

CHAPTER 2

AN EVALUATION OF THE FORM AND CONTENT OF COVER DESIGNS PRINTED IN TURKEY IN THE SAMPLE OF KAFKA'S "THE METAMORPHOSIS" BOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Design means solving a problem. Graphic design is a visual design field that usually solves problems on 2-D surfaces (Becer, 2002). With a more contemporary definition, graphic design is an art of communication that combines art and technology to inform, influence, persuade, educate, provide a visual experience and convey messages that are vital to our lives (Resnick, 2003). Graphic design has many fields of study and application such as visual identity, publication, packaging, poster, illustration, and informative designs.

Book and book cover design, which is one of the fields of graphic design, is a product that will be kept for decades and serve humanity. In this respect, it is necessary to show importance and to approach the creative process of book and cover design differently. In particular, the cover design, which makes the target readers feel the content of the book, is an impressive and powerful design subject. In the creative process of cover design, a graphic designer is the person who brings words and image elements together to communicate visually. The designer is both a messenger and a format editor (Becer, 2002). In other words, a designer is the person who shapes the content in line with the target and builds the visual communication through this form. The relationship between form and content in the cover design process can and should differ in the way each designer handles the subject and the originality of the graphic language s/he uses. This differentiation enables designers working on the same subject to produce different products. In the field of graphics, designers and design styles can be evaluated with different works produced on the same subject.

In this study, the book covers published in Turkey for Kafka's world-famous "The Metamorphosis" were examined. "The Metamorphosis" was published in many editions by various publishing houses in our country as well as in the

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world. The covers of this great work of literature, which was published by dozens of publishing houses, have also been designed many times. Samples of these cover designs with different expressions of graphic language were selected and examined in terms of form and content in this study. The way different designers deal with the same subject in terms of form and content, the visual language they use, the way they convey the message, and how they use plastic art elements were emphasized. With the evaluation made, our study is thought to be a resource that can give a perspective to the designers working in the field and the students who study graphic design.

VISUAL LANGUAGE OF THE BOOK: COVER DESIGN

Book cover design is one of the important study subjects that can produce original value for the graphic design field. The aspect that makes the cover design different from other graphic design study subjects is the fact that the main purpose of this design is to visualize the intellectual content within. Thus, it becomes important to design the book as a whole. However, the first contact element that presents the book to its readers is the cover design. In this context, the cover is the point where the book is opened, the book starts with the opening of the cover; when it is closed, the book stops, pauses or ends (Taşcıoğlu, 2013). Cover design is a communication tool that tells and introduces a long text in a snap. It sometimes presents the content directly to the reader, and sometimes just gives clues about the content.

Considering today's communication dynamics, cover design is expected to have a high impact on the reader. A good cover design can ensure that the book stands out and has the appeal to distinguish it from other books in the bookstore. However, in this diversity, no matter how good the design of the cover is, it should not be ignored that the personal preferences of the reader and the desire to read determine the act of choosing and buying a book.

In addition to this visual communication feature, which is one of the functions of the book cover, the book cover should also be considered as a protective element that holds the pages of the book together with its packaging and binding structure. In addition to being the front of a hardcover book, the cover design is a structure suitable for creating extraordinary functions and creative forms as a design object (Taşcıoğlu, 2013).

Apart from extraordinary design manifestos and experimental design approaches, no matter what the genre and subject of the book is, there are standard elements such as the title of the book, author's name, publisher's logo, barcode,

ISBN number, etc. that should be included in the specific formal structure of the cover design. The arrangement of these elements in unity with other visual elements is one of the issues that should be emphasized in the cover design process. When the title of the book or the name of the author is the dominant visual element in the design process, the audience is expected to be interested in the meaning of the title or the reputation of the author (Landa, 2012). With this approach, the structure of communication with the reader differs, visual images remain in the background or the author is emphasized first. The right approach for appealing to the target audience and for expected marketing strategies is to highlight the name of the author in the books where the name of the author is important and the title of the book when the title of the book is interesting (Atabilen, 2017). Graphic designers act more independently in book and cover designs when commercial concerns are less, which allows them to stay closer to design rather than marketing (Atabilen, 2017).

