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Symbolism in The Trial Novel

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ABSTRACT

Franz Kafka's novel The Trial is a contemporary classic. The work is a reserve of meanings containing multifaceted messages. According to Umberto Eco's theory of the open work, an open work is a work in which each reader finds meanings according to their own knowledge. What makes The Trial a reserve of meanings is its intense symbolism. This article will examine what the symbolism in the novel contains and what it points to.

Dava Romanında Sembolizm

Keywords:

*Franz Kafka,
Dava,
Sembolizm,
Otorite,
Birey.*

ÖZ

Franz Kafka'nın Dava romanı çağdaş bir klasiktir. Eser çok yönlü iletiler içeren bir anlamlar rezervidir. Umberto Eco'nun açık yapıt kuramına göre açık yapıt her okurun kendi birikimince anlamlar bulduğu eserdir. Dava'nın anlamlar rezervi olmasını sağlayan ise ondaki yoğun sembolizmdir. Bu makalede romandaki sembolizmin neleri ihtiva ettiği, nelere işaret ettiği incelenecektir.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Trial was begun in August 1914 but never completed. Nevertheless, Max Brod, who owned Kafka's estate, published the novel in 1925, a year after the author's death.

Some information about the adventure of writing the work is presented. Some of these are interpretations based on Kafka's diaries. Again, based on his letters to his fiancée, it is stated that the novel was born out of the artist's broken relationship with Felice Bauer. Elias Canetti, on whom these claims are based and who is frequently quoted, bases them on Kafka's correspondence with Felice Bauer and argues that the breakdown of the engagement was considered by Kafka as a kind of trial.

Canetti argues that the end of the engagement between Kafka and Felice, which lasted about two weeks, constitutes the inspiration for the novel, albeit a negative event. Canetti (2000: 77) says that "in the novel, the engagement is reflected by the arrest in the first chapter and the 'trial' by the execution in the last chapter." Canetti also states that World War I, which broke out at that time, affected Kafka spiritually. According to this interpretation, what is going on in the artist's inner world is an objectified expression in the novel.

Canetti looks for traces of Kafka's state of mind in those days in the novel. He sees Josef K, the protagonist of the novel, as identical with Franz Kafka. K is under pressure throughout the novel. He is faced with humiliation. Canetti draws a parallel between the feelings of shame, humiliation and oppression in the novel and Kafka's state of mind at that time. Kafka feels oppressed because his engagement to Felice Bauer is broken off in front of everyone. The fact that the incident turned into a kind of judgment embarrassed him even more. Therefore, it is stated that the autobiographical and psychological roots of *The Trial* should not be denied. From Canetti's perspective, *The Trial* is a fictional projection of reality. He also emphasizes that the room where Josef K was arrested belonged to Mrs. Bürstner. The similarity of initials between the names Bürstner and Bauer and some parts of Kafka's diaries lead Canetti to the idea that *The Trial* is symbolic of a personal adventure.

Klaus Canetti also touches upon this issue in his biography. He wants to prove that the novel is "a kind of penal imagination" with facts from the artist's life. He says that Josef K was murdered on the eve of his 31st birthday, and Franz Kafka decided to go to Berlin to break off the engagement on the eve of his 31st birthday. He presents as another proof that the hotel where the engagement was broken off was called a court in her diary (Wagenbach, 1984:104). In short, he is of the opinion that the novel is a reflection of Kafka's private life.

There are also those who associate the starting point of *The Trial* with the artist's father. A broader point of view can be mentioned here. The father is the authority. As is known, the artist has problems with his father. He has lived under his father's high sphere of influence since his childhood. Kafka finds his father's behavior oppressive. The father image in Kafka is based on power and cruelty rather than compassion and protection. The father is a fierce and uncompromising authority of approval. Therefore, the relationship between father and son, which develops within the framework of strict obedience, has always been pregnant with tension.

When the authority of the father is expanded, the concept of authority is confronted in a more encompassing sense. Thus, a favorable trajectory emerges for reading the novel on the axis of the struggle with authority. In our opinion, this is a more comprehensive and rational attempt to make sense of the novel.

In his interpretation of Kafka's famous long letter to his father, Michael Müller draws attention to the similarities between the interference in Joseph K's life in *The Trial* and the pressure that the father, Herman Kafka, puts on his son Franz (Kafka, 2002: 152). As a matter of fact, in his letter to his father, Kafka complains that he has developed an unnecessary guilt psychology because of him and uses the last sentence of *The Trial* in his letter. He characterizes the deep wound his father left on him as a feeling of shame that will last even after his death (Kafka, 2002: 57). It is very significant that this characterization is the last sentence of the novel.

The Trial is not a simple didactic text. One cannot speak of a world of meaning with sharp corners. What happens is surreal at times. It can even be linked to surrealism in the sense that it puts human beings and the realities of humanity at its foundation, but processes them in an irrational way.

