

Disappointment and Dystopic Fear in Franz Kafka's The Trial

Gözde Kaba

Submitted to the
Institute of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
English Language and Literature

Eastern Mediterranean University
December 2017
Gazimağusa, North Cyprus

Approval of the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Hakan Ulusoy
Acting Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Can A. Sancar
Chair, Department of Translation and Interpretation

We certify that I have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Can A. Sancar
Supervisor

Examining Committee

1. Asst. Prof. Dr. Can A. Sancar

2. Asst. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Zaman

3. Dr. Rıza Tuncel

ABSTRACT

This thesis would like to investigate the ways in which Franz Kafka explores the themes of disappointment and dystopic fear in *The Trial*. The situations of Kafka's characters have often been compared to the absurd and belittled characters of the post First World War era, the inhabitants of *the Wasteland*, nihilistic *Waiting for Godot*-like beings who are helpless before the forces of tyranny, and who thereby succumb to despair in the search of justice. We will glance through Kafka's *The Trial* from a Lacanian psychoanalytical approach by applying Jacques Lacan's Three Orders; The Imaginary, The Symbolic and The Real in understanding the destruction of the individual. The individual can be destroyed either psychologically or physically or both in Kafka's works, through extreme duress, the compulsion to conform to the expectation of the System, or murder. This is not self-destruction. It is unwilling victimhood in Kafka's works, although it is often with little will to self-preservation given the great power of the 'system'.

The modern state, with its sophisticated apparatus of social control can diminish the power of the individual to the negligible. One of the foremost novelists of the 20th century, Franz Kafka became identified with a mood that characterised his work, namely a world portrayed by him as bleak, uncertain, threatening and unreal, with Kafka, so much so that the term 'Kafkaesque' came into use to describe reality whenever it resembled Kafka's fictional world. In the progression of his works we believe we can see an unfolding philosophy the initial premise in Kafka's early work that the fear of the father is a source of angst and alienation the later works, particularly *The Trial* equate patriarchy with the System with far more unpleasant consequences

as the System has the power not only to oppress, but also to kill. Sense of social mission in the novel reaches its peak in the destruction of Josef K. In conclusion, the thesis wish to establish that in fact *The Trial* presents a critique of the period in which Kafka wrote that is hopeful and uplifting. By depicting the nightmarish confusion and ultimate downfall of his protagonist, Kafka seeks to alert and forearm his readership in opposition to European totalitarianism, and to celebrate the unconquerable human spirit.

Keywords: Tyranny, justice, disappointment, dystopic fear, the destruction of the individual, system, Law.

ÖZ

Bu tez Franz Kafka'nın *Dava* romanında hayal kırıklığı ve olabileceğinin en kötü korku temalarını araştırdığı yöntemleri inceleyecektir. Kafka'nın karakterlerinin durumları Çorak Ülke'nin yerlileri, zulüm güçlerinden önceki yardıma muhtaç nihilist *Godot'yu Beklerken* gibi ve bu sebepten adalet arayışında karamsarlığa yenik düşen I. Dünya Savaşı çağı sonrasının saçma, gülünç ve küçümsenmiş karakterleriyle karşılaştırılmıştır. Kafka'nın *Dava*'sına bireyin yıkımını anlamak için psikanalitik yaklaşımla Jacques Lacan'ın Üç Kuralı olan Hayali, Sembolik ve Gerçekli'ğini uygulayarak göz gezdireceğiz, Kafka'nın eserlerinde birey ya ruhen ya bedenen ya da her iki şekilde yani son derece baskı yoluyla, sistemin beklentisine uyum isteği ya da cinayetle yok olur. Bu bir kendi kendini yok etme değildir. 'Sistemin' büyük gücü tarafından verilen kendi kendini az da olsa koruma isteğiyle olmasına rağmen, Kafka'nın eserlerinde bu isteksiz bir kurban olma durumudur.

Modern devlet, kendisinin gelişmiş sosyal kontrol aygıtı ile bireyin gücünü yoksanılabilir seviyesinde azaltabilir. 20. Yüzyılın önde gelen romancılarından Franz Kafka eserini tanımlayan bir ruh haliyle özdeşleşti, yani başka bir deyişle kendisi tarafından kasvetli, belirsiz, şüpheli, endişe verici ve gerçek dışı olarak tasvir edilen bir dünya ile. Eserlerinin ilerleyişinde, baba korkusunun endişe, kaygı, keder ve yabancılaşmanın bir kaynağı olan Kafka'nın ilk eserinde baş terim olarak yayılan bir felsefeyi özellikle ataerkil toplum düzeni sistemle daha fazla hoş olmayan sonuçlarla birlikte görebileceğimize inanırız. Romandaki sosyal görev algısı Josef K.'nin yıkımında zirveye ulaşır. Sonuç olarak, bu tez *Dava*'nın Kafka'nın içinde bulunduğu umut dolu ve neşelendirici dönemin eleştirisini sunduğunu ortaya koymayı ve

kanıtlamayı umuyor. Kafka kabus gibi kargaşayı ve başkahramanının nihai çöküşünü tasvir ederek okuyucu sayısını Avrupa bütüncülüğüne karşı önceden hazırlayıp ikaz etmeye ve yenilmez insan ruhunu kutlamaya çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Zulüm, adalet, hayal kırıklığı, olunabilinecek en kötü korku, bireyin yıkımı, sistem, Hukuk.

To my beloved son Yiğit Murat Kul

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank my parents for their support and motivation. I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Robert D'alanzo, Prof. Dr. Prakash R. Kona for their advice and encouragement in spite of the physical distance between us. And special thanks to my dear friends Bilun Aliođlu, Robin Davie and Duyal Tüzün for their technical contributions on my thesis.

Also I am truly thankful to Asst. Prof. Dr. Mine Sancar for her encouragement and Asst. Prof. Dr. Can A. Sancar, my supervisor, a great mentor for giving me the chance to write my thesis, his patience, effort and encouragement on creating my ideas while writing my thesis.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 A brief summary of *The Trial*

This seminal work is known as Kafka's last and unfinished novel which was written in 1915 and published in 1925, a year after his death. Josef K. is a man from an unknown country and also the sole protagonist of the novel who lives alone and owns the second highest position in a bank, gets arrested on his thirtieth birthday for an unknown reason. Within a very short time Josef K. finds himself struggling in a case with an invisible Law and is always followed or surrounded by the unknown people who conform in this unknown organisation.

As an ordinary, highly 'system' adapted obedient citizen of an unidentified country, Josef seeks answers to this bizarre situation in order to find his way out from this dead ended labyrinth kind of nightmarish condition which later he finds all his attempts are inconclusive. Every happening is uncertain and leaves Josef disoriented so that soon he realises that his life has entirely changed. Throughout the story Josef faces his situation alone. The anonymous but all pervasive bureaucracy hounds Josef K. to his death until his next birthday.

Beyond the plot and this protagonist who is an ordinary young man from the middle class, and seemingly not acting against the 'system', there lies the political aspect in the novel which the reader witnesses how Kafka portrays the victimisation of his

protagonist Josef K. within a different manifestation, indeed absurd way of the 'system' in the context of the wider society.

In this novel we are introduced to a pernicious and dysfunctional bureaucratic system destroying Josef's individuality, taking his limited freedom away, having him under suspicion of either criminal proceedings, the nature of which he has not one single clue about, and causing his tragic death at the end.

1.2 Franz Kafka

One of the foremost novelists of the 20th century, Franz Kafka became identified with a mood that characterised his work, namely a world portrayed by him as bleak, uncertain, threatening and unreal, leaving the reader feeling exposed, vulnerable and uneasy at the end of the day. This became a trademark with Kafka, so much so that the term 'Kafkaesque' came into use to describe reality whenever it resembled Kafka's fictional world. Apart from some of his aphorisms, Kafka's literary works are characterised by ambivalence and a gloomy atmosphere, and they are characterised by isolated and hapless, belittled protagonists. The very distinctive feature that can be no co-incidence is the constant use of names which reflect the writer's own – Josef K., K. in *The Castle*, Samsa (rhyming with Kafka). This is another sign of his identification with his suffering characters. Kafkaesque; "Characteristic of the style, tone and attitudes of the writings of Franz Kafka...nightmarish atmosphere which he was capable of creating through the pervasive menace of sinister, impersonal forces, the feeling of loss of identity, the evocation of guilt and fear, and the sense of evil that permeates the twisted and 'absurd' logic of ruling powers" (Cuddon, 1992, p.472) in this work on the illogic and absurdity of oppression.).

Kafka was born on July 3, 1883 and died of tuberculosis on June 3 in 1924. Born into a middle class Jewish family that valued education, Franz studied in the Altstädter Staatsgymnasium, a strict high school for the academic elite. Franz's forte was intellectual, and certainly not physical, as we establish elsewhere in this work. In 1901 Franz enrolled at the Charles Ferdinand University of Prague where he studied Law, graduating in 1906. This field of study did not seem to interest him much ("... dislike of the study of law, which he never attempted to conceal..." Brod, 1995, p.41) but it certainly prepared him for the depiction of legal nightmares in *The Trial*. After a short appointment at an Italian insurance company, Kafka joined the Workers' Accident Insurance Institute for the Kingdom of Bohemia, thus learning all about bureaucratic structures – also useful for *The Trial*. At this time in his life, Kafka learned Yiddish, and interested himself in the rise of active Judaism, although he did not become an activist. Perhaps this is due to the feeling of helplessness that characterise Kafka, and that is alluded to in the title of this section.

Young Franz was never a healthy child, nor was the adult Franz Kafka. As the quote above shows, Franz fantasized about being successful like his father, and big and brave like his father, hence the image of the coach and the heroic rescue of the mistreated girl. "According to his mother, he was a weak, delicate child, generally serious...a child who read a lot, and didn't want to take any exercise..." (Brod, 1995, p.14). So, it seems that Franz, despairing of being like his father outside his dreams, and, if Brod is right about his mother's opinion, declining to build his physique through exercise (more helpless behaviour), decided to put his efforts into his writings instead.

Bad health dogged Franz from an early age, and this had an enormous impact on his writings, both in his works and in his private correspondence. He describes himself as “the thinnest person I know” (Parry, 1994, p.xi). His poor health was “an obstacle” throughout his life (Stanch, 2013, p.4). In *The Trial*, just as when Josef K. needs his wits about him, he encounters an obstacle in his physical health, and becomes “dizzy” at just the wrong moment – when facing officialdom in an attempt to discover the instances of his upcoming hearing. He notes that physical distress leaves him “put at the mercy” of his tormentors (p.53). Perhaps we can see young Franz put at the mercy of his perceived tormentors as a child and young man, and projecting that feeling onto the character of K.

Dying at the most productive age of 41, Franz Kafka left some of his works uncompleted. His closest companion, Max Brod who was also an author, and who was an active Zionist went against his friend’s last wishes, which were that his works should not be published, but in fact burned. Incidentally, the Nazis burned his sisters. A man with such a love of knowledge seems odd in this respect.

Franz Kafka is synonymous for many with the themes of alienation, high anxiety in a complex modern world context, powerlessness in the face of faceless bureaucracy, physical vulnerability and absence of hope. He is the great writer on the dilemma of the individual and the individual’s place in a modern society, the quest for freedom (and its frustration), and the Hamlet-like dilemma and mis-match between the life of the intellect and action. Here we explore these themes, among others, in *The Trial*, yet contend that his world view and intimate personal view do not encompass hopelessness, but rather an audacious sense of hope in spite of all.

Kafka's distinctive style presents his readers with the traumatic sides of his personal psyche and the reflections of his ethnic roots, as well as his family background, his relationship with his father, Hermann Kafka, who is known to posterity by his authoritarian and oppressive fatherhood. The looming figure of the father is of enormous importance to Kafka's writings, and part of their darkness. As mentioned, the father is equated with oppression in Franz's mind, either directly within the family, or as an ugly aspect of rule of the state through patriarchy. The strongly emotional engagement with this comes across very clearly in what Franz writes in *Letter to my Father*. "My writings were about you, in them I merely poured out the lamentations I could not pour out on your breast" (Brod, 1995, p.25). This could not be clearer – the haunting effect of Kafka's father was both a spur to create and a source of enormous regret. The poignant detail of Franz's father's breast points to a place where the boy could not find the comfort he craved, where instead he found rejection and pain.

