



Reading the Letter in the Pocket: Dissemination and Insemination in Kafka's "The Judgment"

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Abstract

Departing from the intimate relationship between writing and reading in Kafka's oeuvre, this article aims to illustrate the transference effect of literature staged by Kafka's "The Judgment" (1912). As a text telling the story of a conflict between father and son, "The Judgment" evokes an Oedipal struggle. The article suggests that despite these Oedipal connotations, the text resists representation, foregrounding its performative force. Tracing this performative force in the itinerary of the letter that the son writes to his friend in Russia, the article engages with Lacan's conceptualization of "letter" and "literality." With the help of other Kafka readers, particularly Adorno, Benjamin, Blanchot, Deleuze and Guattari, and Derrida, the article concludes that "The Judgment" can be read as a text of transgression –both of the Oedipal law and the laws of literature– in which the effect of transference leads to an experience of jouissance.

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