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THE IMAGE OF THE BED IN KAFKA'S THE TRIAL: AN ANALYSIS OF K'S STATE OF EXISTENCE

XiaoWen Bi
School of Humanities, Tongji University, Shanghai 200092, China.
Corresponding Email: 2253361@tongji.edu.cn

Abstract: This paper takes the core image of the "bed" in Franz Kafka's The Trial as a starting point to delve into the multiple connotations it symbolizes regarding the protagonist Joseph K's suspended state of existence. The "bed" is not only the site of K's mundane life and the awakening of his "sense of guilt," reflecting his cyclical entrapment in sin while in pursuit of truth, but also serves as an irony to his so-called "freedom"—the freedom of movement granted by his arrest actually constitutes a paradoxical punishment. Ultimately, the "bed" directs K toward an absurd "death" sentence, highlighting the groundlessness and "thrownness" of his existence. As a key symbol, the "bed" profoundly reveals K's absurd living condition: neither able to integrate into the secular order nor capable of reaching the supreme truth.
Keywords: Kafka; The trial; Bed; Existential state

1 INTRODUCTION

In the landscape of modernist literature, few images carry as much symbolic weight as the bed. Often dismissed as a mundane, domestic object, the bed in literature frequently transcends its physical function to become a site of profound psychological, existential, and even metaphysical significance. It is where life begins and, ideally, where it ends. It is the space of intimacy, illness, dreams, and death. In Franz Kafka's The Trial, the bed assumes a central symbolic role, functioning not merely as a setting but as a metaphor for the protagonist Joseph K's entire existential condition. From the moment K is arrested in his bed on his thirtieth birthday to the final moments of his life, the image of the bed—whether physically present or implicitly evoked—serves as a constant reminder of his suspended, liminal state between life and death, guilt and innocence, freedom and imprisonment.

Literary theory has long recognized the layered significance of imagery [1]. Metaphor, imagery, and symbol are often regarded as interconnected conceptual tiers: an "image" can be transformed into a metaphor once, but if it is continuously presented and re-presented through repetition, it evolves into a symbol—even becoming part of a symbolic or mythic system. As Gu Zuzhao observes, imagery is a signifying vehicle aimed at expressing philosophical ideas through symbolism and suggestion, characterized by absurdity and multiplicity of meaning. The prominent American scholar Fredric Jameson once declared, "The inevitable tendency of modernism is symbolic." Hence, it can be asserted that the predominant form of modernist literature is the art of imagery. As a foundational figure of Western modernist literature, Franz Kafka employed imagery with deliberate and exquisite skill. In The Trial, through repetitive use, he expands the dominant image of the "bed" into a core symbol reflecting the protagonist Joseph K's suspended state of existence. This image, through rich variations, unfolds the theme of "death," achieves synthesis of meaning through repetition, and implies "profound dimensions not expressed outwardly."

Kafka's use of the bed is not arbitrary. It is deeply embedded in the narrative structure, character psychology, and philosophical underpinnings of the novel. The bed is the site of K's arrest, the locus of his introspection, the symbol of his bodily limitations, and ultimately, the counterpoint to his death, which occurs not in comfort but in a desolate quarry. This disjunction—between the expected and the actual, the symbolic and the real—mirrors the broader absurdity of K's trial and, by extension, of modern existence itself. The bed, in Kafka's hands, becomes a liminal space: a threshold between the conscious and the unconscious, the social and the solitary, the temporal and the eternal.

This paper argues that the bed in The Trial functions as a polyvalent symbol that encapsulates K's existential condition. It is through the bed that Kafka explores themes of guilt, freedom, alienation, and death. The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 examines the bed as the root of guilt and worldly weakness; Section 3 analyzes the paradoxical relationship between the bed and freedom; Section 4 explores how the bed leads K toward his final judgment—death; Section 5 expands the discussion through philosophical and psychoanalytic lenses; Section 6 offers a comparative analysis with other modernist works; and Section 7 concludes with a reflection on the enduring relevance of Kafka's symbolic imagination.