Kafka's high levels of anxiety have perhaps been exaggerated, but Kafka certainly faced "... the anguish of his personal life" (Murray, 2004, p.4). His most famous biographer and friend (rendering him a primary source), Max Brod sees Kafka in "despair" (Brod, 1995, p.143). The reasons for Kafka's anxiety are many. His family life was difficult, particularly with a domineering and seemingly uncaring father. In a letter to his father, Franz wrote of "the fear I have of you... this fear involves so many details that when I am talking I cannot keep half of them together" (Brod, 1995, p.16). The second half of this quote suggests great nervousness in his father's presence, rendering his father useless in terms of emotional support. In one of his works *The Verdict*, Kafka has a young man driven to suicide by a father who condemns him as an evil character. The sense of victimhood at the hands of the father, and the ineffectual

presence of the mother in juxtaposition give this work an oedipal character, and an insight into the angst that Franz inherited from his father in particular, but also from family life in general. The sense of betrayal in this vital parental role is reflected in *The Trial* when K's *in loco parentis*, his uncle, says, in the light of the unknown allegations against his nephew "To some extent I am still your guardian, and until today I was proud of that fact" (p.76). Again the fog of uncertainty with "to some extent," and then the horrible realisation that K.'s uncle is no longer proud of his association with his nephew – rather that the uncle, like so many, sees Josef as tainted and unworthy - without the slightest clarification of why this should be.

The themes of physical frailty, lack of empowerment in society, victimhood and, we can perhaps say, a deep sense of the ridiculous nature of human existence, come together in an abiding image of Kafka's – the insect. Of course, this finds its greatest expression in *The Metamorphosis* in which an average middle class salesman transforms into a giant bug and experiences all the humiliations and horrors associated, on the surface, with being an insect, and, on a deeper level, being a human without power, dignity, self-respect or love ("fit for the dustbin" – Parry, 1994, p.vii). Kafka uses the insect image from an early age. In his letters to Felice (with whom he seems to have been in love), he depicts himself as a helpless insect – an unconventional way of trying to win a lady's heart.

Regarding Kafka's emotional development in relation to his parentage, Franz spent almost his whole life in the shadow of a dominant father. Hermann Kafka did his military service for three years, began his first job as a butcher in his father's shop, had a very hard childhood, and had to work for long hours for his family in his adult years.

There is no doubt that Franz Kafka respected his father and envied his strength. As Brod explains, unfortunately, respect seems to have been one-sided: “All his life Franz was overshadowed by the figure of his powerful and extraordinarily imposing father – tall, board-shouldered – who, at the end of a life full of work and success in business...in whom he took a patriarchal pride [sic]...His admiration for his father in this respect was endless...it was fundamental in Franz’s emotional development” (Brod, 1995, p.5). Due to his father’s ways they were never be able to construct a loving father-son relationship. This emotional deficit meant young Franz experienced loneliness and sadness in spite of coming from a large family (he had five siblings in his early years). “Franz’s childhood, by all accounts, must have been indescribably lonely...governesses and soulless schools. His first memories of erotic awakening are connected to a French governess or some Frenchwoman. The sadness and awkwardness of his early years – ‘earth-weight’ Kafka calls this characteristic...” (Brod, 1995, p.9).

The negative impact of the lack of affection from his father was compounded by his mother’s being very busy with the family business. A diary entry written in 1911 is telling. “I put up with gentle pokes in the back from my mother on our Sunday walks, and with warnings and prophecies which were much too remote for me to be able to connect them with the sufferings I was then enduring...from sadness because, since the present was so sad I believed I dare not leave it until it turned into happiness; from fear, because, afraid as I was of the smallest present step, I considered myself unworthy...responsibility to form an opinion about the great adult future...every tiny advance seemed a fraud...I could spend a long time before going to sleep, imagining myself one day driving into the ghetto as a rich man in a coach-and-four, and with one

word rescuing a beautiful girl who was being unjustly beaten, and taking her away with me in my carriage; but undisturbed by all this make-believe which probably fed on nothing more than a sexuality which was already unhealthy...” (Brod, 1995, p.11). The inability to connect his “sufferings” with his mother’s words suggests just the alienation within the family that we see in his later writings; and the impossibility of “the smallest present step” shows his feeling of helplessness in doing anything about this unfortunate situation. The lack of effective family support, and the sadness of life in general led to a sense of unworthiness – and the psychological ailments were reflected in physical ones.

Sexuality is difficult to explore in biography and literary criticism. It is usually a private, even taboo, matter, and evidence is, of course, hard to come by. Accounts can be spurious. Also, Kafka lived long before the sexual liberation of the 1960s, when sex became an acceptable topic of polite conversation (Brown, 2000, p.2). Yet Kafka gave away a great deal about his sexual nature in his writings. While feeling alienated from society, Kafka desired a conventional bourgeois marriage and a conventional sex life (Parry, 1994, p.xi). He went about it in a strange way, as mentioned above, and, as James (2007) points out Franz “... never quite got away from the idea that the consummation of sexual desire, if it should ever happen, would be *Schmutz* – something dirty” the sense of guilt implicit in a supposedly dirty act finds expression in both Kafka’s private life and his writings (Brod, 1995, p.11) describes the young Kafka with “a sexuality that was already unhealthy”; and he also hints at an Oedipus complex, with an erotic view of the mother and a subconscious hatred or fear of the father (Brod, 1995, p.32). With Kafka we can perhaps say that his fear of his father

was not subconscious, but very overt. We explore this below. With K., sex is a matter of using a poor girl for gratification once a week – no uplifting phenomenon.

Reading Kafka in his letters reveals a life in the shadow of such a father. Thus Kafka's whole life was blighted, particularly in his romantic relationships, none of which were to lead to marriage. In *Letters to Milena* - Milena Jesenska Pollak, Kafka's former lover, writes a letter to her humble friend Haas from a concentration camp saying: "Oh, if only I could be dead without having to die...Don't let me perish alone like a dog!" (Ed. Haas, 1999, p.11). This makes us turn our attention to World War I rather than Kafka's unhealthy romance life. So, can it be a coincidence that this is the fate of Josef K. in *The Trial*? Dying like a dog? It seems rather to point to K.'s end foreshadowing the events of the Nazi era, with Jews and other 'racial degenerates' de-humanised. Kafka did not write extensively about the socio-political situation of European Jewry, but his novels most certainly depict a futuristic nightmare world in which totalitarian systems served by unaccountable minions tyrannize and oppress, and, indeed, kill the hapless (Roberts, 2004, p.486). While we would not contend that Kafka foresaw the Holocaust, but we can say that he foresaw and understood the historical conditions under which such a thing could happen.

In a letter to Milena, Kafka answers her question about how it feels to be a Jew in Europe. "...you're only asking me if I belong to those anxious Jews...furthermore only palpable possessions give them the right to live...From the most improbable sides Jews are threatened with danger...leave the dangers aside and say they are threatened with threats" (Ed. Haas, 1999, p.40-41). Anxiety was the lot of Jews in Europe at this time, and this was not only with the rise of the German far right. Already in the Austro-

Hungarian Empire, Jews were subject to systematized racism, and in most countries there was a great deal of anti-semitism. This, of course, reached its apex with the Nazis, yet they exploited a lot of what was already there. Kafka is almost a symbol of the frightened, cowed Jew. “When you talk about the future, don’t you sometimes forget that I’m a Jew? It remains dangerous, Jewry...” (Ed. Haas, 1999, p.117).

But in Kafka’s nature there lies fear anyway. In his letters to Milena he frequently mentions the terrible fear that he cannot dispel; “...my nature is: Fear...unfathomable of fear...” (Ed. Haas, 1999, p.57). Kafka writes as if fear was the essence of his being, a feeling that captured his soul and never permitted him to establish his persona. A vast fear eroding his self-confidence, with awful consequence for his life, but also generating a formidable creative output.

Marriage was never a serious undertaking for Kafka. This, as we have already argued, seems to have been part of his sense of personal unworthiness and failure. Marriage, a home, children, responsibility all made him recoil. In one of his letters to Milena, then twenty-seven, he defines marriage as *Katorga*, which is a Russian word meaning a long term of imprisonment with subsequent exile. “For those who enter into marriage out of despair – what do they gain? If loneliness is joined to loneliness it never leads to a *being-at-hemo* but to a *Katorga*. One loneliness reflects itself in the other, even in the deepest, darkest night... Marriage means rather – if one is to define the condition sharply and strictly – to be secure” (Ed. Haas, 1999, p.186). “What the three engagements had in common was that everything was all my fault, quite undoubtedly my fault” (Haas, 1999, p.43). Due to fear or irresponsibility, Kafka was conscious of the damage caused to others as a result of his attitude towards marriage. The word

“despair” suggests marriage as a refuge, indeed a last resort. The idea of two lonelines blended is interesting; Kafka explores the theme of loneliness in *The Trial*, with characters occasionally trying to reach out to others only to be rebuffed. K.’s pathetic need to have his proffered hand shaken springs to mind. The above quote further highlights Kafka’s self-defeating nature; he writes to the woman he (probably) loves, and yet uses the image of a prison to characterise marriage. However, as so often with Kafka, there is ambivalence here. The prison image is very unattractive, but the words “to be secure” are not – indeed they represent the craving of young Franz to have the comfort and protection of a functional family life.

Felice Bauer met Kafka in Prague in 1912, a result, as so often, of Kafka’s friendship with Brod. As was his habit, Kafka started a prolific correspondence with Felice, and once again we can see the usual themes. She did not respond very much, and this disappointed Kafka; he puts himself down in his recurring ways of self-defeat in relation to women. He speaks of “prostrating” himself (see below). He dedicated his short story, *The Verdict* (Kafka, 2016, gist) to Felice, a dark tale of a boy oppressed and ultimately drowned by his father. (Drowning can be seen as symbolic of helplessness in an alien environment.). Again, the long shadow of Hermann. In spite of the usual feebleness in the arts of seduction, the couple got engaged in 1914, but this lasted for only a few weeks. March 25, 1914 - a letter to Felice: (Ed. Heller, Jurgen Born, 1999, p.418-420).

It is a telling detail that Kafka feels that he, the great writer and communicator, cannot express himself to Felice except when running behind her is a telling detail, as is his image of his own self disappearing. The word “humiliated” is typical of his self-image,

and again we have the dehumanising image of the dog – cf Josef K.’s end and Milena’s. He states that his disappointments are endless, and that he is immature. Then he makes his usual expression of desire – a life with Felice – which is undercut by his previous words. The final assertion that marrying Felice would be an escape from his “dead end” life foreshadows his letter to Milena in which he sees marriage as something entered into due to “despair” The two options of marrying Felice or “going away” adds to the sense of wishing to escape – almost a sense of wanting to use her now that he sees his life as coming apart. He later depicts his main protagonist in *The Trial* constantly trying to evade threats and embrace opportunities, forge relationships, sometimes being assertive to authority, sometimes kowtowing. His life is a dead end, he has no family life, his sex life is only with a prostitute, and his death is like a dog’s. There is such a feeling of disappointment, victimhood, scapegoatism and an all-pervading haplessness.

The result of Franz’s upbringing was, “...according to the “Letter”, (and in this passage Kafka provides his own commentary to the conclusion of his novel *The Judgement*) “In front of you I lost my self-confidence and exchanged it for an infinite sense of guilt. In recollection of this infinity I once wrote about someone, quite truly, ‘He is afraid the shame will even live on after him.’ Kafka goes on to construe his life after this is a series of efforts to break loose from his father’s sphere, to reach fields where he would be safe from his father’s influence.... That’s why he wants to lump all his literary work together as an ‘attempt to get away from my father,’from that of a man haunted by the father-image” (Brod, 1995, p.24).

