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Characters' Mental Chaos in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915) and Rachid Boudjedra's *L'escargot Entêté* (1977)

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for a **Master's degree in Literature and Civilisation**

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DEDICATION

Our humble work will be dedicated to the memory of the purest heart Rachid Kasmi and to all our lovers. We don't want to mention your names because you're precious. Without forgetting to mention our haters who push us a step forward whenever we feel that we go back. Here's to you.

To our little prince and princess "Houssam Kasmi and Farah Kaci", Tomorrow is waiting for you. Be happy and strive to survive longer than anyone. To each and every bedroom's corner, that witnessed the burden of our backs while reading.

Finally, it's weird! But we would like to dedicate our work to life. Thank you. It's true that you stabbed us, many times, in the back and you are still stabbing as if we don't feel anymore but we cannot deny the fact that you make us stronger.

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Abstract

This dissertation gives tribute to the notion of human beings that are put on the margin of society through dragging the main protagonists of, *The Metamorphosis* (1915) by Franz Kafka and *L'escargot Entêté* (1977) by Rachid Boudjedra, into analysis. This work is all about Gregor Samsa and the unnamed rat exterminator, these grey characters that represent a deteriorated minority inside the frame of our social environment. These people are usually not understood because they do not have clear bruises on their skin, yet they are suffocated by their mental suffering. The main purpose of this study is to capture the mental chaos of these two protagonists, go on a journey inside their minds without being judgmental, and investigate the degree of their resemblance and difference in order to humanize them. Hence, both characters are examined using the theory of psychoanalysis and most specifically some concepts introduced by Sigmund Freud and Jaques Lacan, and this helps us to break the beautified image of the human being which is usually portrayed in many literary works.

Key Words: Character Mental Chaos, Psychoanalysis, Prison, Suffocation.

DECLARATION

We hereby declare that this research is our own work; based on our personal study and that we have acknowledged all materials and sources used in its preparation. We also certify that this work has not previously been submitted in any other university. We are fully aware that if this work contains plagiarized content, this will involve serious consequences.

Lounis Kaci & Soraya Kasmi.

Signature:

General Introduction

General Introduction

Who can understand mental chaos in a world, where the external tumult deteriorates the human beings that hide inside their universes out of fear? Perhaps no one knows. Writers have not always succeeded to humanize their characters and drag them onto the battlefield of humanity. So are the humans who humanize dogs, befriend them, and spend most of the time caring about the beauty of their furs, yet they do not get to understand some people who are totally forgotten and put on the margin of society. Many characters that appear in a bunch of stories are not truthfully portrayed because some authors prefer to beautify reality and exaggerate when building the protagonists and the antagonists of a specific plot rather than shocking the reader with a truthful character. This is why many bookworms go on a long journey to look for the right book, which pays tribute to those people who feel unimportant inside the frame of our society, yet they become the most important when the writer tells their stories in a literary work. In this research, we will shed light on two vivid masterpieces which are: *The Metamorphosis* (1915) written by Franz Kafka and *L'escargot Entêté* (1977) written by Rachid Boudjedra. These two novellas represent unusual heroes that do not remind the reader of the Disney dreamy world. Both characters do show neither the dark side, nor the bright one; they both play on a grey psychological spot. So let us go on a journey in their minds to see how literature takes us, for quite a while, into a different world without moving from our places.

No one has ever compared between the main protagonists of *The Metamorphosis* and *L'escargot Entêté*, and this clarifies the uniqueness of our research. But much ink has been spilled on talking and analyzing these two controversial literary works from different perspectives due to the shock they spread and the writing techniques they use to tell these Kafkaesque peculiar stories, which make the reader lose their minds because of the mental complexities that these works handle. The main reason which pushed us to compare between Boudjedra's work and Kafka's masterpiece is the common literary flavour that the two

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novellas share, and the influence of Kafka on Boudjedra as we assume. When we read some articles that were written about these novellas, we ended up in front of a bunch of redundant ideas shared by many scholars and researchers, so here we will try to review the most significant studies that we find worth exploring.

Maria Maya P. Angeles Narra, in her article “Gregor Samsa: A Repressed Homosexual” (2016) proclaims that the metamorphosis which happens to Gregor Samsa in the story can be considered as a coming out of a person who cannot bear anymore the burden of his homosexuality, which suffocates him on the inside. She addresses her words from a more societal perspective and proclaims that “when Franz Kafka published the novella *The Metamorphosis* in 1915, homosexuality still was not accepted in the society of anywhere in the world” (1). This article breaks the redundancy of those multiple studies which interpret the transformation of the salesman, the main protagonist, as a symbol of a sick person who becomes an unbearable responsibility under the roof of his family. Maya P. Angeles assumes that *The Metamorphosis* of Franz Kafka was written to address the issue of gays, who wanted to express themselves and move a step forward from their closet at that time, when the social norms were not as flexible as they are today. Therefore she highlights the end of Gregor's secret as being homosexual in the passage where “[his] family and his manager demanded to open the door and forced him to come out of his closet” (4).

Ann Kowal Smith in her article “Text to Text 'The Metamorphosis' and 'How Social Isolation is Killing Us' ” published in *The New York Times* (2018) explores the concept of social distance and its effects on the health of some human beings that cannot detach themselves from society because they are considered to be an important part from the whole social puzzle. This article explains, with a bunch of scientific facts, how hard it is to be isolated from society, and this creates many mental and physical issues that can lead to death, as it happens to Gregor Samsa by the end of *The Metamorphosis*. In the article we find that

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“3.4 million People found that socially isolated individuals had 30 percent higher risk of dying in the next seven Years” And this was mentioned as a scientific example. Smith explains that loneliness is the fundamental issue of the protagonist Gregor, so that he feels guilty and expelled from his family, and assures that the notion of a lonely human being can accelerate cognitive decline which usually puts an end to one's life.

From a Marxist perspective, Sarra E. Riggs, in her article “Marxism in a Bug-Shell” (2018). Which sheds light on the marginalized social class (the proletariat), that the reader notices when turning the pages of *The Metamorphosis*. She assumes that the protagonist Gregor Samsa is described as a tool used by his family that does not accept their miserable social situation, where all its members are put, so according to the article the parents represent “the underclass that does not recognize or acknowledge their own class placement” and in order to get rid of such a social burden they “take advantage of their son Gregor's success”. Sarrah E. Riggs points out that the metamorphosis that happens to Gregor in the story is symbolic; it represents “the view that the bourgeoisie has of the proletariat.” Kafka builds the story on a Kafkaesque background on which the protagonist turns into a disgusting insect in order to say that “The working class are just as good as bugs to the upper class” this is how Marxism is put in a bug-shell in Kafka's story

Aicha Maamri, in her research paper *La Représentation de la Société Algérienne dans L'escargot Entêté de Rachid Boudjedra* that was submitted in 2016 shows the fact that the novella with all its characters and symbols mirrors the dark side of the Algerian society in the 1970s and interprets all aspects of life that were foreshadowing a worse future for the country, and this is what actually happened after this gloomy socio-political period. Maamri talks as well about *L'Escargot Entêté* from a psychological point of view; she compares between the unnamed protagonist and the Algerian citizen because she assumes that the hero represents, in a way or in another, an Algerian soul who goes through life suffering under a bunch of social

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circumstances. She declares that the Algerian citizen usually escapes from reality and tries to create an imaginary world, where he can forget his pain, and this goes hand in hand with the life of Boudjedra's rat exterminator "le personnage principal se réfugie dans un univers créé par son imagination en évitant la réalité socio-politique" (38). This research highlights as well the notion of dishonesty that we see today in our society. She explains that the civil servant himself is a snail that hides inside his shell out of fear. She gives as an example the fact that the civil servant does not openly confess his atheism; he even donates to help some people build a mosque. She claims that "ce jeu de masque et de démasque se manifeste tout au long de l'histoire" (42)

Loubna Achheb, in her PhD dissertation *Quête de soi et désillusion dans L'Escargot Entêté de Rachid Boudjedra, L'amour, la fantasia d'Assia Djebaret Le fleuve détourné de Rachid Mimouni* (2013) argued that Rachid Boudjedra, in *L'escargot Entêté*, uses what she calls the dizziness of writing "le vertige de l'écriture" (20). Because the novella is structured in a redundant way where the protagonist narrates all the little details that happen during six days of his life; it is a kind of an artistic diary, which highlights the hallucination of a mental deteriorated person, who is not considered to be free. Loubna asserts that "notre personnage principal se voit détourné de son objectif de quête de liberté car il réalise sa condition de prisonnier" (147). Achheb says that *L'escargot Entêté* is a literary work that mixes between reality and some supernatural events, which contaminate the story and make the reader doubtful about the credibility of the rat exterminator, she further notes that "le sur naturel contamine la réalité du roman et finit écrasé par la semelle de notre protagoniste" (29).

Our motivation in conducting this research is to end up in front of the main characters of, *The Metamorphosis* and *L'escargot Entêté*, in order to freeze-frame their inner psychological chaos and compare between them for the sake of dissecting the notion of sick human beings who strive to survive no matter how.

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What makes a bouquet beautiful is the diversity of its flowers, so are the human beings. We are different, yet we sometimes are the same, however to which extent can we consider the characters we compare alike or different? We will learn the answer throughout the second and the third chapters of this research. But first, let us introduce the big question that makes our curiosity clicks in, and upon which the whole work is based: Are Gregor Samsa and the rat exterminator three-dimensional characters? In other words, do these characters remind us of ourselves as human beings, or are they doomed to forgetfulness once we close the novellas?

In this research, we adopt psychoanalysis and some of its concepts that are introduced by Sigmund Freud and Jaques Lacan as a theory in order to dive deeply into the minds of our characters and measure the degree of their resemblance and difference. The whole work is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter warms up the reader and gives them an informative ingredient about the novellas we chose to study.

Throughout the first chapter, we drag the reader into the different literary periods in which *The Metamorphosis* and *L'escargot Entêté* were written, with providing some points about the lives of the authors, Franz Kafka and Rachid Boudjedra respectively, and the plot summary of each story. Then we explore the term 'Kafkaesque' and show its role and existence in leading both stories. In the end, we provide the reader with a simple definition of psychoanalysis in order to prepare them for the coming chapters.