The graphic designer should not forget that typographic elements and visual image should go together in integrity, and should not make the mistake of pursuing an effective visual image and adding typographic elements later. Visual images and typographic elements should be worked on synergistically; and text and visuals should be approached as a natural part of each other (Landa, 2012).

The design process for the cover differs depending on the genre of the book. For example, the target audiences of an art book containing the works of the artists and the test book for the university exam show differences, just like the message of the cover designs of these books will do. The graphic designer should know the content of the book very well, and choose the visual images that are suitable for the type of publication and that can add the strongest expression to the book and therefore to the cover design (Düz, 2001).

As in other application areas of graphic design, the cover design process also includes the same design fundamentals such as content editing, visualization, composition, integrating images with text, creating visual interest, and creating a clear level of communication (Landa, 2012). A graphic design such as a book cover should be able to attract the attention of the target audience, and for this, the visual elements should be used with striking and unexpected approaches. In addition to many factors, the design can be made impressive and prompting by considering its formal structure with an innovative interpretation. When conveying a message to the target audience, the graphic designer should create a graphic language by giving original meanings to the visual elements apart from their usual effects. An important feature of the graphical language is that

it simplifies complex information and makes it more comprehensible (Ergüven, 2021). Different visualization methods such as illustration, symbolic expression, photography, stylization, abstraction, metaphor and typography can be used in the creation of a graphic language (Turgut, 2013). Whichever of these methods is preferred, the form structure of the cover design should be evaluated in accordance with the basic design elements and principles.

A book cover should convey its message quickly and clearly and arouse interest. The cover is the reader's first experience with a book. In a bookstore, after the first reaction to the cover, a new relationship develops as the reader begins to read. The reader usually looks at the cover and thinks (Linda, 2012). At the end of this process, the reader communicates with the book and therefore with the author. In this communication process, whether the cover design should come before the book or how much content it should present about the book is an issue that should be evaluated in the design process. At this point, the book cover not only establishes a special relationship with the reader, but also undertakes a complex structure such as advertising, marketing, information and design. For this reason, it will be extremely important for art directors, graphic designers, copywriters, book writers, editors, advertising and marketing experts to discuss and agree on the design during the design process (Asan, 2021). It should not be forgotten that this common view will also affect the market success of the cover design, which has a commercial function (Düz, 2001).

The most important value judgment of the cover design is how the essence of the book is handled with a visual language and the form quality of the plastic arts. However, the type and weight of paper used, the type of binding and other elements of the book can change the way the cover design is perceived. In addition, technical processes such as lamination, local lamination and cellophane, embossing and spot color that can be applied to the design surface can support the three-dimensional structure of the book, changing the visual effect of the cover design. The graphic designer can add different structural elements to the design by evaluating these technical applications during the cover design process.

KAFKA'S "THE METAMORPHOSIS" BOOK

One of Kafka's most important works, the original name of which was "Die Verwandlung" was translated into Turkish as "Dönüşüm". It is about the events Gregor Samsa, the main character, goes through. The story consists of three parts, the first of which tells about Gregor Samsa's relationship with his job, the second with his family, and the third with himself (Aktaş, 2001). With the first sentence of his book "One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams,

he found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin.”, Kafka directly referred to the metaphor of transformation in his story. With this first sentence of the book, the emphasis on the main character’s transformation into an insect has caused the work to be studied within this framework in literature (İlkılıç, 2020). At first glance, although the metamorphosis in the book is perceived as only Gregor Samsa turning into an insect, the family members also undergo a metamorphosis in the later stages of the story. Moreover, the metamorphosis in the work is not limited to the transformations of the characters. In the story, there are transformations on the basis of the places and the family’s economic status (İlkılıç, 2020). These different metamorphosis processes bring many different perspectives to Gregor’s inner conflicts.

