, too, has an unconscious, vaguely romantic feeling for Gregor. In explaining why she resists her mother's worry about moving his furniture, the narrator says, “Perhaps, however, the romantic

enthusiasm of girls her age . . . played a part, by tempting her to make Gregor's situation even more terrifying in order that she might do even more for him. Into a room in which Gregor ruled the bare walls all alone, no human being beside Grete was ever likely to set foot" (25).

This fantasy matches one Gregor later has in which his incestuous feelings for Grete are exhibited, although he does not recognize them as such. Neither does Gregor realize his sexual projections onto the framed, englassed picture of the lady with furs, not even during the scene in which he acts out his passion for her. This occurs after his mother's worry about the removal of furniture shocks him into trying to think of himself again in his previous human form. He wonders at his own acceptance of his desire to climb walls and hang blissfully from the ceiling. Panicked, he impulsively dashes from under the couch where he has been hiding himself so as to protect others from having to view him, and after running back and forth in confusion, sees the picture and throws his body upon it, taking comfort from the cool glass on his hot belly. He is prepared to protect this image of a furred woman even at the price of having to "fly into Grete's face" (26) should she try to take it. His sister and mother return; his mother faints; Grete raises her fist and actually acknowledges him as she calls out: "You, Gregor!" (26). The narrative immediately again develops slapstick proportions as Grete runs to get first aid materials, Gregor rushes out of his room after her to help, frightens her when she turns around so that she drops a bottle of corrosive medicine a few drops of which burn his face. She dashes back into his room and slams the door, so he is left to crawl helplessly all around, floor, walls, ceiling, until he exhausts himself and falls plop onto the middle of the dining room table.

Neither Grete nor Gregor grasps the sexual significance of what has just occurred: he has opted for the exogamous female in the picture¹⁵ and has even been willing to fight Grete for her, while their mother once again has responded to events by going unconscious. They are only aware of a moment of mutual hostility. Grete, however, never cares for Gregor the same way again. First, she betrays him to their father who arrives in the middle of this family *mélée*. He, angered and glad at the opportunity to confront Gregor, begins stalking him around the room. Gregor cannot escape into his room because the door is shut. The contest is utterly unequal and is climaxed by Gregor's father pelting apples at him until he pierces his back, flattening him with pain. Gregor sees his mother burst out of his room, shedding her petticoats, throwing her arms around his father "in complete union with him" at which point his vision "went dim" (29). Again, the sexual implications are perceived by no one in the story.

This sexual theme comes to its denouement when Gregor issues forth from his room to listen to Grete's violin playing for boarders the Samsas have taken in for extra income. During the months between the apple wound and this moment, Gregor's hunger has continued but can find no object to satisfy it. He is starving. In

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addition, he has been neglected. Grete has been feeding and cleaning with minimal attention so that his not eating has not even been noticed. The growing filth in his room has attached itself to his body in the form of dust, fluff, and discarded food fragments. It is in this dirty, malnourished form that he crawls into the main room toward Grete. Her music strikes him as the nourishment he has been longing for. He recalls his dream of wanting to send her to study in the conservatory. As he notes that the boarders fail to appreciate her playing, he wants to invite her into his room “where he would never again let her out” (36). He would tell her of his intentions about the conservatory, and she would be so moved that she would voluntarily consent to stay with him in his room forever. He would then “raise himself up to her shoulder and kiss her on the back of the neck . . .” (36). This fantasy is particularly poignant because he has realized earlier that she cannot stand the look of him, much less the touch, and that she cannot quickly enough get out of his room. His unconscious desire, in other words, prevails even in the context of what he consciously knows.

Grete’s response to his appearance is to persuade their father and mother that this creature is not Gregor and must go, that if this were Gregor, it would have long ago realized that they could not live with it and would have gone away. His father wishes wistfully that they could communicate with him. The fact that they do communicate with him continuously never breaks into their consciousness. The significance of what they communicate, that is, their lack of love for him, never breaks into Gregor’s consciousness. Gregor’s mother, in the face of Grete’s call for Gregor’s being done away with, actually falls asleep as Gregor struggles back to his room.

Gregor’s fantasy about life ever after with Grete has been met by Grete’s rejection of his existence. Still taking his identity from others, Gregor returns to his room, thinks lovingly of his family, and breathes his last breath. Neither he nor they have grasped anything of the unconscious dynamics driving them with regard to dependence or sexuality.