The second chapter marks the beginning of our psychoanalytic analysis of the two main characters. It demonstrates the shared mental gaps of the protagonists' randomized psychology. This chapter focuses on four points shared by Gregor Samsa and the rat exterminator: Sexual suffocation, emptiness, anxiety, and insomnia. We show how these

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terms affect the routine of these two sick characters, and this will be discussed through some passages, conversations, and hallucinations from the novellas.

The third chapter focuses on the other side of the characters' coin. It highlights three main differences that make each character special. In this chapter, we discover the notion of prison and time through the angles of our protagonists whose stories are timeless. As a last point, we highlight narcissism as a concept and show the identity of the narcissistic character.

The conclusion is fully devoted to answering our research problem. It is the final touch of our work which marks the end of our long discussion, a discussion which pays tribute to the neglected human being, so as to push the reader to humanize themselves and be less judgmental because everybody has a story.

Chapter One

When Literary Chaos Becomes a Matter to

Study

We begin from the first step to reach a thousand miles throughout the journey of this research paper. It is quite hard to explain the core on which the first chapter is based, but it is obviously clear that we try to depict and drag the two novellas into light. In the first chapter, we explain the literary chaos that happens in the stories that we chose to analyse. This is built on shedding light on the literary periods in which the novellas were written and highlighting some events that happened in the lives of Franz Kafka and Rachid Boudjedra with the summaries of the works, *The Metamorphosis* and *L'escargot Entêté*. Then, we put our personal touch through exploring the term "Kafkaesque" and explaining its role in playing with the events of the two plots. In the end, we warm up the reader and say something about psychoanalysis to get ready for the second chapter.

I.1. Modern German Literature

Traumatized and deaf people due to the war's bombs and chaos; this is our personal definition of modern German literature.

Modern German literature dances to the tune of the twentieth century European literature; its diversity makes it unique because it surrounds all aspects of life and shocks the reader through telling simple stories, which carry unbearable emotions and psychological pains. This literary period flourished by the end of the nineteenth century till the middle of the twentieth century. It accumulates several movements including: Dadaism, Surrealism, New Objectivity, and ¹Expressionism. The latter is actually the best known and most important. All these avant-garde movements depict the dread images of wars, stories of weak human beings, the meaningless of urban life, heartbreaking scenes of fatal illnesses, political oppression, the absurdity of the human condition, the limitation of the individual perception, and the problematic of human subjectivity.

¹Expressionism is a modernist movement that includes painting and poetry, flourishing in Germany at the end of the 20th century.

Expressionism put its personal touch inside the frame of this literary period and played an important role in conveying messages through its words; it was an ultimate response to all kinds of modern life sufferings. Writers like Georg Heym, Gottfried Benn, and Georg Trakl succeeded to impose the horrible images of war, oppression, and illness in their lyric poetry. Expressionist art played with colours like gold, red, blue, and purple, those colours which give tribute to each and every minute that the human being lives striving to look for endless answers to absurd questions. On the other hand, Expressionist drama used some methods of grotesque distortion to blame modern technology and attack the subjection of workers to industry, yet it expressed a kind of optimism due to ²Italian Futurism.

The striking narrative technique of Franz Kafka in *The Judgment* (1913) and *The Metamorphosis* (1915) owe much to Expressionism; they are meant to go with the flow of the context of that movement, yet his works are better understood as an early phase of experimental Modernism. Kafka's masterpieces creep up behind the concern of the 20-th century Modernists. His writings explore many themes which depict the horrible reality of the human condition. Kafka's unfinished works like *The Trial* (1925) brings to light the aspects of the individual's inescapable entrapment in subjectivity. The author created memorable characters that look like those people who lived during that period, but these characters feel more universal and can be found in any time and place. Joseph K and Gregor Samsa are the best protagonists who tell the story of human beings who are subjugated to inexplicable forces associated with patriarchal social norms and bureaucratic universes.

Today, all the bookworms go back in time to this literary period through its books to try to understand the human condition and the terror of wars which happen in the mind.

²Italian Futurism was a social and artistic movement that blossomed in Italy in the early twentieth century; it embraced modernity and aimed at putting Italy in a liberate bubble far away from the weight of its past.

I.2. Franz Kafka's Biography

Franz Kafka, the Jewish writer who is considered to be a cage in search of a bird, was born in Prague in July 1883, into a middle-class Jewish family. He lived in his early days inside a labyrinth of mental disorder, struggling with his narcissistic father, Herman Kafka, who was described by the biographer Stanley Korngold as a huge, selfish, and overbearing businessman (Wikipedia).

Kafka was socially alienated and had constructed the notion of his quirky universe through portraying lost bureaucratic protagonists trapped in nightmarish situations and introducing the term Kafkaesque, which made his name enter the language, and this word refers to surreal events that take place in spine-chilling atmospheres.

In 1902, Kafka met Max Brod, a Jewish Czech author, composer, and journalist, at Charles University, then became best friends. Brod believed in Kafka's great talent in writing at first sight, he even described Kafka's cryptic and different way of writing as a blessing from the sky. After gaining his degree at the German University in 1906, the signs of lung tuberculosis started to appear, and this marked the beginning of Kafka's health decay. In 1921, he wrote *The Judgment*, a book which brought him success, at a single eight-hour sitting. After the publication of *The Metamorphosis* in 1915, Kafka succeeded to mix between reality and fantasy through his incredible character, Gregor Samsa, a travelling salesman who had turned into an ugly insect.

The publication of *Letter to His Father* (1952) is considered to be the harshest rebellion of a son against his dad. According to Kafka, this work is a sort of a psychological relief because it resumes the verbal harassment that he received from his monstrous father, talks openly about such a familial issue, and breaks the proverbs which say "the apple doesn't

fall far away from the tree” and “like father like son”. This issue made him good at portraying the son-father conflict in many works like *The Metamorphosis* (1915).

Kafka's final wish was ordering his best friend Max Brod to burn all his unfinished works like *Amerika* (1927), after his death. He died in Kierling, Austria, on June 3, 1924, and fortunately, his friend Brod published all his works. Thanks to him, Kafka is today considered as one of the most mysterious and greatest literary figures of all time.

I.3. *The Metamorphosis*: A Plot Summary

The Metamorphosis is a masterpiece which was first published in 1915 in German. The plot measures the nightmarish life of Gregor Samsa, a travelling salesman, who awakens one morning to end up inside the body of a monstrous insect. This transformation happens out of the blue and makes the protagonist in a real dilemma, so he tries to move his body from bed to go to work because he worries about the reaction of his boss and family: “he discovered that he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug” (03)

After this strange metamorphosis, the salesman is now ready to do anything at all costs to go to work and arrive on time. Gregor's supervisor comes looking for him because he did not go to work, and then he and all the members of his family: His Sister, father, and mother are feverishly terrified when they end up in front of a god-awful horrible insect. Gregor Samsa is immediately fired from his job, and his life with his family gets dull after when he was the one who worked day and night to help his parents and pay his sister's violin lessons. Grete, his sister, plays the role of his caretaker for quite a while. She cleans his bedroom, feeds him, and takes care of all his needs. After a short period of time, the furnishings are taken out of the insect's bedroom and the place becomes spacious for him to crawl in peace.

The days go by and Gregor becomes the heavy burden that no one can bear anymore. His mother faints whenever she sees him, his dad injures him out of hatred and disgust, and

his sister Grete cannot handle his needs anymore. The place where they live is haunted by a psychological terror which ruins all the emotional puzzles of such a family. The story reaches the climax when the sister talks to her parents about getting rid of Gregor because he becomes more unbearable. When the insect hears the conversation, he creeps silently to his bedroom and dies the next day. After the death of Gregor Samsa, the family embraces a new happy life and goes to the countryside to get some fresh air and savour the golden rays of sunshine.

I.4. Post-Colonial Algerian Literature

Algerian literature has been influenced by many civilisations: Romans, Arab, Berber, and French. This high-quality literary legacy is preserved throughout the years, for it depicts an exhausted society that suffers within the bitterness of colonialism.

During the period of colonization, the French left a significant mark upon the Algerian literature and played an important role in its creation and development. Then after the declaration of independence in 1962, a new literary period emerged in Algeria under the name of postcolonial literature; therefore, it highlights any literary work that has been published after independence. Such literature often treats several themes related to many of socio-political issues, and usually describes the terrific mental chaos, psychological tumult, social instability, colonial terror, and terrible trauma which were all created during French colonization.

Because of French colonization, several Algerian writers adopted French language through which they expressed themselves. Many authors like Kateb Yacine, Mouloud Maameri, Mouloud Feraoun, Rachid Boudjedra, Tahar Djaout, and others used French as a resistance toward the oppressor. Postcolonial Algerian authors refused the idea of categorizing their fiction within an Arab or French literary traditions, for they believed that the Algerian reality is unique. The structure and the style of a postcolonial Algerian novel is

highly modernist; it is based on following fragmentation, myth, stream of consciousness, and subvert standards of convention in classical writing.

Algerian novels in French reflect a history full of diversity which developed themes of nationalism. French colonialists strived for brainwashing the Algerian citizens and keeping them away from the real identity and language in order to stand against the classical Arabic language which was imposed by the state. Postcolonial Algerian literary figures expressed their disappointment over the development of the country's economic crisis, the hidden dictatorships, and the suffocating nature of a rigid and archaic Islam.

Many authors such as Mourad Bourboune, one of those who went against the flow of the state, chose to be thrown into exile after the takeover of Houari Boumediene. Nevertheless, many new voices like Nabile Farès, Leila Marouane, Malika Moukkedem, Leila Sebbar, and Boualem Sansal started to be heard and publish books. Postcolonial Algerian literature succeeded to make the Algerian voice go viral all over world.

I.5. Rachid Boudjedra's Biography

Saddek Mebriouk, in his book *Écrivains Algériens d'Expression Française* proclaims that Rachid Boudjedra is an essayist, novelist, and playwright. He is an Algerian prolific writer. Jean Dejeux described him as the terrific child of North-African literature (92).

He is known for his controversial literary works and philosophical cryptic way of writing which usually involves shocking themes. Many critics agree that Boudjedra's fiction is written in a difficult style, and this reminds the reader of the intricacy and the complexity of William Faulkner and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. He was born in Oum El Bouaghi (Algeria), where he grew in a familial nest full of hatred towards his father, who loved women as he described him during one of his conferences. The psychological terror he received in his

childhood pushed him to capture the notion of the corrupt world and the lost humanity in his novels.

