

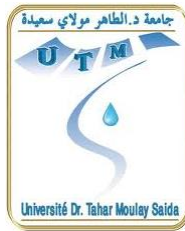
People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

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Existential Guilt in Franz Kafka's the Trial

A dissertation submitted in the Department of English and Literature in partial fulfillment of the Requirement of Master Degree in Didactics of EFL.

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Academic Year: 2016/2017

Dedication

I dedicate this work to:

My parents -the rock on which I lean-for their wise counsel and sympathetic ear.

My loving siblings Abd EL Malek and Sarah,

All the English teachers, especially the great ones

Acknowledgments

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful

I would like to express my profound gratitude to my mentor and supervisor Mrs. Mokeddem for her continuous support, patience, motivation, and immense knowledge. Her guidance helped me greatly in this humble research of mine. I would also like to thank the rest of my thesis committee for accepting to evaluate this thesis.

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Abstract

Mankind's alienation and loss of identity in the modern world are one of the central themes in Franz Kafka's *The Trial*. It evokes a sense of alienation and loss as well as it tells about the author's experience of modernity. This dissertation examines the work of *the Trial* by focusing on how sicknesses or emotional instabilities can infiltrate in Kafka's work.

This research paper adopts the methodology of a traditional literature review to examine Kafka's world, i.e. His family, his career as a writer, the canon he belongs to ...etc. Further, a Psychoanalytic Theory was adopted to decipher the author's famous work in terms of humanistic issues such as guilt.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is entitled Franz Kafka's literature: 'an axe for the frozen sea within'. The second chapter is entitled Franz Kafka's guilt "guilt can never be doubted. While the third chapter is entitled Josef K's guilt "he who has a why to live for van bear almost any how". This study revealed that the sickness being 'Existential guilt' did infiltrate in *The Trial*, from Franz Kafka 'the author' to Josef K 'the protagonist' in an implicit manner.

Key-words: Kafkaesque-Guilt-Modernism- Psychoanalytic Theory

General Introduction

General Introduction

Literature is the means by which writers relieve themselves from whatever pain they feel so that readers can pick it up and experience it. On this account, Lang leav wrote: “I don't think all writers are sad. I think it's the other way around- all sad people write.”¹ Modernist literature in particular allowed both authors and readers to emotionally communicate and connect to each other through a roller coaster of emotions.

In Modernist novels, authors – such as Franz Kafka (1883–1924) - can be prophets, patients, sceptics, critics, heretics, and believers. This sort of embodiment - that could only take place in literature – along with the use of stream of consciousness, irony, satire, and censure has allowed readers to relate to characters. Therefore, the study of literature is the study of life itself.

Franz Kafka was and still remains a towering figure of Modern European literature; he was part of a generation of German-speaking Jews from Prague. Kafka's literary work has been given a tremendous importance to the extent of considering it the bible of modern age, this stems from his use of a minor literature ‘Prague German’, his adoption of a language of bureaucracy, and his use of surreal scenarios in which almost all characters are found inexplicably guilty and put to suffer for that cause.

Throughout his works, Kafka's characters are not guilty because of a misconduct or a breach of societal value but because they are survivors, sexual, Jews, Catholics, existentialists, repressed, suppressed, and sublimated. *The Trial* for instance - one of Kafka's novels- tells the grotesque and disturbing account of a man found unreasonably guilty and gets trapped inside a bureaucratic and judicial labyrinth from which he is unable to come out.

Amongst all Kafka's writings such as *the Country Doctor*, *the Metamorphosis*, *the Hunger Artist*, and *the Penal Colony*, *the Trial* has not been given justice because of its highly absurd nature and its abundant interpretations. Hence, this thesis is entitled “*Existential Guilt in Franz Kafka's the Trial*”, it draws attention to a writer who was able to transcend his external environment and dip himself in a setting where man has a responsibility to live an individual and authentic life.

¹<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/923802-i-don-t-think-all-writers-are-sad-she-said-i> consulted on 2/6/2017

General Introduction

The Trial portrays conflicts between Josef K and the external world because of his failure in answering or answering in the wrong way, all this enter into an understanding of the problematic of guilt. Ergo, Kafka tackles not only a neurotic guilt but also a real guilt that occurs as a result of Josef K's personal situation and his responsibility.

Accordingly, the present work aims to examine Kafka's life by analyzing his relationship with his family, paramours, and faith which supposedly mirrored his sense of guilt through Josef K. A man witnessing an absurd form of justice, desperately tries to discover the nature of his guilt.

In view of that, the work is based on the following research question:

Can sicknesses or emotional instabilities infiltrate from Franz Kafka to the protagonist Josef k. in Kafka's *the Trial*?

According to this question, a hypothesis has been formulated:

It is assumed that since Kafka was mentally unsound, some of his confused emotions – particularly guilt - might have infiltrated in his writings forming some sort of bond between Kafka and his imaginary character Josef K.

In order to investigate the research question in relation to its hypothesis, the Psychoanalytic literary- critical theory seems to be the appropriate methodology to achieve cogent analysis.

This work is divided into three chapters each dealing with an important aspect in Kafka's literature and life. The first chapter is entitled *Franz Kafka's literature: 'an axe for the frozen sea within'* it discusses the literary characteristics of the novel starting with a definition of the principle concepts such as Kafkaesque, Existentialism, Absurdism all being notions related to each other. It also goes through Franz Kafka's Minor Literature and its effect. The aim of this chapter is to shed light on the literature that mirrored Kafka's sense of guilt.

The second chapter is entitled *Franz Kafka's guilt "guilt can never be doubted"*. It contains a formal and a psychological definition of guilt and its types; comprising neurotic and existential guilt. Further, this chapter examines Kafka's

General Introduction

relationship to his family -especially his father-, his unsuccessful romantic life, and his relationship to his Jewish faith and Jewish guilt as well. The aim of this chapter is to picture Kafka's environment and the sources that gave rise to his sense of guilt based on the available personal document: "Letter to My Father", letters to Milena, and personal diaries.

The third chapter is entitled *Josef K's guilt "he who has a why to live for van bear almost any how"*. This chapter comprises a short summary of *the trial* with its most important occurrences focusing on the theme of guilt and its dominance over Josef K, the law, sex, and religion. The aim of this chapter is to see whether Kafka's guilt has been indeed reflected in *the Trial*, thus to prove that sicknesses can indeed infiltrate in written fiction.

This thesis could have been best conducted if it was not for the lack of resources because most of Kafka's personal documents and diaries were not given to the public.

This work is based on the 6th edition of the APA referencing style.

Chapter one
Franz Kafka's Literature
“An axe for the frozen sea within”

I.1. Introduction

Franz Kafka (1883-1924) was a Czech-born German-language author whose written fiction shed light on the distress, alienation, and powerlessness that 20th century individuals went through. As a remarkable literary figure, Kafka was described in a multitude of ways. According to Louis Begley, in his *The Tremendous World I Have inside My Head: Franz Kafka: A Biographical Essay*. Kafka was:

over six feet tall, handsome, elegantly dressed, an unexceptional student, a strong swimmer, an aerobics enthusiast, a vegetarian, a frequent visitor to movie houses, cabarets, all-night cafés, literary soirées and brothels and the published author of seven books during his brief lifetime²

Some of Kafka's biographers believed he was a saint while others thought otherwise since from another angle, Kafka was described as a man with a distorted and unstable self-image who suffered from hyper-sensitivity to noise and a desire for solitude. The author was portrayed by Frederick R. Karl in his "*Franz Kafka: Representative man*" as:

an obsessive writer, an episodic depressive, a diarist, an insurance agent, a letter writer, a family member, a disease victim, a lifelong *hypochondriac*³, a frequenter of gentile Czech prostitutes, and a man who belonged to a despised German-speaking minority within a Jewish minority and felt he had no native tongue with which to speak his deepest feelings.⁴

Kafka got first introduced to Literature at Prague University when he was eighteen and began writing in 1904. Four short stories and three novels were his main works. After that, he went on to receive a law degree, and on June 3rd, 1924 he died in the Kiel nursing house near Vienna. On his death bed Franz asked his friend and

²<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2008/07/17/f-kafka-everyman/> consulted on 7/5/2017

³From Hypochondria; the conviction that one is or is likely to become ill even though there is no medical evidence of illness.

⁴<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/frederick-r-karl/franz-kafka-representative-man/> consulted on 25/5/2017

literary executor Max Brod to burn all his letters and writings but fortunately his last wish was disregarded.

Franz Kafka's works were characterized by nightmarish settings in which characters were featured as sad, helpless and unable to avoid their lonesome existence. This absurd, nonsensical, frustrating predicament modern men were forced to experience came to be called after Kafka himself as "*Kafkaesque*"

Despite the fact that Franz Kafka left a few books and number of short stories as a legacy, he remained the most widely read author of the twentieth century. Kafka wrote about spirituality, women, oppression, innocence and guilt, Law's authority, and the very logic of human bond and communication. This chapter will analyze Franz Kafka's peculiar type of literature and its characteristics.