2 THE BED AND THE AWAKENING OF "GUILT"

2.1 Bed: As the Root Cause of Guilt and Worldly Weakness

In The Trial, the "bed" is intimately and inextricably associated with secular life, which in Kafka's cosmos consistently symbolizes a state of "weakness, a lack of self-confidence, and an innate guilt." K's attachment to the bed, his initial desire to return to its comfort and normalcy, represents what might be called a "submission to the laws of the body:

estrangement, compassion, carnality, timidity, and vanity." It is from this submission that guilt organically emerges [2]. As Kafka himself suggests in his diaries and aphorisms, "Guilt is the fragility of the body, the perpetual yielding to physical desires and needs." As a result, humans are condemned to perpetually live in a state of lack and ontological incompleteness, a fundamental flaw that becomes one of the primary roots of K's awakening "sense of guilt." The bed is where the body is at its most vulnerable, most naked, and most susceptible to its own needs—it is the throne of the id, and thus the birthplace of a guilt that is inseparable from embodiment itself.

Kafka emphasizes the central, disruptive role of the "bed" from the novel's unforgettable opening: K is arrested not in a public square or his office, but in bed, on a sunny morning—the symbolic commencement of a new life decade, his thirtieth birthday. The violation is compounded by the absurdity of the court's location: it is situated in the apartment of the court usher. In a typical Kafkaesque conflation of spheres, the court is a home, and the home is a court. This architectural confusion suggests an intrinsic, almost metaphysical link between K's "guilt" and the "bed," while also hinting at a deep structural similarity between the earthly, corrupt court and the domestic, private sphere. Both are sites of judgment, power dynamics, and unspoken rules. The bed, traditionally a sanctuary of rest, privacy, and intimacy, is violently transformed into a site of interrogation and accusation. This intrusion is not merely physical but ontological: it marks the precise moment when K's everyday, taken-for-granted existence is punctured by an incomprehensible and irrational authority, shattering his bourgeois complacency.

K's arrest is meticulously distinguished from that of a common criminal; as his landlady, Mrs. Grubach, intuitively grasps, "It seems to be something abstract, which I don't understand, and don't need to understand." This abstraction is key. Jacques Derrida, in his analysis of Kafka in Acts of Literature, points out that the "law" in The Trial is not a set of statutes but a vast, enigmatic system of signification that is perpetually deferred and ultimately undecidable—it is everywhere palpable in its effects, yet its source and meaning are always tantalizingly out of reach [3]. That more "abstract" entity is the true, unstated reason for K's arrest: it is the other "law," the hidden, transcendent Law that lurks in the shadows of the novel's palpable bureaucracy, the supreme truth that K never finds a way out of until his death—a kind of perfected existence that remains forever inaccessible. The différance and undecidability of the "law," as revealed by Derrida's deconstruction, are precisely what trap K in a perpetual state of "hesitation" and "suspension." The goal he pursues is itself an unreachable phantom, a horizon that recedes with every step he takes.

Kafka's personal writings reveal a man tormented by a belief in a higher, pure realm. He always believed that "there exists an absolute, sinless, perfect world," yet he also stated with devastating clarity: "There is a goal, but no way; what we call the way is hesitation." Thus, he condemns K in The Trial to an eternal wavering [4], "a form of perpetual unrest, constantly evolving upward toward perfection," a cycle that is both his damnation and his defining trait. Hence, K's life becomes a vicious cycle: the more intensely he seeks the truth of life and the law, the deeper his inexplicable guilt grows; and the deeper his guilt becomes, the more obsessively he must focus on the minutiae of life itself, seeking clues in the everyday. As long as K lives, his guilt only compounds. This inner, magnetic force pulling him toward the "law" is his inchoate sense of guilt. Though often consciously ignored or rationalized away by K, it operates incessantly beneath the surface, engaging in a covert, psychic struggle with his rational nature and his bodily instincts [5]. Whenever K's instincts lead him too far into indulgence—with women like Fräulein Bürstner or the court usher's wife—a surge of guilt emerges, compelling him to re-engage with the trial, to take it seriously. It is a psychological pendulum. Step by step, through this process, K is forced to confront his true self and finally realizes in a moment of bleak clarity: "He could no longer choose between accepting or rejecting the trial—for he was already in it, and he must proceed with extreme caution." The bed is the ground zero of this oscillation between desire and guilt.