The Samsa family’s thriving through unconsciousness

The family responds to his death by seeking further unconsciousness. They do not wish to hear what has become of Gregor’s body, which their charwoman has conveniently disposed of for them. They do not wish to talk about Gregor. They excuse themselves from work for a day, a freedom never permitted to Gregor in five years. They take a trolley to the country for a picnic. As they arrive, Grete stands, stretches her young, healthy body, making her parents think that it will soon be time for her to marry. Grete’s sexuality and ability to regenerate foretell the ongoing survival of the Samsas.

So what does Kafka's tale reveal that we as a collective need to integrate into consciousness? Kafka wrote this story in 1912, and we can acknowledge that ideas we take for granted today were not part of collective consciousness then—that family dynamics are lived out unconsciously and that scapegoating can be done unconsciously and still contribute to the welfare of the collective if not to that of the scapegoat. What we perhaps have yet fully to take in is how well the collective thrives *through* unconsciousness. Demonstrating that is Kafka's great joke. The Samsas will regenerate, and collective life will continue. Their example invites us to reflect on the fact that human life has thrived in the sense of continuous and ever-increasing regeneration through all the millennia of our unconsciousness. But now humanity is threatened with situations where unconsciousness threatens species death. How can we reverse a human entropy in terms of unconsciousness that has succeeded in humanity's waxing and multiplying so as to take over the earth?

Kafka portrays the incongruity of our human responses to our objective conditions, while dysfunctional in the extreme, sometimes even fatal, as funny. If his works offer any consolation about our unconsciousness, it is that once we perceive its unrelatedness to our world, we can laugh. So is our option to be able to behold through artistic revelation the intransigence of our unconsciousness and see the humor in it? But even that helpless consolation depends on species survival, a fate that is in question.

Realism in Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*

And what price are we to pay for species survival? Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, title story in the collection of the same name, suggests that making survival our priority degrades human life so much as to make questionable the value of survival itself.

Borowski's style could not be more different from Kafka's. It is realistic with a vengeance.¹⁶ Borowski knew of what he wrote. Born of Polish parents in the Soviet Ukraine in 1922, he experienced at age four his father's being sent to a labor camp and at age eight his mother's being sent to a settlement in Siberia. Reunited in Warsaw with his father at age ten and his mother at age twelve, he was not quite seventeen when the German occupation of Poland began. The Germans forbade higher education to Poles, so he studied literature in the underground. When he was twenty, he self-published his first book of poems, *Wherever the Earth* whose "dominant image," according to Jan Kott, "was that of a gigantic labor camp" (14-15). That same year, 1942, searching for his fiancée, he fell into the same trap as she in a friend's apartment being watched by the Nazis as a site housing political dissidents and was arrested. From his prison cell window he watched the systematic burning of tenements in the Warsaw ghetto. After two months of imprisonment, he was sent to Auschwitz shortly after a policy change protected

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non-Jews from the gas chambers. There he survived for over two years until, in 1944, he was sent to Dachau, which the U.S. Seventh Army liberated in the spring of 1945. Within the next year he wrote and published *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*. In a later story, one based on letters he wrote to his fiancée who was in Birkenau near Auschwitz, he wrote, “I do not know whether we shall survive, but I like to think that one day we shall have the courage to tell the world the whole truth and call it by its proper name” (*This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, 122). In a review of a book about life in the camps, he wrote:

The first duty of Auschwitzers is to make clear just what a camp is. . . . But let them not forget that the reader will unfailingly ask: But how did it happen that *you* survived? . . . Tell, then, how you bought places in the hospital, easy posts, how you shoved the ‘Moslems’ [prisoners who had lost the will to live] into the oven, how you bought women, men, what you did in the barracks, unloading the transports, at the gypsy camp; tell about the daily life of the camp, about the hierarchy of fear, about the loneliness of every man. But write that you, you were the ones who did this. That a portion of the sad fame of Auschwitz belongs to you as well. (qtd. in Kott, “Introduction” 22)

Tadeusz’s unconsciousness and survival

This attitude helps account for Tadeusz Borowski’s naming the protagonist of his Auschwitz stories Tadeusz. These stories reveal the shadow side of survival. An assumption that we rarely question is that survival is to be sought—individual survival as well as survival of our particular group, be it family, tribe, nation, religious, or other group, and, of course, survival of our human species. *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* is a merciless portrait of people in a humanly created situation where survival is always in question, is the measure of success, and leads to human horror as a daily matter of course.