I.2. Kafkaesque

The word *Kafkaesque* has entered the vernacular to describe unnecessary, complicated and frustrating experiences. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary *Kafkaesque* means: "Of, relating to, or suggestive of Franz Kafka or his writings; especially: having a nightmarishly complex, bizarre or illogical quality"⁵

Indeed Kafka's works dealt with some of the absurd aspects of modern bureaucracy which were partly inspired from his personal experience as an insurance clerk in early 20th century Prague. But it was not just the authoritarian realm of the work place that inspired Kafka; some of his protagonists' struggles come from within. Not only did Kafka shed light on the pressure people fell under but also on how they responded and whether they rose above their struggles or not. According to Kafka's biographer Frederick Karl, *Kafkaesque* is:

When you enter a surreal world in which all your control patterns, all your plans, the whole way in which you have configured your own behavior, begins to fall to pieces, when you find yourself against a force that does not lend itself

⁵<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Kafkaesque> consulted on 25/5/2017

to the way you perceive the world. You don't give up, you don't lie down and die. What you do is struggle against this with all of your equipment, with whatever you have. But of course you don't stand a chance. That's Kafkaesque.⁶

The term *Kafkaesque* has indeed been used synonymously with “Surreal” because the nature of Kafka's style had placed his writing into a variety of literary schools. The hopelessness and absurdity common to his works are seen as illustrative of *Existentialism*.

I.3. Existentialism

Existentialism as a term is impossible to define for its exceedingly broad approaches, still some of its major principles can be outlined. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, Existentialism is:

A chiefly 20th century philosophical movement embracing diverse doctrines but centering on the analysis of individual existence in an unfathomable universe and the plight of the individual who must assume ultimate responsibility for acts of free will without any certain knowledge of what is right or wrong or good or bad⁷

Existentialism - as a movement - arose in the 19th century Europe, became prominent in the mid-20th century and gained popularity after the horrific years of the Second World War (WWII). This particular period of time witnessed influential existentialists such as: Soren Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Franz Kafka, Martin Heidegger, Albert Camus, Maurice Merleau Ponty, and Jean Paul Sartre. All of these figures were concerned with the problem of living as a human being. As Robert C. Solomon expressed it in his work “*from Hegel to Existentialism*”:

Existentialism is not simply a philosophy or a philosophical revolt, it is the explicit conceptual manifestation of an existential attitude— a spirit of the

⁶<https://makingsensephilosophy.wordpress.com/2016/09/16/franz-kafka-kafkaesque/> consulted on 25/5/2017

⁷<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/existentialism> consulted on 25/5/2017

'present age' [...] It is a philosophical realization of a self-consciousness living in a "broken world" (Marcel), an "ambiguous world" (de Beauvoir), a "dislocated world" (Merleau-Ponty), a world into which we are "thrown" and "condemned" yet "abandoned" and "free" (Heidegger and Sartre), a world which appears to be indifferent or even "absurd" (Camus). It is an attitude that recognizes the unresolvable confusion of the human world, yet resists the all-too-human temptation to resolve the confusion by grasping toward whatever appears or can be made to appear firm or familiar [...] The existential attitude begins with a disoriented individual facing a confused world that he cannot accept⁸

European thinkers who embraced this movement or refused to be labeled as existentialists but wrote about existential themes such as: anxiety, anguish, absurdity, death, alienation, and estrangement were called Existentialists. Jean Paul Sartre; an atheist French philosopher who refused to be labeled as existentialist claimed: "My philosophy is a philosophy of existence; I don't even know what Existentialism is."⁹

Thus, Existentialism is what these thinkers hold and write and they differed from one to another according to their propensity; being atheists, theists, phenomenologist¹⁰, hermeneuticists¹¹, absurdist...etc. Furthermore, each of these philosophers tried to stress on the individual as an existing subject in his own way.

Despite their various opinions on the matter, all Existentialists rejected systems that espoused absolute answers to the existential problems to life because they largely removed the massive burden people would have to face when they try to create purpose for themselves in a unique and personal manner. They believed that adhering to these systems was unfavorable to one's development into an authentic and free human being.

⁸Solomon Robert, *from Hegel to Existentialism*, Oxford, Oxford University press, 1988, p238.

⁹<http://www.iep.utm.edu/existent/> Consulted on 25/5/2017

¹⁰From phenomenology: the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view

¹¹From Hermeneutics: the science of interpretation, especially of the Scriptures.

Most Existentialists or precursors of Existentialism seemed to share an obsession over how to live one's life and believed that philosophical and psychological inquiry can help. They believed there are certain existential questions that everyone must deal with such as: death, existence, and the place of god in it. Existentialists believe that life does not have an "objective" or a universally known value, and that it is up to the individual to create one. Sartre argued "Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself."¹²

Existentialism holds that an individual is determined from within, not from outside forces which may affirm or limit his freedom, it also holds that human beings are completely free and must take responsibility for their actions and choices because they are not trivial, but definitive of their very self-hood. For existentialists even choosing not to make a choice is a form of choice bringing with it consequences. Thus, it is not surprising that living and acting is a terrifying responsibility and a burden that has caused Existentialist great anxiety and anguish.

Existentialists believed that the only way to rise above the absurd condition of humanity is by exercising our personal freedom and choice in an ethical manner. Sartre claimed in his work *existentialism is humanism*:

What is valuable is not simply the empirical fact of human existence. Our ethical aims should not be to increase our numbers, lengthen our lives, satisfy our desires and preferences, or improve on our achievements. What distinguishes existentialism – or, more precisely, existential humanism – as an ethical theory is its view that all that is intrinsically valuable is the nature or structure of our existence, the kind of thing we are.¹³

Existentialism is closely related to a concept or an idea that was mentioned by Jean Paul Sartre in 1945 lecture entitled *is Existentialism a Humanism*. The concept is referred to as: "Existence precedes Essence". This concept was initially put forth by

¹²<https://thenorthernmonkee.com/2013/03/22/dissertation/> consulted on 25/5/2017

¹³<http://www.jonathanwebber.co.uk/articles/Existentialism.pdf> consulted on 25/5/2017

the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle - along with Plato - who took it as a given that everything had an Essence (including us) and that our essences existed in us before we were even born. He claimed that: "Every independent thing /substance be it a person, a rock or a tree has its essence, hence the essence of a substance can be seen as its necessary properties or characteristics which are required for a thing to be what it is"¹⁴

Jean Paul Sartre did not believe that we as humans were designed but rather come to this world lacking a pre-determined Essence, our ability to make free choices gives us the chance to sculpt a unique Essence for ourselves. Existentialism holds that, with the absence of divinity or any other transcendent force, the only way to find meaning in life is by embracing existence.

Existentialism goes hand-in-hand with absurdism. It emphasizes the bewilderment an individual feels in the face of a meaningless and lonely world. Set aside and Separated from other individuals feeling alienated from the world itself.

I.4. Absurdism

The term *absurdism* refers to a lack of purpose and the absurd world is primarily a nonsensical universe; bizarre, meaningless, and invites ridicule. According the Merriam Webster dictionary absurdism is: "A philosophy based on the belief that the universe is irrational and meaningless and that the search for order brings the individual into conflict with the universe"¹⁵

Absurdism is a philosophy that features the isolation and estrangement of human beings after being thrown into universe devoid of any religious, spiritual, or metaphysical meaning. It manifests a lack of logic, coherence, intelligibility, and realism. The literature of the absurd depicts the anguish, and the inherent despair in the human condition.

Existential writers such as Franz Kafka, Albert Camus and others used the absurd and refrained from conventional literary structure because it allowed them to explore the aforementioned elements in a senseless world using absurd themes, characters, or situations to question whether meaning or structure exists at all.

¹⁴<http://www.friesian.com/essence.htm> consulted on 25/5/2017

¹⁵<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/absurdism> consulted on 25/5/2017

According to Albert Camus; a French philosopher and journalist, the absurd is: "A divorce between man and the world, this world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart"¹⁶

In his analysis of Franz Kafka's *the Trial*, Camus pointed out: "Consequently, I recognized here a work that is absurd in its principles ... Nothing is lacking, neither the unexpressed revolt, nor lucid and mute despair, nor that amazing freedom of manner which the characters of the novel exemplify until their ultimate death"¹⁷

Based on this standard, there are three components of an absurdist work that *the Trial* successfully exemplifies: an unexpressed revolt, a lucid and mute despair, and an amazing freedom of manner.

I.5. The characteristics of Kafka's literature

As a writer and a reader, Franz Kafka had a peculiar preference for a particular sort of books. He believed that books should make us feel something, move us, and lead us to doubt the reason behind our existence, and the absurdity of the world in which we live. Kafka used literature as a means to relieve himself from the enormous amount of emotional confusion he felt. As a writer he had believed that books should:

Wound or stab us. If the book we're reading doesn't wake us up with a blow to the head, what are we reading for? So that it will make us happy, as you write? Good Lord, we would be happy precisely if we had no books, and the kind of books that make us happy are the kind we could write ourselves if we had to. But we need books that affect us like a disaster, that grieve us deeply, like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished into forests far from everyone, like a suicide.¹⁸

Kafka's written fiction was dramatic, absurd, and existentialist because it mirrored his true self and it reflected the period of time during which he lived and wrote. In his books Franz Kafka transmitted his memories, joyful moments, and

¹⁶<http://users.humboldt.edu/jwpowell/sisyphus.htm> consulted on 25/5/2017

¹⁷<http://users.clas.ufl.edu/burt/MythofSisyphusCamus.pdf> consulted on 25/5/2017

¹⁸<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/237620> consulted on 25/5/2017

sorrows to his characters, and the time he invested in writing was as the only period during which the real and the fictional merged into one.