In the story, turning into an insect appears as a metaphor that refers to the concretization of alienation (Öztürk & Çipe, 2020), a way Kafka questions modern society. He tells about human relations, work stress and working conditions of modern society through Gregor (Öztürk & Çipe, 2020). He emphasizes the relations of the individuals in the society and the alienation in line with these relations (Altıparmak & Durakoğlu, 2016).

With the allegorical structure of the story and various images, the narration of the ironic situation in which the individual is enslaved as a result of social necessities but cannot internalize this enslavement gains importance (Öztürk & Çipe, 2020). This situation can be explained with several themes. First of all, being a member of modern society and fulfilling responsibilities within the existing system are considered as the greatest necessity, and this causes the individual to distance himself, in other words, to become alienated. As a second theme, modern life makes the individual more dependent on the existing system rather than liberating him. So, this enslavement leads to alienation. In this context, the concept of alienation appears as the main theme of the story. As for another theme, an individual who cannot establish healthy social relations and does not have a social life outside of office experiences psychological traumas due to the alienation (Altıparmak & Durakoğlu, 2016).

Later in the story, the conflict in Gregor’s inner world with his physical appearance results in the victory of one. So Gregor is freed by death. This situation shows that contradictory concepts such as restriction and freedom, absence and awareness of existence occur simultaneously (Öztürk & Çipe, 2020).

Many years after the first publication of the book, Kafka’s queries and determinations still remain valid in today’s modern society. As a work that preserves its literary quality by becoming a classic, it will continue to be a reference to the individual relationships in society.

THE ORIGINAL BOOK COVER DESIGN OF KAFKA'S "THE METAMORPHOSIS"

The cover design of the original book is important in terms of seeing the form and content of the story. Kafka wrote a letter to the publishing house to be forwarded to the designer who would design the first cover for the book. In his letter, he stated that it would not be appropriate to use an insect image in the cover design, if possible (Kafka, 1994).



Picture 1. *Book Cover-1*

The original cover design was created by Ottomar Starke in 1915 (Kafka Museum, 2022). The cover design does not include an insect image as Kafka wished, as seen in picture 1. In the cover, the image created by black and white pattern is located in the center of the design, and the title of the book is written in red, capital letters and larger fonts than other writings. The author's name, publishing house and publication date are located centered with the image in the cover design.

The visual image used on the cover is created as a figure in front of an ajar door. An important expression about the figure is given with the movement effect caused by the heel of the figure's foot in the air, the tension felt in his body, the way he holds his head with his hands to cover his face, and messy hair. In addition, the

light on the figure in the direction he is looking at depicts an ironic contradiction with the darkness behind him. When we take Gregor Samsa as the main character of the story, the metaphoric inner tension of the metamorphosis, pain and expression of the distress are successfully and clearly visualized. Another element in the visual image is the door in the background. The door is presented open, and it shows a dark room behind. With the way the door is illustrated, a reference was made to the room where the story was depicted. When we evaluate the visual image on the cover together with the plot, one can say that the metaphorical insect dies and the main character leaves this room and leaves the crisis behind.