It has an ambiguous structure. It needs to be interpreted as a narrative without a date, that is, with an indefinite time. Some elements, metaphors and descriptions in the novel aim at suggestion, insinuation and intuition instead of conveying the truth. They present the impressions of certain truths in the world of emotion (Karataş, 2011: 214, 516). With these aspects, it is clear that *The Trial* has a symbolic concept. If we remember that symbolism was born as a reaction to realism, it is not difficult to grasp the ambiguous, dark, symbol-based structure of the novel.

We believe that it would be enlightening to provide this information and present the plot before moving on to the symbolic structure of *The Trial*.

2. PLOT OF NOVEL

The Trial is a novel consisting of nine chapters. The intensity of the events and the number of pages of the chapters are in correspondence. This is evidenced by the fact that the sixth chapter, which has the highest number of pages, is the chapter where the most events are described.

The work begins with this sentence "Someone must have slandered Josef K, because one morning he was arrested out of the blue."¹ (Kafka, 2003a: 5). The first sentence is like the key to the novel. With this sentence, a very simple fact is mentioned. On the other hand, it emphasizes that they are faced with a situation that is difficult to explain. It can be said that the main dilemma in the novel begins with this first sentence. There is an arrest without any reason.

The protagonist Josef K is detained one morning by two officers, Franz and Willem. These are the two officers who will keep him in custody for ten hours a day and collect their wages. K tries to understand what happened to him by asking them questions. He learns that a chief in charge of this work wants to question him.

The chief states that he does not know whether K has been charged or not, but that he is in detention. However, he notes that there is no problem for him to continue his daily life. K is surprised by this. He is under arrest but he will be able to go to work as usual, that is, to the bank.

Soon he receives information that his case will be heard. One Sunday he sets off for the court in one of the neglected corners of the city. The judge who will question him is very sloppy. K realizes this from his first observations. The judge's notebook is yellowed and stained. The fact that he asks K if he is a painter raises doubts about his command of the case. K is upset and angry at being in front of a court that does not even know the defendant's profession. What is happening seems absurd to him. Nevertheless, he makes a rational defense. From his arrest to the attitude of the interrogating judge, he expresses in his words how he has been subjected to a lack of seriousness. He declares that this is an infamous case. Based on what he has seen, he states that this is how he understands how others are treated. Therefore, he adds that even though his own case is seen here, he is actually defending on behalf of others. Thus, from what he says, it can be concluded that he acts not only on behalf of himself but also on behalf of those who are wronged or victimized.

K states that he was arrested about ten days ago. He says that he understood from what the judge said that an innocent painter should probably have been arrested, but that he was mistakenly detained. He continues his speech in an interesting way. He claims that there is a big organization and that judges, gendarmes, gendarmes, bailiffs and even executioners

¹ I read *The Trial* in its Turkish translation, so the quotations in the article are from this book. I have translated the quotations into English myself and the translations of the quotations from the novel throughout the article are my own.

carry out the order of this organization. According to him, the aim of the organization is to open fruitless prosecutions. In such a structure, it is difficult to prevent immorality, bribery and oppression of the innocent. Under the guise of the law, an organization that commits immorality has developed.

While K is talking, he notices a situation. Everyone in the hall is wearing a badge. The group sitting on the right and the group sitting on the left and the judge have the same badge. So-called groups have been formed, but in fact all these seemingly separate groups are under one umbrella. K is convinced that he has encountered a secret game, a conspiracy, and leaves the courtroom amidst insults.

K goes to court the following Sunday, despite not being summoned. He is told that the case will not be heard today. The hero looks around. Things are covered in dust and dirt. He pokes through the books. He sees that there are obscene pictures in them. He realizes that another book is a novel. He says, "Here are the books of the law being read here...The people who read these will judge me!" (Kafka, 2003: 56).

In the meantime, he receives some information from the wife of the bailiff in charge of the court. Since the husband and wife do the court's work, they are able to reside in this place where the trial is being held. When he learns that the court is being held in a room that normally houses laundry tubs, K becomes convinced of the absurdity of this.

During his conversation with her, he learns that she is having an affair with a promising law student. The bailiff also knows that his wife is cheating on him. He tries to rationalize why he did not react. His interlocutors are the judge and the law student who works under him. The bailiff complains that his hands are tied because his interlocutors are people of higher rank than him.

In his first interrogation, K had spoken against Franz and Willem, who had taken him into custody, but one afternoon at the bank he sees them about to be beaten by someone with an official identity. The officials will be punished for their negative actions in the line of duty. Franz and Willem turn to K for help and beg the hero to spare them violence from this man who is about to beat them. K, surprised, offers the beater money to prevent his observers from being beaten. The beater refuses and beats them both.

In the next episode, K's uncle Albert arrives from the countryside. Erna has informed him by letter that a lawsuit has been filed against K. The uncle is worried that such a case might have bad consequences for his family. He invites K to the village for his health and to get away from the case. When K refuses, Albert says he knows a lawyer. He suggests consulting him. K goes to the lawyer with his uncle. The lawyer's house is quite gloomy. In the novel, the courtroom, the bank where K works and the lawyer's house are always narrow, dim, full of documents and gloomy.