I.5.1. Kafka's minor literature

Besides the fact that Kafka used a bureaucratic language and a surreal scenario in *the Trial*, he also wrote a *minor literature*. According to the French academics Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari a minor literature is that which is written by an excluded and marginalized minority in a major language or the colonizers' language: "A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language."¹⁹

According to Deleuze and Guattari there are three characteristics that identify a minor literature: "The three characteristics of minor literature are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation."²⁰

In light of what these French academics have mentioned, a minor literature has three characteristics. The first characteristic is the deterritorialization of language, and it revolves around taking the language out of its territory by eradicating its social, political, or cultural practices from its native place and using it by a minority to revendicate its rights. Franz Kafka for instance used 'Prague German'; a language that was not originally his but was nevertheless used to denounce -through fiction- the way his fellow Jews were oppressed and marginalized.

The second characteristic is the connection of the individual to a political immediacy. This refers to the political nature of a minor language in which political issues are the concern of the whole minority and the center of public awareness. In majority literature concerns are individual – relating to one's person only- with the environment serving as a background while a Minor literature is completely different; its cramped space forces each individual to connect immediately to politics.

¹⁹<http://projectlamar.com/media/dgkafka.pdf> consulted on the 24/05/2017

²⁰ibid.

The third and last characteristic is the collective assemblage of enunciation. It suggests that what each author says individually already constitutes a common political cause and action. Because collective or national consciousness is often inactive in external life, literature finds itself charged with the role and function of the collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation.

I.5.2. The Kafka effect

On April 10th, 1917 Franz Kafka received a letter from a man named Dr. Siegfried Wolff. "Dear Sir, You have made me unhappy," the letter began:

I bought your "Metamorphosis" as a gift for my cousin. But, she is incapable of understanding the story. My cousin gave it to her mother who doesn't understand it either. The mother gave the book to my other cousin, who also didn't find an explanation. Now they have written to me: They expect me to explain the story to them as I am the doctor in the family. But I am at a loss. Sir! I have spent months in the trenches exchanging blows with the Russians without batting an eyelid. But I could not stand losing my good name with my cousins. Only you can help me. You must do it, as you are the one who landed me in this mess. So please tell me what my cousin should think about "Metamorphosis."²¹

The nature of Franz Kafka's works have given way to either a confusion and a difficulty in understanding the point that Kafka is trying to convey or an abundance of interpretations. Walter Benjamin declared: "any exclusive appropriation of the Austrian author's literary philosophy is not satisfactory when it comes to understanding the point of Kafka's works"²². What Benjamin meant by this is that Franz Kafka should be placed within one's own subtle world in order to fully grasp the philosophical eccentricities that characterized his work for the aspects of Kafka's literature dealt with sexes, classes, neurosis, and mysticism, and hence cannot be

²¹<http://forward.com/culture/340878/opening-a-treasure-trove-of-kafka-trivia/>consulted on 25/5/2017

²²https://www.academia.edu/25308896/Franz_Kafkas_personal_writings_and_their_philosophical_impact_on_his_literature consulted on 25/5/2017

analyzed by focusing only on the historical context of when and how his writing took place.

Thus, one misses the point in Kafka's writings either by *oedipalizing*²³ and relating him to mother-father narratives or by trying to limit him to theological-metaphysical speculation in the detriment of all the political, ethical, and ideological dimensions that run through his work and give it a special status in the history of literature.

In an attempt to figure out the effect of Kafka's writings, a study was conducted at the University of British Columbia. Two groups of study participants were given the task of reading a short story and spotting hidden patterns in rows of letters. One of the groups was given Kafka's "The Country Doctor" which is a typically absurd Kafkaesque story, while the second group was given a story that actually made sense.²⁴ When the researchers checked the study results, they found out that those who read the confusing Kafka story were twice as good at spotting correct patterns in the strings of letters

According to another study conducted at the University of Missouri and written by psychologists Samantha Heintzelman and Laura King: "When people believed their lives made sense, they let their intuition guide their actions because they were likely on auto-pilot, relying on intuitive processing"²⁵. However, this is forcefully changed since after a traumatic event, effortful processing may be crucial to making or reinstating meaning.

Facing Meaningless situations in life is quite similar to facing them in literature. In order to make sense of things human beings usually go beyond what they see on the surface and start processing thoroughly in order to find clarity. When someone detects something that does not make sense, a cluster of brain functions called the *salience network*²⁶ a powerful set of cognitive skills that work to find other meaningful patterns

²³From the oedipal complex, a crucial stage in the normal developmental process that involves a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex and a sense of rivalry with the parent of the same sex

²⁴<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/strategic-thinking/201604/the-kafka-effect> consulted on 27/5/2017

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶A mechanism that facilitates learning and survival by enabling organisms to focus their limited perceptual and cognitive resources on the most pertinent subset of the available sensory data.

around people. Once it starts, the brain will not stop looking until it finds something to fill the void with. If one's brain cannot make sense of things it will start looking elsewhere with extraordinary intensity. It will identify unrelated patterns and connections between ideas and objects that were present all along, but that no one noticed before.

On this account, psychoanalytic literary theory seems to be the suitable tool to deal with Franz Kafka's emotional distress and guilt. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical and psychosexual theories were employed to get a better understanding of the emotion of guilt from a psychological perspective.

I.6. Psychoanalytic literary theory

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was commonly referred to as the father of *psychoanalysis*²⁷, he was an Austrian neurologist esteemed as one of the most influential minds of the 20th century. During his career, Freud developed many theories including those that focus on the three levels of the mind –conscious, preconscious, and unconscious, the interpretation of dreams, Defense mechanisms, The Id, ego, and super ego, and what is referred to as the psychosexual development theory. Words he introduced through his theories are now part of everyday vernacular such as: libido, denial, repression, cathartic, Freudian slip, neurotic etc.

Freud's belief that things that happen to people during their childhood can contribute to who they become and the way they later function as adults is incorporated in these theories. Hence, if one's childhood is filled with Joyful memories, love, and support he or she will grow up to be a happy, sane, and confident individual, but if the contrary occurs, one can go through serious mental damages.

Amongst all the theories mentioned above, this study will comprise Freud's commentary on guilt in his *civilization and its discontents*, The Id, ego and super ego and his theory on the psychosexual stages of development.

I.7. Conclusion

²⁷A method for treating mental illness and also a theory which explains human behavior.

Chapter One: Franz Kafka's Literature 'an axe for the frozen sea within'

Flexible books that have been interpreted according to one's beliefs like: the trial by Franz Kafka, thus spoke Zarathustra by Nietzsche, and the stranger by Albert Camus are venerated literary masterpieces. Many analysts have taken liberty in assigning different interpretations to absurd pieces of fiction, all being logical and sustained with arguments.

Second chapter

Franz Kafka's guilt

“Guilt is never to be doubted”

Second chapter: Franz Kafka's guilt "Guilt is never to be doubted"

II.1. Introduction

One of the major keys to understand Kafka as a person and as a writer is to fathom the nature of relationship he had with his father. During his life time, Kafka never wrote directly about his father, it was rather deduced from the psychology of his novels. Thus, this chapter intends to dive into the psychological aspects of Kafka's guilt and the reasons that gave rise to it based on what Kafka wrote in his *letter to my father*.

II.2. Definition of guilt

In its formal definition, guilt is an internal state or an emotion one gets after having committed an offense by breaking a rule that is considered - by our moral compass – valid. According to the Merriam Webster dictionary guilt is: “the fact of having committed a breach of conduct especially violating law and involving a penalty”²⁸. This breach could be committing a criminal deed, going against a social norm, or acting against one's internal values.

As a psychoanalytical term, guilt first appeared in Sigmund Freud's article *Obsessive Actions and Religious practices*.²⁹ It is defined as: “an unconscious feeling resulting from a conflict between the aims of the superego and those of the ego.”³⁰

Guilt is recognized as an internal voice that can bring people to realize that they have fallen short in a standard by which they lived. According to Martin Buber: “Guilt appears when one places oneself outside the order that the human world has created and which each individual believes to be the basis of his own and all human existence.”³¹

Guilt can be a positive feeling; in that it can help motivate people to learn from painful experiences and straighten their actions by pushing them to make amends and

²⁸<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/guilt> consulted on 01/06/2017

²⁹ibid

³⁰<http://www.encyclopedia.com/psychology/guilt-unconscious-sense> consulted on 01/06/2017

³¹<http://kaaretorgnypetersen.blogspot.com/2012/03/bubers-theory-of-existential-guilt-and.html> consulted on 1/6/2017

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repair damaged relationships. It can also lead to a thorough review of mistakes, increase alertness and caution, and help a person feel responsible.

