


# Typologies and Semantic Universes of Resentment Metaphors as Substitutes for Justice in Ahmet Altan's Novels

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## Abstract

The question of whether an individual may seek justice by their own means when institutional mechanisms fail has long been a central issue in philosophical, legal, and literary debates. Under despotic regimes, where law loses its legitimacy, justice mechanisms are stripped of their independence, and the individual can no longer protect their rights, alternative forms of justice grounded in personal conscience emerge. Literature often conveys these struggles through metaphor. Ahmet Altan's novels *Like a Sword Wound*, *Love in the Days of Rebellion*, and *Dying Is Easier than Loving* vividly portray, through striking metaphors, the moral dilemmas individuals face, as well as the psychological and social consequences of resentment justice, in contexts where institutional justice cannot be realized. This study, drawing on George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory, examines the metaphors in these novels that reveal the interrelation between justice, resentment, and despotism. It discusses how the metaphors employed in the texts, at structural, ontological, and orientational levels, articulate multiple layers of meaning and represent the tension between individual reckoning and collective justice. The findings demonstrate that justice is not merely a legal principle but also a multidimensional concept shaped by individual conscience, collective memory, and cultural narratives.

## Keywords

Ahmet Altan, Law and Literature, Resentment Justice, Metaphor

## 1. Introduction

Justice, one of the oldest and most debated concepts in human history, embodies

a multifaceted structure that cannot be reduced merely to the functioning of legal norms. Considered a fundamental principle of law, justice plays a central role in both individual conscience and social life through its philosophical, ethical, psychological, and cultural layers. However, in periods when political oppression and authoritarian regimes become pronounced, justice loses its institutional function and turns into a field of crisis; in such situations, individuals are compelled to pursue their quest for justice beyond the confines of the law.

In circumstances where justice cannot be achieved through institutional mechanisms, individuals face a moral dilemma regarding the legitimacy of seeking their rights through their own efforts. This dilemma emerges as a fundamental problem that interrogates the boundaries of both individual freedom and social order. This issue, which has been debated at the philosophical and legal levels for many years, is rendered tangible through metaphorical expressions. In particular, the novel stands out as a literary form that visualizes the individual quest for justice, resentment, and the void left by the absence of social justice through powerful metaphorical constructions.

Ahmet Altan's novels, *Like a Sword Wound* (*Kılıç Yarası Gibi*), *Love in the Days of Rebellion* (*İsyan Günlerinde Aşk*), and *Dying Is Easier than Loving* (*Ölmek Kolaydır Sevmekten*), metaphorically reflect the oppressive atmosphere (Macit & Üstünyer, 2025) of the tyrannical era and the internal reckonings individuals experience when justice fails to prevail. In these novels, the justice of resentment can be interpreted not merely as the expression of a personal anger, but also as the emblem of a conscientious resistance against a corrupted legal order. Thus, justice, as both an individual and a social issue, is brought to the center of literary narration through its semantic and metaphorical layers.

This study aims to examine the metaphorical representations that emerge when the individual's pursuit of justice fails to be realized at the institutional level, to reveal which conceptual metaphors are used to describe justice and injustice in Altan's works, and to seek to address the following questions:

- 1) In times of tyranny, when justice is not served, what metaphors are used in Ahmet Altan's novels to represent the individual's quest for justice by his or her own hands?
- 2) What kind of meaning does the justice of resentment generate in the psychological and social worlds of the novel's characters?
- 3) How do the metaphors used in Ahmet Altan's works make visible the political oppression of the period and the dilemmas experienced by the individual conscience?
- 4) How does the semantic analysis of these metaphors reveal the tension between individual reckoning and the vision of social justice?
- 5) In the context of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, how does the treatment of justice and resentment in novels contribute to broader debates on law and justice in literature?
- 6) How is the justice of resentment represented in Ahmet Altan's literary works,

and what layers of meaning does this representation reveal in the context of Altan's own life story and the political-social traumas experienced by his family?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Justice

At the core of the demand for justice in daily life lies the desire to establish a social order in accordance with the idea of justice. In other words, the demand for justice constitutes the foundation of social life itself because social life is a means of eliminating the negative consequences that human beings, living within the limits set by nature, face in the natural state. Foremost among these adversities is the threat that human beings pose to their own species.