The opening scene of *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* is of “swarms”—Borowski’s word—of naked men in one concentration camp and of naked women in another, sweltering in heat. The narrative then focuses immediately on food. As in Kafka’s story, food is what enables life; in the *Metamorphosis*, physical food cannot staunch Gregor’s hunger for food for his soul but in this story, hunger for physical food trumps any hunger for food for the soul. The opening dialogue shows that survival, dependent upon food, has led inmates to dehumanize those dying. The protagonist and a few of his privileged friends sit on a top bunk enjoying “crisp, crunchy bread” (30) recently delivered from Tadeusz’s mother’s kitchen, upon which they are layering bacon and onion. Beneath them are crammed starving inmates, some of whom will soon be selected for the ovens.

With Tadeusz is the other major character, Henri, a leader of the labor gang, or Kommando, in charge of transferring the people from the trains to the trucks to be driven to the gas chambers. As Tadeusz washes down his snack with a can of evaporated milk, Henri waxes nostalgic for the champagne that he previously enjoyed from the transports from France. Tadeusz has little patience for Henri's fantasies of returning with champagne and presses him about returning with the shirt Henri has promised him. Henri assures him that he will take care of it after the Kommando goes to the ramp again, but Tadeusz is not to be reassured. He answers: "And what if there aren't any more 'cremo' transports? . . . Can't you see how much easier life is becoming around here: no limit on packages, no more beatings? You can even write letters home. . . . One hears all kind of talk, and dammit, they'll run out of people" (31). Henri, his mouth "full of sardines" from the package Tadeusz has received from his brother, replies, "nonsense. . . . They can't run out of people, or we'll starve to death in this blasted camp. All of us live on what they bring" (31). Tadeusz reminds him that he and other Poles get packages, but Henri points out that without the transports and the food scavenged for the camp inmates, the camp inmates would not allow the privileged Poles to enjoy their packages. Tadeusz rejects this argument on the grounds that whoever has "grub, has power" (31).

Borowski here is addressing collective unconsciousness about the complicit state of privileged survivors in the camp. He is portraying at once the hierarchy based on nothing but blood lines, the lack of moral outrage of the non-Jewish Europeans at the gassing of transports of what they knew to be thousands of people, and their physical dependence for survival on these transports of doomed people. Tadeusz and Henri are quite conscious of their situation. What they are not conscious of is the loss of moral conscience in how they are perceiving their everyday reality.

Survival vs. empathy and integrity

Borowski early on in the story introduces a brief encounter with moral conscience and human relatedness.¹⁷ Normally not part of Canada, the Kommando unit tasked with emptying the trains, Tadeusz gets invited along this particular day and agrees as if he were being asked to take a walk in the breeze. "Want to come with us on the ramp?" asks Henri. "Sure, why not?" replies Tadeusz, his unconsciousness of what is actually involved leading him like an innocent to initiation.

Borowski gives a grueling opening description of arrival of the train, including the intimidation of the suffocating passengers who stick their heads out the window to gasp for air. They are greeted with a rain of random gunfire resulting in withdrawn heads and silence. At order, the doors are unbolted allowing those still alive to spill out "like a blind, mad river" (37), "breathing like fish cast out on the

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sand” (37), while the Kommando grabs their coats, packages, purses; forces them to pile up their luggage; strips them of everything except what they are wearing; and loads them onto a steady stream of trucks. Borowski then focuses on a vignette introducing the issue of conscience. An S.S. soldier orders Tadeusz and some others to clean up an emptied car. As Tadeusz enters he sees “[i]n the corners amid human excrement and abandoned wrist-watches . . . squashed, trampled infants, naked little monsters with enormous heads and bloated bellies.” He says, “We carry them out like chickens, holding several in each hand” (39). The S.S. soldier orders, “Don’t take them to the trucks, pass them on to the women” (39) and fiddles with his cigarette lighter. Tadeusz tries, but the women “run from [him],” as he and the women “look at each other with hate and horror” (40). As the S.S. soldier begins to draw his pistol, a “tall, grey-haired woman” steps forward, saying, “You mustn’t shoot, I’ll carry them” (40). Hers is an action for survival that cares about others as well as herself. But her gesture is more than just a move toward survival. Tadeusz reports that “she takes the little corpses out of my hands and for an instant gazes straight into my eyes. ‘My poor boy’ she whispers, and smiles at me” (40). She is a literary embodiment of what John Beebe terms “integrity,” that is, a capacity for relating to the entirety of a situation (including its demonic aspects) with compassion (Beebe 30). As Tadeusz watches her move on toward the trucks, “staggering along the path” (40), he is so overcome with tiredness that he leans against the train. When Henri tries to recall him to work, Tadeusz asks him, “Listen Henri, are we good people?”