Here Brod tries to get to the essence of Kafka's tortured sense of his upbringing and oppression by his father, and we can perhaps see Kafka's depiction of the state and wider society in his writings as a projection of what he sees as the pernicious phenomenon of patriarchy, the heartless control exercised by authority. In *The Trial*, the main protagonist does not have a father, and we may see this as a conscious desire to characterise the state as the oppressive father-figure, both feared and courted by the increasingly helpless and disorientated K. – a man who, like Kafka himself, does not know how to wield power or to resist those who do.

The father, or father-figure, creates a feeling of guilt in the younger one through oppression characterised by orders and punishments. The rules are set even before the child's birth (*cf* Structuralism mentioned below), and Kafka expresses this sense of helplessness and the pain of injustice. As Slavoj Žižek puts it, "... [the] Kafkaesque situation of being guilty, of not even knowing what (if anything) he is guilty of : I am forever haunted by the prospect that I have already made decisions which will endanger me and everyone I love, but I will learn the truth only – if ever – when it is already too late" (Žižek, 1999, p.338). It is interesting that Žižek both asserts guilt and brings it into question – intuitively one is either guilty or not guilty rather than both – and thereby evokes the essence of Kafka's nightmare worlds. In the words of James, (2007), the "remorselessness logic of an irrational system" is at play here – James's is a self-conscious oxymoron reflecting Kafka's work. K. is a being without a proper self. He lives his life and takes his decisions according to the patriarchal system – which he does not question.

Kafka's ideas on fatherhood are not positive. In one of his letters to Milena he writes; "Not even I, who have never read a letter from your father, can read anything new in it. It comes from the heart and is tyrannical and believes it ought to be tyrannical in order to satisfy the heart. The signature has really little importance, it only represents the tyrant..." (Haas, 1999, p.118). It seems that all fathers are tyrants to Kafka. Of his own father: "What I'm afraid of, afraid of with wide-open eyes, helplessly drowned in fear...is only this inner conspiracy against myself (which you will understand better from the letter to my father...for the letter is too much directed towards its purpose) which is perhaps based on the fact that I who, in the great Game of Chess am not even Pawn of a Pawn, far from it, yet now, against all the rules of the game and to the confusion of the game, even want to occupy the place of the Queen – I, the Pawn of the Pawn, thus a figure which doesn't exist, which has no part in the game...if I really want this, it would have to happen in another more inhuman way" (Ed. Haas, 1999, p.59). Yet again "helpless," and the word "drowned" (see *The Verdict*), and the theme of self-defeat with his "inner conspiracy against myself." Belittling himself, as usual, Kafka goes beyond the clichéd idea of being only a pawn to being less than that, indeed nothing. "What difference could his father's approval make of Kafka?...the fact that he did need it existed once and for all as an innate, irrefutable feeling, and its effects lasted to the end of his life a general load of fear, weakness, and self-contempt" (Brod, 1995, p.23). This feeling of fear and the desire to be freed by his master and not being able to succeed, due to the authoritarian and unreachable, distant nature of his father, he not only had to repress his will and the right to be himself, he had to remain fearful and weak. Then later one can observe his subconscious was reflected in his literary works as can be noted in Kafka's *Letter to My Father*: "My writings were about you, in them I merely poured out the lamentations I could not pour out on your breast"

(Brod, 1995, p.25) even if he did try to get away from this haunted father image in his works, without his father's approval or communication it was not enough to solve this problem. "...a series of efforts to break loose from his father's sphere, to reach fields where he would be safe from his father's influence" (Brod, 1995, p.24). Then again from *Letter to My Father*; "For me you developed the bewildering effect that all tyrants have whose might is founded not on reason, but on their own person" (Brod, 1995, p.22). As it is mentioned previously, Kafka considers not only his father but also Milena's father as a tyrant as mentioned above.

In November 1919 Kafka wrote a letter to be given to his father, and handed it to his mother. After keeping it a while, perhaps pondering it, his mother gave him back the letter saying his father was a busy man and should not be disturbed by such things. *Letter to My Father* is more than an ordinary letter. It is rather like a short story - over one hundred pages - written in a simple style. It certainly does not reveal everything about Kafka's life or the deeper levels of his existence, but, in terms of comprehending his emotional development and how this formation is reflected in his literature, this letter is significant.

We can only speculate that it may be that he thought he could exorcise some of the negative feelings deep in his psyche by bringing them to light in the only effective way in which he operated – through writing. He opens the letter with the common subject of fear. This must surely have been the main thing to be exorcised. By putting all the blame on his father Kafka rather diminishes his argument, as one hundred percent of the blame on one side or the other is not credible. Yet he does not seem to be looking for credibility but rather a total emotional reconfiguration of his relationship with his

father, which can be neither credible nor non-credible. The images Kafka uses are highly emotional, the prose rambles somewhat, and there is no tight thematic structure that one would expect from a great writer. It is an outpouring. He at once wheedles (“Dearest Father”), points the finger of blame, exonerates himself, puts himself down, indulges in generalisations of conflict (chivalrous or otherwise), points out obvious facts (his father’s military background), and generally rambles.

Commenting on his parents’ marriage in a negative way may be a clue to why his mother handed it back. Again, one does not know what good such a comment was meant to do. Kafka relates the difficult relationship of his parents with his thoughts concerning his own (never-to-be) marriage. This is also done in a rambling and indefinite way. The word ‘marriage’ is juxtaposed with “monstrous.” This seems to indicate that Kafka saw it as a looming threat and a fearful thing. This surely came from his experience of his parents’ marriage and the family life in which, as we have shown, he felt so uncomfortable – to put it mildly.

Without his father’s approval he could not become a self-determined person even in his adult life. Having lived in the shadow of his father, feeling crushed by him, there may be a desire for assertion here in a way that Hermann (no man of letters) could *not* do. Kafka then, at the end of the passage, makes one of his characteristic attempts at self-assertion as he (presumptuously) offers this one missive as a blueprint for his and his father’s relationship in life and in death. This last point almost offers an absolution to his father. Franz, of course, died before his father, so there could be no opportunity to practice this presumption.

1.3 The Significance of *The Trial*

The novel, in terms of its time can be considered as a futuristic nightmare in which the individual has no redress from what we can call ‘the system’. The reader is as disorientated as the main protagonist, and the effect is to give the reader a sense of what it is like for an average individual to stand alone before the vast bastions of bureaucracy and social control. Reflecting Kafka’s inner reality, a journey to himself.

At this point we need to take a look at the historical context in which Kafka was writing. We use the word disappointment in our proposal, and conjecture that Kafka, a child of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was dismayed to find that the clumsy but all pervading bureaucracy and the tyranny of the powerful were simply replicated in the new republic of Czechoslovakia. The themes of intrusive governance and the helplessness of the individual, indeed the near impossibility of escape, has a long provenance, as does the idea of a dystopian society.

The earliest such work that this thesis is aware of is Plato’s *the Republic*. In this work Plato comprehends a ‘perfect society’ which is controlled by the educated and developed in self-conscious rejection of Athens’s partial democracy. This imagined polity is characterized by absolutes, which strikes this thesis as tyrannical. The word of the philosopher ruler is Law. One detail exemplifies the all-pervading control that Plato desires - in the theatre in his imagined *Republic* no evil doing can be acted out on stage lest it corrupt the populace by example (Plato, 2010, gist). Even poetry is seen as suspect by Plato. It arouses desires that cannot be fulfilled, and disturbs the ‘peace’ of the polity. This theme is explored in *Fahrenheit 451*, mentioned later. Somewhat earlier than Plato, the rich tradition of Greek drama that Plato wished to castrate flourished, particularly in the field of tragedy (a heritage that we mention elsewhere in

this work), which has great relevance to Kafka's *the Trial*. Although we would not contend that *the Trial* is a tragedy in the Aristotelian sense, we would most certainly say that it has elements of this genre. As it blurred the line between the oppressor and the oppressed, raised the issues of the need for authority and stability, and perhaps sent a signal to the Resistance to the effect that 'it's not as simple a moral question as you may think' Terry Eagleton puts the situation of Antigone thus: "... it is exactly this stubborn fidelity to some absolute claim on one's being, regardless of the social or moral consequences, which for Jacques Lacan is most typical of the tragic protagonist. Antigone's conduct is no more socially conformist or ethically prudent than Christ's crucifixion" (2003, p.45-46). This quotation of Eagleton nevertheless holds light on the necessity of psychoanalytical critic on this essay.

While we cannot contend this work of Kafka conforms to the Aristotelian definition of tragedy insofar as the scapegoat is not of high status brought down from a position of great power, we can see that Kafka portrays elements of tragedy in this work. As mentioned above in relation to Shakespeare, high status is not necessary in tragedy, particularly not in the modern world. In a twentieth century context an ordinary individual can face tragedy, and be brought down by circumstances beyond their control. The Greek gods are not hovering over their shoulders deciding their fate; instead, the 'system' is hovering over their shoulders deciding their fate, as unseen as the gods. Eagleton writes "Franz Kafka's description of the law in *The Trial* has just the ambiguity of a necessity without justice. Like the Greek concept of *dike*, the law is logical but not equitable. On the contrary, it is vengeful and vindictive..." (Eagleton, 2003, p.130). This work by Eagleton, incidentally, ends with the words "We may leave Franz Kafka with the last word. At the end of *The Trial*, as he is about to be executed,

Josef K. glimpses a vague movement in the top storey of a nearby house. The casement window flew open like a light flashing on; a human figure, faint and insubstantial at that distance and height, forced itself far out and stretched out its arms even further. Who was it? A friend? A good man? One who sympathised? One who wanted to help? Was it one person? Was it everybody?" (Eagleton, 2003, p.297). Eagleton makes a great deal of this (simply choosing to end his seminal work on tragedy, *Sweet Violence; The Idea of the Tragic* with Kafka's *The Trial* is hugely significant). Here we have the very vagueness and incomprehensibility, the feebleness of hope, and the final realisation that the whole of society could be at play and mean precisely nothing to the fate of the main protagonist. In the modern world, a middle class individual living a comfortable life with security and technological conveniences can be seen as having a long way to fall when he or she does. Secondly, there is a working assumption in modern liberal societies that the individual is free, and able to realise their human potential. "To genuine tragic action it is essential that the principle of *individual* freedom and independence, or at least that of self-determination, the will to find in the self the free cause and source of the personal act and its consequences, should already have been aroused" (Hegel, in Williams, 1966, p.33). It is perhaps a dubious benefit for society at large that tragedy has been democratised. Society can be seen as the agent of destruction of a protagonist powerless (or unwilling) to resist or take steps towards personal survival – we see here society's victim. Incidentally, K. takes few steps to evade his fate, but cooperates with the 'system' to the end. "... he yielded himself completely to his companions" (p.176) [to his murderers].

From a Structuralist point of view, without endorsing it, we can see how a modern tragedy can be seen as similar to an ancient one, with here a depiction of helplessness

in the face of the 'system' rather than the gods. "Man's life is a line that nature commands him to describe upon the surface of the earth, without his ever being able to swerve from it, even for an instant. He is born without his own consent; his organization does in nowise depend upon himself; his ideas come to him involuntarily; his habits are in the power of those who cause him to contract them; he is unceasingly modified by causes, whether visible or concealed, over which he has no control, which necessarily regulate his mode of *existence*, give the hue to his way of thinking, and determine his manner of acting..." (Solomon, 1993, p.230). This is the essence of Structuralism, even Determinism. It is terrifying when melded with totalitarian persecution, with an inescapable victim's fate. The words "visible or concealed" are important – much of K.'s hapless journey involves a fruitless attempt to understand what is knowable and unknowable, what is real and what is not. It has a great relevance to tragedy. It is also the essence of *The Trial*.