AN EVALUATION OF THE FORM AND CONTENT OF COVER DESIGNS OF KAFKA'S "THE METAMORPHOSIS" BOOK PRINTED IN TURKEY

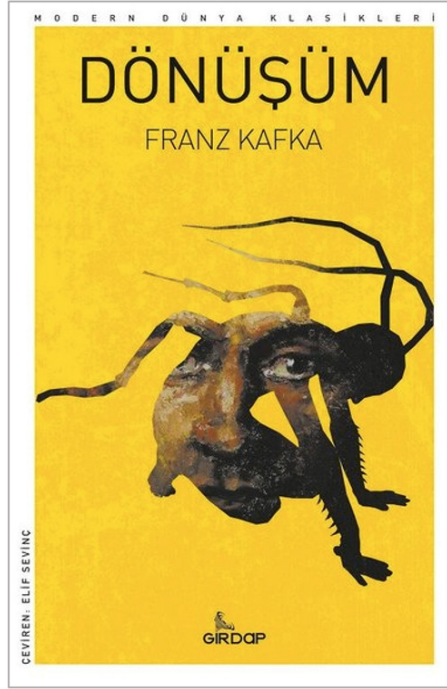


Picture 2. *Book Cover-2*

A simple expression language was used in the cover design of the book, which was published as the 4th edition in 2015 by Ayrıntı publications, as seen in picture 2. The black and purple color used in cover design is at the forefront. The primary visual image perceived in the design is three figures in purple on a black area. In the upper left corner, typographic elements in typewriter font give information about the author's name, the title of the book, the name of the translator and the

edition, respectively, in a hierarchical visual order. In the lower left part, there is the logo of the publishing house and the phrase “classic”. When the cover design is evaluated with its form structure, it is seen that a hierarchical arrangement has been made in the design. Using all the elements in two colors increases the visual effect. The visual image is located according to the rule of thirds, which is preferred in the search for the ideal composition. In addition, the fact that the figures were created using negative space on the black area boosts the visual expression. The upward narrowing structure of the black silhouette provides dynamism to the composition. The typographic elements are aligned from the left with the publishing house logo, which has brought a visual balance to the design in its relationship with the location of the visual image.

When the design is evaluated in a form-content relationship, the identities of the figures, the black spot forming their eyes and the perspective angle created by these spots together with the heads are remarkable. It is presumed that the figures are the characters of the book, the father, sister and mother, respectively. Considering the plot in the story, the whole black area can be said to depict a door opening to the room. The vertical linear texture on the so-depicted door creates the image of rain and makes reference to the bad weather described in the book. When the viewing angles of the figures and the perception of the floor formed by the perspective setup are evaluated, they can be said to be looking at the main character of the book, which turns into an insect. The perception of the dimensional difference between the large family members and the small size of the insect is clearly observed. It is obvious that a different narrative language has been created in the book’s form-content relationship. In this cover design, an insect image was not used in line with the message sent by the author for the first edition of the book.



Picture 3. Book Cover-3

The cover design of the book, which was published as the 1st edition in Girdap publications in 2017, includes a visual image with a strong painting effect on a yellow background with white contours, as seen in picture 3. The visual image consists of a portrait located in a stylized human figure. On the top of the cover, the classification and the title of the book and the author's name are given. In the bottom, there is the logo of the publishing house and the name of the translator. In the design, except for the name of the translator, the typographic elements are written in the vertical axis in a centered format. A visual integrity is achieved by the painting structures between the textured yellow color in the background and the visual image. The white contour around the book cover keeps the yellow background in the composition. It creates a high contrast between the black-oriented, dark visual image and the yellow background, increasing the effect in the cover design. The location of the visual image on the cover design and the positioning of the extremities coming out of its back in the composition creates vibrancy in the figure-background relationship.

When examined in terms of form-content relationship, stylization of the strong visual image reflects the concept of transformation directly. In the stylization, depicted in the human form, the depression and pain of the main character, Gregor

Samsa, throughout his transformation is illustrated successfully since the figure is on the floor as if he fell and his head is tilted downwards. In addition, transition tones to black in the figure strengthen the severity of depression and pain. The portrait in the figure is predicted to be of Kafka's. The look in the portrait and the emotional expression creates a strong structure in terms of conveying the essence of the story and presenting the author. The designer has created a good graphic work of art and an effective original language by constructing the cover's form-content relationship in the visual image designed in painting structure.