2.2 The "Law" of Abstraction and the Eternal Suspended State

"All of Kafka's works poetically express the necessity of submitting to a transformation of the soul—no matter how terrifying that transformation may be," writes the scholar Erich Heller. K gradually, agonizingly, comes to recognize this "necessity," which is why he maintains a strange composure amidst the escalating upheaval. The scene of his "arrest" functions with the sudden, disruptive force of the night bell in A Country Doctor, jolting him out of a numb, ignorant, and arrogantly secular life. It violently pulls him into another kind of existence—one he had perhaps unconsciously desired but never had the courage or patience to consciously confront. From his arrest on his thirtieth birthday to his execution on the eve of his thirty-first, this single year carries more existential weight than the thirty that came before. It is a year compressed into a lifetime of anxiety. His rhetorical question near the end—"Could it be that the year-long trial taught me nothing? Do I want people to say after I'm gone that at the start of the case I wanted it to end, and at its end I wanted it to begin again? I don't want that."—signals a moment of tragic self-awareness. K finally, implicitly, admits his guilt. From outright denial to a weary, complex acceptance, K spends an entire year on this circular path in search of a guilt whose definition he never learns. Kafka's seemingly absurd narratives "are in fact an assault on our realm of consciousness," and K, in his flawed and stumbling way, "sought a path to a deeper world."

The bed, in this context, is not only the physical location of his arrest but also the metaphorical ground of his existential awakening. It is the site where the personal and the juridical catastrophically collide, where the body is both at its most vulnerable and most desired. The bed is the realm of dreams, sexuality, and the unconscious—all of which are implicated in K's amorphous guilt. Kafka suggests that to be human is to be guilty by virtue of being embodied, by virtue of having desires, weaknesses, and a body that demands care and offers pleasure. The law does not create guilt; it merely reveals what is already there, latent in the very condition of being alive. The court officials who invade his bedroom are merely externalizing an internal state. This reading aligns with a psychoanalytic interpretation where the

bed represents the subconscious, and the arrest is the eruption of repressed anxieties and self-doubt into the conscious world, shattering the ego's fragile defenses. The law, in this sense, is akin to a merciless superego, perpetually judging the ego for its failures.

3 THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN BED AND FREEDOM

The bed naturally metaphorizes restraint, confinement, and stagnation. It is a place of passivity and recumbency. Freedom, by its classical definition, suggests the opposite: limitless possibility for action, movement, and self-determination. Yet in Kafka's inverted world, freedom takes on an unusual and sinister meaning: freedom as punishment. Thus, the appearance of the "bed" at the very beginning of the novel implicitly establishes the awkward, paradoxical situation of K's freedom—or more precisely, the image of the "bed" constitutes a quintessential Kafkaesque irony, profoundly revealing the absurdity that underlies his newfound liberty.

His arrest, paradoxically, performs a perverse act of liberation. It transforms K from a man bound by the mundane shackles of identity, professional status, and social expectation into a "free man" in the most existential sense—one focused solely on the problems of basic existence and his own besieged self. On that remarkable morning, as the awareness of the "Law" violently awakens within him, K's free will is also ignited. He is imprisoned by the accusation, yet simultaneously liberated from the complacency of his former life. He is given a purpose, however terrible: to navigate the trial. This creates an existential paradox of the highest order: the Law, through its representatives, seemingly encourages the exercise of free will (even after arrest, K is free to continue working, banking, and acting as he wishes), yet guided by this very free will, every choice K makes is inevitably wrong, every path he takes leads him deeper into the labyrinth. One perceives one's freedom only through the errors one commits, and in exercising that freedom, one inevitably commits more unforgivable mistakes. It is a catastrophic feedback loop.

Regarding this addictive yet absurd mode of existence, Albert Camus remarked in The Myth of Sisyphus [6]: "Kafka's universe is indeed an unspeakable cosmos in which man indulges in the luxury of suffering, fishing in a bathtub knowing full well that nothing will come of it." This "persisting in the impossible" is precisely the task Kafka assigns to his protagonist [7]—although he is acutely aware of the fundamental split within the self, that "the 'I' that feels, perceives, and acts can never be defined through its feeling, perception, or action; it can be reduced to the minimum of a letter, yet can never become anything else." The split between body and soul manifests almost farcically in K's life: his soul strives to soar towards the law and truth, while his body—its desires, its fatigue, its needs—constantly drags him back to the earthly, sensual realm. Existence itself becomes torment; a life swept along by the current of habit and bodily routine turns into an abyss of meaninglessness, and the very legitimacy of continuing to exist is called into question. In this struggle, K becomes his own defendant, and by extension, the defendant of the whole world, put on trial for the crime of being human.