As Beebe has told us, integrity “provides . . . moral power” through relating from “one’s inner self” to the outer world (32). The tall, grey-haired woman’s empathy is an extraordinary example of this power. This woman, willing to carry the horribly deformed dead babies, the abandoned, murdered future of her people, in order to save some few strangers from being shot; this woman, able to see the psychological state of the prisoner tasked with thrusting these baby corpses onto the women prisoners and able to feel compassion for him, breaks through the carapace of hardened indifference Tadeusz has developed in the camp in order to survive. She enables him to face the question of his own moral status. Henri, still encapsulated in the survival mode of indifferent blindness, replies to Tadeusz’s question, “That’s stupid. Why do you ask?” (40)

Then instead of reading that Tadeusz has been awakened to caring for at least the woman, one reads of Tadeusz’s murderous rage: “You see, my friend, you see, I don’t know why, but I am furious, simply furious with these people—furious because I must be here because of them. I feel no pity. I am not sorry they’re going to the gas chamber. Damn them all! I could throw myself at them, beat them with my fists. It must be pathological. I just can’t understand . . .” [ellipsis in original]

(40). Owning his complicity in the desire to harm the victims, Tadeusz owns his shadow. This flash of self-consciousness brings to light the question of his moral life.

Henri resists this line of thought, reassuring him that it is his exhaustion making him feel as he does and that it is indeed healthy to turn one's hate "against someone weaker" (40). To be healthy, to survive, one ought to turn against those weaker; one ought to feel justified in it. Here, the noble ideal of civilization, the ideal differentiating human from predatory animal culture, that is, the utilizing of human strength for the realization of all, including the weak, is unceremoniously dismissed. Henri points to the Greeks, stereotyped as being willing to eat anything, one of whom "has just devoured a full jar of marmalade" (41). No nausea, like that issuing from Tadeusz's moral questioning, there.

Tadeusz's encounter with the grey-haired woman changes nothing in the outer world. He continues to witness the atrocities that Borowski delivers in small vignettes—a woman running from her child in hopes of being selected for the women's camp instead of the trucks; a Russian member of the Kommando, indignant, knocking her down and tossing her and her child onto a truck; Tadeusz carrying more dead babies out of other cars.

Choosing death

Borowski does include a single vignette suggesting that choosing to die is superior to striving to survive. A lovely young girl with "soft blond hair . . . fallen on her shoulders like a torrent" (44) upon descending from the train, approaches Tadeusz and asks him what is happening. He says nothing but thinks of her going either to the gas chamber or to the women's camp to do slave labor, starve, and eventually be gassed anyway. She seems to take the situation in without being told and "walks off resolutely in the direction of the trucks" (44). When a man tries to stop her, suggesting she might have been able to go to the women's camp, she not only pushes him aside but actually runs toward the trucks. She refuses to make physical survival the point of her life, chooses death rather than the life the camp offers her. Tadeusz attempts to keep her within his vision, but with "blond hair flying in the breeze," she disappears on a moving truck. This young girl literally introduces the option of not making physical survival her criterion, thus countering its seeming inevitability.

Triumph of seeking physical survival

Toward the end of the emptying of this first transport of the day, Tadeusz, literally whipped into continuing to unload the cars, grabs "a corpse by the hand" and "the fingers close tightly around" his. This movement of death toward him

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climaxes his experience: he cries out, is overwhelmed with horror, “stagger[s] away” (48), and finally vomits.

And what does he long for at this moment? Survival in the camp. He “dream[s] about returning to the camp, about [his bunk], on which there is no mattress, about sleep among comrades who are not going to the gas tonight. Suddenly [he sees] the camp as a haven of peace. It is true, others may be dying, but one is somehow still alive, one has enough food, enough strength to work . . .” (48). The desire for and fact of physical survival triumph, leaving abandoned the question of the survival of his moral life.