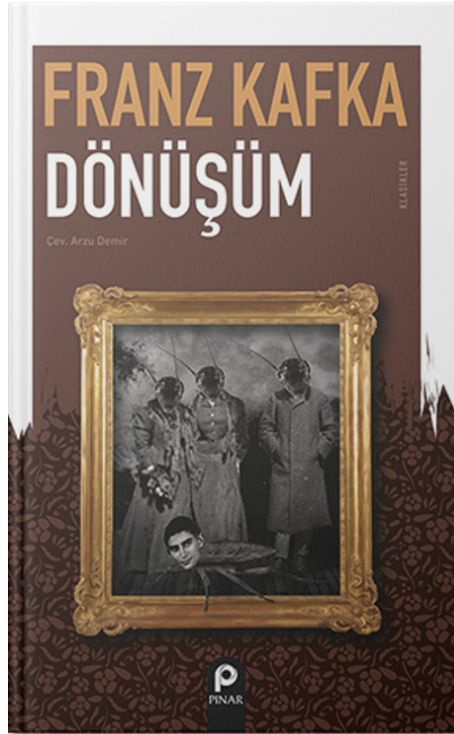


Picture 4. *Book Cover-4*

The cover design of the book, which was first published in 2021 by Yitik Ulke publishing house, was designed with typographical elements, as seen in picture 4. The author's and the translator's name and publishing house logo are presented in white on a green textured background, and the title of the book in black creates a simple narrative style. When the font used in the design is examined, each repeated "a" and "ü" letters in the text are unique so one can say that readily available digital typefaces aren't used, and that a pictorial design of letters for the cover is created. In this context, this special form and holistic design of the letters can be considered as the visual image of the book. The text gains a pictorial effect with the distortion of the space order by spelling the text, and the intricate structure in the positioning of the letters side by side and above and below. It also

creates a hierarchy among the texts in the design. The positioning of black on green increases the contrast effect of the composition and increases the visibility of the cover.

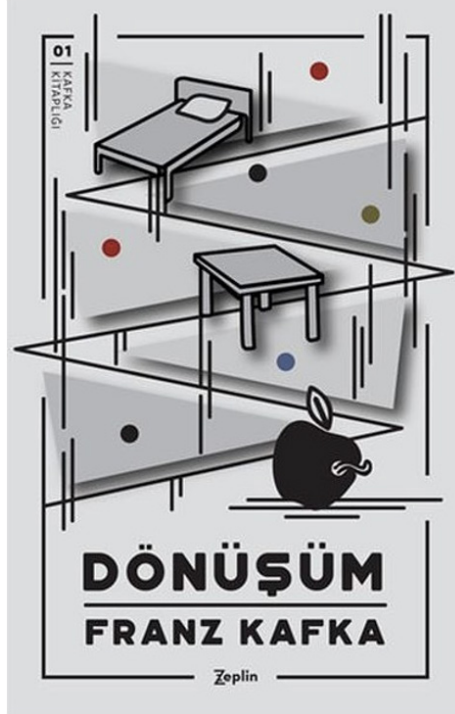
When the cover is considered in terms of expression language, the characteristic of the typographic element, which is the most important part of this design, becomes significant. The thick spots in the form structure of the text drawn pictorially, and the horizontal and vertical strokes turning into sharp tips look geometric. However, the organic form caused by the irregularity and inconsistency of this geometry creates an imaginary insect perception in the viewer. The use of dot strokes and the abstract structures of letters refer to the body and extremities of a crustacean. In addition, the designer's partial use of writing creating a vaguely visible insect rather than transforming it into a whole image establishes a different communication between the book and the reader. In this sense, it is obvious that the designer has created a unique expression language and excluded the insect image that Kafka didn't want on the cover.



Picture 5. *Book Cover-5*

Photographic images were mainly used in the cover design of the book published by Pınar Publications in 2020, as seen in picture 5. The head of the cover design includes the name of the author and the title of the book in large fonts and different colors, and the name of the translator and the classification of the book in small fonts. There is a visual image in the middle of the design and the publisher's logo below it. By using different colors in the name of the author and the title of the book, a visual hierarchy is created between the two texts. The light-colored text on the dark background becomes more visible, and the title of the book is emphasized. The visual image consists of a wallpaper image that starts to disappear in the middle of the book and a black and white photographic image in an antique carved gilded frame giving a collage effect. The tonal relationship between the frame, the wallpaper, the author's name and the background creates a color scheme in the design. With the white contour in the upper part and the white color of the book title, light tones are created and the visual image becomes more effective.