The lawyer is unwell and is assisted by a girl named Leni. The Chief of Staff is also sitting in the lawyer's room. They start talking about K's situation. Meanwhile, K goes out on the pretext of hearing a noise and meets Leni. After a short conversation they become closer. It is clear from their conversation that Leni is also aware of K's situation. She even advises him to confess his crime and get away with it. What to confess to is unknown to the readers. After spending time with Leni, K is scolded by his uncle Albert. He says that everyone in the room understands what is going on, especially the lawyer, who is very upset by this situation.

K thinks about writing a defense for this ambiguous and absurd case. He is not hopeful about the lawyer his uncle has found. Especially what the lawyer tells him about the court is particularly disappointing. According to him, the indictment of the court is neither shown to

the defendant nor to his lawyer. Therefore, it is very difficult to determine what the first petition will be based on. Moreover, the lawyer says that these petitions are not read. Hearings are not open and transparent. Lawyers try to bribe the court to obtain information in favor of the accused. Again, according to the lawyer, the court or this wheel, as K stated in his first interrogation, is an outright organization and is destined to exist as long as the world lasts.

Time marches on. Every day the protagonist becomes more and more frustrated by this vague process. One day, a fabricator comes to the bank where K works and tells him that he is aware of K's case through a painter named Titorelli, that this painter paints portraits of the court panel and that perhaps he can help K. K postpones his meetings at the bank and sets out to meet Titorelli. He goes to the suburb where the painter lives. The streets are dirty, rats roam around. The author often uses the word gloom to describe these places.

K finds the painter's house. While talking to him, he looks at his painting. The painter has drawn a Goddess of Justice, but the figure is reflected in the painting with wings. Seeing a scale of justice whose scales cannot be balanced because they are suspended in the air, K thinks that there is a logic error in the painting. He tells Titorelli what he thinks. The painter records that he paints according to whoever pays the money. This dialog is a symbolic part that gives readers an idea about the sense of justice.

The painter knows why the protagonist has come to him. When he gets to the point, he starts talking about what he knows. He tells K that the court opened the case believing in the guilt of the defendants and that they did not change their beliefs throughout the trial. He even tells him that even if he drew portraits of the defendants on canvas and K tried to explain his innocence to the judges on the canvas, K would be more successful than in front of the court. These words, uttered after the previous dialog, make the readers, as well as the protagonist, think deeply about the nature of the concepts of trial, court and justice.

In the sixth chapter, the information the painter gives to K and what he shows is important. Titorelli explains that his father was a court painter and this is how his relationship with the court began. Besides, everything is about the court. K is astonished when Titorelli tells him that even the girls waiting outside his door are related to the court. The painter asks the protagonist what kind of exoneration he wants. He mentions three types of exoneration. The first is a full acquittal. The second is a so-called exoneration. The last is exoneration by procrastination. Titorelli gives a detailed explanation of the three. Then he sells him some of his paintings and sees K off. About to leave the painter's house, K is surprised to find that the room leads to the court pens. The painter tells him that he shouldn't be surprised, since his own room was given to him as a room from the court pens. As he says, it is as if everything is related to the court and every road leads to it.

K becomes increasingly desperate. He thinks his lawyer is not working. He wants to dismiss him. K goes to the lawyer's house for this purpose and meets a merchant there. This person, who is following his own case, sleeps in the lawyer's house. The lawyer also takes care of the merchant's legal affairs.

Here, K learns from the merchant that there are two types of lawyers. It is said that there are big lawyers and small lawyers. Although it is said that there are big lawyers, it is not possible to reach them. After talking to the merchant, K comes to the lawyer and tells him that he has dismissed him. He no longer has a lawyer.

Towards the end of the novel, K is assigned to show an Italian tourist, one of the bank's clients, around. K is to meet him at the cathedral. When the appointment time arrives, K waits at the cathedral and sees that the Italian does not show up. Here he meets the prison

priest. The priest is also one of those who know that K is on trial. The protagonist witnesses that almost everyone is aware of his case. The priest makes some explanations to the protagonist. He tells him about the path of the law with a different metaphor. He symbolically expresses the process K is going through by giving the example that there are gatekeepers waiting at the door of the law and the gatekeeper waiting at the outermost door does not let the defendant in, and that even if one passes through the outermost door, there are three more strong gatekeepers inside. In a way, the priest's example explains the intense bureaucratic wheel that overwhelms people.

At the beginning of the final episode, we are told that a year has passed since the trial began and K is about to turn 31. K arrives home around nine in the evening to find two fat, pale-faced men in frock coats waiting for him. He goes out into the street with them. With these two people on K's arm, K walks a long way out of the city. They come to a quarry. K senses that he is going to be killed. Before he is killed, he sees a light, a silhouette floating towards him from far away. He cannot understand who or what it is. One of the guards pulls out a knife. When K sees the knife, he realizes that death is inevitable and even thinks of stabbing himself with it, but he cannot find the courage. One of the guards holds him while the other plunges the sharp knife into the hero's heart. K is murdered. The work ends with the words that Josef K died in shame.

3. SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE IN THE NOVEL

Symbolism is inherently open to polysemy. However, interpreting the symbolic order through a certain focus provides consistency. The symbolic structure in *The Trial* is largely built on the paradigm of the individual against authority. Inspired by the science of physics, the concept of authority here is the basic element with its own gravity, law and trajectory. The novel already progresses on the axis of the overwhelming power that oppresses human beings. The frightening mechanism K is confronted with oppresses him more and more every day. As events unfold, he becomes subject to the gravity, law and trajectory of this power that he cannot resist. Ultimately, he loses his existence in the gears of a ruthless mechanism.

The Trial is a work that can be more easily understood with an authority-centered reading. Authority, as a political or administrative power, derives its legitimacy from public opinion. With the legitimacy it obtains, it judges and uses coercion. Authority directs. It coerces and limits the individual and punishes him/her when he/she goes beyond the limits. Punishment is the prerogative of the powerful. Therefore, the mass pays attention to what he points out. The rule of authority separates the good from the bad, the legal from the illegal, the innocent from the guilty. In short, it draws boundaries that everyone can understand and exposes and regrets those who step outside the boundaries it draws. In other words, authority retains the power to stigmatize.

Josef K, the protagonist of the novel, is a person stigmatized by authority. He is detained in his hotel room and suddenly has to explain his situation to the inhabitants of this place where he lives. He has been arrested for no reason, but no one knows about it. His situation is also heard at work. K is therefore irritable. He is constantly nervous about others finding out what happened to him. His uncle Albert arrives from the countryside and one of the first things he says is about K's situation. He worries that his being a defendant in a trial will have a negative impact on the whole family. K is no longer able to go on with his old ordinary life.

The stigmatized individual is excluded, or at least lives with the feeling of being excluded. The protagonist cannot get rid of the idea that everyone from his relatives to his

circle of residence and workplace looks at him differently from now on. Having problems with authority is a difficult task to overcome. Its oppressiveness lies primarily in the fact that it stigmatizes the person with a single command. The psychology of the stigmatized is turned upside down. This situation is also observed in the novel. Josef K, a respected member of society, slowly moves away from his respectable position. He is separated from the others because he is now a defendant in a court of law. He is someone who has to explain and defend himself. His uncle offers him a lawyer before he even knows what his crime is. Even Leni, the girl who works at the lawyer's house, tells K to confess his guilt, even though K himself does not know what he is accused of. His accusers do not specify on what basis they want to bring him before the law. K is stigmatized, but he cannot understand why he is experiencing this. He cannot learn this reason, which is kept under a veil of mystery throughout the novel. This is the important point of *The Trial*.

The authority's power to stigmatize is an official right granted to it by law. The exercise of this right is also within the framework of the law. If the authority's decisions are fair and reasonable, they will be accepted in conscience. This is how the stability of authority is ensured. However, in the work, the stigmatization of the protagonist occurs with the arbitrary application of unknown laws.

Stigmatizing, accusing or condemning a person has serious consequences. The stigmatized person is inevitably isolated from society. As a matter of fact, Uncle Albert's uneasiness is related to the potential of K's risky situation. It is perceived that he approaches K as if he will be the black sheep of the family. Therefore, a lawyer is consulted to take precautions. However, the lawyer hired as a defense counselor advises K that it would be beneficial for him to submit to this unjustified domination. Moreover, all the way down to the maid in the lawyer's house, he is always told not to break the law. Even the priest he meets in the cathedral speaks to K in the same manner. No one mentions that there is something clumsy in this process where everyone is on the side of authority. Only K suffers from this situation. It is unclear what he has been accused of all along. He appears before the chief for questioning. He too does not reveal what he is accused of. His trial takes place. In the presence of the judge, he is again unable to find out what the matter is based on. Here a mechanism of vicious bureaucratic domination is at work. There is a chilling power that does not provide information, does not want to be questioned, but has the authority to condemn people for no reason at all.

The protagonist, whose life is going well, has unexpectedly fallen into a dilemma. In this respect, his situation is tragic. The tragic aspect of the situation is soon joined by humor. K is supposedly a prisoner, but he is free to do all his work, to go out and travel as he pleases. The following words of the chief stun the reader as much as K:

"You are under arrest, there is no doubt about that. But you can still work at your job and live your life as usual." Kafka, 2003a: 18).

The crime is not clear. The law is not clear. Nevertheless, there is an arrest sentence. This provision is more of a psychological torment than a criminal sanction. An order that actually exists but is not properly implemented creates a ridiculous situation. A released detention is a paradox. The meaning of accusation and stigmatization must then be emphasized. It is unacceptable to accuse a person without a real and legitimate basis. Other people in the novel ignore this. No one has any objection except K.

The following comments were made about this legal process in the work:

"Much of the way in which the court operates in *The Trial* may be classified as extra-legal or exceptional: indictments and evidence that are not made known, hearings that occur

outside of formal processes, secret punishments in private, execution without verdict and judgment. Yet, there is never any doubt cast upon the legitimacy and legal force of these functions and acts, and all of the characters either fulfill their official roles dutifully or accept the validity of even seemingly arbitrary rules and practices." (Buonamano, 2016: 597).