Hope normally conceived vs. religious hope

In later stories, Borowski details yet further horrors committed by inmates over food: a father hanging his son for having stolen food, starved inmates rushing to eat the raw brains of just-executed communists, and Tadeusz intriguing to have a fellow prisoner who has stolen from him discovered in a theft of food by the Germans.

He holds hope accountable for these atrocities. In a letter to his fiancée, also imprisoned in a concentration camp, he writes:

Despite the madness of war, we lived for a world that would be different. For a better world to come when all this is over. And perhaps even our being here is a step toward that world. Do you really think that, without the hope that such a world is possible, that the rights of man will be restored again, we could stand the concentration camp even for one day? It is that very hope that makes people go without a murmur to the gas chambers, keeps them from risking a revolt, paralyses them into numb inactivity. It is hope that breaks down family ties, makes mothers renounce their children, or wives sell their bodies for bread, or husbands kill. It is hope that compels man to hold on to one more day of life, because that day may be the day of liberation. Ah, and not even the hope for a different better world, but simply for life, a life of peace and rest. Never before in the history of mankind has hope been stronger than man, but never also has it done so much harm as it has in this war, in this concentration camp. We were never taught how to give up hope, and this is why today we perish in gas chambers. (121-22)¹⁸

Borowski’s condemnation of hope equates giving up hope to giving up life, at least physical life. As James Hillman says in *Suicide and the Soul*, “Where hope is, is life. . . . [H]ope is the urge to live into tomorrow, the heedless leaning ahead into the future” (154-55). This understanding of hope is basic to health as well. Dr.

David Cumes speaks of the healing power of hope, of attacks on hope as *nocebos*, that is, as curses causing harm.¹⁹ In this sense, Borowski's revealing the destructive potential of hope seems a *nocebo*—and it is, if one is thinking only of the prolongation of physical life. But there is also the life of the soul and hope related to soul life. Hillman is helpful here. He focuses on the soul's relation to death, emphasizing that a death experience is necessary for transformation. He lists many kinds of death experiences, for example, depression, collapse, failure, dissociation, and pain (83). He further says literal death is the goal of life and therefore the soul "is on the side of death" (107). Assuming that death is the goal of life, he claims, "Physical reality which is limited to life only must yield primacy to psychic reality, since the reality of the soul includes both life and death. The paradox of the soul is that, in spite of its ancient definition as the vital principle, it is also always on the side of death. . . . It works at its perfection beyond questions of physical health and life" (107).

Borowski's portrayal of hope's heedless drive for life reveals the need for another kind of hope, one that serves the life of the soul. Hillman distinguishes between hope for physical life and what he calls religious hope. He turns to St. Paul for an understanding of religious hope as hoping for "that we see not" (Romans 8.25, qtd. in Hillman 155) and concludes that "the religious meaning of hope implies the sacrifice of all hoping" (155). Religious hope so conceived trumps hope for physical survival.

Species mortality

Borowski's portrait of the suppression of conscience in the face of the need physically to survive impels reflection on our assuming species survival as the measure of what we are hoping for. What Kafka's and Borowski's fictions lead me to consider is why we do not assume, as we do for individuals, mortality for our species. One reason, I believe, is that individual death has been made palatable in many systems of thought by the ongoingness of our species—through ancestor worship, reincarnation, an afterlife in which we reunite, even wealth and property inheritance. Further, species survival gives meaning to our human efforts historically. But in fact we know that, even if we miraculously survive our nuclear weapons, our consuming of our earth and poisoning of our atmosphere, air, water, soil; even if we escape random calamities such as asteroid collisions and any other peril, the life cycle of our sun will eventually make our earth uninhabitable. In other words, we cling to an assumption of endless species survival that serves our sense of meaning with regard to life and death but that objectively we know is illusory. And it struck me that not only I, but collectively we, live in denial of this inevitability. Indeed, we measure our insights by how they might contribute to our species' survival—insights such as the transformative value of individuation, such as the evolution of psyche, such as the birth of a new cultural dream. Let me make

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clear that I affirm these sources of hope—but I suggest that they do not integrate into consciousness the inevitability of species death.