We can certainly say that Kafka felt alienated from his society. Growing up in the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire, young Franz experienced "... alienation from daily life" a life he seemed to live in "otherworldliness" (Stach, 2013, p.xi). The alienation he felt can perhaps be attributed to his origins to an extent. A Jew in a society that persecuted Jews – he is said to have lived in "a ghetto with invisible walls" (Murray, 2004, p.6). "...a sense of alienation from the dominant Christian society seems inevitable. As a Jew, Kafka, had first-hand knowledge from birth of how it felt to be faced with exclusions and un-passable tests with ever changing rules" (James, 2007, p.343). This is the essence of *The Trial*, in which Josef K., try as he might, cannot gain the approval he seeks from his polity's authorities, cannot comprehend what they want from him, cannot learn how to meet their unspecified demands, and

ultimately cannot learn how to evade death at the hands of the insouciant agents of the corrupted State.

The theme of persecution runs through Kafka's works, particularly *The Trial*. In the end Josef K. is killed "like a dog" (p.178). The animal imagery reflects common parlance in reference to Jews in Kafka's lifetime. Kafka uses this imagery, moreover, to evoke the means by which those "in the cell of himself is almost convinced of his freedom" (Auden, 1939) are tamed when physically incarcerated. Of Block: "The client was no longer a client, he was the advocate's dog. If the advocate had ordered him to creep into his kennel under the bed and bark from there, he would have done so willingly. Leni notes with satisfaction "... how obedient he is" (p.151). Yet there is no sense anywhere of any overall purpose to this degradation. In Kafka's time? The fear of Jews? ('Perishing like a dog!' - Milena in a concentration camp) (Ed. Haas, 1999, p.11).

Kafka highlights again and again the irrationality of persecution. "For me you developed the bewildering effect that all tyrants have whose might is not founded on reason, but on their own person" (Brod, 1995, p.22). The word "bewildering" resonates in *The Trial*, as does the disturbing fact that persecution has no reason, but seems to be for its own sake – a horror visited on the innocent with a result from which nobody gains anything. Kafka was spared the Holocaust by his early death (all three of his sisters perished at Nazi hands – Murrey, 2007, p.389); his works foreshadow what a bureaucratic tyranny can do to people who are cowed and obedient even at the point of death. The issue of bureaucracy is very important in Kafka's work, and it is seen as sinister and ruthless, as well as faceless and unaccountable. James writes of Kafka's

view of the “... remorseless logic of an irrational system” (2007, p.343). This seeming oxymoron is very apt in relation to how Kafka himself depicts the systems of social control of the modern nation state. This is in particular reference to the irrationality, indeed incomprehensibility, of despotism and officially sanctioned murder. The Holocaust can be seen as an industrial scale incidence of scapegoating, with the Jews heaped with every form of guilt for the woes of Germany, indeed the world. Nearly six million Jews were exterminated, although, of course, far from being expiated, the Germans have never recovered from the stain, or overcome the blank incomprehension of others (Comager, Ed. Allen, 1962, p.427). As we say, Kafka foreshadowed the dystopic Nazi Germany in his writings, particularly in *The Trial*.

As we argue, knowledge empowers ordinary people, and threatens tyrants. Orwell posits this powerfully in *1984* (1948, gist). This novel is a dystopia set in a nightmarish future in which freedom is almost completely stamped out by a monstrous tyranny. The tools of oppression are Kafkaesque – deliberate fostering of ignorance, outrageously lying propaganda, the ‘dumbing down’ of language (‘newspeak’) in order to render creative expression defunct, and a ‘system’ that has its surveillance mechanisms everywhere. The hero, Winston Smith, has a job in the government falsifying records. Stamping out the past. This is prophetic, and also a reading of history. The French Revolution was followed by an attempt to erase the ‘tainted’ past, and ‘year zeroism’ was born. Polpot in Cambodia tried the same thing, with mass murder of intellectuals who could transmit to others the knowledge of the past. This knowledge was seen by the Kmer Rouge as dangerous to their hold on power, as those who knew about alternatives to their ideology and the society they had created could subvert it (Sharma, 2002, p.553).

Malcolm Bradbury in *Fahrenheit 451* (1954, gist) depicts book burning as a means of ‘pacifying’ the people. The chief book-burner argues that literature would only trouble people’s minds, make them aspire, make them unhappy in their unfulfilled desires. Of course, the sub-plot is to minimise any desire in the populace for change. In Nazi Germany this policy became a reality, with ritual book burning and, the political aim of keeping the ‘helot’ population ignorant. Himmler (2007): “For non-German children there was to be no education beyond the four primary school classes, where they were to learn to count up to five hundred and no further, to write their names and to understand that it ‘is a divine commandment to be obedient to the Germans and to be honest, hardworking and well behaved. I do not consider reading necessary.’” The quote within this quote is from Katrin Himmler’s great uncle Heinrich. He, Hitler and the other high-up Nazis were attempting to create a utopia (Davies, 1997, p.945), and ignorance in the enslaved was an important part of this plan.

The British writer Ian McEwan, who penned *Atonement* among much else, includes Marxist-run polities in the utopia bracket. “When people believe that there is a utopia to be gained, then it is perfectly rational to slaughter millions in order to get there and for the rest of Mankind to be happy forever” (McEwan, 2009, p.276). Again we have the word rational (see James) in relation to the utterly irrational. McEwan makes the point that this is evil, and that even if such a thing as a utopia could be attained it would be hellish.

Dostoevsky put these concepts into novel form between January 1879 and November 1880 in Russia. We have alluded to this above. Kafka read Dostoevsky. “Kafka’s private library, unfortunately recorded a decade after his death, contained

Dostoevsky's "Letters", "The Brothers Karamazov", "Crime and Punishment", and a one volume collection of shorter works with the title "The Gambler"..... In 1914 a German translation of Dostoevsky's "Complete Works" had become available. On the basis of Kafka's Letters and Diaries we know that he read many other works besides those in his library, including Nina Hoffman's Dostoevsky biography and Strachov's introductory essay to Dostoyevsky's "Collected Works" (Struc, 2017, p.1). Dostoevsky must be seen as a great influence on Kafka, indeed an inspiration.

The great allegory in the book *The Brothers Karamazov* concerns just what came to be seen as Kafkaesque – the desire of those in authority to deny the populace their freedom through repression and the deliberate cultivation of ignorance. In this allegory, Jesus returns to the world, to Spain during an *auto da fe*, and people recognise him and celebrate him. But the Grand Inquisitor has him arrested and put in prison. He has no wish for the people to hear Jesus, no wish for them to learn. On the contrary, he gags him by taking him out of circulation. Freedom, he tells Christ is not compatible with happiness. "You want to go into the world and you want to go empty-handed, with some promises of freedom, which men in their simplicity and their innate lawlessness cannot even comprehend – for nothing has ever been more unendurable to man and to human society than freedom!" Of the weak of the world, "They are vicious and rebellious, but in the end they will become obedient too", "They will marvel at us and be terrified of us and be proud that we are so mighty and so wise as to be able to tame such a turbulent flock of thousands of millions. They will be helpless and in constant fear of our wrath, their minds will grow timid, their eyes will always be shedding tears like women and children, but at the slightest sign from us they will be just as ready to pass to mirth and laughter. Yes, we shall force them to work..."

(Dostoevsky, quoted in Healey, 1992, p.108). This is a manifesto of a policy of total social control, social engineering and utter subjugation. The instruments of this policy are to be terror and rewards, engineered ignorance and immaturity.

Kafka foreshadowed these things in his writings; and it is astonishing that he would wish his writings to go the way of the books destroyed by totalitarians. Again, we should argue that Kafka's feeble self-image and sense of weakness in the face of the odds made him wish to try for this final destructive act. That the act would have no positive outcome, would be a lose-lose scenario is typical of one aspect of Kafka. "...the appetite for destruction that takes hold of desire and that is such that, in the final outcome of the primordial struggle in which the two combatants face off, there is no one left to determine who won and who lost" (Hyppolite, 1996, p.882). Or as Seamus Heaney puts it "... two berserks, grieved in a bog, clubbing each other, sinking." (Heaney, 1975, p.vii). We owe a great debt to Brod for thwarting Kafka's destructive impulse. Instead, by having the works in question published posthumously, Brod ensured the dissemination of Kafka's works to a very wide readership. (His biography of his friend is also very valuable, and we have used it a lot. Yet Brod as Kafka's Boswell was not too reliable. In another context Auden writes, "The words of the dead are modified in the guts of the living" (Auden, 1939, p.45). James has him "Often derided as a giftless and interfering parasite on Kafka" (James, 2007, p.344). This is not our view, nor does it seem to be James's. However, we cannot count on Brod's being a source to trust fully.

As of Kafka's influence on other authors, we mention the ridiculous nature of the human condition, and can perhaps see Kafka's influence on other writers in this

respect. The phenomenon of the Theatre of the Absurd mirrors Kafka's sense of the ridiculous and helplessness in human life. It also, especially in the works of Ionesco, explores the surreal and the dramatically startling political potential of the stage. In *Rhinoceros*, Ionesco portrays ordinary people transforming into rhinos in a provincial French town with the main protagonist as the only one who stands against this metamorphosis (Esslin, 2014, p.97). The allegory is of people conforming to a totalitarian system, with a fear of freedom and individuality, for these things are seen as the route to isolation, to being labelled, being persecuted and perhaps ultimately being scapegoated. The surreal cross-species transformation echoes *The Metamorphosis*, and the political themes echo *The Trial*.

More recently, the Russian movie *Zoology* (Tverdovski, 2016) echoes *The Metamorphosis* with a woman called Natasha growing a tail as she finds herself isolated in society, unmarried and unloved, in a job with a bullying boss. Her huge tail has her labelled as a freak, an allegory of society's outsiders who are treated with disgust and can find no way to escape this fate. Here we have again a Kafkaesque theme, with victimisation of the 'other,' surrounding characters automatically condemning a woman (in this case as a witch), and patriarchy (in this case the main character's mother using male Christian symbols to repel the 'evil' she does not realise emanates from her daughter).

Kafka's influence can also be seen in English film. The dystopia depicted in the 1985 Terry Gilliam film *Brazil* is a good example. The 'system' uses bureaucracy backed by violence and murder to control the populace, and in the atmosphere of the society portrayed, the hapless citizens do not know how the system works, who the system

benefits, or whether they will be the next scapegoats, spirited away by unaccountable agents of authority. At the start of the film 'enemy of the state' Buttle's name is misspelt as Tuttle, and so due to a typo deep in the bureaucratic machinery of the 'system', Tuttle is pounced upon, straightjacketed, and removed from his home by agents (without a warrant) never to be seen again. Clive James writes "*Brazil* is one of the great political films, an extraordinary mixture of Fellini and Kafka.... The suggestion [arising from the torture scene] seems to be that a torturer, except for what he does, need be no more sinister than your doctor" (James, 2007, p.272). This is indeed the stuff of Kafka, especially with reference to *The Trial*, with the salient point that strikes the reader of the sheer humdrum nature of oppression and cruelty and murder. Also we note, as does James, the ordinariness of the doers of evil (whom we would prefer to be psychotic freaks rather than disturbingly like the people next door).

Certainly, sexuality is not particularly healthy in Kafka's writing. In *The Trial*, K. has sexual relations with an amateur prostitute (p.14), and there is no hint of a healthy loving relationship under his belt. We can compare this with Kafka's fellow Czech writer, Milan Kundera, a man who echoes many of Kafka's themes. In his *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* Kundera depicts a man, the libertine Tomas, who cheats as a chronic habit, and who sees sex purely as his selfish pleasure (Kundera, 1995, gist). This gives his long-term partner enormous pain, but he will not stop. Politics mix with sex in the work, as the philanderer, a doctor, is identified as subversive by the 'system' and finds that he cannot work in his field due to some accusations. His mistake was to believe that the Prague Spring meant a good measure of freedom of speech, which would continue. Exercising free speech may not bring about instant punishment, but when noted, when put down in one's file (which is there

forever), the supposed evidence of disobedience or disrespect to authority can come back to haunt you as the bureaucrats do their anonymous work in controlling and oppressing the people.