Another interpretation confirms this. This is perhaps a kind of juristocracy. This hegemonic cadre in the novel resembles "the despotic rulers of ancient times, whose role in modern times was to impose the law, but who were themselves excused", and in this state they are quite brutal:

"By placing the courtroom right next to the washers, Kafka created a sublime game with the civilizations archetype of purification. Unlike dirty laundry, which will, after being cleansed become clean and bright once more, those whose guilt "is worthy of attention" will not be allowed to rehabilitate themselves because they will be brutally executed." (Prole, 2020: 473).

Kafka pursues a real law with the fictional character he creates. K will sacrifice himself on this path (Liska, 2022). Accordingly, the protagonist's search in the novel is actually a search for a reasonable order and law (Smith, 2008: 11). The protagonist goes to court without being summoned. The sight he sees makes him think that the whole thing is a farce because he learns that the place of his first interrogation is actually a rented place. The courtroom is actually a place where a family stays. It is as if a *mise-en-scene* was staged on the day of his trial and this rented place was turned into a court for a day. Just like his arrest, the court phase is also frivolous. The court is already in an out-of-the-way place in a suburban neighborhood that is not befitting an official office. The fact that this court, sitting in a rented house, works on a Sunday is another oddity. K later sees that there are court rooms in narrow rooms, at the bottom of the stairs, at the top of the steps. Neither the architecture nor the staff of this bizarre court has a respectable profile.

The state of the court and the yellowed, stained notebook in front of the judge symbolize the cumbersome bureaucracy, the outdated structure. Especially the judge is not competent in what he does. He did not even record K's profession properly.

Another ridiculous aspect of the court takes place in the cathedral. The prison priest makes a sentence to the protagonist that makes him smile about how seriously the court will be taken:

"The court doesn't ask you for anything! When you come, it doesn't ask why you came, when you want to leave, you just leave." (Kafka, 2003a: 217).

These expressions, which destroy the formality and institutional weight of the judicial procedure, are in contrast to the scenes at the beginning of the novel. When he first learns of his arrest, the officials tell K, who is going to the chief, to take off his night clothes, but they do not want to take him to the chief in that state. They even force him to wear a black jacket so that he would be in a dignified outfit. When K arrives at the chief, he asks for permission to sit down, but the chief refuses. The chief is a lower ranking person in this bureaucratic wheel compared to the court. In contrast to the deference shown to someone at a lower level, K can leave the court, which is a higher authority, at any time with insults. This contrast is the irony of bureaucracy. The imbalance and oddities make it tragicomic.

A court with no official hours of service and no binding rules on the arrival and departure of the accused appears to be extremely frivolous. The misdemeanor charged against K is not clear, but he is expected to appear in court. The protagonist comes to court, but neither he as the accused nor the people in the courtroom are satisfied with the outcome. The judge cannot reach a verdict either. In that case, the protagonist's appearance in court

and his trial are devoid of meaning. There is a formalized legal order, a kind of totalitarianism. This is a conclusion drawn from the symbolic structure of the novel.

Civil servants, a so-called state apparatus, vague rituals are enough to tell the reader that a structure and a system are being encountered. Moreover, there is an obvious hierarchy. In the novel, there are lower and higher ranking officials, big and small lawyers. Even the audience in the courtroom is in a hierarchical order. Those in the first row are always old and white-bearded. The fact that they all wear the same badge, including the judge, leads K to the idea that he encounters an organized structure. The fact that there are those who direct such as the court, the judge, the priest on one wing and those who are directed such as Josef K, merchant Block, uncle Albert on the other wing in the novel inevitably brings the reader to the idea of bureaucratic authority that wants to keep individuals under guardianship, but all this hierarchy and bureaucracy is not enough to establish a rational authority.

The protagonist gets into a conflict out of the blue. However, he neither understands the reason for his conflict with the K legal system nor does this system give him an explanation. There is no explanation for what is done. If it is assumed that the structure K calls an organization symbolizes the state, the author's criticism here can be identified. If the state builds an order that it cannot explain and operates in mystery, its credibility is undermined. The state guarantees its existence by using reason and positive law. If it attributes sanctity to its existence and excludes reason and positive law, its functioning in mystery leads to tragicomic situations. The judge's invitation to respect the court to K, who walked out of the hearing, did not resonate with K, because K refused to be subjected to a trial that lacked transparency and logic. He considers both the trial and the court a disgrace. He does not accept a system in which reason is ignored, the right to information is denied to the individual, but despite all this informality and informality, he hopes to be respected. This is actually Kafka's reaction to the way the modern world functions. The state is not just about bureaucratic functioning. It should not be. Rigid bureaucracy based solely on hierarchy does not work. Only the skeleton of a structure emerges with lower and higher officials, higher authorities, orders and instructions. However, implementation is important. It is also the human reality that will give the body a soul. If the state fails to use reason and becomes shrouded in mysteries, it begins to manage the mass in a metaphorical way. Already in the novel, Josef K encounters an irrational tyranny of law.