Boudjedra was educated in Constantine and at Tunis Collège Sadiki, and then he received his degree in philosophy from the Sorbonne University. He is among the few intellectuals who fought for the FLN (The National Liberation Front) during the Algerian war of independence. He started writing in French from 1965 to 1981. All of a sudden, Boudjedra adopted Arabic and also French to tell his stories. During an interview for the *Gulf News*, the author said: “when I write in French I live a kind of neurosis”. He declared that Arabic belongs to him more than any language else. Over a period of fifty years, he published about thirty books and novels that were translated into more than 40 languages.

La Répudiation (1969), his first novel, turned his life upside-down and brought him spread attention for the strength with which he challenged traditional Muslim culture in Algeria. The novel caused a fatwa against him, calling for his death in 1969.

His famous novels like *L'escargot Entêté* (1977), *Timimoun* (1995), *L'insolation* (1972), *Printemps* (2015), and *La Dépossession* (2017) do bridge the gap of need to talk more about the socio-political issues and the hidden taboos in Algeria.

His obstinate personality and harsh criticism, when it comes to attacking the corrupt Algerian system, always appear in his works. During an interview with Shakir Noori, a Dubai based journalist, Boudjedra argued that he is still likened to the character he portrayed in his famous novella *L'escargot Entêté* and he even is more obstinate than the snail that we find in the novella, due to what happens nowadays in the Arab world.

I.6. The Plot Summary of *L'escargot Entêté*

L'escargot Entêté is a satirical literary work written in 1977 by Rachid Boudjedra. This novella is quite a controversial work which unveils the hidden in the Algerian society; it breaks all the socio-political taboos. The story drags the reader into a bureaucratic atmosphere where they get to end up in front of the nameless civil servant as the main protagonist, who works as a rat exterminator, and whose goal in life is to exterminate five million rats which make chaos in his city “un seul but dans ma vie. Anéantir les rats de cette belle ville qui pourrait être plus propre”(12). The novella includes six chapters. Each chapter represents a day in the life of the unnamed civil servant who is described as an introverted person obsessed with his job to the point of craziness “l'obéissance aveugle est la qualité essentielle du fonctionnaire” (12). His contradictory life is all about rats. He hates them and wants to exterminate such a rodent breed, yet he can never live without them. This fact may shape up the notion of a crazy man who throws incoherent thoughts as a headless lost ostrich “j'avoue que si cette espèce n'existait pas, ma vie n'aurait aucun sens”(25). But his high degree of intelligence puts him again in the bubble of sanity. In addition to that, the narrator is described as a hater of humanity and little kids “elles m'accusent de vouloir éliminer l'espèce humaine. En fait je ne m'en prends qu'aux rats jusqu'à nouvel ordre”(15).

This unusual hero is fond of writing his intimate secrets on pieces of paper which he hides in his pockets. The weirdo, the civil servant, usually praises his dead mother who is his source of power and solid personality. His words are so offensive towards his dead father whom he considers to be the cause of his lung disease. His crippling sister, who lives in the countryside, appears as the one who hides his file's second version about rats.

In the beginning of the story, the narrator talks about a mysterious thing, or person that follows in his footsteps, wherever he goes, to push him away from his goal which is cleaning

the pretty city and exterminating the rats. The truth is suddenly revealed during the third day when he unveils the identity of the gloomy creatures and declares that he is being followed by a huge snail. The hermaphrodite disappears for quite a while, and his absence puts the civil servant inside the frame of some psychological irritations and fear, yet he still works to achieve his goal. “Il croit me faire peur. La mort ne m'effraie pas”(64).

On the fifth day, the snail reappears again next to the protagonist's house to make him out of his mind and push him to put an end to this irritating story through squashing the slippery animal on the sixth day. “Je l'ai aussitôt écrasé avec la semelle de ma chaussure gauche”(149).

I.7. The Kafkaesque Atmosphere in *The Metamorphosis* and *L'escargot Entêté*

The word “Kafkaesque” is quite controversial and hard to grasp its meaning from the first reading. Its labyrinthic definitions make the reader confused about the elements which show its existence in a specific story. Frederick R. Karl, author of an exhaustive critical biography of Franz Kafka, assumes that the term “Kafkaesque” is misused; people tend to think that this word talks about strange events as in a situation of a person, who goes to catch a bus and finds that all the buses have stopped running. This is not Kafkaesque according to Frederick R. Karl.

During an interview in Karl's Manhattan apartment, he said, “What's Kafkaesque is when you enter a surreal world in which all your control patterns, the whole way in which you have figured your own behaviour, begins to fall to pieces, when you find yourself against a force that does not lend itself to the way you perceive the world” (The New York Times). Such a situation has to be reinforced by a real struggle in order to survive. In this case, we can consider the story as Kafkaesque.

According to the events of the novellas that we are studying, we assume that they both pay tribute to the term Kafkaesque. How is that?

Both fictional universes introduce main characters that suffer and struggle in incoherent situations. This puzzled world where Gregor Samsa and the rat exterminator, the heroes, are trying to find out a solution to specific problems is quite dull and hard to decode. They are both built on a random mental disorder, which makes them a good subject to explore; they cannot get out of the nightmarish turfs where they get to survive longer than anyone. The Kafkaesque atmosphere plays a role in taking the events of both plots to the edges of madness, and this way of telling a story attracts the reader and captivates them throughout the whole journey of reading. In *The Metamorphosis*, the protagonist wakes up in the morning to find himself in the bubble of a horrible body. He turns into an insect; this transformation is the first sign which gives hints about the Kafkaesque notion that will be savoured by the reader later on throughout the events. It is shocking to start the story with such a metamorphosis but it helps the reader to get ready to what will happen after that. The protagonist is now trapped in his bedroom which represents a kind of a jail to him. His family becomes the real antagonist after his transformation. The father, the mother, and the sister cannot stand him anymore due to the burden he imposes in their life. He struggles and wishes that everything was a dream; he tries to wake up from such a bad dream, but this is impossible because he is already awake. The same thing happens in *L'escargot Entêté*. The reader ends up in front of a unique character, the civil servant, who goes through life with a strong desire to kill millions of rats. The fact that the protagonist is put in such a dirty city full of rats creates the Kafkaesque atmosphere, which threatens the mind of the character and sabotages his thoughts. The whole city represents a trap where the rat exterminator is struggling, but what makes the story dreary is serving the mind as the ultimate jail in which the hero is shackled and cannot get out of it. The snail as well drags the story into a Kafkaesque climax

and insanity; it represents the narrator himself who looks strong on the outside with slippery emotions on the inside. Its shell tells us more about the introversion of the character who likes to get away from society. The end of the story proves that we are reading a Kafkaesque literary work because the problem is not solved and the character is doomed to struggle in his mental jail. Through this section we assume that Rachid Boudjedra is influenced by the writing style of Franz Kafka which is mind-blowing.

I.8. Psychoanalysis

Our research is based on the concepts of such a mysterious word because it gives tribute to the human mind and cares more about the characters and their inner psychological world which is full of chaos and despair.

Have you ever wanted to have sex with your mother? At least that is what Sigmund Freud, the Austrian neurologist, would have you believe. Several of Sigmund Freud's ideas have been debunked throughout the years (Penis envy, Oedipus complex, psychosexual stages of development). However, his most attracting invention, psychoanalysis, has lived on. So what do we mean by psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis was first developed by Freud back in 1896. It is considered to be a form of therapy that he popularized as a treatment for mental health disorders. Today, many psychologists would agree that psychoanalysis draws the starting point of psychotherapy, but it is considered to be scientifically flawed and unpopular due to its subjectivity in dealing with patients. It actually theorizes that the human mind can be divided into two parts, the conscious and the unconscious; they are constantly in conflict. In the end, the maturity of the human being will be the compromise between these two belligerent sections. Psychoanalysis proposes that the human psyche is broken down into three parts: The Id, the Ego, and the Superego. The Id is the little devil which murmurs in our ears in order to drag us into the flow

of our instincts. It is hard to control because it is based upon our intimate emotions and their intricacy. The Superego is the complete opposite of the Id. It tells us about social norms and how to behave as a good human being who lives inside the frame of a strict society. The Ego balances between the Id and the Superego; it is more logical and tries to find the best solutions.

The world of psychoanalysis is so big so that we cannot deal with all its essential concepts and theories. What has been said through this section is nothing but a drop of water from the sea of such a therapy. To wrap up this section, we can say that the ultimate goal of psychoanalysis is to make the unconscious conscious.

Throughout this chapter, we have tried to capture social chaos which helps to understand its effective role in creating the characters' mental tumult which will be well explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

Same Minds in Different Bodies

The second chapter takes a close-up shot of the common points shared by the two main protagonists of our selected texts. Gregor Samsa, a suffocated character who ends up inside a vermin's body and the civil servant, a hallucinated hero who goes through life with a strong desire to exterminate all the rats that invade his city. This chapter provides the reader with a mental analysis which dives into the deepest depths of these chaotic characters' minds that push them to a deteriorated psychological gutter. The chapter is focused on the theory of psychoanalysis with an introduction to some concepts coined by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan.

II.1. Sexual Suffocation: Characters without Orgasm

“I am a human being”; this sentence may seem simple but it carries out the notion of a contradictory inner world, based on a complex mental labyrinth, which can be misinterpreted by the theory of psychoanalysis due to our intriguing complexity as human beings. After puberty, the human sexual desires achieve the climax and this may make some people lose their control, go with the flow of their instincts, strive to satisfy their sexual desires, live on the edge of their fantasies, and behave like animals. But what happens if we end up inside the mind of a human being who is sexually suffocated? In other words, how does it feel to go through life without sex? The answer would be a “happy life” if we were asexual, but we assume that it is a tiring task for other kind of people like heterosexuals, homosexuals,³ necrophiles, zoophiles, and others.

When we finally closed the last pages of the two novellas that were discussed above, we noticed labyrinthic minds which involve and share inner chaos within their psychological boundaries, and this fact pushed us to discuss more the common points (mental issues) of the

³Necrophile is a sexually attracted person to the dead.

main protagonists, compare their degree of resemblance, and capture some psychoanalytic measurements that will help us to understand both characters.