Whereas Kafka's tale implies the question of whether we can continue to get away with collective unconsciousness, Borowski's implies the question of whether we need to reconceive our relations with death. Part of the horror of the concentration camps was that they destroyed any sense of death as sacred, as a meaningful transition. Jung, after his blissful near-death experience, wrote in a letter to his friend Kristine Mann that, given the wonderful experience he had of existence after having apparently died, he realized the will to live is "crazy" (Shamdasani 23). He was referring to individual survival. I wonder if our will to survive as a species, at least at the level Borowski describes, is "crazy," crazy because it removes most of us—except for an occasional rare grey-haired lady capable of empathy and carrying our dead babies— from the moral realm of life, and crazy because it does not imagine death as a transition, not just for the individual but for our species. Hillman speaks of individual death as the cure for the "rage to live" (157). Do we as a species need to wrestle with our "rage to live" in a way that accepts our eventual death? Hillman also distinguishes between conceiving life and death biologically for the collective and psychologically for the individual (164). Do we not need to conceive life and death psychologically also for the species?

Religions offer stories of our end such as Christianity's story of the Last Judgment, which imagines a new heaven and a new earth, with morality mattering in the division of the sheep and the goats. That story still works for some Biblical religious people. What can work for those of us who believe in psyche? Jung, in a letter to Cary Baynes in 1945, says that the only part of life he carried with him in the crossing from life was the psychological work he had done. He writes, "Whatever we do and try in analysis . . . [t]hat is the only thing, which has accompanied me across the threshold" (qtd. in Shamdasani 24).²⁰ Is there a hint there for us?

An underground shift

I would like to end with a personal story. One day, after articulating these questions for myself, an articulation that I experienced as taboo and frightening, I was riding on the New York subway with the usual crowds of people. Typically, at some subconscious level, I experience these crowds as part of the problem we face. I would express it as too much of Earth's biomass having been converted into human beings, with our attendant desires for ease and luxury, and our toxic behaviors. Having become absorbed with the idea that our species is mortal, I noticed that my feeling toward the other passengers had become, I can think of no

other word, tender. Each person was a unique manifestation, and his or her existence, while part of the causes of our eventual destruction, as is my own existence, was no longer to be unconsciously resisted but instead, because inevitably temporary, to be valued.

Conclusions and ongoing questions

We may, in fact probably will, continue to act out our dynamics unconsciously, as Kafka's story shows us—and conditions in our world such as altering the ecological balances supporting life or such as nuclear warfare most probably will not continue to allow us to get away with continued unconsciousness and will result in our destruction. Our dynamics may, and probably will, become ruthlessly cruel as our physical survival comes to be at stake as Borowski has portrayed. Yet if we take into consciousness not only the inevitability of our individual death, but also that of our species, perhaps we can experience a shift in the quality of the lives we lead until such times, a shift in the direction of empathy with one another, a tenderness toward our unique existences, and a willingness to help one another carry our dead babies.

These two works of imaginative fiction aroused further questions in me. Because of Kafka's story, I wonder whether we need to deflate our hopes of human consciousness, that is, to assume the absurd disconnect between what we are conscious of and what is. Because of Borowski's story, I wonder whether we need to, whether we are capable of, imagining survival without moral conscience as the most killing death. Hillman argues that “[w]hen a soul history begins to emerge from its confusion in bodily life . . . then the independent reality of the soul and its transcendence of the body begin also to be realized” (85). If that is true of our individual souls, would it not also be true of us as a species?

Can we imagine species mortality in terms of completion of psyche's urge to manifest experience through our human consciousness? That is, can we reimagine the life force we recognize as psyche as containing a plenitude of Being beyond us? I wonder, too, whether this vision of completion can be reconciled with the myth of rebirth, so common and consoling in our cultures and religions. Can rebirth reimagined strictly symbolically in terms of psychic transformation rather than literally in terms of physical survival still motivate us? Finally, I wonder if there is some way we can envision the end of our species as a passage we can anticipate not simply in fear and sorrow but with “religious” hope, that is, with a sense of mystery and trust?

It is my hope that these questions encourage not only reflection on themselves but ongoing readings and interpretations of Kafka's and Borowski's stories, as each reader, each generation, and each culture brings a perspective that can discover new revelations of psyche latent in literature.

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Notes

¹ This article is a revision of a plenary talk given on Thursday, Aug. 12th, during the joint International Association of Jungian Studies and the Jungian Society of Scholarly Studies Conference entitled "On the Edge: Psyche in Ethics, the Arts, and Nature" held at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, August 10th-14th, 2010.

² A list of writers making such a claim would include such distinguished authors as Robert Louis Stevenson, Alice Walker, Jorge Luis Borges, Stanley Kunitz, and Haruki Murakami.