In his *The Joke*, Kundera depicts sex as possession, with a girl who is gang raped going back to her rapists to serve them further, their possession, their plaything. Could this be rather like the ‘love of one’s chains’ posited by Pasternak referred to elsewhere (Kundera, 1995, gist). In *The Trial*, Kafka describes K. as having a woman whose “...supple, warm body in course thick clothes, belonged only to him” (p.45). Interestingly, the narrator of *The Joke* feels that he cannot look at his own face – “I avoided the mirror directly opposite me and raised my eyes, letting them wander to the blotchy ceiling” (Kundera, 1995, p.8). The theme of shame resonates throughout Kafka’s works too. The fact that Kafka never realised his sexual desires in any full way was another disappointment in life for him, a sad reflection of the hapless situation of so many of his characters. And a large part of the reason for lack of fulfilment is a debilitating sense of shame – with its consequent erosion of self-confidence.

That Kundera was influenced by Kafka is very probable. Clive James asserts that “...he [Kafka] created a body of work that has influenced almost everything written since” In *The Joke* we see a similar situation to that of Josef K. in that of the main protagonist. He believes in a similar way to Tomas (above) that the Prague Spring means that a new openness and ability to practice free expression has arrived, and he makes a joke about the Communist rulers of his (occupied) country, only to find that his indiscretion has been noted and filed away in the annals of the state bureaucracy. And when the Soviets send the tanks in to crush the democratic movement in Czechoslovakia in

1968, and the open government of Dubczech is removed, he finds that he cannot find a job, cannot get along in life, and finds that his military service is to be experienced in a punishment battalion. A small entry in a file, documenting a little joke, destroys him (Kundera, 1995, gist). The parallels with *The Trial* are clear. The crime or indiscretion of K.'s is deliberately unclear, and a supposed unacceptable act is his complete downfall. The result is the same in all cases cited here. In Kafka's life he could never answer the question of why his father blamed and punished him (as he saw it) and for this reason we contend that he never makes completely clear in his works why his characters are victimized.

Also, Dada and Surrealism in art were coined in the year that Kafka died. This movement was also influenced by Kafka. Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, Tristan Tzara *et al* sought to capture in art what they saw as "a world gone mad" (Hopkins, 2004, 1). The artists of Dada held that "...human nature is fundamentally irrational." (Hopkins, 2004, p.1). They sought to offend and, like Diogenes, bring people to question their lazily held values. (Diogenes would masturbate in the agora in an attempt to outrage what we would today call middle-class sensibilities). The irrational nature of society is at the heart of *The Trial*, as also "senseless delusion" (p.95).

Chapter 2

BEFORE THE LAW

2.1 Psychoanalytical Approach

Psychoanalysis was developed by the Austrian psychotherapist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and coined after him in 1896 so that Freud is also known as the father of psychoanalysis. It is defined as; “method of treating mental disorders by repeatedly interviewing a person in order to make him aware of experiences in his early life and trace the connection between them and his present behaviour or feelings” by the OED. (1994, p.1007). For the adaptation of psychoanalysis on literature; “Psychoanalytic literary criticism includes a range of approaches: Freudian psychology, ego-psychology, Lacanian psychoanalysis, id-psychology, object relations, and others. In general, the psychoanalytic approach studies (1) the latent, hidden, unconscious meanings of texts; (2) the unconscious activities that are part of writing, reading, and language itself; (3) the ways that sexuality, desire, and repression are of central importance not only in texts but in individuals and the culture at large; and (4) the formation of identity, particularly how individuals become defined as males and females. As Cowles puts it, by applying psychoanalytic criticism to texts, we study the text’s, the author’s, and the reader’s psychological processes and provide a psychological map for understanding symbols, relationships, and patterns in the text as well as in the author and reader” (1994, p.5). For Eagleton, Psychoanalytical criticism...can tell us something about how literary texts are actually formed, and reveal something of the meaning of that formation (1983, p.179).

As it is mentioned earlier, Kafka's literary works are commonly seen as the manifestation of his broken familial relationship due to his father's oppressive manners. This situation associates the Oedipal complex of Freud which is followed by a symbolic castration. The Oedipus complex is the structure of relations by which one comes to be a man . It signals the transition from the pleasure principle to the reality principle; from the enclosure of family to society at large. For Eagleton, Freud's Oedipus complex is the beginnings of morality and conscience through law in all forms of social and religious norms. The father's real or imagined prohibition of incest is symbolic of all the higher authority to be later encountered and in 'introjecting' this patriarchal law, the child begins to form what Freud calls its 'Superego' - the awesome, punitive voice of conscience within it (1983, p.156). This is where the 'self' begins to shape his/her Superego, which as shall later be discussed in detail, Lacan calls the Symbolic Order and refers to the 'self' entering this order as the 'subject'.

Also, Freud posits the Oedipus complex as; "The first object of a boy's love is his mother, the other parent is felt as a disturbing rival and not infrequently viewed with strong hostility" (Freud, 1986, p.32). In relation to Kafka's writings – "The Super-ego retains the character of the father, while the more powerful the Oedipus complex was and the more rapidly it succumbed to repression (under the influence of authority, religious teaching, schooling and reading), the stricter will be the domination of the super-ego later on – in the form of conscience or perhaps of an unconscious sense of guilt" (Freud, 1986, p.458). This sense of guilt haunts Kafka's works, and the complex matrix of the various forms of authority in society and in the family foster a sense of guilt and low self-worth in his novels, as well as in his private writings, letters and so on.

2.1.1 Lacanian Psychoanalysis

The other distinguished psychoanalyst is Jacques Marie Emile Lacan (1901-1981) who was a French innovative far-ranging thinker and a post Freudian psychoanalyst in Europe in the twentieth century. His ideas were both elusive and illuminating which included some revolutionary theories. He began his career with a medical degree and in the 1920's completed his training in psychiatry. He is also known as a post Freudian philosopher. The difference between Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical critique is explained by Cuddon as; "Freudian criticism or classical psychoanalytic criticism – which is often speculative – is concerned with the quest for and discovery of (and the subsequent analysis of) connections between the artists (creators, artificers) themselves and what they actually create... Thus, in the Freudian method a literary character is treated as if a living human being; whereas, for example, in the method of Jacques Lacan literature is seen as a 'symptom' of the writer" (1992, p.356).

Regarding what Lacanian critic Barry says; "Like Freudian critics they pay close attention to unconscious motives and feelings, but instead of excavating for those of the author or characters, they search out of the text itself, uncovering contradictory undercurrents of meaning, which lie like a subconscious beneath the 'conscious' of the text... They treat the literary text in terms of a series of boarder Lacanian orientations, towards such concepts as Lack or desire....as an enactment or demonstration of Lacanian views about language and the unconscious, particularly the endemic elusiveness of the signified, the centrality of the unconscious" (1995, p.115).

Lacan's training sessions [his 'seminars'] the *Ecrits* brought him a remarkable reputation. In his works he defines unconscious as 'the nucleus of our being'.

According to Cuddon, the proposed methods and theories of Lacan, in his examination of language, and which he explains in *Ecrits: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, are much more subtle and intricate. (1901-1981). In his *Ecrits* Lacan sets out to interpret Freud in terms of structuralist and post-structuralist theories of discourse. Borrowing the idea from Saussure, Lacan also believes; (a) signifiers and signifieds do not always match; signifiers ‘float free’ of what they refer to, because they are symbols of other symbols (i.e. dimensions of a symbolic language which is never *real*, or *referential* in a stable sense.) (b) Lacan privileges the signifier in relation to the naming of social roles a child knows its identity when it enters into the *Symbolic Order*, in which the world of law and the social community is defined – associated with the father figure. This identity or selfhood is *constructed* in relation to this patriarchal symbolic order. So the ‘I’ in Lacanian terms can only be a *signifier*, since it relates to a symbolic realm; it is not tied to a stable reality. It is Lacan’s contention that not only is the unconscious structured like a language but that it is a *product of language*. He sees the unconscious as coming into being simultaneously with language; whereas Freud’s view was that the unconscious exists before language takes effect” (1992, p.358-359).

Some of Lacan’s ideas were influenced by the famous linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). He believed that a human being is born into a situation from which it is impossible to escape; the perceivable world is defined by language (*parole*), and as a child acquires its first language, the child acquires the sense of their surroundings both human and material through this overwhelmingly powerful factor which is language and therefore, they acquire the prevailing discourse of the society in which they find themselves and that is how the individuality is formed. This is Structuralism. This

concept is by no means new. In the Bible (John 1:1) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God.” That is where the authority begins through the limitations of language as the ultimate tool. This is where Saussure’s *Langue* takes part by setting the rules. *Langue* is nothing but a mere delimiter which also introduces division. Thus, in other words, language is not purely a neutral tool in communication. “...between the language *system*, which pre-exists actual examples of language, and the individual *utterance*. *Langue* is the social aspect of language: it is the shared system which we (unconsciously) draw upon as speakers. *Parole* is the individual realisation of the system in actual instances of language” (Selden and Widdowson, 1993, p.104).

In Post Structuralism, Saussure defines Signifier as the word or other symbolic representation of a concept or meaning and Signified as the concept or meaning represented symbolically by a word or other signifier. A Sign is a symbol that conveys meaning within a system. A sign combines a signified (concept) with a signifier (symbolic representation). In language, words are signs. In adapting Saussure’s model; the gatekeeper and the gateway are the signifiers, both signifying indifference of the Law – authority, “...he is after all a servant of the law, so belongs to the law, and so is detached from human judgement” (p.172). Interestingly, in the novel, this parable, *Before The Law*, is told by the priest who K. meets in the cathedral and soon after telling this story the priest [without any hesitation] declares; ““That means I belong to the court”” (p.173), admitting his loyalty to the Law which is discussed below as the paternal phallus – Lacanian symbolic phallus as the representative of the law, state etc.

In Lacanian psychoanalytic approach we are greeted with an ontological model which is the RSI: The Real, The Imaginary and The Symbolic. This model of Lacan is mainly derived from Freud and Saussure's theories. Lacan, like Freud, uses literary examples to demonstrate his ideas. He finds it fitting to use literary texts as they are examples of the usage of language figuratively and this suits his purpose of demonstrating the operation of the Saussurean terms, signifier and signified as well as the operation of signs within language. Since Lacan believes that the unconscious comes into being with language, he creates three orders as the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real.

In the Imaginary Order, as it is seen in the early childhood stage, Cowles succinctly puts it, "The imaginary is the world of image fantasy, wish fulfilment; it appears to be a utopian state of oneness with the mother" (1994, p.147). K.'s desire in this Order is to be freed from this corruption, to reach the justice (for he believes the existence of justice) but the signifier is always escaping for it is elusiveness. Soon after his hearing at the court, the reader slowly starts to witness K.'s hope for justice fading away, "K. opened the top book, to reveal an indecent picture. A man and a woman were sitting naked on a sofa... 'So these are the law books studied here, K. said. 'It's by people like this I'm supposed to be judged'" (p.41). Indeed within the realm of Kafka's Law – Justice does not exist.