On the other hand, Guilt can dominate people's thinking and turn a positive person into a person who sees nearly everything as an issue. This type of guilt is often associated with depression, anxiety, stress and other mental health related problems because it can slow down or totally inhibit people's progress, and at times completely immobilize them, decrease motivation and productivity, and undermine their self-esteem and sense of worth.

Unlike those who have a conscience, People who lack any sense of guilt - labeled psychopaths - typically do not exhibit a remorse or guilt in the face of wrongdoing because they appear to have a lack of moral reasoning, an inability to evaluate situations in a moral framework, and an inability to develop emotional bonds with other people.

Freud Sigmund linked the feeling of guilt and its related emotion of anxiety to the *Oedipal stage*.³² Freud believed that young children from the age of 3 to 5, desire having sex with their opposite-sex parent and develop some sort of jealousy and rivalry towards the same sex parent. Freud wrote: "We cannot get away from the assumption that man's sense of guilt springs from the Oedipus complex"³³.

What Freud meant is that when a boy is in the phallic stage of development, he suspects that acting on his feelings of attraction to his opposite sex parent is unacceptable so he represses his desires. This process results in an unconscious sense of guilt.

In his psychosexual theory, Freud also proposed that boys and girls experience the complex differently: boys in a form of *castration anxiety*³⁴, girls in a form of *penis*

³² One of the five psychosexual development stages :(i)**the oral**, (ii) **the anal**, (iii) **the phallic**, (iv) **the latent**, and (v) **the genital**

³³ http://changingminds.org/disciplines/psychoanalysis/concepts/oedipus_complex.htm consulted on 1/6/2017

³⁴ a child's fear of injury to the genitals by the parent of the same gender as punishment for unconscious guilt over Oedipal feelings

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envy³⁵ and that unsuccessful resolution of the complex might lead to neurosis, pedophilia, and homosexuality. A child's identification with the same-sex parent is the successful resolution of the complex. Eventually, his repressed desires become transformed into sexual attraction toward peers of his own age.

II.3. Types of Guilt

There are two distinguishable types of guilt that create a basic conflict in each individual: neurotic and existential guilt.

II.3.1. Neurotic guilt: can be defined as feelings of remorse, shame, or self-attack for seeking gratification. This form of guilt appears to be related to emotional deprivation, parental prohibition, and faulty training procedures in childhood.

II.3.2. Existential / Ontological guilt: a type of guilt that is triggered by silencing one's natural inclinations. It is generally experienced by individuals when they turn their backs on their goals, retreat from life, or seek gratification in fantasy.

II.4. Existential Guilt

Existential guilt is an internal feeling that does not arise from personal failures or misconduct, but rather from one's core of being. This type of guilt floats from one fault to another. When it temporarily attaches itself to a moral fault, which is then corrected, it takes wing and settles on another fault. Irvin D. Yalom; an American existential psychiatrist, discusses existential guilt and states: "one is guilty not only through transgression against another or against some moral or social code, but one may be guilty of transgression against oneself"³⁶.

The internal tension of conscience can be dealt with by either changing behavior to fit standards or changing standards to fit behavior. However, existential guilt will not yield to these techniques. No matter how good one becomes, he will still

³⁵The female envies the male for his possession of a penis. Occurs when females become aware of the anatomical differences between the sexes

³⁶http://www.glendon.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/the_voice_dual_nature_of_guilt_reactions.pdf consulted on 2/6/2017

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feel guilty. Moral improvement does not cure existential guilt, and the failure to acknowledge one's existential guilt inevitably leads to confusion, despair, and alienation.

Kafka's protagonists suffered from a sense of guilt, and Kafka himself was burdened with it. In order to find the origin of Kafka's guilt, one must go through his relationship with his family, with women, and with his faith - all being under the influence of his father to get a better understanding of the emotional labyrinths both author and character went through.

II.4.1. Relationship with Family

It is relatively known that Kafka led a sad life with problems that began in his early years. Being the son of a psychologically abusive father and a mother who was too weak to protect her son had its damaging effects on Kafka's childhood. As a result of the abuse and the oppression, Franz grew timid, bookish, full of self-hatred, and he suffered from feelings of inadequacy and a difficulty in making decisions throughout his life.

Franz's father, Hermann Kafka, was a self-made merchant and manufacturer. Franz never managed to emerge out of his father's shadow because Hermann was utterly different from him. Hermann was physically strong; he displayed a gigantic build and a brash character. In 1919, as an attempt to give some sort of account on the type of relationship he had with his father, Franz wrote a 47 page letter entitled *Letter to my Father*. He justified his indifferent feelings towards his father by saying:

I have always slunk away from you to my room, to my books, to my crazy friends, to my overwrought ideas; I have never talked openly to you, never came near you in the synagogue, never visited you in Franzensbad or had any sense of family in other ways... While I don't lift a finger for you (I don't even give you a ticket for the theatre), I'll do anything for strangers.³⁷

³⁷KAFKA Franz, the essential Kafka, by John R. Williams, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth editions, 2014. P 555

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Hermann's domineering and authoritative manner as a father led his son to loath him. The eldest Kafka was more than what Franz could bear. In the same document Franz pointed out:

I would have been glad to have you as a friend, a boss, an uncle, a grandfather, indeed even (though more doubtfully) as a father in law. But it was as a father that you were too strong for me, especially since my brothers died young and my sisters came much later, so that I had to suffer the first assault quite alone, which I was far too weak to do.³⁸

Being a child at heart and greatly fond of his father, Franz often compared Hermann to many male figures in his family including himself. Hermann was after all the man Franz admired and aspired to be. Although as any human being Franz was aware of his father's numerous character flaws yet he was his role model, his strong and out of reach figure, and as he put it in words: "the standard by which I measured myself."³⁹ On this account he wrote:

Compare the two of us: I, to put it very summarily, a Lowy on a Kafka base, as it were, though not someone driven by the Kafka will for life, trade, and domination, but rather by the Lowy impulse, which works more mysteriously, more timidly, and often gives up altogether. You on the other hand, a true Kafka in your physique, health, appetite, your powerful voice, your loquacity, self-confidence, authority, stamina, presence of mind, knowledge of the world, a degree of generosity, and of course allied to these qualities all the faults and weaknesses to which your temperament and at times your fits of rage impel you"⁴⁰

Throughout his letter, Kafka discussed his fathers' dominance over him. Hermann dominated his son's life in every possible way for as any proud father he wanted his son to be as strong and fulfilled as himself without realizing that it caused him incalculable inner damage and distrust in his own judgement. Franz pointed out:

³⁸ KAFKA Franz, the essential Kafka, by John R. Williams, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth editions, 2014. P.555

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. P.557

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"You encouraged me when I marched and saluted properly, but I was never going to make a soldier; or you encouraged me when I ate heartily, or even drank beer with my meal, or when I sang songs I couldn't understand or learned to repeat your turns of phrase. But none of this was part of my future [...] even today you only really encourage me in matters that effect you personally [...] whatever good would it do me if it is only offered when it is not about me in the first instance?"⁴¹

Hermann's dominance far exceeded the way his son ate or sung. Kafka was neither able to think freely nor speak properly – he stuttered - in the presence of his father. Consequently, Franz was unable to form his own judgements and to support them for the intellectual dominance had its roots in his childhood. In no occasion did he ever recall being given the opportunity to think or form judgements freely without having them dismissed. He declared:

You dominated me intellectually [...] you ruled the world in your armchair. Your opinion was correct, everyone else's was crazy, overwrought, deranged, and abnormal. Not just that, you were so self-confident that even when you contradicted yourself, you were still right... for me you acquired the baffling nature of all tyrants.⁴²

What Franz most recalled from his memories was what his father had taught or rather imposed on him. And it had indeed seemed as if Hermann's rules applied to Franz and Franz alone as if they were made only for him:

[...] your instructions consisted largely in teaching me table manners. Whatever was put on the table had to be eaten, I was not allowed to say how the food tasted –but you often found it inedible, called it "fodder" and said 'that cow' (the cook) had ruined it. Because you had a hearty appetite and much preferred to eat everything quickly in great mouthfuls while it was hot, the child had to hurry his food [...] I was not allowed to gnaw at the bones, but you could. I was not allowed to suck at the vinegar, but you did [...] I had to

⁴¹KAFKA Franz, the essential Kafka, by John R. Williams, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth editions, 2014. P.559

⁴² Ibid. P.561

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be careful not to drop any food on the floor, but then you left more than anyone else under your chair”⁴³

Not only did Hermann dominate Franz's every minute of existence, he even opposed the handful of choices his son made such as selecting friends, writing, his interest in Judaism, and his decisions to be romantically involved with some women. In this regard Franz wrote:

It was enough for me to show some interest in a person-which being what I am, I did not do very often- to intervene without any regard for my feelings or respect for my judgement with abuse, slander and denigration. Innocent childlike people like the Yiddish actor Lowy [...] without even knowing him you compared him [...] to vermin, and as you so often did with people I was fond of, you automatically came out with the proverb: ‘if you go to bed with a dog, you get up with fleas.’⁴⁴