Everybody has already ended up in front of the famous picture of Freud with the starline “What's On Man's Mind?” Freud's facial organs consist almost entirely of a naked woman, and this pays tribute to his theory of sexuality that goes viral all over the world and remains a fundamental platform on which sexual issues are treated in this day and age. His theory sheds light on sex as an instinct which he labels “libido”; a term we use nowadays to describe lust and desire. Freud believes as it is mentioned in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) that “a disposition to perversion is a general and fundamental characteristic of the human sexual drive” so that we, the human beings, will do anything to satisfy this life force for this reason, sexuality can be dangerous; it must be restrained and kept under control in order to live a healthy sexual life. Is it healthier to go to the other extreme side? In other words, what if a person suffocates themselves sexually?

In the beginning of the analysis, we will discuss sexual suffocation as a real problem shared by both heroes that belong to the same fictional worlds of the novellas we chose to analyse. Sexual suffocation is actually repressing one's instinctual desires and trying to control the pervert Id, which is introduced by Sigmund Freud as the part of the mind in which innate instinctive impulses and primary sources are manifest. Such repression can be boosted due to some religious, social, or even individual wills. (Wikipedia)

Sexual suffocation is more obvious in *L'Escargot Entêté* than *The Metamorphosis*, but it is still an important point shared by the main characters. First, we will discuss this issue inside the frame of Boudjedra's masterpiece *L'Escargot Entêté*.

The rat exterminator hallucinates and says: “pourquoi cette obsession? La reproduction! Seule chose qui Les intéresse réellement. Comme les chats et les souris. Moi, je

vis seul” (13). Over the course of reading this passage, we notice the civil servant's hate towards the notion of reproduction. He even compares the citizens who live in his filthy city, which is infested with rats, to the rats themselves; they are known for their atrocious sexual capacity of giving birth to a hundred millions of voracious creatures in a short period of time. This general truth bothers the unnamed protagonist and pushes him to step away from the Eve's race (women) and isolate himself in an empty house where he lives alone. It is obvious that the narrator cannot bear women and declares: “ce n'est pas moi non plus qui vais faire des enfants à une femelle excitée” (37). This character is the one who deprives himself of having sexual activities in a society where sex means the world to everybody. Freud argues in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933) that “where Id was there ego shall be” this sentence shows that the protagonist's ego is the principal component which controls him as a person and leads him to neglect the id (his instinctual desire). Instead of that, he works day and night to achieve his ultimate goal that is all about wiping out the rodents which invade his environmental spot and put it in danger, and his faithfulness to his job is shown through this quotation: “un seul but dans ma vie. Anéantir les rats de cette belle ville qui pourrait être plus propre” (12).

His need to get rid of his sexual force appears in some lines and makes his suffocation achieve its climax. He is considered to be repressed on the inside. We can easily understand that he needs to practice sex in order to relax and feel as a bird, which flies for the first time, because practicing sex is a sort of relief. The protagonist claims: “il m'arrive de perdre du temps dans les toilettes, mais c'est extrêmement rare” (65).

The only thing he does to get rid of his sexual force is masturbating in his toilet, and from here we understand that he has been doing it since adolescence though it is not mentioned in the text. We can easily understand that he feels guilty after masturbation. He

even confesses this issue through his shoking words “mais si je décris ce que je fais dans les toilettes, je n'aurai jamais le courage de me lire” (65).

It is clear that the character wants to create the meaning of a world without sex but he cannot fulfil this task; as a result, he keeps pretending that everything is fine, so that sex remains a piece of dessert to him. We can say that he keeps himself away from those beautiful ladies in order not to give birth to a new human being. In psychoanalysis, the issue of masturbation was addressed by Freud in a famous discussion in 1912. Annie Reich (1951) quoted him as saying that “masturbation may be harmful in prematurely establishing psychic patterns that impede socialization” from here, we can understand the trouble that the narrator faces with society. (Wikipedia)

Irony plays an important role in the narrator’s thoughts; as a result, he says : “heureusement que mes concitoyens n'ont pas des pénis de cochons.” The passage highlights the idea that sex becomes a severe sort of phobia in the mental environment of the character. The narrator repeats his words, and this redundant way of expressing one's thoughts shows that the degree of their psychic chaos is over the top, so this hurts and pushes him to exaggerate by declaring: “je me fais vieux. Pourtant, jamais d'alcool. Jamais de femmes” (89).

It is challenging to talk about sexuality in Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* because the story itself does not offer information about the subject. There is no clear notion of sexuality in the life of Gregor but we, as readers, can make an argument, through some passages, that Gregor is sexually suffocated.

Gregor, as we know, is a travelling salesman; he is such a busy person who has never had a girlfriend in his life. All his flashbacks give some details about his empty sexual universe where he was a serious product of his social norms; “the young man has nothing in his head except business” (11). According to the story, the only girl that Gregor loves is his

sister Grete. She is the only girl in his life, though it was a pure love of a brother who cares for his little sister. Some passages show that he needs to go beyond his transformation and be with a girl after when his family hated him, this is highlighted in this quotation: “then he saw the picture of the woman dressed in fur” (46). The picture of that pretty woman, on the wall of his bedroom, is a great symbol which spreads the concept of sexual suffocation and the unbearable need for an Eve on bed. The protagonist scurries up over the picture and presses himself against the wall that holds it (46). This action of approaching from the picture can be interpreted as a strong sexual desire towards the beautiful female locked up in a frame, as if the author wants to say that the insect misses his life as a human being and regrets the fact that he didn't have sex in the past before having turned into a giant bug.

Unlike the civil servant, who masturbates to forget his need for a woman on bed, Gregor finds for himself an amusement which is creeping around the bedroom. Perhaps it is the best way, for a man being who became an insect, to get rid of the sexual shackles. Who knows!

II.2. Emptiness: Lifeless Minds

Empty people equal dead souls. Ending up in front of a survivor with an empty feeling may appear an abnormal fact to a person, who is gazing at the world from an objective angle, but this inner problem is actually unbearable to the one who experiences it because it leads, most of the time, to self-destruction.

Emptiness is a feeling which comes in many different forms; many patients with narcissistic and depressive pathology have already experienced it. This word is sometimes used interchangeably with some concepts like absence and nothingness. Its sense is also a natural process of grief that may be resulted by some heartbreaking and painful events like losing a loved one. However, the different meanings of "emptiness" vary with the context and

the religion, or the cultural tradition in which it is used. For instance, Western sociologists and psychologists put a state of emptiness in a negative social and psychological box, yet Eastern philosophies such as Taoism and Buddhist philosophy view the notion of emptiness as a mirror into the soul of an independent self-nature and a pure mind.

Many novelists have clearly paved the way into dark literary universes, where empty characters are struggling indifferently inside the frame of toxic environmental spots. Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre, and others are the best examples that portrayed emptiness in their memorable works. In our comparative study between the two masterpieces, written by Kafka and Boudjedra, We notice that the concept of emptiness is a similar point that the main characters share. “Emptiness is a great feminine secret. It is something absolutely alien to men” (Wikipedia). According to the Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Guvstav Jung, the concept of emptiness lies only with the race of Adam's love (women), which is not the case in our two stories. In both novellas our main concern is men's emptiness and this is obviously reflected through the characters that lead the disordered chronological order of their universes, which feel disturbed and troubled excessively.

The degree of emptiness that haunts the minds of our unusual heroes is quite confusing and shocking; it is destroying and suffocating them on the inside. These characters are, without doubt, handcuffed to a bunch of social gaps, which create empty feelings and randomize their mental puzzle, to a point that they cannot go on in their melancholic lives as normal human beings. Such empty feelings often drag these hallucinated people to act madly as if they are daydreaming after having lost the peaceful symphony of their psychology.

On one side, *L'Escargot Enteté* depicts many passages which introduce “emptiness” as a human condition, and extract is the best example for such a mental issue.

One of the most real passages which indicate the truthfulness of the primary character is when he utters these words: “une vie. Un vide. Un mot inutile. À biffer. Ou à cacher dans le vingt et unième poche, afin que personne ne sache ce que je ressens” (27). In this emotional passage, which feels as a moment of truth, the narrator confesses that his life is empty but, all of a sudden, he tries to hide his feelings and pretend happiness as if he has never said a word about his sad reality. The civil servant is rarely honest about his thoughts and always hides behind a bunch of lies to satisfy society. The unnamed character says: “je suis rutilant et seul. Il m'arrive d'être atteint par un immense bonheur. C'est rare” (19). It is very clear that he is a miserable human being who lives in order to clean his city from all the rats which pollute and make chaos inside its geographical boundaries. We have mentioned earlier that emptiness can be resulted due to someone's loss, and here over the course of the story, we clearly know that this person has nobody with whom he shares his moments, so we can say that he unfortunately lost himself in order to gain the other.

Losing one's self is the real reason, which creates the concept of ‘emptiness’ in *L'escargot Entêté*. The whole story speaks about the evolution of the narrator's hallucinations from the first day until the sixth and last one. Many events have added a special empty flavour in this process, and this shows the high degree of the character's delirium. The fact that his life is all about rats and an obstinate snail, which does not stop pursuing him, makes his mind go astray and forget about the social universe, so he mentions: “je suis, cependant, sûr qu'il y'a un escargot qui ne cesse pas de me suivre. Je ne pourrai même pas l'empoisonner” (87). On the other side, his hate towards women, babies, autumn, rain, and almost everything is a big sign of his dead blind emotions and inner unbearable emptiness.

This empty character is detached from reality, in other words, he is creeping up in his imaginary world, which irritates his conscience. To describe the distance between reality and the fictional bubble where he lives, he says: “la ville est une réalité mais elle ne m'atteint

pas” (80). We, as students, assume that the middle-aged civil servant is emotionally drugged; he does not owe any feeling to anyone after the death of his mother, whom he loved and who used to flatter him when she was alive. The rat exterminator sadly assumes that he misses his mother saying: “ma mère me manque. Je lui dois tout” (14). The absence of a motherly figure can be considered as a clear reason which scratches out the notion of “happiness” in his everyday life and makes him a talented liar; he pretends happiness, yet he lies to himself to be capable of going on and forgetting about the past.

To quote the narrator, “on devrait me verser une prime de célibat”(65). His social status as a single man is a second reason which makes him a dead empty soul. His parents have passed away; his crippling sister lives in the countryside, so she is far away from him. The absence of the family and its importance in shaping up warm and happy atmospheres is putting the mental state of the character down; as a result, he is doomed to live emptyly.