Lacan's Symbolic Order is also known as the Superego in Freud. The Symbolic Order is concerned about the formation of signifiers and signifieds, that is language, enveloping the subject/self even before he/she comes to the world. Indeed it is an organization which organizes the self/subject through discourse, words, and written rules. In other words, it is called the *System*. Just like Kafka's definition in *The Trial*,

an organization. Kafka calls the whole situation a play, a theatre in a very sarcastic manner. ““At what theatre are you playing?”” (p.174). An imaginary role was given to him in this *play*. The whole novel is based upon an imaginary situation, an imaginary desire for the system to succeed oppressing every single individual and destructing his/her individuality. This nightmarish desire gets carried away with books which belong to the examining magistrate the so-called Law books. “K. opened the top book, to reveal an indecent picture. A man and a woman were sitting naked on a sofa....It was a novel called *The Torments Grete Had to Suffer from Her Husband Hans*. So these are the law books studied here, K. said. ‘It’s by people like this I’m supposed to be judged’” (p.41). The people who supposedly represent the law are the ones who are corrupted in the first place. The whole system is corrupted. And K. takes his part in this dystopic society as well as an ordinary man living in conventional limits. Soon he does not hesitate to identify it as tyrannical ‘the corrupt gang’ (p.37) ‘great organization’. “An organization which not only employs corrupt warders and fatuous supervisors and examining magistrates...And the purpose of this great organization, gentleman? To arrest innocent persons and start proceedings against them which are pointless and mostly, as in my case, inconclusive” (p.36). In the courtroom as a certainty, K. realises that everybody wears badges in different size and colours which signifies that they belong to an organization, which later makes him call them ‘thugs’ (p.35). K. later on comes to an understanding that these people who take part in this corrupted ‘theatre’ are under obligation in order to earn their living. Indeed they are actually passive obedient. Tamed as Block, who was no longer a client but a kneeling ‘dog’, kissing his own advocate’s hands and saying “At your service” (p.148). Block indeed is the most significant character portrayed in the novel as the proof of the destruction of an individual. He is a tradesman who is also one of the accused men,

and coincidentally the client of Dr. Huld just like K.. His case is five years old and he is no longer the prosperous man he once was, but he is utterly in a pathetic condition as a result of the tyranny he is subjected to. “The client was no longer a client, he was the advocate’s dog. If the advocate had ordered him to creep into his kennel under the bed and bark from there, he would have done it willingly” (p.151). By this quote, now we begin to comprehend, how this play/game [Imaginary Order] is structured and played upon the individuals through the Symbolic Order.

““There is no doubt that behind all the utterances of this court, and therefore behind my arrest and today’s examination, there stands a great organization. An organization which not only employs corrupt warders and fatuous supervisors and examining magistrates, of whom the best that can be said is that they are humble officials, but also supports a judiciary of the highest rank with its inevitable vast retinue of servants, secretaries, police officers and other assistants, perhaps even executors – I don’t shrink from the word. And the purpose of this great organization, gentlemen? To arrest innocent persons and start proceedings against them which are pointless and mostly, as in my case, inconclusive. When the whole organization is as pointless as this, how can gross corruption among the officials be avoided?”” (p.36) within these lines by Kafka there lies a totalitarian danger which stands strong and becomes even stronger when K. refuses to acknowledge his ‘guilt’. These symbolic figures from the magistrate to the executors mentioned above are not only reorganizing the social life of K. but also destructing his individuality. This is restructuring the thinking pattern of the individual in order to limit the person by barring the self/subject using the *system* – language. It simply uses the phallic symbols through language. As Eagleton defines; “...the ideologies of modern male-dominated class-society rely on such fixed signs for

their power (God, father, state, order, property and so on), such literature becomes a kind of equivalent in the realm of language to revolution in the sphere of politics.” (p.189). As Eagleton puts, for the symbolic order of which Lacan writes is in reality the patriarchal sexual and social order of modern class society, structured around the ‘transcendental signifier’ of the phallus, dominated by the Law which the father embodies (1986, p.187). The idea of *phallic symbols*, belongs to Freud. He puts forward the idea that phallic symbols are a matter of attribution of sexual connotations to objects such as; any guns, knives, whips, minarets, monuments or any object resembling this organ. From this point of view, these phallic symbols can easily be spotted in *The Trial* especially in the whipping scene of the warders (p.70) and the tragic ending of Josef K. by the notorious twisting knife scene (p.178). Lacan on the other hand, in his “Desire,” 51 defines the “phallus” as the signifier of power, of potency. Regarding Lacan’s phallic symbols we are greeted with an abstract notion of the phallus compared to Freud’s interpretation of the physical objects. According to Cowles, Lacan distinguishes between the penis and the phallus: while the penis is a biological organ, the phallus is a symbol of the rule of language and culture over the individual. Because the phallus is a signifier, no one can possess it” (Cowles, 1994, 150). In Lacanian perspective these phallic symbols are symbolising powerful paternal authority as he calls it The-Name-of-the-Father (*Nom du pere*) see *Ecrits*, 557 / 200. The tyranny in *The Trial*, the state and its institutions vs. the individual – Josef K. and the father-son conflict between Franz and Hermann Kafka are two solid examples for this notion. As Barzilai puts it, the paternal phallus as representative of the law, the police, the state is binarily, and perhaps necessarily, congruent with the signifying functions of predator-aggressor/protector-defender (1999, p.215). The significance of phallic symbols in *The Trial* are shown through the operation of the agents of the

system. Especially the phallic symbols in *The Trial* are revealed as the father figures such as; his uncle, the ruling system and its agents as the Other – guards (warders), priest, advocate, the doorkeeper, and the magistrates.

Now, in terms of Kafka's writings we explore Lacan who posits the concept of the 'three fathers.' as the "imaginary, symbolic and real. The contention that in these three facets of the father figure, lies the belief that there is justice in society. Let us also remember that the culture in which Kafka was formed is the German culture, which regards its society as 'The Fatherland'. Moreover, such things as rules of the state, conventions and soft-power of the state actually shows the dubious nature of the concept of justice and thus Law. Initially, Josef K. believes there is justice, indeed that speaking to a high-up will sort his legal problem out ("someone of my own level," (p.5); he follows the orders of the State, and submits to its soft power; in the end he is given the ultimate object lesson in there being no law – he is killed for exactly nothing. However, Kafka demonstrates that the seeming 'nothing' – K.'s death speaks volumes. Therefore, it is most likely that in *The Trial* Franz Kafka projects himself as Josef K. and the tyrannical father figure as the State.

Kafka's works are suffused with resentment towards his father, He sees himself as bereft of "...the blood-bond that is drawn around the father and the son [which is] ... easily driven away by the father" (Brod, 1995, p.130). In *The Trial* K. goes through all the above factors in his polity only to find that they all amount to an extension of patriarchal control; and one can speculate that this is a hangover from his childhood that he never managed to shake off. Authority is the father, giver of punishment, instiller of guilt as well as a sense of worthlessness.

As Kafka experiences an immense fear and guilt under his father's tyranny, it is no coincidence that his relationship with his father is reflected in *The Trial* and his other literary works. Without coming across Kafka's father, either in autobiographical mode or insinuated, the reader encounters his father as the 'system' – the State as the representative of the Symbolic Order in Lacan's trajectory. The Symbolic Order is a series of patriarchal laws determining an individual's gender roles, familial and social boundaries through language/discourse. In other words, the Symbolic Order is an unshakeable apparatus setting rules for an individual, starting from his/her infancy in terms of determining/shaping the dynamics in a social order. At first glance, it might appear useful in terms of regulating the integrity of social, sexual and familial networks, yet, what happens when the rule-maker does not know where to stop? And who controls the controller? Limits are needed to be set for the controller as well. That is when and where tyranny begins first in the family then spills over to society at large. A visible or a non-visible tyrant shows up, and corruption follows.

As mentioned earlier, just like a baby who is born into certain rules set up by patriarchy through language, in *The Trial*, Josef K. wakes up to a day in which he finds himself proscribed: "You are after all under arrest" (p.2). He is physically not trapped, but verbally (symbolically) trapped, a condition which bars him from his individuality until he gets murdered – 'executed'.

The last Order of Lacan is the Real. In his very own words; "The "real" Real is both beyond and behind Imaginary perception and Symbolic description. It is an algebraic x , inherently foreclosed from direct apprehension or analysis. The Real, therefore, is that before which the Imaginary falters, and over which the Symbolic stumbles

(*Seminaire I*, p.298). This Lacanian idea of the Real has led to the description of it as the impossible...that saying or seeing the Real objectively was not possible.” (Lacan in Sullivan, 1986, p.188). By this quote, objectivity on the Real clarifies the situation as perceiving the Real notions, things or experiences are merely a perception of personal interpretation. In other words, it is mutable and filtered through language. Lacan’s Real is an unfathomable x , the algebraic x , where the OED defines x as; “(mathematics) unknown quantity: unknown or unspecified person, number or influence (1994, p.1483). The Real is elusive and beyond our conventional experience and therefore acquisition. It can neither be practiced nor presented by the Symbolic nor the Imaginary Orders, as if it is the pre-imaginary or pre-symbolic. It is “the aspect where words fail” (Vogler, 2007, p.2) and what Miller describes as, “the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element, which may be approached, but never grasped: the umbilical cord of the symbolic” (Barry, 1995, p.26). The Real is where all the concrete and abstract notions begin - it is the beginning, the essence of existence. “The Real is the actual world, and everything in it, all of which remains unknowable to the individual. Individuals in the Imaginary and Symbolic stages try to master the real, but they cannot ever directly experience it. This is where alienation sets in...he cannot ever fully and directly know the Real except through language, which is incapable of capturing the Real” (Cowles, 1994, p.147). Although the Real can never be defined by language, it seems like the centre of all things and thus defined as “algebraic x ” by Lacan. And this can only be understood in connection with the categories of the Symbolic and the Imaginary since it is the centre of everything. The Real situates the Symbolic and the Imaginary in their respective positions. Inevitably the three orders are inseparable and can only be understood with each other’s existence.

In *The Trial*, the protagonist Josef K., confronts Lacanian Lack (*manque*). As Lacan introduces Lack in his *Seminar Le transfert (1960-61)*, he divided Lack into three parts. The Lack of the Symbolic Phallus denotes the Loss of being which arises the desire. The desire to be Be again. To Be is to be free. So here freedom and justice become the Lacanian Real, that is that these concepts become illusive and unattainable for K. These basic abstracts are the need of a human being to be himself, to have the right to be an individual without any oppression and prohibitions. It is the desire for the oneness of himself. A man cannot be whole with himself if he is separated from his freedom or justice does not exist. Even from the very first line of the novel, the reader is made aware of how this tyranny takes away an ordinary man's dignity, individuality, freedom, integrity in life, and drives him into an infinite isolation, alienation, and drowns him in the depths of the Symbolic order. K. yelling "Let me be, for heaven's sake!" (p.7) becomes a reproving appeal which is only the beginning of the declination of an ordinary man, K.

2.2 The Beginning of the Fall of K.

The novel begins very simply with a statement of fact by which the theme of guilt and persecution is opened. "Somebody must have made a false accusation against Josef K., for he was arrested one morning without having done anything wrong." The ambiguity is here from the very start; the words "without doing anything wrong" are those of the omnipotent narrator, yet the words "must have" bring in a note of uncertainty. Clearly, the main character is presented as a victim from the very first sentence, and the word "somebody" (interestingly the first word of the novel) gives the reader the sense that there is a secretive and perhaps unknowable aspect to the 'justice' system in this polity, the name and location of which we never find out. Josef K. is depicted to the reader as a very ordinary man in a fairly comfortable situation in

life. He is expecting to have his breakfast served in bed, quite a privilege, yet he finds that instead, he is served a very unpleasant shock in the shape of an unknown man who seems to feel more in control of Josef's personal space than Josef is himself. Also, the power relationship is further highlighted when the stranger openly mocks him, to the hilarity of his colleagues. "“He wants Anna to bring him his breakfast’ this was followed by a short burst of laughter in the next room...” (p.1). So here on the very first page, we see how even the most intimate physical space of a private individual can be violated, and “the short burst of laughter” is redolent of the arrogance and swagger of those who serve the ‘system’ and oppress their fellow humans. Josef’s powerlessness and humiliation is emphasized from the start.

Throughout the book, the theme of unanswered questions pervades, and the reader soon understands that there will be no evident answers to them. The operatives have no intention of enlightening Josef about why they have come ““...what do you want?’ said K., and he looked from this new acquaintance to the one spoken of as Franz, who remained in the doorway, and then back again” (p.2). This is the first of many unanswered questions; the words “this new acquaintance” are highly ironic, as Kafka introduces an aspect of the absurd; and the words “spoken of” (p.2) clearly signal that one cannot trust the names or identities of the agents of the state.