This newfound "freedom" also stands in direct opposition to a mechanical and habitual life. Before his arrest, K was passively carried along by social and customary forces, a cog in the bank's machinery, never needing to justify his actions or his existence. The arrest, while making him a defendant, also performatively tears apart the web of habit, pulling his life out of the grip of inertial routine. Everyday events are stripped of their traditional and logical justification; they are left without reason or explanation. The simple act of waking up in bed in the morning is forever transformed; a new, terrifying world unfolds before him. As the critic Maurice Blanchot observes, in this new world "here nothing is lacking: not silent resistance, not despair that is keenly felt but beyond words, and certainly not the unimaginable freedom in which the characters of the novel live until their deaths."

It is this "unimaginable" and terrifying freedom that allows K's existential experience to undergo a qualitative leap within a single year. He does not choose to retreat or escape into denial (at least, not permanently); instead, he confronts the abyss of existence head-on. Although he lingers at the edge of the abyss until ultimately being swallowed by the darkness of death, he has, in a crucial sense, truly entered—and exited—the trial in the full Kafkaesque sense. He has completed the absurd journey.

This section can be powerfully read through the lens of Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power and the panopticon. The bed becomes a micro-panoptic site where K is both the prisoner and his own warder, constantly watched by an internalized gaze and watching himself. His freedom is a meticulously disciplined one, shaped and constrained by the invisible, internalized structures of the law. The bed is where he is most himself—naked, private, authentic—and yet most alienated from himself, a paradox that Kafka explores with relentless and logical precision. The freedom he experiences is the freedom of the subject who is forever being observed and judged, a freedom that is itself the most effective form of confinement.

4 THE BED AND THE FINAL JUDGMENT—DEATH

4.1 Birthday and Bed: The Origin and Conclusion of Absurd Existence

Why was K arrested on his birthday, and specifically in bed? What does this meticulous chronological and spatial detail signify? In Hamlet, "to be or not to be" is the fundamental question, but in Kafka's disenchanted modern era, both life and death had become equally disgraceful, stripped of heroism or meaning. To live is "to live like a dog," mired in compromise and absurdity, and to die is equally devoid of transcendent value and meaning. Hence, with cruel symmetry, Kafka has K executed just before his next birthday, ensuring his life is bookended by these two traumatic events. We are born in bed—this is the beginning of life's contact with the world, a moment of vulnerability and

potential. Yet, in K's case, he cannot die peacefully in bed, achieving the classical ars moriendi; instead, he dies like an animal in a desolate quarry, hastily and unceremoniously disposed of, his death marked only by the world's profound indifference. Kafka deliberately severs the conventional, comforting bond between bed and a peaceful death, thereby revealing the raw absurdity and alienation of modern death. Guilt and innocence, action and paralysis, life and death—between these traditional opposites Kafka identifies a vast, ambiguous spectrum of possibilities, and it is these murky, in-between states that he explores with obsessive focus. Yet he never explicitly explains them, forcing the reader to dwell in the same uncertainty as his protagonist.

On the morning of his execution, "it was still early, but he was already exhausted," and "he considered his fatigue a bad sign." Exhaustion is a quintessential hallmark of Kafka's protagonists, a physiological manifestation of their spiritual condition. "Whenever it is time to take control of their own destiny, at the critical moments of life, they are overcome with weariness; fatigue paralyzes them at the very core of existence." This pervasive weariness is a form of passive resistance and a symptom of despair. The awareness of death permeates Kafka's writing [8], often foreshadowed through subtle details. Shortly after learning of his arrest, K finds himself unconsciously exchanging "meaningful glances" with the guard Franz, a moment of silent complicity that hints at a shared mortal fate. Later, the artist Titorelli drags out three identical paintings from under the bed—a location that again ties the symbol to K's fate—and forces them upon K. They depict barren wastelands under gloomy skies. He tells K, "Some dislike such themes, calling them too gloomy, but I believe there are always those like you who appreciate somber art." Though meeting K for the first time, the artist, as a creator of images, already intuitively recognizes his nature—clearly, K's aura of impending death has left an impression.

Kafka also employs persistent climatic hints to reinforce this mood. The morning of K's arrest is deceptively sunny, and the night of his death is clear and moonlit, but throughout the intervening year—the entire duration of the trial—there is no good weather. The author repeatedly uses phrases such as: "the weather was gloomy," "a light rain was falling outside," "snow falling outside the window, foggy and dark," "damp air, windy," "the rain had eased, but it was damp, cold, and dark." This incessant inclement weather is a favored motif in Kafka, creating intertextual echoes across his works and building a world that is physically and morally oppressive. Process determines outcome. The appearance of the prison chaplain in the cathedral heralds the end of K's entanglement with the Law—the worldly lawyer effectively hands K over to the priest, meaning K's death sentence is spiritually ratified. In fact, for K, there is no strict boundary between life and death: to live is to be in a state of dying (to the world, to himself), to die is to achieve a form of life (as a finalized, judged entity). The same held true for Kafka himself, for whom writing was a form of living and a constant confrontation with death.