³ A number of analysts have made use of literature in their expositions of psyche. Dr. Edward Edinger's explications of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Dr. John Beebe's use of John Milton's poems, Jane Austen's novels, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and Dr. Murray Stein's and Dr. James Hollis's writings on Rainer Maria Rilke's *Elegies* are notable examples.

⁴ The post-Jungian Susan Rowland has bridged the traditional Jungian understanding of myth as archetypal and myth as stories of individuals. In *C. G. Jung in the Humanities*, she cites the Greek division of knowledge between logos (“abstract rational knowledge that is non-narrative”) and mythos (“epic narratives of gods and heroes that frame and make possible Greek potential because they represent some kinds of being beyond normal human limitations”) (21). She argues that from one perspective Jung’s psychology is a form of mythos that “speaks to the infinite imaginative human possibilities only expressible as (individuation) stories” (22). Although acknowledging that Jung’s psychological writings also include logos knowledge, she points out the crucial role of mythos knowledge: “Only mythos—in the form of narrative, imaginative imagery, and symbols—is able to invoke the unknown energies of the soul” (22). This latter vision makes it possible to conceptualize imaginative literature as the unfolding of mythos as narratives by individual authors revelatory of unconscious psyche, thus subsuming imaginative literature within the category of mythos.

⁵ Athene is a striking instance, converted from Sumerian creatrix (Graves 33) to daughter born literally of the head of the father god, Zeus (Graves 45-46), a story congenial to the patriarchal Achaeans from whose times it arose. This appropriation and/or repression of the multifarious characteristics of the earlier stories about Athene by a patriarchal culture is *the* story that has been naturalized and passed on to later western cultures.

⁶ Historically, Kafka’s writings were made available to the public before World War II by his Zionist friend Max Brod (see Ritchie Robertson, “Antizionismus, Zionismus: Kafka’s Response to Jewish Nationalism 25-26) as fictions motivated by religious purpose. The war eclipsed most response to Kafka’s works, but his writings were brought to public attention again immediately after the war through the anthology edited by Angel Flores astutely entitled *The Kafka Problem* (1946). Flores’s first anthology reiterated Brod’s religious readings. As Ruth V. Gross’s review of the history of Kafka criticism makes clear, this allegorical religious reading was then strenuously resisted by Günther Anders in *Franz Kafka, pro und contra* (1951) and then conclusively rejected by Angel Flores and Homer Swander in *Franz Kafka Today* (1958) who said (presumably referring to Brod and his interpretation of Kafka’s purpose) “those who were closest to him [Kafka] knew him least, misunderstood him most” (qtd. in Gross 4). One of the most influential writers dismissing any theological reading of Kafka has been Theodor W. Adorno in *Prisms* (1967). Adorno insisted on the bourgeois capitalist context of Kafka’s writings. A particularly damning critique of the early readings of Kafka’s work as religious comes from Milan Kundera in *Testaments Betrayed* (1993), a history of the European novel and Kafka’s place in it. Kundera berates Brod and his followers as having created “Kafkology,” allegorized forms of reading Kafka that remove his works from historical and aesthetic considerations in the interest of hagiography (40-42). Literary criticism has moved so far from finding religious meaning in Kafka’s works that the influential work on Kafka by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975), analyzes them as political efforts to escape signification altogether.

⁷ Numerous psychological interpretations have been published. Kafka, who asked his friend, Max Brod, to destroy his manuscripts, had the misfortune of having not only his fictions, but also his diaries, letters, and philosophical aphorisms published, so that much commentary about his writings has focused on his life. Calvin S. Hall and Richard E. Lind

actually did a study of his dreams, life, and writings and compared them to statistical norms for males his age in order to argue that his dreams were not compensatory. Jungians Darryl Sharp in *The Secret Raven* and Anthony Storr in “Kafka’s Sense of Identity” both focus on analyzing Kafka rather than his writings. There have also been interpretations from various psychological theoretical schools, primarily that of Freud. See, for example, Stanley Corngold’s “Freud as Literature” in *The Fate of the Self* (1986), Walter H. Sokel’s *The Myth of Power and the Self: Essays on Franz Kafka* (2002), and Philip Weinstein’s *Unknowing: The Work of Modernist Fiction* (2005). J. Brooks Bouson offers a reading emphasizing reader empathy based on the theories of Heinz Kohut in “The Narcissistic Drama and Reader/Text Transaction” in Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*. Post-Jungian James Whitlark in *Behind the Great Wall: A Post-Jungian Approach to Kafkaesque Literature*⁸ seeks connections between Jung’s and Kafka’s lives and psychological understanding, perhaps most interestingly their respective encounters with Taoism.