In the state of nature, the human being—while living in isolation—is neither just nor unjust with respect to his or her actions, but this condition changes with the presence of another.

As Hobbes expressed in the dictum *homo homini lupus*—"man is a wolf to man"—in the state of nature, every individual acts according to the instinct of self-preservation, and this instinct becomes an element of threat to the life of the other. In such an environment, everyone's existence is constantly under threat. Hence, social life functions as an order that eliminates these mutual threats. Justice, therefore, emerges as an indispensable element not only for the sustainability of law but also for the sustainability of social life itself (Kahya, 2005: p. 1).

In his article titled *What is Justice?*, Hans Kelsen emphasizes that there is no definitive and universal answer to this question.

According to him, justice is a relative concept shaped by individuals' subjective value judgments and cannot be defined with absolute content. From his perspective, therefore, justice should be understood not as the ultimate end of law, but rather as a value that varies in accordance with social and historical conditions. Kelsen concludes his discussion by stating that absolute justice is impossible and that one can only speak of a relative form of justice (Apaydin, 2018: p. 460).

In the modern period, understandings of justice have gained different dimensions.

Dworkin views justice as the task of discovering the truth—or the best possible theory—concerning morality and political rights. According to him, justice can be explained through two models: the natural model and the structural model. In the natural model, the principles of justice are not created by humans but are discovered, much like the laws of physics; humans have uncovered these principles. In the structural model, by contrast, justice is not a set of independent principles revealed by intuition, but rather the properties stipulated by a general theory that must be constructed, like a sculptor shap-

ing the most appropriate animal that best corresponds to the bones he finds (Bayram, 2015: pp. 66-67).

This diversity demonstrates that justice has been a subject of both legal and philosophical debate throughout history, and that it has been redefined in different contexts at different times. Friedrich Nietzsche, one of the most striking thinkers of modern philosophy, approaches the concept of justice not merely as a category confined to legal norms, but as a dynamic phenomenon situated at the very center of human nature, power relations, and the production of values.

Nietzsche's concept of justice radically departs from classical approaches to legal philosophy. For Nietzsche, justice at times appears as an instrument devised by the weak to impose constraints upon the strong, and at other times as a mechanism of control operating under the claim of preserving social order. Thus, justice becomes not only a legal category defined around the principles of equality and fairness, but also a product of power dynamics and relations of domination (Baki, 2024: p. 588).

## 2.2. Law and Justice

Although the fields of law and literature appear to be different disciplines, functionally they converge in their aim to evaluate human actions. While law protects social order through legislation, literature reveals the human side of concepts such as crime, punishment, and justice through narrative. Both disciplines use language as their primary tool and play a role in the construction of values. In this respect, literature deepens legal thinking and supports the ability to interpret and develop arguments (Şahin, 2024: p. 228; Yazıcı, Škop, & Aydın, 2017: p. 5). As Topuzkanamış (2014) emphasizes, literature and law are influenced by the same historical processes; the shaping of both literature and legal theory by the realism and naturalism movements in France is an example of this (p. 7). Therefore, while law regulates reality, literature often questions that reality; both find common ground around the concepts of crime, perpetrator, victim, and justice.

## 2.3. Resentment

Within the tradition of modern thought, the intricate relations between anger, resentment, and an individual's pursuit of justice have constituted a significant field of debate. Particularly in periods when justice cannot be established through institutional mechanisms, when the law becomes dysfunctional or corrupt, the question of what emotional and cognitive forms the deep discontent experienced by individuals takes is of critical importance. In this context, the concept of resentment emerges not only as an individual state of mind but also as a key conceptual tool for understanding social relations and political structures. Resentment is a complex emotion that arises from discontent and is characterized by hatred. This emotion can be defined as a mental state involving the desire to retaliate and take revenge on the perceived cause of one's dissatisfaction. This internal dynamic, combined with hatred, is not only an individual reactivity but also a form of affect