4.2 Fatigue, Premonition and Suspension: Towards Absurd Death

Beyond his inevitable physical death, K's entire existence remains perpetually suspended in a state of "action without outcome." He is a paradigm of what Heidegger would call "thrownness" (Geworfenheit). He can neither fully enter and enjoy secular life nor attain the supreme truth he yearns for internally[9]. He becomes a rootless being, eternally hovering in a state of in-betweenness. Although he possesses a profession, an identity, and a social status, he is not truly integrated into the conventional order. He stands in stark contrast to the bank's deputy manager: the latter has a family, a vibrant social circle, frequently hosts colleagues and friends—he embodies the image of a successful, integrated bourgeois man. While K vies with him in petty business intrigues, he is in fact fundamentally excluded from the comforts and assurances of worldly life; what little confidence he retains at work can no longer conceal his inner insecurity, alienation, and profound weariness with life itself.

In the cathedral, K projects his own despair onto the priest, believing he "ascended the pulpit merely to extinguish the lamp—lighting it had been a mistake." "Yet, that was not the case." Kafka implies here that K feels his very existence is a mistake, an irrevocable error in the cosmic order. Humans cannot choose their existence; they are always-already "been" (i.e., born). In Heideggerian terms, being-in-the-world is a "falling," a state of having been "thrown" into a situation not of one's own making. To emphasize this "thrownness," Kafka not only deliberately withholds K's background, rendering him without origin or history (unlike the traditional novelistic hero), but also makes the events that befall him sudden, inexplicable, and devoid of rational causation. K has long been aware of the absurdity of existence on some level, which is perhaps why he so recklessly and defiantly challenges the Law; it is a reaction against the meaninglessness he intuits.

The Trial is thus a masterful story about the universal human condition: on the surface, it appears tragic, but it is fundamentally a theatre of the absurd, even a black comedy—for Kafka, in a world without God or ultimate meaning, there can be no true tragedy in the classical sense. The elements of farce are everywhere: K's uncle takes him to see the lawyer Huld for a serious consultation, but at the crucial moment, K becomes distracted and flirts with the lawyer's nymphomaniac secretary, Leni; the two executioners who come for him appear as figures of death but also of clownishness, with their "fat, flabby faces," as if performing a bad play, making it impossible for K to treat his own death with solemnity; their exaggerated, theatrical politeness during the execution ceremony is utterly farcical, turning the most terrifying moment of a life into a mockery and a humiliation. Death thereby becomes a form of liberation approached almost playfully—even death itself is rendered absurd. Although K's case does not progress legally, and he seems to have gone in circles, an essential internal change occurs within him. After all this turmoil, K arrives at a final, passive insight: he understands that he cannot attain the truth, and so he abandons struggle and effort, accepts the absurdity of his situation, and embraces his death. Yet it might also be said that, in doing so, K finally exercises a

choice: he rejects an absurd and groundless life, and in the end, by not resisting, he chooses his death. It is his ultimate and only authentic act.

5 THE BED AS A SYMBOL OF MODERN ALIENATION AND POLITICAL IMPOTENCE

To fully appreciate the richness of Kafka's symbol, we must also consider the bed within the broader context of modern alienation and the political powerlessness of the individual in the face of opaque, all-pervasive bureaucratic systems. The bed is the most private of spaces, the inner sanctum of the self. Yet in K's case, it becomes the very public site of his humiliation and subjugation. This inversion perfectly reflects the way modern life, particularly under the shadow of large-scale administrative states, erodes the boundaries between private and public, subjecting the individual to constant potential surveillance, judgment, and intervention by anonymous powers.

Kafka wrote as a legal official within the vast, decaying bureaucracy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His works are often read as uncanny premonitions of the totalitarian systems that would dominate the mid-20th century. The bed, in this socio-political light, symbolizes the ultimate vulnerability of the private self to the encroachments of state power. K's arrest in bed is not just a narrative device; it is a profound violation that echoes the arbitrary power of a regime that recognizes no sanctuary, not even the intimacy of the bedroom. This reading adds a crucial and chilling layer to the existential and psychological ones already discussed. The Law is not just metaphysical; it is also the very real, mundane, and terrifying power of the state to disrupt a life at any moment, without explanation.