On the other side, *The Metamorphosis* treats ‘emptiness’ in a different way, yet its psychological symptoms appear on more than one character in the novella, but our main concern is always Gregor Samsa. It is asserted: “why should Gregor not feel the same, since he had been accustomed to the room furnishings for a long time and in an empty room” (43). Here, in this situation, Gregor's mother rejects the fact that her son's bedroom will be empty after moving all the furnishings outside, because she thinks that the new empty atmosphere that will be established in the room will push Gregor to embrace the edgy feelings of emptiness and loneliness. On the other side, some members of the family like Grete, the sister, suggest that “Gregor would be pleased with the removal of the furniture” (43), because it is a good idea which helps the monstrous insect to crawl at ease and feel again his freedom. Many suggestions are made from different angles because each person of the family looks at this dilemma from a subjective perspective and tries to find the decent solution to their new burden (Gregor).

Gregor's room looks very different, now, after when the furnishings are removed. The space symbolizes Gregor's inner emptiness. This character that has been metamorphosed is handcuffed to a bedroom which is actually the place where he will spend the rest of his days as an insect. Hope is not spread during the sad Kafkaesque evolution of the story which strangely creates a sombre tone. Gregor's family members, as well, pay tribute to the notion of emptiness and play a great role in pushing the main character to feel empty and sad; they unconsciously and indirectly make him aware of his uselessness after when he was the one who worked day and night to provide them with everything they needed. He was working to pay his parents' debts and make the dream of his beloved sister come true, that is to be a professional violinist.

Unlike the civil servant, who is considered to be a sad human being and an empty liar because he lost himself in order to satisfy his mental desires, which are based on a bunch of hallucinations and incoherent thoughts, Gregor's fundamental reason which causes his feeling of emptiness is the fact that he lost his family's love. After his transformation, no one was able to stand him anymore; he became a real burden that cannot be handled. To make things clear, we can say that Gregor Samsa is put in a spot of alienation which looks like a living hell.

Alienation makes from this character a forgotten human being, who is like a dead person, or even a useless object, the family starts working to get out of their miserable social state and forget a little bit about the insect, and this what shapes up the concept of nothingness in the dark new life of the transformed salesman, as it is mentioned, "in this overworked and exhausted family who had time to worry any longer about Gregor" (55)

In the end, we would like to lock up this section with a general review of the mental issue we have discussed above. Emptiness is a redundant suffocating feeling which is shared

by both characters over the course of many events of both stories, yet it is never expressed in words due to the civil servant's denial of the truth and Gregor's inability of expression.

II.3. Anxiety

Every one of us has already experienced anxiety. Some people cope with it effortlessly but others do not really master the steps they should follow to get rid of it. First, what do we mean by anxiety?

Anxiety is simply a feeling or an emotion of worry and uneasiness characterized by an unpleasant state of inner turmoil. It is generalised and unfocused as an overreaction to a specific situation that is seen as menacing. Anxiety is often accompanied by some bothering symptoms like fatigue, muscular tension and restlessness. Many people think that fear and anxiety are actually the same emotion which dances to a regular mental tune, but this is totally wrong, yet they are both considered to be a response to a real or perceived immediate threat. Anxiety is seen as a menacing issue which sometimes puts an end to one's life; it deteriorates the human being's psychology and ruins the person's mental ramshackle bridge that is about to fall apart. Anxiety's emotional effects generally include: “scary feelings that the mind has gone blank, some troubles of concentration, feelings of apprehension or dread, anticipating a foggy tomorrow, and waiting for the worst to come” as well as, “Obsessions about sensations, fearful thoughts, déjà vu, and having daily nightmares” (Wikipedia).

II.3.1 Am I a Male Praying Mantis? Jaques Lacan and Anxiety

Am I a male praying mantis? This question, at first sight, seems silly and illogical but according to Lacan, it is fundamentally a necessary question which is usually asked by anxious people. Lacan, in his tenth seminar (1962) introduces anxiety as “a sensation that feels like dread or more precisely expectant dread”. The French psychoanalyst came up with an unexpected and quirky theory over the course of 1961, in his ninth seminar, which is not

yet a book officially, where he illustrated the famous story that must be classified among the most fascinating and mind-blowing stories which explain and seek the real notion of anxiety inside the flexible frame of the theory of psychoanalysis.

Lacan's story turns around the human's fertile imagination; it is all about ending up, face to face, in front of a female praying mantis and putting one's self in the shoes of a little insect wearing the mask of another praying mantis whose sex is not known. That is not clear. Right! The explanation looks like one of Kafka's Kafkaesque ways of telling the plot but it is not the case here.

Science proves that female praying mantises are known for biting off the heads of their partners after sex; about 90% of them engage in what we call “sexual cannibalism”, that is a female cannibalizes her male prior to, during, or after copulation (Wikipedia). Now imagine that you are the creature who ends up in front of a female praying mantis wearing that mask. Anxiety, for sure, will haunt you. You will ask many questions like how does she look at me? Who am I according to her? Is she going to cannibalize me? Am I a female or a male? What if I am a male? These questions will, without doubt, make everyone of us anxious. This is the Lacanian interpretation of anxiety.

Lacan defines anxiety as the sensation of the desire of the other. Such a sensation is naturally developed when we do not know who we are for the other and what the other wants from us. As it is proclaimed, “anxiety is the sensation of the desire of the other” (Seminar ix) This quote that is extracted from Lacan's tenth seminar (1962) highlights the importance of the praying mantis' gaze and tells more about how it affects us in our daily life and boosts the level of one's anxiety. In other words, society and what we call the other individual who stands in front of us, both, have an influence on the person.

To conclude this short conversation, we argue that the other plays fundamentally the role of a double-edged sword which can affect the human being positively but it often stands as a negative aspect which messes with one's psychology and pushes him to get anxious and ask a bunch of existentialist questions.

II.3.2 Anxiety in *The Metamorphosis* and *L'escargot Entêté*

The presence of anxiety in the life of the characters we are studying is crystal clear, but how do they cope with such a dreadful sensation over the course of their lives? And from where exactly does their anxiety come?

Let us begin with Gregor Samsa as a human being. After finishing our reading process and closing the book, we figured out that some lines go back to the past of this character and introduce some flashbacks to make the reader know who he was before turning into a horrible insect. In these lines Gregor is actually described as a salesman who is loved and cherished by all the members of his family. He has always been the hard worker who is ready to sacrifice and lose his own personal life for the benefits of his family. We, as readers, can feel that his life was nothing but an obsessive routine.

Gregor's anxiety begins with the traumatic event that happens just in the beginning of the story when he wakes up and figures out that he has been turned into an insect without any reason. The trauma shocks the character when “he discovered in bed he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug” (3). Trauma is the first stimulus of anxiety that is captured in the melancholic frame of the novella; it leads the protagonist to the extreme high level of what we call eternal anxiety, a traumatic feeling which lasts for a long time due to its effective harshness on the brain, such a sensation can make every person anxious or even mad. Many interpretations were given about this insect and its symbol, but we are not here to discuss this Kafkaesque situation. We are just analyzing the situation as it is.

Gregor is obviously trapped in a turf of anxiety in the first morning when he becomes another creature that does not look like a human being. Therefore, he tries to move his strange body and go to work because all what makes him afraid is the reaction of his beloved family and strict boss. In order to motivate himself, he says: “right now I have to get up” (5). Later after the metamorphosis, the sad truth has been revealed, the boss fires him, and the family members are shocked. He is now confused, afraid, suffocated on the inside, and most importantly anxious; he faces what is called “existential anxiety”, which is a feeling of unease about freedom, choice, and even meaning in life. Many sentences in the story show Gregor's existential crisis, especially when he claims: “just yesterday evening everything was fine with me” (15). This quote pays tribute to one of the most significant existential questions that everybody asks in hard times which is “why me?” Why does such a Kafkaesque transformation happen to him and not to someone else? The insect now goes through life trying to grasp his family's love that is on the verge of disappearing. He strives anxiously to catch a sense of hope, in a hopeless environment, while he can still dream of a day where everything turns to its natural shape. But hope fades away with the evolution of the events, and this pushes him to give up on his dream.

The praying mantis gaze plays the main role in the universe of someone who suffers from anxiety. This concept that has been introduced above comes to life in this section of our analysis. The famous gaze, according to us, is shown through the eyes of the family members who are looking awkwardly at the unbelievable situation, which takes place inside the frame of the familial nest, and this area becomes later on, for Gregor, a kind of cage; he is the one who is wearing the mask, the person who has been metamorphosed. The insect is super anxious because he can anticipate neither acceptance, nor refusal from his father, mother, and sister. Gregor does not know what would be their reaction after the transformation. He is confused and he does not know whether his family is going to kill him, or they will keep him

safe under the same roof, where they used to live happily in the past. Unfortunately, the events have already subsided to a sad ending and the Lacanian concept of anxiety is perfectly shown after when Gregor has turned out to be a male praying mantis that should be killed; he dies by the end of the story due to anxiety, sadness, and repression.

On the other side the nameless civil servant in *L'escargot Entêté* has been going through many types of anxiety, for he lives on a toxic spot which makes him more anxious than anyone else in the story.

Many memories take us to the horrible rat hater, he notes: “je fus donc confié à une paysanne. . . Elle m'enferma dans une pièce . . . Je fus attaqué par une dizaine de gros rats énervés par la chaleur” (71). The quote actually takes us into a traumatic event that is still scratching out and messing with the protagonist's thoughts. He tells the readers about his first meeting with the rats, these voracious rodents that he met when he was two years old. The flashback gives a portion of explanation about the civil servant's hate towards these creatures. He narrates the fact that he was entrusted to a woman peasant during one of the summer hot days; she was his babysitter at that old time. One day she locked him in a room and went to help her husband cut the wheat. During her absence, the trauma happened; he was attacked by big rats which were bothered by the season's heat. This is actually the source of our character's anxiety which goes back to the days of his childhood. When the trauma happens to a baby, it is very hard to fade away throughout the years, and this is clarified by the story's events; the narrator is in his fifties, yet he still remembers what happened. This sensation of dread can be defined as a traumatic anxiety, which is the result of a shocking trauma. He since loathes the rats and considers them as the ultimate enemy that should be exterminated by the power of his brain and plans. The protagonist says: “à vrai dire ma vocation m'épuise. Je la porte depuis l'âge de deux ans” (99). He even thinks he started working as a rat exterminator

since that day when he was attacked. And this highlights his incurable mental state which only aims at cleaning his city and killing all its rats.