Throughout his letter Franz attacked and retreated almost immediately, his hatred, censure and accusations were soon transformed into admiration, probably because Kafka admired his father's ability to exist in a country where Jews were constantly under attack. He admitted:

Fortunately, however, there were exceptions to this, mostly when you suffered in silence [...] this happened rarely, to be sure, but when it did it was wonderful. Like those times, on a warm summer day when I would see you asleep in the shop after the midday meal with your elbows resting on the desk, on the Sundays when you were worn out and came to join us in the fresh summer air; or when mother was seriously ill, and you would hold on to the book case, shaking with tears; or during my most recent illness when you came quietly into Ottla's room to see me in bed, and in order not to disturb me just waved a hand in greeting. At such times I would lie down and weep with joy, and I weep again now as I write about it⁴⁵

⁴³KAFKA Franz, *the essential Kafka*, by John R. Williams, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth editions, 2014. p.562

⁴⁴Ibid p.561-562

⁴⁵Ibid. P 568

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As a victim of abuse Franz never stopped hoping for some sort of forgiveness from the person who had wronged him. In a passage in his letter, Franz admitted that all of his writings revolved around the only authority he loved and hated at the same time. He wrote: "[...] my writing was about you, indeed I was only confiding my troubles to a book because I could not confide in you."⁴⁶

As a result of the abuse, Franz's world was shattered into pieces and his identity was deformed. He pointed out:

The world for me was divided into three parts-one that I, the slave inhibited, under laws which were devised only for me, laws moreover which, for reasons I did not understand, I could never fully comply with; then a second world that was infinitely removed from mine, the world in which you lived, ruled, issued orders and were angry when they were not followed; and finally a third world in which other people lived happily, free from the giving and obeying of orders. I was constantly in disgrace; either I obeyed your orders, which was shameful because they only applied to me, or I defied you, which was shameful too, for how could I dare to defy you...⁴⁷

Despite the fact that Franz Kafka's mother was not fully given justice in his writings, he recognized the fact that she tried to intervene and attempted to somehow reconcile between her husband and son. In the same document Kafka wrote:

It is true that mother was boundlessly good to me [...] mother played the part of a beater in a hunt... by showing kindness, by talking sensibly, by pleading for me, and I was driven back to your sphere of control, from which I might otherwise have escaped to your benefit and mine [...] Mother simply protected me from you by stealth, gave me something or let me do something behind your back. And then I was once again the creature that shunned the light, the deceiver, full of *guilt*, the nobody who could only obtain by underhand means what he felt was his right. Naturally I then got used to using those means to

⁴⁶ KAFKA Franz, the essential Kafka, by John R. Williams, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth editions, 2014.p.586

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.563

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obtain what even I thought I had no right to: and that again only added to my *sense of guilt*.⁴⁸

Franz Kafka stressed on the fact that his relationship with his father had done him more harm than good and he mentioned the sense of guilt that haunted him more than twenty times. In this regard he noted: "In my dealing with you I had lost my self-confidence, which had been replaced by a limitless sense of *guilt* [...] I once wrote rightly of someone: "he fears the shame might outlive him"⁴⁹. And that someone was none other than Kafka's persona Josef K Himself

II.4.2. Kafka's romantic life

On the surface, Kafka courted women and led people to believe that he wished to be wedded and have children of his own. This, in fact was nothing but a mere pretension he loathed to a great extent, and while performing this little *mise -en-scene*⁵⁰ in reality, he in fact defended himself by completely rejecting this world in his writings. Through his fiction he shattered the very norms to which he had once submitted in his everyday life.

The writer's obsession with seducing women, his incapacity to fully committing to any of them, and his profound anxiety about not being unable to meet his lovers' expectations are traits that echo vividly in his work and a major cause behind his sense of guilt. Precisely between 1912 and his death in 1924, Kafka knew several women to whom he was engaged and disengaged. All of his Romantic ventures were long distance relationships. The women Kafka knew were:

II.4.2.1. Felice Bauer

On 13th August 1912, in his best friend's house Max Brod, Kafka made the acquaintance of his fiancé-to-be Felice Bauer, a secretarial assistant in a Berlin office. Franz met Felice for the first time during a dinner party, and according to what he

⁴⁸ KAFKA Franz, the essential Kafka, by John R. Williams, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth editions, 2014. p569-570

⁴⁹Ibid. p.578

⁵⁰ Mise-en-scène : the stage setting or scenery of a play.

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wrote in his diary, Kafka was far from being impressed by what he had seen in the young lady:

When I arrived at the Brod's, she was sitting at the table. But she looked like a maidservant to me. I was not at all curious about who she was, but rather took her for granted at once. Bony, empty face that wore its emptiness openly. Bare throat, a blouse thrown on [. . .] almost broken nose. Blonde, somewhat straight, unattractive hair, strong chin. As I was taking my seat I looked at her closely for the first time, by the time I was seated I already had an unshakeable opinion.⁵¹

Nevertheless, Kafka seduced and engaged in a relationship with Felice and sent her more than a hundred love letters in the three months that followed and they ended up getting engaged. Kafka then tried to talk Felice out of marrying him, warning her about his terrible personality and dreadful habits and his inability to bring a child into this world because of his strong fear of matrimony. As a way to save her engagement from the man she loved, Felice sent her close friend *Grete* as an emissary to Prague. Kafka met with *Grete* and could not help but start a flirtatious correspondence with her.

The unsettled emotional entanglements eventually led Felice, her sister, Grete, and Kafka's friend Ernst Weiss to confront the writer in a hotel room to sort out the mess. Kafka called the long session a kind of "law court" in which he was put on *trial*. Kafka wrote *The Trial* during 1914 in the months following his breakup with *Felice*. The novel is partly based on some of the events of his unhappy relationship.

This event meant the end of their relationship, but instead Felice and Kafka renewed their engagement and planned a wedding. Franz was looking again for an excuse to end his engagement. Kafka's relationship with his fiancé was characterized by extremely little physical interaction for the issues that tortured him most of his life were of a sexual nature, he feared sexual intercourse, was apparently disgusted by it

⁵¹<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jan/15/john-banville-kafka-trial-rereading> consulted on 25/5/2017

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and saw it as a punishment. On August 14, 1913 Franz wrote in his diaries: "Coitus as punishment for the happiness of being together"⁵²

In early 1919, Felice Bauer married another man. She had loved Kafka, but could not endure his depressions and manic episodes any longer. His emotions for her were never clear, even to Kafka. Although Franz's relationship with Felice was an unpleasant bumpy ride, she considered him a saint.

II.4.2.2. Julie Warhyzek

In 1918, after Kafka's tuberculosis got even worse than it was, he was sent to rest in a small hotel in the north of Prague where he met Julie Worhyzek. Julie and Franz were attracted to each other, and met secretly for a while in Prague. After bringing the subject of marriage with Julie to his father, Franz faced his father's disapproval to marry the daughter of a modest family after the failure of his first two engagements with Felice.

After having initiated a relationship with Julie, Franz started looking for an exit and found one miraculously when a landlord refused to rent the couple an apartment. Franz Kafka endeavored to justify that the reason behind his inability to get married which was relatively close to the fact that this prospect of his life was contaminated by his father's authority. He wrote something about the women he chose and his engagements as well:

Both girls were, albeit by chance, extraordinarily good choices, it is another sign of your complete misunderstanding that you can think someone as timid, hesitant, and wary as I am could decide to get married on an impulse [...] both marriages would have been sensible matches... neither girls let me down – it was just I let them both down. My opinion of them today is exactly the same as it was then, when I wanted to marry them... so why did I not marry? There were some obstacles, as there always are; but life consists in getting over such obstacles. The fundamental obstacle, however which sadly has

⁵² FRIEDLANDER Saul, Franz Kafka the poet of shame and guilt, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, p68

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nothing to do with particular cases, is that I am clearly mentally unfit for marriage. This is clear from the fact that from the moment I decide to Marry, I am unable to sleep, my head feels feverish day and night, I stumble about in desperation; it is no way to live⁵³

II.4.2.3. Milena Jesenska

When they first met, Kafka did not know that Milena was about to become a living fire within him. Milena happened to be the most passionate of Kafka's lovers, and he was seriously concerned he might not survive her intensity. Willy has described Milena in her youth saying:

She herself sometimes struck one as like a noble woman of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, a character such as Stendhal lifted out of the Old Italian chronicles and transplanted into his own novels, The Duchesse De San Saverina or Mathilde De La Mole: passionate, intrepid, cool and intelligent in their decisions but reckless in her choice of means when her passion was involved and during her youth it seems to have been involved almost all time. As a friend she was inexhaustible in kindness, inexhaustible in resources whose origin often remained enigmatic, but also inexhaustible in the claims she made on her friends. Claims which, to her as well as to her friends, seemed only natural⁵⁴

Kafka's relationship with Milena started in the spring of 1920. Milena was a Czech journalist and translator of some of Kafka's texts. She was a good-looking woman, much younger than Franz, and truly a free spirit. Milena lived in Vienna, was miserably married to a Prague Jew Ernst Pollak Whom she could not leave and loved regardless of his numerous affairs