that can persist in social relationships. Resentment can be defined as a psychological phenomenon that becomes evident when negative emotions such as anger, resentment, jealousy, or hatred experienced by an individual transcend ordinary reactionary dimensions and assume a persistent character. Initially, such affective responses may appear as ordinary reactions in everyday life; these emotions gradually intensify in situations of harm suffered, humiliation, or deprivation resulting from unfulfilled desires. However, the decisive factor in this process is whether the individual possesses the power to compensate for the injustice he or she faces. The impossibility of reparation or the closure of avenues for achieving desired justice transforms these emotions into suppressed anger. In this way, resentment ceases to be a temporary reaction and evolves into a desire for revenge that permeates consciousness and extends across the whole of life. This situation produces both a constant hostility in the subject's inner world and a pervasive dissatisfaction that overshadows other domains of existence. "Ultimately, resentment transforms into an emotional state that virtually condemns the subject to fantasies of revenge and leads to an existential poisoning" (Türk, 2023: p. 985).

According to Baki (2024), resentment "...triggers negative emotions, leading the individual to reject a person or idea they believe has harmed them. In this context, resentment emerges not only as a psychological emotion but also as an element affecting the functioning of the social and moral order" (p. 583). The term *ressentiment*, of French origin, is regarded as a negatively oriented affect, bearing unfavorable connotations on both individual and social levels. The concept has been discussed in various contexts in the discussions of many Western philosophers, such as Hegel, Stirner, Nietzsche, Scheler, and Deleuze; it has been examined in detail, especially by philosophers of life such as Nietzsche and Scheler. The psychology of resentment is not merely an emotional state at the individual level, but also a phenomenon permeated into the very fabric of social relations. Upon closer scrutiny, traces of resentment can be observed in almost every aspect of social life, from power relations to political conflicts, from social injustices to collective movements, for this reason philosophers such as Nietzsche and Scheler have considered resentment not as a mere category of anger or hatred, but as one of the fundamental dynamics shaping the moral, psychological, sociological, and anthropological equations of human history. "In this respect, resentment functions as a key concept in explaining not only the internal conflicts of the individual, but also the recurring cycles of power, justice, and revenge that persist in the historical development of societies" (Sağlam, 2022: p. 6).

In these discussions, *resentment* is defined as an affective state that points to the deep and mysterious dimensions of the human psyche and is directly linked to destructive acts such as revenge, envy, violence, and lynching. An internal blockage caused by negative emotions that cannot be translated into action or expressed forms the fundamental basis of resentment. Resentment holds philosophical significance not only as an individual psychological distress but also as an emotion that shapes social tensions and the pursuit of justice (Oktan

& Demir, 2025: p. 181). In Wotling's words, resentment is an affect, or rather a form of repressed hatred characterized by powerlessness, a desire for revenge that can be said to be an imagined attempt at reparation rather than an open conflict (as cited in Çiftçi, 2016: p. 100).

### **2.3.1. Resentment Justice**

Law is one of the most debated domains within social institutions and occupies a central place in collective consciousness. A significant portion of criticism points to the fact that legal regulations fail to reflect justice or that legal practitioners, consciously or unconsciously, make mistakes in their interpretation of norms. However, sometimes the issue becomes even more serious: when governments that monopolize state resources instrumentalize the law, they indirectly become complicit in the perpetration of crimes. This situation, which can be conceptualized as the corruption of law, not only renders the administration of justice practically impossible but also leads legal philosophy into theoretical deadlock. Legal theories assume that the ultimate goal of the system is to ensure the fair distribution of rights and responsibilities.

If this cannot be achieved, "unable to channel their anger through legal means, victims increasingly turn toward feelings of revenge and retaliation. In this context, where the law becomes dysfunctional, the psychology of resentment turns into an alternative pursuit of justice for the individual" (Türk, 2023: p. 989).