An internal mythology has formed around power. In the order where reason retreats, myths and false beliefs, which are wrapped in the armor of the sacred, dominate. What the priest in the cathedral describes with the metaphor of the gate and the guard is a reflection of this. The state has opened a door of law for the individual, but when someone wants to claim their rights, they are not allowed through this door. The door is guarded as if it were the entrance to a holy shrine that must be hidden from people. The guard does not give a reasonable justification to the person he does not let in. He acts as if he is guarding a sacred object. He intimidates the person with the gate, other guards, the order. Instead of getting their rights, people are made to wait and wait in front of these sacralized concepts for a lifetime for no reason. In the priest's example, the person seeking his rights spends his life in front of the door. It is possible to interpret the priest's metaphor as the society being harassed and oppressed by certain concepts. This subtle symbolism also appears in Kafka's other works. It can be said that the author approaches concepts such as authority, state and bureaucracy with a negative perspective through his fiction, witty stories and veiled criticisms. The abundance of malpractices in the novel pushes the reader to generalize about the system or its functioning. As a matter of fact, Franz Kafka, for this reason, narrates from a

perspective that devalues the nature of these concepts. He shows his resistance and reaction with a criticism based on black humor.

The authority that is supposed to administer justice is absurd. Its practices cast a shadow on its reputation. It is thought-provoking that the novel ends with a murder. Josef K, who was arrested without any reason, is killed by the officials again without any reason. The court is neither justified nor fair. Its practices have caused a blatant tragedy. Injustice is the epitome of evil. K's murder is due to the fact that vague rituals, not human beings, are given importance and justice is deviated from. The author, who believes that humanity cannot progress with hollowed-out concepts, sees them as a burden on society.

Expressing the irrationality, conditionality and ruthlessness of the order, Titorelli's words destroy even the faintest glimmer of hope for such a system:

" 'The tribunal does not hear frivolous cases; once it has heard one, it is convinced of the guilt of the accused, and can hardly be dissuaded from this conviction again.' - 'What difficulty,' said the painter, holding up one hand, 'there is no dissuasion in the world. If I were to paint all the judges on a canvas, and you were to stand before them and try to defend yourself, you would have more success than in a real court of law.' " (Kafka, 2003a: 143).

Despite this, it is presented through the mouth of the lawyer in the novel that such an order will continue forever. No matter what one does to defend oneself, no matter what is revealed against the structure, "this great organization" has the power to stop the shaking and maintain the balance in its favor. Therefore, it will exist as long as the world lasts (Kafka, 2003a: 115).

When *The Trial* is read in tandem with *the Diaries*, the author's thoughts are better understood. According to him, there are interest clusters that benefit from the concepts mentioned above. In particular, the concept of authority is most useful for those who benefit from it. In the novel, almost everyone seems to complain about their situation except the judges who are incapable of doing their job properly. The judges have their portraits painted by Titorelli. They live prosperous lives. There is no indication that they are in distress. They are content under the influence and immunity of authority, but the order they are responsible for running is problematic. Titorelli, who is close to the judges, is also content, that is, those with organic ties to authority have no complaints about the system. The painter makes a living by using the court, that is, his relationship with authority. He paints portraits of judges. He easily sells a few paintings while telling K what he knows about the court. The house he lives in was given to him by the court. It is his connection with authority that provides him with the comfort of life. On the other hand, the merchant Block is in litigation, his business has not been resolved for years. Even K's lawyer complains that the process is based on bribery and favoritism. The bailiff of the court has a problem with the judge. K is lost in the maze of law. In short, there are two groups in the novel: those who are satisfied with authority and those who are harmed by it. Those who feel satisfied are not against the existing order, even if it continues unjustly, because their interests are there.

The problem and struggle with authority is the main theme of the novel. This theme is presented in different ways. K's conflict with the court is the most obvious one. At the hotel, the protagonist clashes with the hotel owner Mrs. Grubach because of her opinions on Bürstner. At work, it is observed that he is not on good terms with the deputy manager who symbolizes authority. In the cathedral, the priest and K enter into a dialog as two characters representing different extremes. It can be assumed that a life spent under an unquestioning paternal authority prompted the author to create such a symbolic world.

Reading about Kafka, one can understand how stressful his relationship with his father was. Herman Kafka directed his son to study law. He was even decisive in his relationship with the opposite sex. He also played a major role in the breakdown of his son's third and last engagement. His father's hegemony over Franz Kafka's life is evident. Due to this extreme pressure, the artist loses his self-confidence over time.

Kafka could not have the freedom he wanted both in his family and at work. He was restricted. As it is understood from his letters and diaries, life is a great disappointment for him. The father's authority, which he could not overcome, the broken engagements, the limitation of routines and his submission to them are reflected in the texts he writes as an expression of humiliation. In *The Trial*, it is observed that the protagonist reacts harshly to his trial at first, but as the novel progresses, he takes it for granted. While at first, with his courageous outburst, he says that he does not recognize such a law and court, towards the end he accepts his fate. It is not difficult to relate the protagonist's loss of self-confidence to the real life of the artist.