What had started as a shallow business correspondence soon started to consume Kafka's sleep. In a letter to his best friend Max Brod, Franz wrote:

⁵³ KAFKA Franz, the essential Kafka, by John R. Williams, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth editions, 2014. p 595

⁵⁴ http://www.kkoworld.com/kitablar/frans_kafka_milenaya_mektublar-eng.pdf consulted on 25/5/2017

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Recently my insomnia had been unbearable. This probably has several reasons, one of which may be my correspondence with Milena. She is a living fire, such as I never seen; a fire that, despite everything burns only for him. At the same time, she is extremely tender, brave, intelligent, and sacrifices everything, or if you prefer acquires everything by sacrifice⁵⁵

Kafka's relationship with Milena seems to have been close, with Milena's own diaries indicating that there were several sexual intercours between them. It is even thought that among all of his previous lovers, Kafka actually dreamt of living under the same roof with Milena as husband and wife. Kafka wrote to Max Brod saying:

after a series of dreams, I had this one: a child wearing a little shirt was sitting by my left (I couldn't remember whether it was my own child or not, but this didn't bother me) Milena was on my right both were cuddling up against me, and I was telling them a story about a pocket book which I had lost but then recovered, although I hadn't yet looked inside, and didn't know whether the money was still there. But even if it had been lost it didn't matter, so long as the two were by my side.⁵⁶

Kafka entrusted Milena with his most valuable possessions, he made a note in his diaries on October 15th, 1921, that his written documents were to be given to Milena upon his death. The pair last met in May of 1922.

II.4.2.4. Dora Diamant

In 1923 Kafka found a new companion, Dora Diamant. They traveled together during the last year of Kafka's life. Dora shared her dream with Franz of opening a restaurant in Palestine. This project impossible, considering Kafka's health, became a peaceful horizon to their story. Kafka was happy for the first time to share his life with a woman. His condition didn't get any better and his best friend Max took him back to Prague. The couple met for the last time at the sanatorium where Franz spent his last days.

⁵⁵KAFKA Franz, the essential Kafka, by John R. Williams,op.cit.p.595

⁵⁶http://www.kkoworld.com/kitablar/frans_kafka_milenaya_mektublar-eng.pdfconsulted on 25/5/2017

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The women mentioned above were not Kafka's only Romantic ventures. Although he was incapable of fully engaging and committing himself to a relationship, he couldn't fight the urge of seducing women. Franz's flirting was uncontrollable, he wrote in June 1916:

What a muddle I have been in with girls, Let me count them: there have been six since the summer. I can't resist, my tongue is fairly torn from my mouth if I don't give in and admire anyone who is admirable and love her until admiration is exhausted. With all six my guilt is almost wholly inward, though one of the six did complain of me to someone.⁵⁷

Not only did Kafka pursue 'descent' women, he also had a peculiar preference for prostitutes. Franz Kafka was no stranger to brothels, He would say: "I passed by the brothel as though past the house of a beloved."⁵⁸ The author was tormented by his sex drive for it was so strong that he couldn't control it. Franz's visits to brothels were mentioned in numerous entries in his diaries and within his written fiction. When writing about his own visits Kafka noted:

I intentionally walk through the streets where there are whores. Walking past them excites me, the remote but nevertheless existent possibility of going with one. Is that grossness? But I know no better, and doing this seems basically innocent to me and causes me almost no regret. I want only the stout, older ones, with outmoded clothes that have, however, a certain luxuriousness because of various adornments. One woman probably knows me by now. I met her this afternoon, she was not yet in her working clothes [...] No one would have found anything exciting in her, only me...⁵⁹

Women in general were neither appreciated nor portrayed in a friendly manner. Franz Kafka often claimed: "Women are traps, which lie in wait for men everywhere, in order to drag them down into the finite."⁶⁰ Women were Kafka's preferred

⁵⁷ FRIEDLANDER Saul, Franz Kafka the poet of shame and guilt, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, P. 68

⁵⁸ <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/1138023> consulted on 25/5/2017

⁵⁹ FRIEDLANDER Saul, Franz Kafka the poet of shame and guilt, New Haven and London, Yale University Press p. 74

⁶⁰ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3558156/Zadie-Smith-on-Kafka.html> consulted on 25/5/2017

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correspondents and inspiration, his most stimulating intellectual partners, his closest friends, and finally the means of his escape.

In a passage Franz admitted that the reason behind the failure of his commitment and matrimony had actually something to do with his father:

The greatest obstacle to marriage however, is my by now ineradicable conviction that to support and quite especially to control a family required everything I have recognized in you ...: that is strength combined with contempt for others, health with a measure of excess, volubility with aloofness, self-confidence with disapproval of everyone else , sense of superiority with tyranny, a knowledge of people with mistrust of most others- and addition entirely positive qualities like diligence , stamina, presence of mind, fearlessness. Compared with you, I possessed practically nothing, or very little⁶¹

Franz admired his father's spectacular success as a husband as opposed to his failure as a parent: "[...] Your marriage held up to me an exemplary model in many ways- in fidelity, mutual support, the number of children; and even when the children grew up and increasingly disrupted the peace of the marriage, it remained unaffected"⁶²

II.5. Kafka's relationship with Judaism

In his late twenties, Kafka became keenly interested in Judaism. Kafka was drawn to many aspects of Jewish culture, particularly Yiddish theater and writing. At the same time, he felt alienated from - and at times repulsed by - his Jewish identity.

The reason Kafka felt alienated from the religion is because as a child he did not receive a proper Jewish teaching, it was rather imposed on him as a matter of form. On this respect he wrote: "it is not a question of some kind of instruction you should

⁶¹FRIEDLANDER Saul, Franz Kafka the poet of shame and guilt, New Haven and London, Yale University Press p .89

⁶²Ibid. p. 598

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have given your children, but of setting an example; if your Judaism had been stronger, your example would have been more effective”⁶³

Throughout his life Franz received an empty form of Judaism. Hermann had indeed brought some sort of Jewishness with him from his ghetto – like village community but it was extremely little that he had already lost some of it in the city and the army which left him with almost nothing to pass on to his children. Franz pointed out that the reason why he was attracted to Judaism is because he believed it would bring him closer to his father. He wrote: “... One might have thought it possible to find some refuge here (in Judaism) – or rather, one might have thought that we could have found each other in Judaism, even that we might have found a common cause in it. But what kind of Judaism did I get from you!”⁶⁴

Unfortunately, his dream of winning his father back through Judaism was never fulfilled. Kafka believed that his father did not even bother to try to be a proper Jew because he saw his son through his faith: “...Through me, Jewishness repelled you, you found Jewish texts unreadable, they ‘made you sick’”⁶⁵.He even recalled the attitudes he had adopted towards his faith:

As a child I followed your lead and blamed myself because I did not visit the synagogue frequently enough, didn't observe fast days, and so on; in this I did not believe I was offending against myself, but against you, and I was filled with a sense of **guilt** which I was always prone to...⁶⁶Later in my youth, I did not understand how you, with your empty faith in Judaism, could criticize me for not making an effort (just out a piety as you put it) to display a similarly empty form of faith. It was as far as I could see, just empty, a joke, not even a joke. You went to the synagogue four times a year, and you were much closer to the ones to whom it meant nothing than to those who took it seriously, you meekly recited the prayers as a matter of form, sometimes you amazed me by being able to turn to the passage in the prayer book that was just being recited;

⁶³KAFKA Franz, the essential Kafka, by John R. Williams, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth editions, 2014. p .584

⁶⁴ KAFKA Franz, the essential Kafka, by John R. Williams, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth editions, 2014. p. 584

⁶⁵ Ibid. p585-556

⁶⁶ Ibid p.581

Second chapter: Franz Kafka's guilt "Guilt is never to be doubted"

otherwise, as long as I was there in the synagogue... I was allowed to do as I liked. So I yawned and nodded my way through all the time there ⁶⁷

II.6. Jewish Guilt

Guilt is not just indoctrinated through family bonds and civilizations, religion also plays an important role. Judaism is, in fact, extremely serious about guilt. There is even a humorous commentary about it in a joke. It says: "*What's Jewish Alzheimer's disease? It's when you forget everything but the guilt.*"

The idea of guilt is deeply ingrained in Jewish culture both in everyday discourse and is enshrined both in literature and in humor. As Rabbi Harlan asserted, "deep in the Jewish tradition, deep in the Jewish Psyche of the Bible, is a human being who can experience guilt. More than guilt's being a problem is that it is second nature to the Jews."⁶⁸

Every fall, Jews stand for hours in synagogues, reciting their sins and asking forgiveness. Guilt is institutionalized, ritualized in daily prayer, part of the fabric of religious practice and language

II.7. Conclusion

Franz Kafka's endless conflicts with his father made him feel guilty for numerous -sometimes inexplicable- reasons. The first cause was that Franz considered himself a disappointment to his father; for not being able to give him any grandchildren, for not being able to lead a normal life, and for enjoying the fruits of his father's labor without going through any hardships which made him feel undeserving of whatever it is that his father gave him and greatly indebted to him.