### **2.3.2. The Legitimacy Issue of Resentment Justice and Debates on Procedure**

Resentment serves as a powerful source of motivation for the individual in contexts where justice fails, the law is corrupted, and inequalities are deepened. The theory of resentment justice developed by Sağlam (2022) discusses the victim's tendency to establish their own justice as a legitimate response under these circumstances. However, Türk (2023) emphasizes that normative legitimacy cannot be derived directly from factual inequality, pointing out that "the framework within which ethical and legal principles of resentment justice can be implemented must be clearly defined" (pp. 1007-1008). Otherwise, resentment risks fueling new cycles of violence and injustice. As cited by Baki (2024), Nietzsche also contends that the desire for revenge among the weak is insufficient to produce true justice and that justice can only be achieved through a transformation of values. The focus of this study is not on the normative legitimacy of resentment-based justice, but rather how this phenomenon is represented at the metaphorical and semantic levels in Ahmet Altan's novels. In Altan's narratives, resentment appears not only as an individual reaction but also as a literary reflection of the sense of injustice inflicted on individuals by authoritarian regimes and social corruption. Thus, the justice of resentment, addressed theoretically by Sağlam (2022), is reinterpreted through the metaphorical language of literature and transformed into a tool of historical and social critique.

### **2.3.3. Resentment Justice in Romans**

Although positive law denotes the body of norms shaped by the will of legislators

and in effect within a given society, it often neglects the deeper dimensions of justice. By focusing solely on the external appearance of actions, law frequently renders invisible the lived experiences of injustice. At this very point, literature makes visible the domains where positive law remains silent or justice is not served, and functions as the voice of individual conscience. In this context, the pursuit of justice expressed in literary texts often fills the gaps in the law and metaphorically represents the internal reckoning of victims.

Sabahattin Ali's *Yusuf of Kuyucak* (*Kuyucaklı Yusuf*) and Heinrich von Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas* are examples where individual demands for justice fail to find a response within the framework of legal legitimacy, and therefore, resentment evolves into a transformative motivation. In Yusuf's case, the silence of the law in the face of profound injustices fuels his anger and personal pursuit of justice, whereas Kohlhaas's revolt evolves into a collective uprising against a corrupt legal order. In both examples, resentment emerges not merely as an individual emotion but as a powerful dynamic that emerges to restore justice where the law is either corrupt or ineffective. As [Bozkurt and Demirel \(2021\)](#) emphasize, "...literary works reflect examples of rebellion and defiance stemming from violations of justice, thus recording in the collective memory the need to change the distorted order perpetuated by society" (p. 71). In this context, literature is not only a field that criticizes the shortcomings of the law, but also a field where the justice of resentment is discussed through literary representations, where the individual's inner reckoning merges with the broader search for social justice.

#### 2.4. Metaphor

Metaphor (Greek: *meta* beyond + *pherein/phérō* to carry) is a discursive and cognitive order that transfers the horizon of meaning of one concept into another conceptual domain ([Lakoff & Johnson, 2005: p. 15](#); [Demir & Karakaş Yıldırım, 2019: p. 1085](#)). By intervening in literal usage, it establishes new semantic relations through the transfer of a term from its conventional context to another ([Cebeci, 2019: p. 10](#)). The German dictionary *Duden* defines metaphor as the transfer of a word/phrase from one literal field to another without establishing a direct comparison between the signifier and the signified; in this respect, metaphor constitutes a construction of meaning that surpasses ordinary comparison ([Устуньер, 2004](#)). "In this approach, which establishes a historical connection with metaphor in Ottoman-Turkish rhetoric, metaphor is not only a linguistic ornament but also a cornerstone of thought" ([Uğur, 2023: pp. 197-198](#)).

Metaphor is central not only to the capacity for verification but also to the capacity for meaning and design.

The function of metaphor is to render the abstract comprehensible through the concrete, to establish conceptual maps, and to enhance cognitive and affective engagement. In examples such as *the scales of justice* and *time being like money*, metaphor visualizes complex concepts and guides action and in-

terpretation. Scientific models are likewise often metaphorical in nature; a model is a metaphorical representation that clarifies its object on another plane (Saruhan, 2006: pp. 7-8).