Furthermore, the bed can be seen as a symbol of the body politic itself—a society that is sick, lethargic, lying in bed, unable to rise or act decisively against the forces that control it. K's personal fatigue and inertia mirror the collective ennui of a civilization in decline, where political action seems futile and meaning has evaporated from public life. The bed becomes a coffin for the living, a place where one passively waits for a death that is both desired and feared, administered by forces beyond one's control or comprehension. The "trial" is then the endless, paralyzing process of dealing with this faceless authority, a process that consumes life itself.

6 COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES: THE BED ACROSS LITERATURE AND ART

To further illuminate the profound significance of the bed in The Trial, it is illuminating to consider how beds and sleeping spaces function in other works by Kafka and in the broader landscape of modern art and literature[10].

In Kafka's own The Metamorphosis, Gregor Samsa's bed becomes his prison and sanctuary after his metamorphosis. It is the place of his isolation, his bodily shame, and his eventual death. It is the site where the family pushes his food in and, later, where they pile their unwanted junk, mirroring their view of him. In A Country Doctor, the bed is where the young patient lies, exposing his fatal, rose-colored wound, while the doctor is miraculously and terrifyingly trapped in bed beside him in a naked embrace. In both cases, the bed is a site of extreme exposure, vulnerability, and existential crisis.

Beyond Kafka, the bed holds significant power in other works. In Vincent van Gogh's famous painting The Bedroom, the bed is the stable, geometric center of a world that seems on the verge of emotional turmoil, representing a yearning for peace and stability amidst mental chaos. In Samuel Beckett's Endgame, Hamm is confined to a chair, but the imagery of ashbins and bare interiors creates a similar effect of constrained, barren existence. In Harold Pinter's The Homecoming, the living room becomes a site of psychological warfare, much like how K's boarding house becomes an extension of his trial; the domestic space is charged with threat.

These recurring motifs across media suggest that for the modern artistic sensibility, the bed is a fundamental symbol of the human condition—a place where we are most ourselves, yet most exposed to the external and internal forces that would define, judge, and ultimately destroy us. By placing The Trial within this broader context, we see that it is part of a continuous modernist exploration of anxiety, where the domestic space is no longer a haven but the frontline of existential conflict.

7 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In The Trial, Kafka endows the quotidian object of "the bed" with an immense and central symbolic charge. It is not merely the site where K.'s arrest begins; it is the very vessel that concretizes his condition of perpetual suspension, his "thrownness" into the world. Through this single, potent image, Kafka unfolds the multiple dimensions of K.'s existential plight with unparalleled economy and depth.

It is where his sense of guilt first awakens—on a deceptively bright birthday morning, still in the vulnerable state between sleep and waking, K. is seized by the Law. This abstract force crashes into his seemingly secure bourgeois life with brutal yet intangible power, hurling him into a vortex of trial where his identity and his sense of meaning are left radically uncertain. The bed also bears witness to the central paradox that turns freedom itself into punishment: K. is liberated from mundane concerns only to find every choice he makes tightening the Law's invisible net around him. His frantic exertions—clinging to his post as a bank clerk, shuttling through the corridors of the law courts, probing the labyrinths of human relationships for advantage—never allow him to anchor himself in any worldly order, nor to reach the remote, opaque "highest court" or "completed life" he dimly intuits.

K.'s existence is, at its bottom, an eternal in-between—poised between the intelligible everyday and an unknowable truth, a figure of groundless absurdity, forever "thrown" yet never arriving, always seeking yet never finding. The bed is the perfect symbol for this state. It is not a place of journeying (like a road) or of decisive action (like a courtroom); it is

a place of waiting, of stasis, of receptivity. It is where one is most passive, and yet where the most profound and disruptive events can occur.

Therefore, the bed is more than a piece of furniture; it is a stage for the entire drama of modern existence. It is where we are born, where we dream, where we love, and where we die. In Kafka's hands, it becomes the perfect symbol for the absurdity of a life lived under the gaze of an invisible law, a life that is always already guilty, always already condemned, yet perpetually and paradoxically free to feel the weight of that condemnation. It is a symbol that continues to resonate deeply in a world where individuals feel increasingly subject to opaque systems of power, where privacy is eroded, and where the search for meaning often feels like a trial without a verdict.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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