There are aspects in the novel that are in harmony with the biography of the artist or that do not contradict it. Kafka is a lawyer in an insurance company. The company he works for is a place that requires bureaucratic correspondence. The protagonist of the novel is also a first chief in a bank. He is constantly between documents, in a hustle and bustle. The artist's working conditions, his background in law and the lifestyle he disapproves of are reflected in the novel.

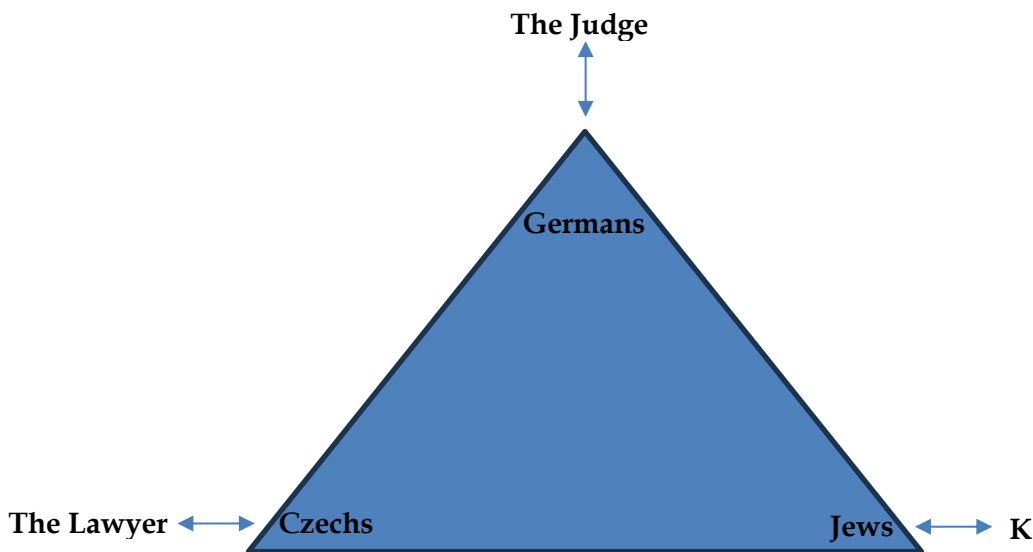
Kafka is also a man of an era of great disintegration. He lived in a period when political maps were changing and empires were disintegrating. At that time, the official authorities call everyone to duty. It is a period of time dominated by chaos. He is a member of a cosmopolitan society. In the novel, this cosmopolitan society is symbolized by the three young people who accompany K, namely the German Rabensteiner, Czech Kullich and Jewish Kaminer.

Franz Kafka is a Jew born in Prague. He writes in German. He is among the Czechs. He is ostracized because he is Jewish. He is not welcomed by the Czechs because he writes in German. In his diary dated March 11, 1915, he writes that even Jews are divided among themselves (Kafka, 2003b: 474). Even among them he is an outsider. He is in a different sociopolitical situation. He becomes alienated from the environment he lives in. In a way that can be related to this, the protagonist of the novel is as if he is a stranger, an outsider. He resides in a hotel. He is constantly wandering. He wanders throughout the novel in the triangle of work, hotel and appointment. In fact, the existence of a trajectory centered on the inability to locate and make sense of things is evident here. It is possible to think that this is an individual and political problem. After all, it is probably not a big claim to say that this endless theme of alienation in his works has something to do with his feeling of exclusion. Therefore, the fact that the protagonist is marked with the letter K is a detail that should not be overlooked. The loneliness felt in the face of alienation, the idea of remaining singular can be considered as a reason why the name is not given in its full form, as a whole. The individuality caused by the intense oppression in the novel partly explains why the protagonist's name is symbolized by a single letter.

In the light of these explanations, it is possible to make the symbolism underlying the fiction more visible. We can even show this with a concrete diagram.

In the work, the judge who represents authority, the lawyer who relates to him and K who symbolizes civil victimization form a triangle. *The Trial* lends itself to readings together with Kafka's biography. The German, Czech and Jewish societies of the author's time form another sociopolitical triangle that can be adapted to this fictional triangle. The Germans,

who were in a position of authority according to the political conjuncture of that period, the Czechs who had relations with them, and the despised Jews form symbolic triangles intertwined in the novel. (Deleuze&Guattari, 2020: 22)



The themes of guilt and suicide in *The Trial* should be evaluated together with the artist's biography and state of mind.

When Josef K is arrested, he suddenly thinks of committing suicide. Then he gives up, thinking about why he should take his own life. Even though he gives up on this idea, he thinks of suicide again at the end. When he sees the knife in the hands of the officers who take him away to kill him, he thinks of taking it and stabbing himself with it, but he doesn't dare. He envisions dying of his own volition rather than being killed. He gives up again, but this time he cannot escape death. The guards end his life. The artist, who states in his diary that he is "ready to die at any moment", slowly leads the fictional protagonist to his death with a sense of guilt, which is sad but coincides with his own spiritual realities (Kafka, 2003b: 272).