Therefore, according to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, "...metaphor is more than just a figure in language; it is an organizer of thought, establishing systematic mappings from a concrete source domain to an abstract target domain" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2005). "Within this framework, three primary types are distinguished: structural metaphors (where one concept structures another), ontological metaphors (where the abstract is apprehended as an entity or substance), and orientational metaphors (based on spatial schemas such as up-down, in-out)" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2005; Küçük, 2016: pp. 62-63). "The cross-cultural variability of metaphors removes bodily experience from being the sole determinant; cultural inter-structures reinterpret similar experiences through distinct metaphorical patterns" (Karaca, 2024: pp. 32-33).

The relationship between metaphor and ideology is evident. "Metaphors function as representational techniques that enable the construction of a reality aligned with dominant arrangements, thereby mediating the reproduction of hegemony; they can obscure meaning and shift emphasis in media and political discourse" (Çoban Keneş, 2016: pp. 259-260). Therefore, "in the narration of social events, metaphor functions as a probe that activates the sociological imagination, both in diagnosing and in generating solutions" (Eraslan, 2011: p. 3). Ultimately, metaphor is a core interdisciplinary mechanism that determines not only how we speak but also how we think and how we construct the world (Macit & Üstünyer, 2024); it reconstructs as well as carries meaning in a wide field ranging from literature to law, from sociology to science.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This study was designed using a qualitative research design. "Qualitative research is a method that is inquisitive and interpretive about the problem it examines and strives to understand the form of the problem in its natural environment" (Baltacı, 2019: p. 369).

#### **3.2. Research Objective**

The primary aim of this research is to uncover how the metaphors used in Ahmet Altan's novels represent the tension between individual resentment and the pursuit of social justice. In doing so, it will illuminate how literature functions as a carrier of individual conscience and collective memory during periods of injustice.

#### **3.3. Population and Sampling**

The population of the study comprises the complete works of Ahmet Altan. However, the sample was selected from his novels depicting periods of authoritarian rule using Typical Case Sampling. It refers to "cases that, among the many similar

ones in the population, contain a sufficient level of information to explain the phenomenon or event under investigation” (Baltacı, 2018: p. 251). This selection was made both to render the justice crisis visible within its historical context and to reflect the literary representations of the psychology of resentment through powerful metaphors.

### 3.4. Limitations of the Research

The results obtained are limited to the context of the works in question. In addition, eleven metaphors were selected for the study, taking into account their suitability for the purpose of the research and their representativeness. Therefore, the findings should be evaluated within the methodological framework of this selection.

Moreover, Lakoff and Johnson’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory was employed as the primary framework in the analysis of metaphors, and other metaphor theories were excluded from the scope of the research. This preference stems from the explanatory power of the theory’s metaphors, which are not merely linguistic embellishments but fundamental mechanisms that shape the cognitive structure of thought. As the Rhetorical Metaphor Theory, which is among the alternative approaches, focuses more on persuasive functions in discourse, it falls short in explaining the conceptual cognitive construction of the themes of justice and law, which is the aim of this study. For this reason, Conceptual Metaphor Theory has been chosen as the most appropriate and sufficient framework in terms of the research objectives. Similarly, while methods such as Comparative Metaphor Analysis are powerful tools for revealing cross-cultural differences, they are secondary in terms of this study’s in-depth analysis in literary and legal contexts. Therefore, Conceptual Metaphor Theory has been chosen as the most appropriate and sufficient framework for the objectives of the research.

### 3.5. Analysis of the Findings

In this study, Ahmet Altan’s novels *Like a Sword Wound*, *Love in the Days of Rebellion*, and *Dying Is Easier than Loving* were examined using descriptive-interpretive analysis within the framework of Lakoff and Johnson’s (2005) Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

A total of 11 resentment metaphors were identified from three works as typical cases. These metaphors were analyzed according to the categories of structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors. Each metaphor was also analyzed in terms of its conceptual structure and semantic connection. The findings were interpreted not only at the textual level but also within the socio-political context.