⁸Perhaps Jung’s most effective evidence for this position is the following allusion to Nazi wars of invasion: “There is no lunacy people under the domination of an archetype will not fall a prey to. If thirty years ago anyone had dared to predict that our psychological development was tending towards the revival of the medieval persecutions of the Jews, that Europe would again tremble before the Roman fasces and the tramp of legions, that people would once more give the Roman salute, as two thousand years ago, and that instead of the Christian cross an archaic swastika would lure onward millions of warriors ready for death—why, that man would have been hooted at as a mystical fool. And today? Surprising as it may seem, all this absurdity is a horrible reality” (CW 9.1, par. 98).

⁹ Stanley Corngold points out that the phrase Kafka uses, *umen*, literally means “restless dreams” although it is not typically translated as such (*The Metamorphosis* 3). The literal meaning, “restless dreams,” attributes autonomy to the life and world of dreams.

¹⁰ Recalling Jung’s claim that literature issues forth images compensatory to the values of collective consciousness, I think of Robert Romanyshyn’s tracing of the Western ego’s desire to separate from the body in his history of the effects of linear perspective in *Technology: Symptom and Dream*. Gregor’s being possessed by his body represents a stunning instance of such a compensatory image.

¹¹ Huskinson cites CW 10, “The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man,” par. 195.

¹² Milan Kundera succinctly articulates the power of Kafka’s humor. Contrasting it with the safe distance typically characteristic of a joke, he says, “Indeed, a joke is a joke only if you’re outside the bowl; by contrast, the *Kafkan* takes us inside, into the guts of a joke, into the *horror of the comic*” (“Somewhere Behind” 24).

¹³ In his study of parasite symbolism in Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, Thomas F. Barry ascribes parasitism only to Gregor, ignoring the textual details describing the parasitic roles of the Samsa family members. He says, for example, “It is not food or money that Gregor seeks from his family but, like a vampire, he wants the blood of their psychic-erotic energy” (70). This limitation prevents his recognizing the unconscious dynamic with regard to dependence operating throughout the Samsa family.

¹⁴ See, for example, Corngold, *The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka*, 3, n. 1.

¹⁵ Deleuze and Guatari inexplicably (there is no hint of such in the text) liken this picture to a “maternal photo,” thus missing the way it functions as exogamous female to separate Gregor and Grete (5).

¹⁶ Borowski’s story demonstrates that realistic fiction can be “visionary,” the kind of literature that Jung thought emerged from the collective unconscious. Citing par. 141 in Jung’s “Psychology in Literature” in *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, Rowland says of “visionary” literature that it “rips away the thin membrane between chaos and reason” (54). Certainly Borowski’s account of emptying the transports does that.

¹⁷ Czelaw Milosz in *The Captive Mind* in his character sketch of Borowski, his contemporary, under the fictional name of Beta, portrays this story as lacking any moral representation. In his summary of vignettes from it, he omits the scene with the tall, gray-haired woman. This omission leaves out the possibility of not dehumanizing the other, in fact the possibility of caring for the other, even within the world of the extermination camp.

¹⁸ Borowski gassed himself to death on July 1, 1951, at the age of twenty-eight. Because his experiences at the camps had persuaded him that people become what their environment determines, he had embraced the Communist idea that recreating society would create a new man, and he became a propagandist for the Communist Party. Jan Kott suggests three factors that possibly contributed to his suicide. First, the friend at whose apartment he had been arrested was again arrested, but this time by the Communist government of Poland. When Tadeusz tried to intervene on his behalf, he was told that “the people’s justice is never mistaken” (21). Second, the Party had begun sending him on special missions, and he may have not wished to continue. Third, after having succeeded in persuading his fiancée to return to Poland to marry him, he had begun a liaison with another woman, even though his wife was pregnant and bore a daughter three days before he killed himself (Kott 20-21).

¹⁹ Dr. David Cumes’s plenary address, “African Healing Wisdom: What does it have to offer Collective Healing?” was delivered Wednesday, August 11th, 2010, at the IAJS-JSSS Conference. Cf. n. 1 above.