He is sure that his mother is the reason of his anxiety because she took him to that peasant woman, but he does not dare to write negative things about her on his pieces of papers due to his love for her. As a result, he prefers to shut up and focus more on his goal, yet he asserts: “j'en veux des fois à ma mère de m'avoir mis en nourrice. Mais je n'ose pas l'écrire”(99).

The notion of the snail is another reason that highlights anxiety in the story. If you remember, in the beginning of the story the unnamed narrator talks about something that bothers him. He reveals its identity over the course of the third day when he utters words about the fact that he is being pursued by a huge snail which awaits him outside and follows in his footsteps.

The third day, without a doubt, marks the beginning of a new anxiety. The gastropod's absence is a quirky fact that happens suddenly in the life of the character and makes him anxiously vigilant. This hallucinated principal character has always been used to the presence of the hermaphrodite animal. He thinks that this creature is harmful and wants to deprive him of doing his job. Now, the fact that the snail is absent creates a sort of anxiety. The civil servant affirms: “l'idée qu'il est là sans que je puisse l'apercevoir me rend nerveux. C'est pire que lorsque je le vois” (54). In this quote we understand that the character prefers to end up in front of his enemy and face the danger. So we can argue that it is a confession of his actual anxiety because the snail is starting to play with him hide and seek the thing that disturbs his psychology the most. He further advances: “au fond, je préfère affronter le danger. . . J'ai faillis revenir sur mes pas” (54).

The rat exterminator is obviously afraid of the snail and he argues: “depuis trois jours qu’il se cache pour mieux me surprendre” (104). The snail is still hiding during three days and the character's degree of anxiety is about to reach its climax, yet the rat exterminator is still vigilant and prepared to face the danger and put an end to this story. Anxiety is sometimes a good sign which prepares the person mentally to face any danger or problem. Freud in his tenth Seminar argues that “when an individual is placed in a new situation of danger it may well be expedient for him to respond with an anxiety state” (134-135). This Freudian sentence is well placed in this situation where anxiety serves immediately as a good sign of preparing to confront any bad situation. To get rid of anxiety, the hero has to put an end to his enemy, and this is what happens on the sixth day. The rat exterminator actually squashes the snail and goes to jail.

The last type of anxiety that will be discussed is social anxiety, which refers to the fear of society, or what we call social situations that may involve interaction with other people who try to evaluate, or judge us. It can be caused by a bad experience with people who have already harmed us, or aimed at stopping our plans as it is the case in *L'escargot Entêté*.

The huge number of the rats is quite astonishing; it is confessed by the main character saying: “5 000 000 de rats! Il doit rester confidentiel. On a beaucoup insisté là-dessus. C'est à cette époque que l'on a essayé de brûler mon fichier” (18). Social anxiety is seriously highlighted in the story and explains the civil servant's hatred towards people who do not believe what he says about the astonishing number of rats. As a result, they have tried to burn out his file which contains all the statistics. These people are portrayed as the evil version of humanity, according to the narrator's hallucinations and thoughts; He believes that they are creeping up silently behind his back to destroy his plans and burn out the files he wrote about the rodents. In the story he tells us about a second file he keeps with his crippling sister who lives in the countryside; he always has to be prepared in order to face the bad people. The

bureaucratic hero assumes that Mistrust is the only armour which helps him to keep the enemies away, as he quotes: “méfiance. C'est la seule chose que j'ai hérité de mon père avec la fragilité des poumons” (22).

In the words of the hero: “entre moi et les rares visiteurs que je reçois, je mets un immense calendrier que je coince entre deux dictionnaires. . . De cette manière, ils ne peuvent pas me regarder dans les yeux” (54). This extract can be broken down into several words and sentences that are written in a bittersweet style. In other words, this quote is sad and funny at the same time. It perfectly shows that the narrator suffers from an intensive social anxiety to the point that he puts a big calendar on his office and places it between him and the visitors that he receives in order not to see their faces. This unusual act draws a picture of distance between him as a person who adores solitude and the others as secondary characters that do not play an important role in his empty life. We, as readers, can even consider them to be the third antagonist in this story after the rats and the snail.

Before closing this section, we would like to say that anxiety is another common point which is shared by both characters. It plays a role in shaping their behaviour and manipulating their lives which are lived according to the dictation of some psychological measurements.

II.4. Insomnia: Characters with Opened Eyes

In this time, when we are writing this section of our dissertation, the world is put under an intense shock because of the Corona virus which is effortlessly killing people all over the planet. As a result, nobody sleeps, we all are insomniac. This situation in front of which we end up is coincidentally shared by our characters, who both suffer from sleeplessness. But first what do we mean by insomnia?

Insomnia is a sleep disorder in which a person has trouble falling or staying asleep. This condition can last for a long time, and this is called chronic insomnia; it happens at least

three nights a week for more than three weeks. It also lasts from one night to a few weeks and this is called acute insomnia.

This sleep disorder is a shared point between Boudjedra's narrator and Kafka's insect. In *The Metamorphosis*, the story begins with the main character that wakes up from some nightmares. The day before the story starts was the last day the protagonist slept as a human being, all of a sudden, he ends up in a new nightmarish strange body. Insomnia starts with the fact that Gregor becomes an insect, and then he has never slept again with extreme tranquillity. Gregor says: "why don't I keep sleeping for a while longer and forget all this foolishness" (3). The transformation seems at first sight as a bad dream, this is why the character is meant to be a lucid dreamer, someone who controls their dreams, but unfortunately he cannot. As we mentioned above, it is clear that Gregor Samsa suffers from insomnia because his sleep disorder lasts for months before he dies by the end of the story. Gregor says: "i must not stay in bed uselessly" (8), staying in bed is a good symbol, which pays tribute to such a mental disorder, and creates the image of a creature with opened eyes.

In *L'escargot Entêté*, the rat exterminator suffers as well from insomnia and indicates: "de toute façon, insomniaque" (49). The reason why our narrator is insomniac is the fact that he is afraid of dreaming. It is obvious that dreams frighten him because they represent his suppressed emotions and fears, so the best way to avoid them is to stay awake. Sigmund Freud wrote a book in 1899, which is called *The Interpretations of Dreams*, where he explains that dreams are the undercurrent of our hopes, emotions, and repressed sexual desires. All these things can come through in the dreams, and that is what happens with the civil servant. When the world of nightmares starts to cuddle him, he confesses: "j'ai rêvé qu'un rat avait mangé mes deux paires de chaussures. Je n'en possède pas d'autre" (77). As we know, the rats play the most important role in the narrator's redundant routines, so their ghosts pursue him in his nightmares to scare him. In modern times, learning the physiology of the dreams indicates

that these thoughts and sensations occurring in a person's mind during sleep come from the back section of the Brain, called the Amygdala section, which is the primitive part that controls fear (Wikipedia). That is why fear is the fundamental reason which creates insomnia in *L'escargot Entêté* as the protagonist mentions: “le jour où je dormirai, vraiment, je ne me réveillerais plus” (82). The narrator goes through some negative and threatening thoughts, which bother him to the point that he decides to remain awake till his last breath.

In the end, we say that the two protagonists prefer to stay awake in order to get ready for facing any danger because they are both living in a world, where hell broke loose and everyone is trying to survive.

In this chapter, we aimed at showing the degree of resemblance between the characters that live in different bodies, yet their minds are quite the same.

Chapter Three

Different Struggles of Suffocated Characters

The present chapter opposes the second one; it sheds light on the mental differences between our characters. This chapter explains more the fact that these protagonists are considered to be prisoners through highlighting the notion of prison in a different way and dragging its concept into the frame of the characters' minds and bodies.

The notion of time is also presented as well, it explains the absence of our characters in the present moment and shows the fact that one of them lives in the past and the other is stuck in the future. The chapter ends with measuring the protagonists' degree of narcissism and showing how this term affects their behaviours in their dark universes.

III.1. The Notion of Prison: The Mind and the Body

Many people are not put in prison, yet they feel jailed. Maybe this seems strange to some humans but it is real. Who can define the meaning of jail? Perhaps no one knows. No one says that jail is a place where a criminal is shackled. Maybe we all are free living with our families, yet we feel the sensation of a bird in a cage. The book of David M. Bierrie and Ruth E. Mann which is entitled *The History and Future of Prison Psychology* (2017) argues that “the world prison population at the end of 2015 was approximately 11 million” (479). These huge numbers of people are sometimes put under the roof of a psychological treatment, so that “psychology and psychologists interact with prisons in a variety of ways” (479). And this is what we are going to do with our protagonists in this section in order to drag ourselves into the different jails, where they suffer, and try to understand each one of them without being judgmental. The word “prison” is actually flexible; it does not have a specific definition. Everyone can look at it from a subjective angle, and its subjectivity is studied through this section which provides the reader with the meaning of prison in *The Metamorphosis* and *L'escargot Entêté*. The term “prison” is used differently in both novellas, and this leads us to the first difference which we find worth exploring in our research.

In *L'escargot Entêté*, the narrator is considered to be the prisoner of his own thoughts. We can easily feel that he is metaphorically handcuffed to his strange ideas and mind, so that he ends up behind the bars of sadness and solitude. The civil servant is the one who narrates the story; he tells the reader about all the things that he feels; he expresses his emotions without any fear and says that he is an atheist in a religious country, yet we assume that he sometimes lies to himself and exaggerates to the point that we can say that he is a crazy man who hallucinates due to the traumatic event, that he experienced. Christa Schöfelder, in *Wounds and Words: Childhood and Family Trauma in Romantic and Postmodern Fiction* (2013) says that “the study of trauma has, over the few decades, become relevant in literary and cultural studies” (28). And this shows the importance of trauma inside the frame of Boudjedra's story on which he built his hero.