#### 3.5.1. Structural Metaphors

According to Lakoff and Johnson (2005), metaphors are mental schemas that systematically assign meaning to abstract concepts, going beyond the figurative use of individual words. In this context, structural metaphors serve to make a concept more understandable by relating it to another concept.

### 3.5.2. Ontological Metaphors

Ontological metaphors enable abstract concepts to be thought of as objects or substances (Küçük, 2016: p. 63). Lakoff and Johnson (2005) categorize these into three types: entity, substance, and carrier metaphors.

### 3.5.3. Orientation Metaphors

Orientation metaphors are based on bodily experience. They organize one conceptual system through another, as in the example “What is abundant is above” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2005). Source domains are typically spatial concepts: up-down, inside-outside, front-back, etc. (Küçük, 2016: p. 62).

## 3.6. Contribution of the Research

This research makes a twofold contribution to the study of law and literature. First, it emphasizes the epistemic role of literature in justice-related discussions of justice by examining its metaphorical representation. Second, it reveals how the psychology of resentment functions as both a motivational and a potentially destructive force in the pursuit of justice. Thus, the metaphorical analysis of literary texts as a tool for collective memory and political critique makes an original contribution to interdisciplinary scholarship.

## 4. Findings and Discussions

### 4.1. The Emergence of Social Resentment

**Metaphor 1:** “The empire, like the people living within its vast borders, was silent, calm, mute, and inactive when viewed from the outside. The tyranny, claimed its power from God, had assumed an almost divine appearance through the fetvas of the Sheikh ul-Islam and the Sultan’s caliphal authority, leaving the empire voiceless and inert under endless oppression... yet in its soul, it harbored a deep unrest, a thirst for a life of freedom, and seeds of rebellion that would soon erupt” (Altan, 1998a: p. 207).

#### Metaphor Type:

**Ontological Metaphor:** The empire is depicted as a living organism, outwardly calm but internally filled with unrest, like a body concealing deep turbulence.

**Structural Metaphor:** The authoritarian regime is represented as an “infinite apparatus of oppression” that shuts down channels of expression.

**Oriental Metaphor:** The thirst for a life of freedom signifies an upward/outward orientation toward openness, while tyranny symbolizes the weight directed downward/oppression.

**Literary Interpretation:** This metaphor demonstrates that a deep social unrest and the potential for explosion accumulate beneath the calm surface. While the silence described by Altan reflects only the apparent stagnation in regimes where justice is not served, in reality, it points to the internalized anger—i.e., resentment—of individuals whose avenues for seeking justice have been blocked. As Budak (2020) emphasizes, “the fundamental dynamic of social rebellions arises from

the disproportion between the expectations of the populace and the capacity of political authority to meet them. The constant postponement and suppression of expectations, like the seeds of rebellion sown in the ground, paves the way for resentment to blossom into collective explosions” (p. 571).

#### 4.2. The Psychology of Tyranny and Resentment

**Metaphor 2:** “The rebellion of the poor religious people had not yet sharpened to the point of risking death; they hid their anger under prayers and curses, but these whispers were even more dangerous than speaking aloud, growing now in the dark like seeds sown in the soil” (Altan, 1998a: p. 104).

**Metaphor Type:**

**Ontological Metaphor:** Anger and resentment; seeds buried in the ground. Prayers, concealed rebellion.

**Structural Metaphor:** Prayer and curse; both secret forms of resistance. Silence, a more dangerous form of struggle.

**Oriental Metaphor:** Emotion repressed within, buried deep; over time, rising to the surface, rising as rebellion.

**Literary Interpretation:** The fact that the poor religious people in the text conceal their anger under prayers and curses rather than through open rebellion reveals the *hidden accumulation* nature of the psychology of resentment. Although suppressed rage appears outwardly as passive silence, it in fact continues to grow like a seed buried in the soil. As Budak (2020) emphasizes, the fundamental dynamic of social rebellions arises from the disproportion between the expectations of the people and the inability of political authority to meet them. In the initial phase, it manifests in low-intensity reactions such as discontent, prayers, or verbal criticism; this stage functions as a kind of incubation period. However, as political repression intensifies and expectations remain unmet, this buried anger transforms into more intense objections and ultimately culminates in collective action. In this context, Altan’s metaphor of a “seed sown in the soil” depicts the silent growth of social discontent, evolving into a more dangerous and transformative force.