The second cause was Franz's Kafka's inability to commit himself to any of the women he knew out of his fear of matrimony and despite the fact that they would have

⁶⁷ Ibid.p.582

⁶⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4560119/> consulted on 10/602017

Second chapter: Franz Kafka's guilt "Guilt is never to be doubted"

all made excellent partners. Kafka sensed that not only he was doomed to have a miserable existence but was making his female partners miserable as well.

The third and last cause was Franz Kafka's empty form of Judaism he received from his father. Franz was not concerned about his own Jewishness, he did not care much about being religious or not, he rather followed the Jewish teachings for it felt that if he did not he would be committing a blasphemy against his godlike father and this made him feel enormously guilty.

Ultimately, Franz Kafka was burdened with a sense of guilt without having committed any real offense, he was rather guilty for not being able to lead a normal life. He often claimed: "We are sinful not only because we have eaten of the tree of knowledge, but also because we have not yet eaten of the tree of life. The state in which we are sinful, irrespective of guilt"⁶⁹

⁶⁹ http://www.azquotes.com/author/7682-Franz_Kafka/tag/guilt consulted on 10/6/2017

Chapter Three

Josef K's Guilt

“He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.”

III.1. Introduction

In order to be condemned and arrested one should violate a commandment, regardless of what sort it that might be. The Hebrew Bible states: "sin, the guilt of it, the punishment due unto it, and a sacrifice for it."⁷⁰ But what would it be like to live in an absurd world and be condemned without having necessarily committed any wrongdoing? What if there is guilt, punishment and sacrifice but no actual sin?

III.2. the Trial

On the morning of his thirtieth birthday, Josef K was arrested by two police officers for no apparent reason. The first sentence in the novel sets the tone for the rest of the story: "Someone must have been telling lies about Josef K., he knew he had done nothing wrong but, one morning he was arrested." (The Trial, P2)

Josef was not placed behind bars but was rather allowed to resume his day-to-day routine and his work at the bank. One of the officers that arrested K claimed: "It is true that you're under arrest, but that shouldn't stop you from carrying out your job. And there shouldn't be anything to stop you carrying on with your usual life" (the trial, P18). At first Josef considered his arrest a practical joke. He couldn't take the matter seriously because he "believed that he lived in a free country where all laws were decent and upheld" (The Trail, p6).

In order to clear his name - Josef hired a lawyer called *Dr Huld*; who instead of defending K, prevented the case from getting a fair trial. Josef paid a visit to *Titorelli*; a court painter who informed K. about the nature of the Court he is fighting against and offered him three different acquittals none of which seemed to offer a definite solution to his predicament. K also manipulated women such his neighbor *Freulein Burstner*, the court attendant's wife, and *Leni* the advocate's mistress.

When Josef's arrest started taking a lot longer than he had anticipated, he started doubting his innocence and wondered "whether it might not be a good idea to work out a written defense and hand it in to the court. It would contain a short

⁷⁰ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4560119/> consulted on 1/6/2017

description on his life and explain why he acted the way he did at each event that was in any way important" (the trial, P134)

As the story reaches its end, Josef K meets a priest; who gives him some insight on how the court operates. The priest tells Josef that he is the victim of delusion and offered to tell him a parable entitled *before the law*. (The Trial, p254)

The parable tells the story of a man from the country side who came up seeking admittance to the law. The latter was guarded by a doorkeeper who told the man that he can not let him in at the moment. The gateway to the law is open as it always is, and the doorkeeper had stepped to one side, so the man bent over and tried to have a look at what was inside. When the doorkeeper saw this he laughed and said:

If you're tempted give it a try, try and go in even though I say you can't. Careful though: I'm powerful. And I'm only the lowliest of all the doormen. But there's a doorkeeper for each of the rooms and each of them is more powerful than the last. It's more that I can stand just to look at the third one" (The trial, p 255)

The man from the country had not expected difficulties; he believed that the law was supposed to be accessible to anyone. But he nevertheless decided to wait until he was granted permission to enter. The doorkeeper gave him a stool and let him sit to one side of the gate. The man sat for days and years, he tried to convince and implore the doorkeeper to let him in but the latter always ended up telling him that he still can't let him in.

The man had come well equipped for his journey, and used everything to bribe the doorkeeper who accepted everything and said: "I'll only accept this so that you don't think there's anything you've failed to do."(The Trial, p255).

As the years pass by, the man forgets about the other doormen and thinks only about the one keeping him from gaining access to the law. Over the first years the man curses his unhappy condition out loud, but as he gets older, he just grumbles to

himself. He becomes senile, his eyes grow dim, and he no longer knows whether it's getting darker or his eyes are deceiving him. (The Trial, p255).

The man sees an inextinguishable light shining from the darkness behind the door. He does not have long to live now, just before he dies, he brings together all his experience into one question. He beckons the doorkeeper as he is not able to raise his stiff body. "What is it you want to know now? You're insatiable" said the doorkeeper." "Everyone wants access to the law," says the man, "how come, over all these years, no one but me has asked to be let it? It was obvious for the doorkeeper that the man has reached his end, his hearing has faded and so that he can be heard he shouts at him: "Nobody else could have got in this way, as this entrance was meant only for you. Now I'll go and close it" (The Trial, P 256)

After a year had passed from Josef's arrest and on the eve of his thirty first birthday, two gentlemen dressed in black payed him a visit in his apartment. K. saw no reason to resist, they quietly left the house, passed through the city and stopped at a small abandoned quarry. They took off his jacket and shirt and put his head on a rock. One of them took out a sharp knife and plunged it deep into Josef's heart.

III.3. Josef K's Guilt

Josef k was a man who held a relatively high position at the bank at which he worked for he was known to be an honest and a straightforward man; "the chief clerk was a gentleman, good and honest"(The Trial, P111).But somehow in spite of his honesty Josef was one day arrested.

Josef K's was presumed to be guilty without even referring to the possibility of him making the slightest offense, while the common sense along with the judicial laws suggest that a person's crime should be acknowledged before being placed under arrest. However, Josef's world is that of meaninglessness, absurd, and lack of logic so consequently it is highly possible that a person can be arrested without committing any harm. When first placed under arrest, one of the wardens tells K:

Our authorities, as far as I know them, and I only know the lowest grades, don't go looking for guilt among the population; they are, as the law puts it, drawn towards guilt and have to send us guards out. That's the law. How could there be any mistake? "I don't know this law", said K, "all the worse for you" said the guard". Yet one of the officers named Franz interrupted saying: "you see, Willem, he admits he doesn't know the Law and at the same time claims he's innocent. (The Trial, p.6)

Determining and grasping what sort of law is condemning Josef is a complicated matter, for if there is a secret law that condemns him without making an actual offense, is not he indeed guilty of something? Regardless of which law Kafka was referring to, he believed that one can be guilty without being in custody, and without having to make radical changes in one's life and routine.

Accordingly, Josef K has been proven guilty because his guilt attracted the judicial authorities to him. But what was he exactly guilty of? In a conversation Josef shared with Mrs. Grubach she told him:

You have been arrested, but it's not in the same way as when they arrest a thief. If you're arrested in the same way as a thief, then it's bad, but an arrest like this... is something very complicated ... that I don't understand... something that you don't really need to understand anyway."(The Trial, P.24).

Freulein Burstner endorsed this by saying: "But you're not in custody now at least now I take it if you've not escaped from prison considering that you seem quite calm so you can't have committed any crime of that sort" (The Trial, p.31)

In view of that, Josef K's claim of being innocent from on one hand and getting arrested on the other suggests that his crime could be interpreted in two different ways. The first is a literal interpretation of a criminal trial while the second can be seen as the internal trial. Before nullifying and confirming the interpretations, one must first go through guilt and its related realms such as law, religion and sexuality in the aim of understanding the nature of Josef K's guilt.

III.3.1. Guilt and the Law

It is common sense that a judicial institution that condemns people and sets apart the innocent from the guilty should be honest and just. However, in *the trial* the organization condemning Josef K operated in mysterious ways, it hired unprincipled riff-raff officers who demanded bribes, tricked defendants into giving them their clothes, and spread news of their arrest that can damage their public reputation. Josef K described this institution as such:

An organization that employs policemen who can be bribed, Oafish supervisors and judges of whom nothing better can be said than that they are arrogant as some others. This organization even maintains a high level judiciary along with its train of countless servants, scribes, policemen and all the other assistance that it needs, perhaps even executioners and torturers (The Trial, p.55)

Another sign of the judicial institution's corruption is the content of the books belonging to the examining magistrate or as they were called "legal texts": "K opened the first book and found an indecent picture... K did not pursue the book further, but simply opened the second book ... it was a novel entitled "the sufferings of Grete at the hand of her husband Hans." (The Trial, P40). Even the documents written by lawyers and destined to be submitted to the court contained everything except that which was related to the defendant's cases. They contained:

lots of flattery to particular officials, they weren't named but anyone familiar with the court must have been able to guess who they were... there was self-praise by the lawyer where he humiliated himself to the court in a way that was downright dog-like and then endless investigations of cases from the past (The Trial, p.211)

The court condemning K was strictly closed to the public and merely tolerated the defense. A court in which: "the first documents submitted are not even read by the court. they simply put them with other documents and point out that ... questioning and observing the accused are much more important than anything written" (the trial, p136). A court that was ashamed to summon those it accused to the attic of this

building for the initial hearing and why it preferred to impose upon them in their own homes. (The Trial, p.72)

Refusing to go along the repulsive corrupt ways of the court, refusing to give bribes, and be rid of his dignity signified that Josef was guilty in the eyes of examining magistrates, the minor officials, and the important. Judges. Josef was guilty of being an honest man in the midst of corrupt others.