His mind is the prison and he is the psychopath prisoner; this is how it feels when we dive more into his quirky thoughts. He talks a lot to himself, he hates people and prefers to step away from women because of his fear of giving birth to children; he hates all the babies of the world because they remind him of those rats, his ultimate enemies that he wants to exterminate. The word “hatred” that we use here might be a wrong term. José I. Navarro, in “The Psychology of Hatred” assumes that “not every act of violence arises out of hatred” (10). The narrator's violent and cruel actions do not always refer to hate; perhaps he is not against children because he loathes them, yet he uses a specific kind of violence because he wants to achieve a goal. It is mentioned that “violence can be instrumental; sometimes we act violently against the other to achieve a goal” (ibid). But we refer to him as a hateful person who cannot stand the world, and then we say that his actions put him behind the bars of illogical thoughts. The narrator said : “et si j'avais un gros rat coincé dans la tête?” (141). Sometimes his logic disappears, his questions are stranger than his attitude as a strict man who works day and night to satisfy the needs of his obstinacy and narcissism. He thinks that

he has got a jailed big rat stuck in his head, this is how he explains the fact that he cannot stand all those rodents. This seems ironic and focuses more on the fact that he is completely the illogical prisoner of a tired mind.

The mother tells her son: “tu verras, quand tu seras grand je t'achèterai des poumons en plastique” (145). Nostalgia in *L'escargot Entêté* plays a very important role in showing the fact that the narrator is stuck in his memories. He remembers his mother who used to tell him that she would buy him plastic lungs when he grows up in order to put an end to his lung disease. These bittersweet memories do not help him to get out of his mental prison, and his analysis can be boosted by the definition of nostalgia that is presented in Janelle.L willson's “Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning”(2014) which argues that nostalgia “typically conjures up images of previous time when life was good” (21)

The last paragraph of the novella is the best section which tells the reader about the reality of the narrator who ends up behind the bars of his mind. In the end of the story the narrator crushes the snail, and we interpret this action as a kind of a psychological surrender because the civil servant did not succeed to swipe out the rats of his city which he wanted to clean in the beginning of the story. The end of *L'escargot Entêté* is quite unpredictable, the character confesses: “je lai, aussitôt, écrasé avec la semelle de ma chaussure gauche” (149). The rat exterminator fails at the end of the day. He tells the reader that he used the sole of his left shoe to crush the snail, and this left sole, according to us, represents the heart of the narrator, which is situated in the left part of the body and his mind with all its instinctive desires that have dragged him into failure. He continues saying: “à l'endroit où je venais de le tuer. Un passant s'arrêta pour me regarder” (ibid). A passer-by stops in the end to look at the protagonist in that place where he killed the snail, and this represents the eyes of society that will always be blaming him no matter what. This actually pays tribute to the theory of Jaques Lacan that we have presented in the second chapter and how the eyes of society can look like

the gaze of a praying mantis, which is ready to cannibalize its male. But the most significant thing that makes our theory, which says that the rat exterminator is a prisoner of his own thoughts and mind, is his answer to the passer-by when he looked at him, so he tells him: “je dis cela fait exactement six jours qu'il me poursuit. Inutile de donner l'alarme. Je vais me constituer prisonnier” (ibid). His last words were so sad. He tells him not to raise the alarm of danger because he will be doomed to jail. According to us, we assume that this jail does not represent a building which holds criminals, but it represents the mental prison where he will remain till his last breath.

In *The Metamorphosis*, the concept of prison is shown from a different angle; the body is the ultimate prison which handcuffs the main protagonist Gregor Samsa to his bedroom which is considered to be the second jail in the story, and here comes the difference between Boudjedra's protagonist who is the prisoner of his own mind and Kafka's character that is actually put in the shell of an insect.

The first paragraph of the story puts the reader in front of the fact that Gregor Samsa has already been put inside a strange body which looks like a huge verminous bug after when “he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug” (3). His new horrible skeleton with numerous legs is not comfortable and feels heavy; it is not under the control of the character. This can be understood as it is mentioned in the published article of Maria Maya P. Angeles Narra “Gregor Samsa: A Repressed Homosexual” as the shackles of homosexuality, which create the concept of jail in the story. After the transformation, Gregor has to get used to this new prison where he is strangely put in the beginning of the story when he wakes up.

All the events of the novella play with the psychology of the reader through introducing the solution that has been adopted by the insect in order to cope with such a Kafkaesque situation. The protagonist represents many people who live in our society like

sick people or those who do not accept their gender and want to change their morphology. All these human beings are belonging to the same fatal situation that our character faces. And the people around him, the members of his family, have always been sending him negative vibes, which are contagious because the persons with whom we go on the journey of our lives can be toxic, and this was explained in Sherrie Bourg's "Emotions are Contagious: Choose Your company Wisely" (2012). The problem of Gregor in the story is that he did not have the privilege to choose his company, so he was doomed to living in hell.

The body as a prison deteriorates the psychology of Gregor and drives him crazy; it is so hard for him to accept the truth and cope with it. He cannot get satisfied and live in peace on the inside because the external image does not look like him anymore and his parents cannot stand the burden he imposes on them daily. He would rather die than live another microsecond in such a terrible physique. And this is what happens in the end of the story; his death is the best solution to unleash the forces of his strange skeleton kind of prison and make all the members of his family happy.

To wrap up, this section tried to show the different notions of prison that we find in *The Metamorphosis* and *L'escargot Entêté*. Our aim was to show that the mind and the body can be considered as prisons that suffocate the human being. What about you? Have you ever felt jailed by your mind and body?

III.2.The Notion of Time: Characters between the Past and the Future

The civil servant is a man whose thoughts are stuck in the future. On the other side, Gregor Samsa is completely blocked in the maze of his redundant past.

The rat hater claims: "je suis à quinze ans de la retraite. Je demande ce que deviendra le bureau de dératisation après mon départ" (81). This sentence shows clearly the narrator's obsession with the future. He keeps thinking about the rat extermination office, the dirty city,

and wonders how everything will be dirtier after his retirement in the future. Being stuck in the future happens due to the huge amount of hallucinations he experiences. His burden, which is all about making his city prettier after killing all those rodents, is psychologically heavy to handle because he is a middle-aged man, so he will soon end up in the bubble of a useless old person who does not master the steps anymore.

It is obvious that the protagonist is bothered by the notion of time. He even tries to put an end to it, and this is clear when he breaks his wrist-watch and says: “j’ai eu ce malaise a cause du tic-tac de ma montre. Je l’ai brisée sous le talon de ma chaussure” (134). This action tells us more about his lost soul which cannot bear all those problems. The civil servant sometimes pretends to expect good results in the future but he knows that it is actually impossible to achieve his goal; he daily encounters multiple obstacles. Hope is the only reason which makes him trust the future and live till the day of triumph and reward. But can we really consider him as a hopeful person? Of course not. He is hopeless to the point that he shouts: “la ville sera à nouveau sale” (129). He is always predicting bad things that will happen in the future, and this drags him again into a pessimistic area.

In *L’escargot Entêté*, the civil servant is described as a middle-aged man who does not think that life is a rose-coloured timeless turf. He is a person who looks at those negative sides which affect his behaviour and make him more troubled than ever. This unnamed narrator is a suffocated character that thinks about the future. He, most of the time, uses his imagination to predict things and expect dangers. The rat exterminator usually looks forward in order to forget his miserable past which pained him. He seems aware of the atrocity he lived. This is why he wants his past to be a place of reference and adopts the future as a place of residence, but we cannot deny the fact that he is sometimes sad and caught by nostalgia where he remembers his beloved mother and declares that “la nostalgie, c’est la poisse!” (39)

“Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower” (Albert Camus). This quote goes against Boudjedra's story because autumn is wearing some sombre clothes inside the frame of the rat exterminator's life, and he highlights this by confessing: “elle disait c'est la saison du soupçon. Ni l'été ni l'hiver. Entre deux” (95). The narrator remembers his mother's words about autumn. This queer season of the year which plays a very important role in defining time and human psychology; it is pushing the main character to question his future fate. At the same time, it delivers the concept of a contradictory brain and a grey character. Mental chaos bothers the rat exterminator during autumn because it is a season which does belong neither to summer, nor to winter just as the narrator who is neither black, nor white. Cathy Cassata, in “Autumn Anxiety: Why Many Feel More Stressed this Season” (2019) for *Health Line* website provides the reader with reasons which makes any person feel stressed and anxious during autumn, and from the article we assume that stress plays another role in deteriorating the mental health of our protagonist.

Our character states: “la ville est une réalité mais elle ne m'atteint pas”(86). Reality does not reach the character anymore, and this goes back to the problematic of time where he is stuck. The rat exterminator owes the future admiration and concentration, so he indirectly self-sabotages his mind because he overthinks about a day which perhaps will never come.

Unlike the civil servant who is trapped in the future, the verminous bug decides to reside in his past. Gregor Samsa is a character stuck in the past because he cannot move forward anymore after his transformation. The insect says: “just yesterday everything was fine with me” (15), the term “yesterday” indicates a period of time that has already gone. The protagonist is introduced to the reader as a monstrous insect from the beginning of the novella and he is still an insect till the end of the story. In the past, Gregor was a different creature. He was a human being with flesh and blood, and this reality makes him desire to go back in time

when he was a man, a person who lived a fake happiness with his parents and sister, as the narrator claims: “he remembered his family with deep feeling and love” (71)

One of the most important reasons, which push the insect to get stuck in the past is the reaction of his family after the metamorphosis. His parents and sister do not accept his new awful body, so they reject him. Rejection plays a fundamental role in shackling this person in his early days when everybody loved him just because he used to work in order to help his family. The narrator affirms that “if Gregor has only been able to speak to his sister” (38). The barrier of language is another factor which drags the insect into desiring to become a human being again in order to let his emotions get expressed by talking to his cherished sister. Unfortunately he cannot say a word and this suffocates him on the inside. De Wall and Bushman, in “Social Acceptance and Rejection: The Sweet and the Bitter” (2011) focus on what they call “The need to belong” and how people feel useless when they are rejected by the ones they love the most. Actually, this is the situation of Gregor Samsa, who needs to belong again to the familial nest where he grew up.

Nostalgia affects Gregor's behaviour as well. It creates a nostalgic atmosphere which touches the insect deep down in the heart and transports him emotionally to specific old moments that he misses. It is mentioned that “Gregor didn't remember hearing the violin all through this period” (62). Hearing his sister playing the violin has always been the pleasure of the protagonist; he wants to hear his talented sister when she plays this amazing musical instrument all the time but he cannot because he is rejected and no one wants to see him outside his bedroom.

To close this section, we say that the nature of the human being has always been complex and its actions sometimes feel weird. Some people live in the past and others prefer the future but nobody savours the present moment. What about you?

III.3.Narcissism: Who is he?

In the last section of the third chapter, it sheds light on narcissism, which is an important term in psychoanalysis and a frequent concept in contemporary society. Our aim is to find the character that is suffering from a high degree of narcissism and explain the reasons that lead people to put themselves in the bubble of Narcissus⁴.