Elias Canetti approaches the themes of suicide and death in the novel from a different angle. He is convinced that K is the epitome of Kafka. He attributes the transformation of the name Josef K into the pseudonym K at the beginning of the novel to the gradual shrinking of the protagonist. The shortening of the name is associated with the idea of self-degradation and withdrawal from power (Canetti, 2000: 87). The feelings of guilt, humiliation and alienation are brought together with death and the novel ends.

K succumbs to a vague case. It is as if his investigation into what his crime is becomes a kind of crime. The idea of absurdity and the impenetrability of authority is presented with a harsh finale. Insolvability and depression, veiled by the veil of symbolism, come to the fore when K loses his life. The character, who becomes more and more timid with the advice and counsel given about the trial, resigns himself to a passive death. However, in his first interrogation, the protagonist declares that he is defending on behalf of everyone, even though he is seemingly on trial himself. K is the defender of a social, not an individual, trial. He resists a whole mechanism of domination that has turned into a kind of show of force, oppressive but unwarranted and perfunctory. The heavy pressure undermines his motivation and dissolves his resistance by causing a consciousness of guilt.

The places in the novel resemble grotesque paintings. Gloom is their most prominent feature. The streets are dirty, the rooms are so dark that they are depressing. The architecture of the court is depicted as shabby and disorganized. The protagonist suffers from shortness of breath when he enters here. The bank where K works is full of documents. The hotel has a dim atmosphere. The cathedral is the same way. There is almost no light in the novel and this symbolizes the lack of hope. Only in the finale, before K is murdered, does the light make a vague appearance when a window opens. It can be thought that the protagonist, who looks at it with hope, albeit very briefly, is in search of someone who will understand him.

When all that has been said is taken together, it is not difficult to conclude that *The Trial* is a novel of intense symbolism.

4. CONCLUSION

The Trial is a work based on the relationship between authority and the individual. Kafka also utilizes the concepts of hierarchy and bureaucracy that reinforce authority in his novel. There are traces of an organized order and bureaucratic formation in the symbolic structure of the court. The image of the court can easily be considered as an institution identical with authority. The rule-lessness of this structure, which exercises domination over individuals, is a big issue. The inexplicable effort of the law and the bureaucracy, which are supposed to operate by rules, to exert pressure is expressed in the novel with subtle sarcasm. K is accused, but even the court that tries him cannot concretely reveal this imaginary crime. Accusation and judgment seem to focus on social pressure, not legal rules. The suggestions made to K by those who hear that he is on trial create pressure on the protagonist.

The violation of the most basic principles of law by the institution responsible for enforcing the law is dealt with sarcastically. Neither Josef K nor his lawyer ever once mentions the presumption of innocence, because the court has already made up its mind. The information given by the lawyer and the painter about the court and the judges already confirms this. This situation points to the black humor that persists in the novel along with symbolism. A legal mechanism that claims to be prejudiced but respectable -perhaps even just- is the main issue that gives the novel its black humor and absurdity. In such a legal labyrinth, K searches for the exit but cannot find it.

If authority does not rationalize, it takes refuge in mysteries. This damages its prestige and leads to chaos in social life. This is perhaps the most important fact to be drawn from the symbolism in the novel. In the work, the existence of two groups, those who are satisfied with the authority and those who suffer from it, draws attention. While those who see injustice and oppression object to the situation, it is observed that those who benefit from the authority do not make a sound at all. The author implicitly describes a universal human reality.

Franz Kafka is a man with a weak life force and a need to be cared for, as far as can be understood from his pity about his inner world. The fact that his novels do not end positively is related to his own life. Kafka reflects his private life and psychology to a great extent in his works. As a matter of fact, in the article, the inspiration for the novel is again related to his personal life. Kafka was a person who had problems with authority as long as he lived. He perceives his father, his supervisor at work, his fiancée, the state and institutions as a focus of pressure. He thinks that they restrict him. He always has the idea of entering into a struggle with them. It cannot be said that this is a relentless struggle against individuals or institutions because there is no actual serious resistance in his private life. It is

more accurate to talk about a mental struggle. He reveals this through his writings in a symbolic language.

Perhaps the reason why this is so is that he sees this: The end of the individual, whose points of resistance have crumbled under the crushing force or forces of the age that cannibalize human beings, is certain. That's probably why the sense of hope is symbolized in a very weak way by that fleeting light at the end of the novel.

The fact that the protagonists of the novel are known by their jobs such as merchant, lawyer, chief of staff, interrogation judge, bailiff, painter, maid, assistant manager is again a characteristic of the era. There is a way of life in which status gives identity.

It is possible to consider it as an irony of life that Franz Kafka, who lived with the feeling of being limited throughout his life, reaches beyond political, personal and periodical boundaries with a novel containing intense symbolism such as *The Trial*.

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