Josef K., understandably bewildered by what is happening to him, nevertheless clings on to what the reader later understands to be an illusion, the belief that he lives in a civilisation which is characterised by the rule of law and the sanctity of the individual and their safety. “...After all, K. lived in a country which enjoyed law and order; there was universal peace; all the laws were upheld; so who dared pounce on him in his own

home?” (p.3). The words “After all” denote discrepant awareness - Kafka as the narrator certainly does not think the polity in question is characterized by law or by peace. Kafka tells the reader this is Josef K.’s illusion, which is further illustrated as Josef’s psychological defence mechanism. The situation is so bizarre that he wants to see it as a joke which can be laughed at, and after which one can move on in ‘normal’ life’. “But in this situation that did not seem right; one could of course regard the whole affair as a joke, a crude joke organized for some unknown reason by his colleagues at the bank, perhaps because today was his thirtieth birthday” (p.3). The words “crude joke” underline the sense of unreality, and yet on a deeper level could mean the sheer ridiculous nature of the individual’s situation; the words “unknown” and “perhaps” further signal K.’s disorientation. The sense of ridiculous continues as he tries to assert his identity, and, with great relevance to the main themes of the book, he tries to find formal bureaucratic documentary evidence of who he is. “At last he found his bicycle licence, and thought of taking this to the wardens, then the paper seemed too trivial and he looked further until he found his birth certificate” (p.3). The very idea of a bicycle licence is not only laughable, but it also demonstrates a society under far too much control; it is put in juxtaposition with his birth certificate for a very good reason - poor Josef K. is floundering around to find reasons why he has permission to live, both ridiculous, but serious at the same time. Obviously a bicycle licence is a ludicrously unnecessary item of an intrusive bureaucracy, yet comical though it may seem it highlights the all pervasive controlling presence of the State, and, indeed, indicates the *desire* of the state for ubiquitous control.

As Josef tries to come to terms with his predicament, small details highlight the arrogance and the sense of non-accountability which characterize the agents of

Authority. The ‘warders’ (we treat this word with suspicion, as the reader has realized that these men are security police in some shadowy way) seem to feel more at home in K.’s home than he does himself. He notices that they “were devouring his breakfast” (p.4). The word “devouring” further emphasizes the lack of any restraint that the agents have in relation to Josef’s privacy and property. Furthermore, when Josef very reasonably wishes to see his persecutors identification papers and whatever warrant there might be to legalize their presence in his home, one of the unwelcome visitors says “‘dear God in heaven!’ ... why can’t you just accept your position, why do you seem determined to irritate us needlessly, we who probably stand closer to you now than any other of your fellow men?” (p.4). This serves as a kind of keynote to the entire work, as well as driving further home the frightening swagger of the agents of the state. The words “...dear God in heaven!” evokes a very ironic feeling of exasperation on the part of the ‘warder,’ as if to say *how dare you object to being stripped of all your rights?* (and ushers in the Symbolic). The rhetorical question concerning Josef’s being supposed to accept his position is intended to make him feel how powerless he is; the word “irritate” is also highly ironic given that these men are trampling on K.’s rights. The men’s assertion that K. should be completely supine because these agents of authority are “closer” to him than anybody else is designed to make him feel isolated and vulnerable, with no hope of support from any third party. With the hint of a relationship between Josef and his ‘visitors’ there begins the classic ‘good cop/ bad cop’ tactic which is used by the agents of authority to both break the victim’s will to resist, and to foster a new psychological dependency on the oppressors, characterized by a pathetic gratitude for small mercies. This foreshadows a great many later works which also explore this theme, notably Boris Pasternak’s *Dr Zhivago*, in which those very few surviving gulag victims come to “love their chains” (Pasternak,

2010). Also, famously, at the end of Orwell's *1984* Winston Smith loves Big Brother (Orwell, 2000). While we cannot say that K. loves his anonymous oppressors, as indicated above, he starts to almost flirt with its agents in an attempt to make things easier for himself. As K. dresses, seemingly to be taken away, he takes "a jacket from the chair and was holding it out with both hands as if spreading it for the warders judgement" (p.5). Clearly, the 'system' tries to tame this man right from the beginning.

The anonymous nature of the oppressors in *The Trial* is mirrored by the little known nature of the Law, and the extent to which it confers the right to intervene in the lives of citizens. The warders are the instruments of the Law, and yet seem to know little about it. One of the warders makes this very clear to K. In a show of apparent frankness, he explains that the "high authorities" know who to arrest, what information to gather, and that they do not make mistakes. Yet, he confesses that he speaks from a position of ignorance – "our authorities, as far as I know them, and I know the lowest grades, do not go in search of guilt in the population but are, as it says in the law, drawn to guilt and must send us warders out. That is the law" (p.5). The vague nature of this utterance, the admission of knowing nothing of his higher superiors, the totally vague quality of the word "guilt" and the word "must" leaves K. disorientated, and is an excellent example of providing pseudo information which leaves the listener and the reader no more informed, and far more confused. The reader starts to suspect that, as in *1984*, "(nothing was illegal, since there were no longer any laws), but if detected [possession of a diary] it was reasonably certain that it would be punished by death..." (Orwell, 2000, p.8). As in *1984*, in *The Trial* the law is an instrument of the powerful, not a framework to protect and guide citizens.

Already at the beginning of the book the reader begins to understand what K. takes a long time to realise - that recourse to higher authority, more developed high achieving people with clear ideas of how to implement their leadership in the interests of the people, is futile. K. denigrates the warders (only to himself, he has at least this much sense of self-preservation). "Their certainty is possible only because of their stupidity. A few words with someone on my own level will make things incomparably clearer than the longest conversations with these two" (p.5). The first half of this quote provides an insight into Kafka's mind-set; only fools can be sure of anything, while an intellectual experiences ever greater doubt the more they inquire into perceived reality. K.'s easy assumption of his "own level" suggests a certain snobbish pride which the reader comes to find ironic given that society treats him like trash. That K. believes higher authority can make things "incomparably clearer" the reader suspects is as a vain hope given that the agents of the state have come with exactly no vested authority, no warrant and no hint as to the matter of on whose orders they have come. K.'s belief in hierarchy also makes him a part of the corrupted society.

The inconsequentiality of oppression is underlined when K. speaks to the warders' supervisor. The supervisor does not enlighten him, but does reassure him that he can continue living his life rather than being locked up. "It's true you're under arrest, but that doesn't mean you can't follow your occupation. And you won't be hampered in your normal way of life.' 'Being arrested is not so bad, said K...." (p.11). A sign of taming, a limited freedom is acknowledged. This acknowledgement of a limited freedom, is at the same time a sign of becoming tame. The supervisor's assertion that K.'s arrest changes nothing further evokes meaninglessness and incomprehensibility and K.'s obvious relief seems to indicate that a kind of 'good cop/bad cop' approach

is working. K. tells himself that the horrific and unjust phenomenon that has happened to him is in some way all right. Clearly, the system of oppression seems to work in the most intimate way – in the very mind of the victim.

Following the distressing experience of discovering he has been put under some sort of arrest, Josef K. is depicted stumbling into a realisation of his isolation in his very own society. He craves emotional and intellectual support in vain, and this increases his distress considerably. Only at work, where he has a relatively high position, does he feel comfortable and empowered. He reflects on how different a threatening confrontation at home is from what it would be like in his work place. “In the bank for instance” he tells Frau Grubach, “I am prepared for anything, it’s impossible that anything like that could happen to me there; there I have my own assistant, the outside phone and the internal phone are on my desk and people, clients, officials are always coming and going...it would actually give me pleasure to be confronted with such a matter there” (p.16).

Clearly, the vulnerable individual finds safety in numbers and in a predetermined organisation in which one’s role and duties are well defined; this comfort zone of K.’s is what has already been described in the novel as a huge bureaucracy, ie. the company he works for. K.’s reference to his assistant reassures him that he has power over a fellow human being: the reference to phones expresses a pleasure at being in touch and being important; yet the absurd contention that a confrontation with agents of the state concerning his arrest would be a *pleasure* in his work place totally undercuts the readers’ confidence in K.’s faith in his professional situation. We later find out that his position in the bank does not help him in the slightest. As this communication with

Frau Grubach comes to a close, K. further displays his vulnerability as he desperately needs this unimportant woman's endorsement of his views with a handshake. "Will she give me her hand?" (p.16). There is a pathetic quality to this – he fears a snub from Frau Grubach, just as he was upset by the supervisor's snub of his offered hand, as he needs emotional support as his confidence plummets. Frau Grubach does not shake his hand – "...and forgot of course about the hand shake" (p.16). The words "of course" denote discrepant awareness, the omniscient narrator does not say this – it is K.'s thought.

As mentioned above, K. lodges in a boarding house run by this same Frau Grubach. As K. moves towards his unhappy epiphany, he sees his landlady for what she is (false), and that the supposedly "respectable" nature of her establishment is a pretence. Frau Grubach buttonholes K. in order to make lengthy insinuations about the young lady, Fraulein Burstner, mentioned above, who also lodges with her. K. likes the Fraulein and wishes to speak to her; Frau Grubach clearly does not approve of the girl, and starts a soft attack on her which in a few lines displays her insincerity and bad intent. She says the young lady is "a good, dear girl, friendly, tidy, meticulous, hardworking" (p.17) and this fulsome phrase is followed by the implication that she is in fact a low level character little better than a prostitute, and "it's not the only thing that makes me suspect her" The constant theme of the book is unsubstantiated allegations, and life lived under suspicion that one has no power to dispel. Frau Grubach goes on to say "I'll keep my eye on her a bit longer of course." Here we have the surveillance culture of her accommodation (p.17). This is a depressingly all - pervading situation in the book, whether coming from the state or taking place in a

little boarding house, hence from top to bottom the whole society seems to reek of this culture of surveillance and fear.

Although the reader's sympathy is with Josef K., we cannot empathise with the power relationship that K. wishes for with women. In spite of facing total dispossession at unknown hands, in other words starting to understand what it is to be a victim, K. desires possession of a sexually attractive woman. "...this voluptuous supple warm body in coarse thick clothes, belonged only to him" (p.45). The unnecessary detail of the coarse clothes reiterate K.'s sense of social superiority, (such as when he feels he should talk to the agents' superior rather than to the agents themselves as he feels they are beneath him), which is here added to his sense of superiority and power over women by the simple fact that he is a man.

K.'s illusion of power and ownership of this woman is shattered when the main horrific theme of his life at this point intrudes again. The woman he believes he can own departs with a violent rejection of K. because she has to obey "the orders of the examining magistrate" (p.46). Here again the 'system' pervades everything, and K.'s illusion of domination over a woman is dispelled by the power of the state. K.'s frustration is present in his private life, his professional life and now in his romantic life, and the reader fully understands that Kafka wishes to show the helplessness of the individual before hidden powers, along with the false perception that the individual has powers of his own. The tainted man finds his friends fall away. K. tries to have some kind of relationship with Fraulein Burstner but to no avail. "...he tried to contact her in several different ways, but she always managed to avoid him" (p.47). K. tries to

win her over as he “promised to defer to her wishes in everything” (p.59). K.’s sense of his own power is clearly waning.