Gregor Samsa and the rat exterminator are mentally sick due to the mental complexities and the atrocious traumas they experience on a daily basis. Their horrible sufferings cannot be noticed at first sight because they do not have bruises on their body, yet the pain keeps hurting them on the inside. Their actions and reactions to specific situations that they meet differ and give each one of them a troubled identity. But the question is: Which one of them is suffering from a narcissistic overdose?

Readers can easily notice that the civil servant is the narcissistic character when we compare him to Gregor Samsa. In the beginning of *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor seems self-denying and a person who is down to earth; we know that the description of his past through some flash-backs tells us that he used to be a hard worker who was devoted to his job in order to pay the debts of his family. He does not think about his needs as a human being because he is trapped in a bureaucratic atmosphere that kills him silently on a daily basis because “the young man has nothing in his head except business” (12), the best description we can give to Gregor after his transformation is that he looks like a lost puppet confused about what to do to face the reaction of his family. His obstinacy and strong desire to go to work in the shell of a bug proves that he has already forgotten himself, he devoted his life to his parents and sister, so far none of his decisions have paid off in any way. We assume that the insect is actually a victim that lives under the roof of a narcissistic environment because the members of his

⁴Narcissus is an important character in the Greek mythology that was known for his beauty and doomed to death out his self love.

family used him once in the past to make their living but now they cannot accept his presence in their lives, so they try to get rid of him. Grete declares: “and thus I say only that we must get rid of it” (68). The end of Gregor which is death puts emphasis on his pure heart and humane personality and explains the fact that he preferred to commit suicide for the sake of the others' happiness.

On the other side, Boudjedra's civil servant is a narcissistic character that is literally going through six tough days and walking around like a headless chicken throwing arbitrary decisions left and right, then retracing them, then reinforcing them again. Freud in his book *On Narcissism* (1914) addresses the concept of narcissism from different perspectives. The theme of the book can be understood as a Freudian message to humanity; he wants to tell the world that happiness does not blossom in a narcissistic season but it flourishes when people give as much as they receive. Unfortunately, this idea goes against the flow of our rat exterminator, who is not a giver. In *On Narcissism* (1914) Freud argues that “a third way in which we may approach the study of narcissism is by observing the erotic life of human beings” (12). And as we explained in the second chapter, the civil servant is sexually suffocated, so his troubled sexuality plays a fundamental role in pushing him to embody a narcissistic character that lies to himself and pretends to be happy without a lover.

Our protagonist, in the beginning of the story, talks about his mom's hatred towards the notion of narcissists; she always wanted her son to be a simple human being who cherishes life and humans, when she was alive because “elle avait l'horreur du narcissisme” (86). His mother tried to create from him the opposite version of his father, who was, according to her, a narcissist “qui portait toujours sur lui sa propre photo, prise à vingt ans” (86). His handsome father used to look like a Hollywood actor, and his son inherited the beauty of his dad to the point that he became an external version of him. The suffocated character does not really like the fact that he resembles to his father, yet he focuses on this

physical resemblance by saying: “on aurait dit mon père le jour où il cracha ses poumons”(86). He confesses that the physical resemblance with his father is quite shocking, so he claims: “par la régularité des traits des traits, je tiens de lui” (86). From here, we can say that beauty is one of the reasons that make the hero go with the flow of a narcissistic behaviour.

The unnamed civil servant says, through his weird thoughts expressed in words that he cannot believe in God because he owes faithfulness to the state. As a result, we say that the absence of God in the protagonist's redundant days, which push him slowly to craziness, is another reason that makes this hallucinated person a God-like human. The confidence of the rat exterminator reaches the climax throughout the evolution of the story's events. He thinks that he is the centre of the world and the most important person in the city where he lives, and believes that he can find a solution to the problem which threatens the life of the few and the many, and this will only happen through exterminating millions of rats. He usually flatters himself by saying: “si tout le monde était stricte comme moi, la ville ne serait pas dans cet état de saleté” (10), so he believes in his artful abilities of extermination using toxic poisons. The end of the story witnesses the collapse of the hero's narcissism due to his inability to kill those rodents that are still putting the dirty city in danger. Narcissism plays a very important role in the rat exterminator's illogical evolution and mental deterioration.

The last chapter has aimed at opposing the second one and highlighting the fact that Gregor Samsa and the civil servant are not the same even though they sometimes look like two minds in different bodies, as we have seen in the previous chapter, but their resemblance does not deny a clear difference.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

To wrap up, we deal with a general review of our research. Our dissertation has given tribute to the naked concept of a real human being who is marginalised in an oppressive society. Nobody would look at the protagonists, we have analysed, if they walked down the street because of their inferiority and lowliness.

Our analysis has aimed at showing the other side of the human psychological coin that we tend to neglect, that side which portrays mental deterioration and chaotic minds that are about to tumble down out of inner suffocation. The whole idea has been put inside the frame of a comparative study between the main characters of the two novellas, *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka and *L'escargot Entêté* by Rachid Boudjedra. Our work is actually based on the theory of psychoanalysis and its subjective views in explaining what goes on in the mind of each grey character, and this gives hints about the answer of our research question that will be provided at the end of this general conclusion.

In the first chapter, we have dealt with an introduction to modern German literature and postcolonial Algerian literature in order to make the reader grasp the two literary periods in which the novellas, we have studied, were written. After that, we have dived into the biographies of the authors, Franz Kafka and Rachid Boudjedra, through highlighting the most important events which happened in their lives then we have shaped up the summaries of the novellas in our own way which does not look as a redundant synopsis taken from some websites. To put our final touch on the first chapter, we have introduced the term “Kafkaesque” and its role in orienting the events of the plots. The theory of psychoanalysis has been introduced as the last point in the first chapter in order to make the reader get ready for savouring the content of the second and the third chapters which are based on it.

General Conclusion

In the second chapter, our research has taken a different direction. We have started to give life back to the characters, so that they feel close to the reader. We have pointed out the shared points between Gregor Samsa and the unnamed civil servant. Their sexual suffocation, emptiness, anxiety, and sleep disorder are considered to be the most important points that they both share. This chapter has adopted many concepts that are coined by Sigmund Freud and Jaques Lacan, these concepts helped us a lot in maintaining the psychoanalytic study which we followed. On the other side, we have exploited the third chapter as a section where we got to mention some points which differ the heroes from each other. We have dragged each one of them into the boundaries of different times and unusual prisons in order to reach the degree of their high mental chaos and try to decode their cryptic way of thinking. Then we have explained narcissism as the last different point that the characters do not share.

The flexibility of our research, in regards to numerous analytic destinations, is quite obvious; it leads any researcher to other questions which are worth answering in order to get rid of the foginess, which would hinder readers' curiosity. Many characters that go astray in the two works, we have analyzed, deserve a chance to appear in other research papers for the sake of exploring them from other perspectives, or even showing another marginalized side, which has not been mentioned throughout our dissertation.

Our research is based upon a specific question which is: Are Gregor Samsa and the rat exterminator three-dimensional characters? In other words, do these characters remind us of ourselves as human beings, or are they doomed to forgetfulness once we close the novellas? To answer this, we have to say that they both represent the universal identity of genuine human beings who suffer daily inside the frame of an indifferent place where the present time means nothing to them and the rose-coloured life is just a myth according to their thinking. Yes, they are three-dimensional; every one of us can easily put ourselves in their shoes and

General Conclusion

feel their pain because we all are meant to understand this chaotic mental mess and undertake the yin and the yang of life.

What about you? Have you ever felt like exterminating something which bothered, or ended up inside a body which didn't suit you?

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Résumé

Cette thèse rend hommage à la notion d'êtres humains mis en marge de la société en entraînant les principaux protagonistes de, *La Métamorphose* (1915) de Franz Kafka et *L'escargot Entêté* (1977) de Rachid Boudjedra, dans l'analyse. Ce travail parle de Gregor Samsa et de l'exterminateur de rats sans nom, ces personnages gris, qui représentent une minorité détériorée dans le cadre de notre environnement social. Ces personnes ne sont généralement pas comprises car elles n'ont pas d'ecchymoses claires sur la peau, mais elles sont étouffées par leur souffrance mentale. Le but principal de cette étude est de capturer le chaos mental de ces deux protagonistes, de faire un voyage à l'intérieur de leur esprit sans porter de jugement, et d'enquêter sur le degré de leur ressemblance et de leur différence afin de les humaniser. Par conséquent, les deux personnages seront examinés à l'aide de la théorie de la psychanalyse et plus particulièrement de certains concepts introduits par Sigmund Freud et Jaques Lacan, ce qui nous aidera à briser l'image embellie de l'être humain qui est habituellement représentée dans de nombreuses œuvres littéraires.

Mots clés: Chaos Mental, Etouffement Sexuel Personnages, Psychanalyse, Prison

ملخص

هذا البحث يعزف سيمفونية الإنسان المضطهد على هامش المجتمع، المتخبط بين مطرقة الأحكام و سندان القمع و يلقي الضوء على الشخصية الرئيسية لكل من رواية *التحول* (1915) لفرانز كافكا و رواية *الطنزون* العنيد (1977) للكاتب رشيد بوجدره. هذا العمل يتحدث عن غريغور سامسا و مبيد الجرذان، هاتان الشخصيتان الرماديتان، التي تمثل فئة قليلة منعزلة سجيبة في ظل القهر الاجتماعي. هذا النوع من الشخصيات غير مفهوم لأن أجسادها لا تحتوي على كدمات واضحة لكنها تبقى مختنقة داخليا بغلال العذاب النفسي.

الهدف من هذا البحث هو إظهار الفوضى النفسية للشخصيتين الرئيسيتين، الذهاب في رحلة إلى أعماقهما من دون إصدار أية أحكام خاصة و ترجمة واقعهما من خلال الكشف على نقاط التشابه والاختلاف الموجودة بينهما. هاتان الشخصيتان ستدرسان على منصة التحليل النفسي مع الاعتماد على مفاهيم طرحت من قبل سيغموند فرويد و جاك لاكان. كل هذا يساعدنا على كسر الصورة المجملة للإنسان التي تظهر غالبا في الأعمال الأدبية

الكلمات المفتاحية: الفوضى النفسية، الشخصيات، التحليل النفسي، الاختناق، السجن

