**Muhammad Arham Khan**

**21701848**

**HUM 112 – Section 8**

**16 May, 2019**

**Grete’s Metamorphosis**

In Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, although Gregor Samsa’s transformation is obvious, his sister Grete also goes through noticeable changes in her character, personality and priorities. So basically while Gregor transforms into some vermin, Grete transforms from a timid and pampered girl to a caring, responsible and rather controlling little sister and then gradually turns into a strong-willed, independent and mature woman and her love for Gregor reduces to none.

To begin with, before Gregor changes, Grete is presented as a timid and naïve girl, incapable of bearing responsibility and childish in nature. As is presented in the earlier parts of the story, Grete cries over her brother’s illness and is presented as a pampered child. But once Gregor changes into the insect, Grete, still a close companion of his, transforms into a caring and composed soul capable of helping and looking after her helpless brother. Be it her writing letters to him or enjoying her time with her otherwise ghastly-looking brother, she is a kind and caring soul. For instance, at the beginning Grete is cautious and tries not to disturb Gregory as if he is an invalid or stranger (Kafka), tries to care for his diet by presenting multiple choices for him and clears out the furniture in room to help her loved brother out. Grete, once a childish and dependent soul now emerges as a responsible and decisive woman who understands the needs of the time and at several occasion stands up for her ill-fated brother. But since this newfound predicament of Gregor is an opportunity for Grete to present herself as more mature and responsible to her parents, it changes from her caring after her brother into her becoming a control-maniac and constantly disagreeing with the ones around her. Grete starts coming up with her own ideas about what is needed for Gregor and even though they don’t comply with her brother’s feelings, she sees herself as "an expert in Gregor's affairs" (Kafka). As an outcome of this attitude of hers, Grete is given superior power over Gregor.

Since her prime focus in taking Gregor’s responsibility shifts from his welfare to uplifting her own image, she gradually rolls-down to her third transformation. Soon enough she starts being less considerate towards Gregor and stops thinking about his feelings in scenarios. For instance, when Gregor is out of his room and scares his mother, Grete doesn’t try to stand for her brother against her father’s anger and as Gregor states, Grete’s “all too brief statement” (Kafka) leads to his father’s anger and Gregor getting hurt. Considering the inevitable detachment between a human and vermin and the utterly disgusting sight of the transformed Gregor, her caring attitude towards Gregor gradually changes and her love for Gregor eventually depletes. Also, with Gregor’s current appearance, he was considered an outsider and alienated since the very beginning by the whole family, including Grete. Be it Grete not touching the food left behind by Gregor or having a separate basin for Gregor’s usage, no matter how empathetic she appeared to be towards her Gregor, Grete’s detachment from her ‘brother’ were visible since the first day and kept building up as Gregor transformed into the insect.

Finally, towards the end of the story, Grete is so fed up with the vermin that when Gregor scares away her violin audience, she says “I won't utter my brother's name in the presence of this creature" (Kafka). This statement symbolizes her realization that the insect is no more her beloved brother Gregor and that it is pointless of her to care after a lost cause. The pampered beauty has now transformed into a beautiful and aware beast who insists on Gregor’s disposal like any other vermin and knows right from wrong. Towards the end, the parents realize their daughter Grete’s “increasing vivacity” (Kafka) and state that “she has bloomed into a pretty girl with a good figure” (Kafka) which is final verdict of her transformation through the course of time and events. Hence, by the end of this story, Grete is no more that timid, shy and dependent girl but by manipulating her authority and exercising her mature decision power with Gregor’s care, she has proven herself to be an independent and mature woman capable of handling any issue at hand.

Now considering Grete’s changes as the frame of view, it is evident how drastic Gregor’s metamorphosis has been (from being a lovable brother to a disposable vermin) and highlights the themes of alienation, absurdity of life and limited sympathy. To begin with, Grete’s (Gregor’s closest companion) detachment from Gregor highlights the concept of how limited sympathy can be and when a sympathetic bond is stressed with ground-realities, it is very easy for the emotional connection to fade away just like happened with Grete’s love for her brother. Grete’s (implicitly) and her family’s attitude towards her brother since the first day demonstrates the theme of Alienation which, as also highlighted in Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein* and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, leads people into a being psychologically distanced from their environments and trapped inside a mental prison. This mental unease and discord entailed by alienation is presented by Gregor’s pointless efforts to cheer her sister’s violin performance up but being the outlier, being misinterpreted into his attempts to sabotage his family’s financial and emotional future. And finally, Grete going from caring after her brother, to utilizing him to uplift her own image to actually dehumanizing him portray how absurd and unpredictable life can be and that how much can the circumstances change the people around us and that fate might throw anything, no matter how different it may be, at us.