2.3 *Before The Law* – The REAL Trial

Before The Law, is a parable written in 1915 and later included into *The Trial* in 1925. When K. waits in the cathedral, he meets a priest who tells him this story. Here in this parable, the reader is introduced to a Law symbolised as a physical space and resembling K.’s current condition and foreshadowing his future. The entire story is about an ordinary countryman from an unidentified country who is trying to get through a gateway which will let him enter into the *Law*. As this man approaches, he sees that though the gate is open, there is a gatekeeper stand-watching in front of it. The gatekeeper tells the man that he cannot let him through. The man asks if he will be allowed through later. The gatekeeper says it’s possible, but it is unclear [very Kafkaesque] if, when, and why he might be allowed to enter in the future. Moreover, the gatekeeper warns him that there are more gatekeepers ahead and each is stronger than the one before. The countryman gets puzzled by these difficulties since he believes the Law should be accessible for everyone. He waits for days, weeks and years yet the answer does not change. As he grows very old, the gatekeeper calls him “insatiable” and tells him that he will close the gate which is only meant for this poor countryman. The man dies in front of the gate way without having an entry to the Law. The gate raises a desire which is to enter it. The individual continuously seeks permission to enter from the door of the Law which is never permitted. Kafka’s treatment of the Law has a strong relation between this parable and Lacan’s Real, which can be seen identical in terms of elusiveness. This is where the impossible lies for the individual, to reach Law and justice. Therefore, reading Kafka through Lacan indeed demonstrates to us that not only do bureaucracy and tyranny go insane and thus

become incomprehensible in this novel, but also Kafka's understanding of Law pinpointed in his parable, *Before The Law*, is placed outside the reality just like the Real of Lacan in which nothing is within grasp. His Law which stands objective and equidistant to all, therefore, exists in another dimension, in which law in other words an ideal, becomes a utopic law.

In Kafka's *Before The Law*, the gatekeeper is a pawn within the system of the Law and through language, he administers the rules and delimits K. He is the agent of the prohibition. Just like Lacan's Real, the Law in Kafka's parable is inaccessible and incomprehensible. Since an accurate definition of the Law here is impossible, the Law has to be seen in an abstract manner, it is like a puzzle in which some pieces are missing. This incomplete puzzle indicates Lack. A demonstration of the subjective operation is the judicial system blurs the boundaries between execution and murder. As K. is to be murdered, Kafka paints the scene thus: "After an exchange of some courtesies with regard to which of them should carry out the next part of their task – the gentlemen seemed to have been given their commission without specific individual assignments – one of them went to K. and took off his jacket and waistcoat and finally his shirt" (p.177). This does indeed have the flavour of everyday normality, as if trying to normalise the subjective understanding of justice. This naturally illustrates the banality of atrocity in an ironic manner where atrocious murderers are addressed as gentlemen. Depiction of atrocious acts undertaken by atrocious "gentlemen" dictated by the system, implies a desire to invest the system with normality or even respectability when it lacks these very things. The word "gentlemen" may be meant ironically given that they are murderers. But also the word conveys the sense that ordinary, respectable-looking individuals can be monsters. The detail of the killers'

lack of individually allocated tasks is yet another example of the fog, the uncertainty of the polity in question (a polity with no name that the reader never learns); and the removal of K.'s clothes (completely an unnecessary act – they could have cut his throat) has a taste of the ritual of sacrifice of a scapegoat.

Josef K. finds himself surrounded by people who conform to the 'system,' and who may even pretend to admire it. A free thinker can well be lurking in the outward shell of a seeming conformist. As Jung Chang writes in *Wild Swans*, when Mao died she was very happy – having seen him for the mass murderer and beast that he was – yet she grasped the girl next to her, buried her face in her shoulder, and cried (Chang, 2015, p.518). The insincerity is a self-defence mechanism deeply held by one who understands the perils of opposing the dominant ideology. K. has exactly no intention of resisting the system, and he is a conformist to the last. (contradicting). When he comprehends his looming death at the hands of the "gentlemen", "There was nothing heroic in resisting, in making difficulties for the gentlemen now. In putting up a defence at this point in an effort to enjoy a final glimmer of life" (p.175). The very word "glimmer" attests to how cheap K. now holds his life; he has been ground down by the 'system' into an almost willing scapegoat.

Therefore, Kafka in *The Trial* is, "...the artist, like the neurotic, is oppressed by unusually powerful instinctual needs which lead him to turn away from reality to fantasy" (Eagleton, 1983, p.179). His desire or fantasy is implicit in his fiction which is to raise awareness of his will to be freed from his symbolic imprisonment, as Eagleton puts it by saying we should "...view the literary work as an 'expression' or 'reflection' of reality" (1983, p.181). This is a symbolic action against repressed

desires. These desires do not always need to be the oneness with the mother or an incestuous preoccupation with the mother. The reader must notice that the narration of the novelist's work is a manifestation of repressed desires. In *The Trial*, Kafka does not only illustrate a system which holds a light to the turmoil that occurred in the twentieth century in terms of revolutions, useless bureaucracy, fascism and the upcoming wars, but also, reveals his personal trauma created by that very system which would soon spawn disaster on a global scale. One could say that Kafka suffered from a castration complex, which is the son's fear of castration by the father, causing the son to give up his sexual longings for his mother and this is expressed through his writings mostly on unempowered individuals, particularly K.

According to Lacan, "This repression operates by a double emotional movement of the subject: aggression against the parent in regard to whom the child's sexual desire places him as a rival, and fear suffered in return of a like aggression, thus a fantasy underlies these two movements so remarkable that it was individualized with them in a complex called castration" (Lacan, 1938, p.26). K. finds that his attempts at powerful manhood are denied him by the patriarchal 'system.' The denial of manhood is the loss of the Phallus which is symbolically castration in Freudian terms. "From this viewpoint, narrative is a source of consolation; lost objects are a cause of anxiety to us, symbolising certain deeper unconscious losses...In Lacanian theory, it is an original lost object" (Eagleton, 1983, p.185). This lost object is the justice he was seeking to reach. That is Lacanian *object petit a*. The Symbolic Phallus is lost and everybody is after the Phallus. It is lacking so it is desired.

Chapter 3

CONCLUSION

3.1 K. the insatiable

This desire for K. of wanting to be free from the tyranny of the state, is an inevitable consequence of the Lack of justice within the system. Experiencing K.'s predicament in *The Trial*, is to represent the oppressive modern tyrannical and bureaucratic world in the twentieth century as the inescapable result of a hostile system setting the limits over human beings by language as it is through language that any system gains operation, hence Lacan's Symbolic Order.

For once again, we witness in this novel that language is not merely a neutral communication tool amongst human beings, and it is an eternal violence through symbolisation – totalitarianism, fascism, hierarchy, tyranny and despotism. These notions form our individuality or destruct our purity by setting limits around us. K. on the other hand, might not be the biggest hero but he never acknowledges his limit – the accusation, the 'guilt'. "To stand accused is to stand to lose" (p.76) is a foreshadowing statement long before K.'s execution indicating the intention of the state and also for K. the beginning of his disappointment. This, at the same time, marks the point of realisation for K. that justice does not exist. Nevertheless, in the last scene K. finds it useless to resist against his executioners for he resigns from the Symbolic and rejects to re-enter it. As it is stated in the parable, the countryman is labelled as "insatiable" (p.167). Considering the countryman in Kafka's parable as Josef K., the message gets clearer that K. gets executed for he is insatiable. The word insatiable

conveys the irrepressible, inextinguishable or unconquerable human spirit. (K.'s desire for justice is never fulfilled). In other words, his desire is not satiable for justice is captured in the Real which is according to Lacan the unattainable.

Kafka in one of his diaries continues: "I can once more carry on a conversation with myself" (Kafka's Dairy, 1910, p.293). Referring to his diary, this conversation with himself was his novel, *The Trial*, which was like a journey to his inner self where Kafka not only reflected the turmoils of the twentieth century, but also reflected the dark sides of his subconscious haunted by his father, reflecting his father's oppressions which he was never able to escape. After a self-realisation, his subconscious finds its way out in his novels and his writings indeed became a deliberate action, reflecting the repression of his father's tyranny. "Linked with this idea of *repression*, which is the 'forgetting' or ignoring unsolved conflicts, unadmitted desires, or traumatic past events, so that they are forced out of conscious awareness and into the realm of the unconscious" (Barry, 1995, p.96-97). Kafka, due to excessive oppression on the part of his father who was responsible for the wounded relationship between them, internalises this sense of injustice and oppression. As a result he cannot reach the Lacanian Real which is his individuality, his self-confidence which is related to his sense of justice which is to express himself within the realm of a family life under his father. Still he desired to free himself from the shadow as well as the burden of his domineering father. He was like a kind of salvation seeker or a slave asking or begging his master to be freed, by asking for his father's approval to be himself, a free soul and an individual.

Kafka both in real life and as K. in his novel knew his limits in a world which had set its boundaries for identities to 'be' themselves by the rule makers which are the Symbolic order, Patriarchy or religion. The priest who also confesses that he belongs to the court later says to K.; "one does not have to believe everything is true, one only has to believe it is necessary" (p.172) Just as they made Block believe he was guilty or needed to be tamed and become satiable, which in five years they succeeded in making him so: 'an obedient dog'. The same tyranny is practiced over K. during which process he is accused as; "You are insatiable" since he is striving for the law. This is what makes K. 'guilty' in their eyes for not being 'satiabile'. The system fears being unable to tame him. So K. gets killed "Like a dog!" (p.178) for he is not an obedient 'dog', for he is seen as a potential danger for the totalitarian system. This leaves the reader with a paradoxical ending. In the last scene a knife kills this man (the phallic knife penetrates a man), deceiving an innocent man even in his death (execution) with a shame.

With the usual ambivalence and doubt, Kafka tries to step out of his father's shadow and be free of him. But as he makes very clear in *The Trial*, even if you are free of your biological father, the patriarchal system will be your surrogate father, and your inescapable oppressor. There *is* no escape.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: The Trial (Before the Law): p.166-167

“Before the law sits a gatekeeper. To this gatekeeper comes a man from the country who asks to gain entry into the law. But the gatekeeper says that he cannot grant him entry at the moment. The man thinks about it and then asks if he will be allowed to come in later on. “It is possible,” says the gatekeeper, “but not now.” At the moment the gate to the law stands open, as always, and the gatekeeper walks to the side, so the man bends over in order to see through the gate into the inside. When the gatekeeper notices that, he laughs and says: “If it tempts you so much, try it in spite of my prohibition. But take note: I am powerful. And I am only the most lowly gatekeeper. But from room to room stand gatekeepers, each more powerful than the other. I can’t endure even one glimpse of the third.” The man from the country has not expected such difficulties: the law should always be accessible for everyone, he thinks, but as he now looks more closely at the gatekeeper in his fur coat, at his large pointed nose and his long, thin, black Tartar’s beard, he decides that it would be better to wait until he gets permission to go inside. The gatekeeper gives him a stool and allows him to sit down at the side in front of the gate. There he sits for days and years. He makes many attempts to be let in, and he wears the gatekeeper out with his requests. The gatekeeper often interrogates him briefly, questioning him about his homeland and many other things, but they are indifferent questions, the kind great men put, and at the end he always tells him once more that he cannot let him inside yet. The man, who has equipped himself with many things for his journey, spends everything, no matter how valuable, to win over the gatekeeper. The latter takes it all but, as he does so, says, “I am taking this only so that you do not think you have failed to do

anything.” During the many years the man observes the gatekeeper almost continuously. He forgets the other gatekeepers, and this one seems to him the only obstacle for entry into the law. He curses the unlucky circumstance, in the first years thoughtlessly and out loud, later, as he grows old, he still mumbles to himself. He becomes childish and, since in the long years studying the gatekeeper he has come to know the fleas in his fur collar, he even asks the fleas to help him persuade the gatekeeper. Finally his eyesight grows weak, and he does not know whether things are really darker around him or whether his eyes are merely deceiving him. But he recognizes now in the darkness an illumination which breaks inextinguishably out of the gateway to the law. Now he no longer has much time to live. Before his death he gathers in his head all his experiences of the entire time up into one question which he has not yet put to the gatekeeper. He waves to him, since he can no longer lift up his stiffening body. The gatekeeper has to bend way down to him, for the great difference has changed things to the disadvantage of the man. “What do you still want to know, then?” asks the gatekeeper. “You are insatiable.” “Everyone strives after the law,” says the man, “so how is that in these many years no one except me has requested entry?” The gatekeeper sees that the man is already dying and, in order to reach his diminishing sense of hearing, he shouts at him, “Here no one else can gain entry, since this entrance was assigned only to you. I’m going now to close it.”