When the design is evaluated with its formal structure, the visual images used directly refer to certain sections in the book. The photo frame on the floral wallpaper of the main character's room is interpreted as family members and himself. The antique structure of the frame and wallpaper give clues about the time period of the story. The main character's effort to convey a message about his feelings by covering the frame with his insect-body in the story is referred to by the content of the cover design. In the book written by Kafka, a woman is depicted in the frame in the main character's room; however, this has been changed in the cover design, and a collage photograph with the characters in the story has been placed in the frame. In this photo, the heads of the family members are replaced by an insect head, while the insect itself has a human head. In the story, the main character's transformation into an insect and the exclusion from his family is fictionalized. However, the cover design turns the tide and family members are transformed into insects. This expression, human-headed insect and insect-headed people, makes a metaphorical reference to the involvement of family members in the transformation, and losing their human values in the end. With these deep layers of meaning, the cover design visualizes the content of the book with a different interpretation.



Picture 6. Book Cover-6

In the cover design of the first edition of the book by Zeplin Kitap in 2017, a bed, a table and an apple which are drawn and visualized on a gray background as seen in picture 6. There is a zigzag line in the background and triangles supporting the line. In addition, the rectangular elements and the vertical lines in various parts of the composition are used in the cover design. The title of the book, author's name and logo of the publishing house are placed at the bottom of the design. The black and bold text comes forward on the gray background. In the upper left part of the design, category information of the book in the publishing house is given. Dots in different colors are used on the design surface, adding vividness to the gloomy atmosphere of the book. The book cover design, which has a dynamic composition, offers a colorless design perception. The formal elements and compositional structure in the design present a contemporary expression language in line with current digital drawing approaches.

As for the form-content relationship of the design, a flow structure that refers to the story is used in the zigzag form and the visual images placed on it. In the three-part story, there is a symbolic drawing for each part. The designer symbolizes the first part of the story as the bed where he wakes up realizing his metamorphosis. The second part is symbolized as the table, a piece of furniture in the room, depicting his experiences with his family, and the third part as an apple, stuck in his back in the story, referring to his loneliness and pain. In addition, the apple with a worm directly symbolizes the rotten situation and increasing pain in the story. The objects chosen for these three parts and their symbolization show that the designer has created a detailed and special form-content composition. Another element integrated to the visual structure of the design is the rectangular frame and vertical lines. The frame refers to the window in the room where the main character looks out of and questions the events. Moreover, the designer successfully visualizes the gloomy and rainy weather the main character describes in the story with the gray color and vertical lines, respectively. When the design is approached more holistically, the room is viewed from the outside and a fiction with a description has been created with the event flow. In the cover design, a symbolic expression has been constructed in a good form-content relationship and a contemporary graphic approach has been presented.

CONCLUSION

In the cover designs examined in the study, different approaches, both formally and intellectually, were observed in the way the designers addressed the subject. Original compositions were created with fiction consisting of artistic elements. In addition to the visualization approach reflecting the characteristics of the time period, today's digital drawing trends were also observed in the cover designs. Some designs provided the form-content relationship with photographic images or a purely typographic approach, and the same story was presented in different graphic approaches. The designers dealt with the same story with different layers of meaning, showing the importance of originality and creativity in the field of graphic design.

For a good cover design, the graphic designer should first understand and analyze the subject and create the formal composition that will reflect the design idea. In this process, the expectations of the target audience should be evaluated well, and a design approach that will present the book accordingly should be preferred. The design process should be conducted with an editorial team in order to manage the issues such as target audience and marketing correctly. In this context, the opinions of the author, publishing house and book editor about

the cover design are as important as the designer's.

The task of the designer in the cover design process is to create a simple and original graphic language. Communicating well with the reader should be the most important goal of the design process. Cover design is a graphic product that can be in use for a very long time since it makes the book visible, protects the book and keeps records of its time period. Therefore, it is necessary to put emphasis on the design process bearing in mind that a cover design is a cultural heritage passed on from generation to generation.

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