All these evidences eliminate the first possibility that Josef's crime was of a criminal nature and suggest that it might have an internal trial. One in which Josef is the judge and executor of himself.

III.3.2. Guilt and Sex

Just as the court is attracted to guilt, almost every female character is attracted to K. Women either try to seduce him or are regarded by him as potential sexual. However, just like nearly every other interaction in the book, romantic relationships are depicted as individuals' attempts to use others to achieve their goals, rather than partners Josef could love and connect with.

K. is obsessed with controlling the women he associates with. The only interest-free relationship was Josef's weekly engagement with *Elsa*. For the other women of *The Trial*, physical intimacy is something of a *bargaining chip*⁷¹, this is why almost all women in the novel are not portrayed as descent but almost as prostitutes. The Kafka scholar Klaus Wagenbach writes:

The prostitute is virtually the only kind of woman we encounter, in *The Trial* for instance as Fraulein Burstner or the servant girl Leni and Frieda, washerwomen and kept mistresses of lawyers. They are dully carnal creatures thinking only of 'present slight physical defects' and emitting a 'bitter exciting odor as of pepper.'⁷²

⁷¹ something that someone else wants that you are willing to lose in order to reach an agreement

⁷² FRIEDLANDER Saul, *Franz Kafka the poet of shame and guilt*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press p 75

Women, for K., can achieve the impossible "A woman's hands will do many things when no one's looking." (The Trial, P.23). Women are also capable of great influence on the unknowable court such as the court attendant's wife whom he considered a means of avenging himself against the court:

He really was attracted to the woman, and even after thinking hard about it could find no good reason why he should not give in to her allure. Maybe there was no better revenge against the examining judge and his cronies than to take this woman from him and have her for himself [...] maybe then [...] the judge would go to the woman's bed one night and find it empty because she belonged to K., because this woman at the window, this lush, supple, warm body [...] belonged to him, totally to him and to him alone (The Trial, P.86-87)

All women in the novel, belong to the court and have their particular doors to guard, they are the help K kept seeking, but it somehow was not what he needed: "you look for too much help from people you don't know [...] and especially from women. Can you really not see that's not the type of help you need?" (The Trial, P.252)

Both sexuality and criminality are aspects of human behavior that are associated with guilt, but Josef's guilt concerning all sexual matters is more of a fundamental fact of him being a human than a criminal because sexuality is something all human beings share. Hence, if to be human is to be sexual and to be sexual is to be guilty then Josef is guilty in the eyes of his society and the court condemning him. A passage from the priest's conversation with Josef affirms this claim. "How is it even possible for someone to be guilty? We're all human being here, one like the other." Said Josef "That is true" said the priest "but that is how the guilty speak" (the trial, P.251)

As a result, Josef K is guilty. His robust sexuality suggests that his unspecified crime may just be the simple fact of his being human. One feels guilty not because he transgressed moral boundaries, offended god, or failed to meet social standards, but because he has fallen short as a human being. Ultimately, the enigma of Josef K's guilt, and perhaps Kafka's guilt as well, epitomizes the idea of existential guilt.

III.3.3. Guilt and Religion

The chapter "In the Cathedral," and its parable before the law have long been recognized as the center piece of Kafka's unfinished novel *The Trial*. The novel has been interpreted in endless ways. Almost all commentators have agreed that the book explores the themes of guilt, anxiety, and helplessness in the face of some indefinite force. While others believe that the novel does not represent anything and is simply a tragedy.

Like God, the court is inaccessible to ordinary people, it has its own sacred texts, documents, and ancient legends about past cases. And, like religious texts documents of the court require a particular method of interpretation that gives the interpreter some insight into the court's workings, but the possibilities for interpretation can be endless.

Kafka wrote *the trial* in a time preceding WWII, and the holocaust, a time in which Anti-Semitic propaganda was beginning to spread. The story takes place In Germany; a country leading an anti- Semitic attack on the Jews and Josef K is a wealthy bank clerk- a position held by many Jews at the time-.

One of the interpretations that canbe assigned to *the Trial* is that the novel discusses- implicitly- the predicament of Jews during the middle Ages. In order to get Jews to convert to Christianity, People tried to isolate them, and if they did not comply and convert they were killed. These steps were all followed by the court in The Trial. K was at first arrested and isolated. He at first tried to ignore the fact that he has been arrested but his uncle implored him to think about the family's good name. He told that because of a false accusation his family might undergo hardships.

False accusations often caused many Jews to be killed as an act of retaliation. The court continued isolating K. by filling his mind with the case so that he thought of nothing else. The court even tricked K. into visiting a Cathedral by having a client of K.'s arrange a meeting with K. in a Cathedral. When he arrived, the Cathedral was

deserted. K. then had a long conversation with a priest and gained valuable information about the court

III.4. Conclusion

Joseph K's dilemma is that of a man consumed by guilt and condemned for a crime he has not committed, by a court with which he cannot reach. There are no formal charges, no procedures, and little information to guide the defendant.

Josef k was guilty in the eyes of law for refusing to abide by its laws and become what it demands him to be, in the eyes of society because he sexually active, and in the eyes of god for not being religious. What is certain is that Josef's trial was not of a criminal nature but it was rather an internal one. In light of that, Josef was guilty hoping to be granted something he could have taken anyway, for demanding some method of examination and reflection which he was incapable of performing on himself precisely because it never occurred to him that is was what he must do. This is why Josef k's answer was within himself not elsewhere.

General Conclusion

General conclusion

In light of what it has been stated before, the present work's main concern was about the *existential guilt* in Franz Kafka's *the Trial*, the thesis comprises the following chapters: *Franz Kafka's literature: 'an axe for the frozen sea within'*, *Franz Kafka's guilt "guilt can never be doubted"*, and *Josef K's guilt "he who has a why to live for can bear almost any how"*

In the first chapter entitled *Franz Kafka's literature: 'an axe for the frozen sea within'*, the conducted analysis has permitted to know and study the characteristics of Kafka's modern literature, a set of concepts and principles that had risen in the modern age and revolved around the quest for an authentic identity and the description of what was like to live in a world devoid of meaning, a world in which people lived aimlessly searching for their individuality and the reason behind their existence.

The second chapter *Franz Kafka's guilt "guilt can never be doubted"*, is a biographical analysis that was conducted in the aim of finding the sources of Kafka's guilt. The study revealed that Kafka suffered a great deal and felt guilty because of his father domination over him. The elder Kafka's damaging relationship with his son negatively affected almost every other relationship Kafka had, be it with friend, women, and even with faith.

The third chapter *:Josef K's guilt "he who has a why to live for van bear almost any how"* has allowed to study K closely in order to prove the infiltration of Franz Kafka's sense of guilt in his novel *The trial*. The analysis was focalized on K believing that K mirrored Kafka. This part of the present work revealed that just like Kafka the character K was guilty in the eyes of god, guilty in the eyes of society, and guilty in the eyes of law. Interestingly enough, Hermann Kafka was for Franz god, society and law because Herman was the standard by which Franz measured himself.

To conclude with, the sickness being 'existential guilt' did infiltrate in an implicit manner. Franz Kafka exteriorized his sense of guilt through fiction. In real life, Kafka accepted paternal authority because he had no right to contradict his father who represented the utmost authority in both his life and implicitly in the form of judicial authority in Josef K's account. Franz Kafka obliterated himself, he had neither

General conclusion

the right to reflect nor to act while in fiction this submission was transformed into a revolt through K's refusal to submit to authority.

All in all, It could be said that guilt can take many shapes and forms, and that Josef K is Kafka and by that the hypothesis being: some of his mental illnesses might have infiltrated in his writings forming some sort of connection between Kafka and the imaginary character is confirmed .

As a researcher one may base the learning objectives in an EFL class on two intertwining pedagogical aims: first, to present students with historical perceptions that challenge or even contradict their understanding of the world; and second, to help students develop their critical thinking skills. By pursuing these goals, *the Trial* can be a good example to broaden how students approach ideas and cultures different from their own, By struggling with ambiguous historical situations that do not easily fit into simplistic binaries such as "right" and "wrong," it is required to teach students the limits of their anachronistic judgments as a means of accessing the past.

In order to enlarge the notion of guilt, one can consider - in the frame for further studies- drawing a distinction between Kafka's writings and those of Albert Camus, the French philosopher and writer in the aim of closely exploring Existentialism and Absurd elements in their writings.

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