#### 4.3. The Solidarity of Resentment: Brotherhood and Opposition

**Metaphor 3:** “There was also something brotherly about the friendship he showed him. Hikmet Bey knew from his own experience that such brotherhoods were only seen among members of oppositional societies rebelling against a powerful force; perhaps the best days of his life always came to his mind when he first worked with the Committee of Union and Progress, when they prepared for revolt with a shared fear and anger, entrusting their lives to one another” (Altan, 1998a: p. 132).

**Metaphor Type:**

**Ontological Metaphor:** Brotherhood; a concrete bond/feeling of trust.

**Structural Metaphor:** Resentment; the organizing force of solidarity.

**Oriental Metaphor:** Shared anger and fear → Turns upward (toward re-

bellion).

**Literary Interpretation:** In the text, the metaphor of “brotherhood” transforms into a form of political solidarity that unites individuals around a shared sense of anger and resentment. This bond, unlike biological brotherhood, arises from the shared values of risk, fear, and rebellion. “The oath-taking procedure of the Committee of Union and Progress also provides a ritual framework that institutionalizes this emotional foundation. The oath-taking of candidates, with one hand on the Quran and the other on a gun and dagger, simultaneously combines elements of faith, violence, and sacrifice, thus reinforcing the bond of brotherhood” (Atılgan, 2022: p. 115).

This ritual demonstrates that the psychology of resentment has evolved from an individual feeling of anger into an organized relationship of trust. At this point, resentment is no longer merely a “desire for revenge” but rather becomes a new form of social relation—a bond-producing element that generates ultimate loyalty and solidarity among members. Thus, resentment produced by repressive regimes turns into both a motivational source for oppositional organizations and a psychological cement that fortifies their internal structure.

#### 4.4. The Psychology of Uncontrollable Resentment

**Metaphor 4:** “The resentful reaction of a region accustomed and indifferent to death, murder, killing, and assassination, to the killing of a single journalist revealed that what was being expressed was more than the pain or resentment of that crime alone. For a city awakened by a single death to once again find peace and tranquility, countless murders had to be committed, people had to be killed, and funerals had to be held; if such a massive reaction was shown to a single death in a land indifferent to death, it meant that much blood would follow” (Altan, 1998a: p. 177).

**Metaphor Type:**

**Ontological Metaphor:** Resentment; a collective energy, an explosive force.

**Structural Metaphor:** Death; the fuse of rebellion/the catalyst of social anger.

**Oriental Metaphor:** Suppressed anger, a wave rising upward from the depths.

**Literary Interpretation:** The extraordinary reaction to the journalist’s murder reveals, beyond an individual death, the potential for a long-suppressed psychology of resentment to transform into a social uprising. In a land accustomed to death, the fact that a single death sparked such profound outrage actually points to a period’s crisis of political legitimacy. This reaction symbolizes not only the mourning of a personal loss but also the collective anger generated by the persistent postponement of justice and the corruption of the legal order. “In this context, the assassination of Hasan Fehmi Bey gains a historical intensity of meaning as the death of one individual becomes the gravestone of a period’s vision of freedom” (Safi, 2018: p. 276). By bringing a personal event to the semantic depth of a period when political purges were commonplace, Altan demonstrates that assassinations

were not only a political tool but also a rupture in the collective memory of suppressed resentment. Thus, the novel critiques the political practices of the Committee of Union and Progress era on both literary and historical levels, while simultaneously revealing how resentment operates as one of the dynamics that trigger the pursuit of social justice.

#### 4.5. The Two Sides of Resentment

**Metaphor 5:** “The coffin, wrapped in green cloth, carried forward in the hands of the crowd waving with chants of ‘Allahu Akbar’, was like an ominous box containing the soul of the entire city; when they placed it into the earth and covered it, it would not be only a man, an opposition writer, that they buried, but the soul and human essence of the city itself. What would remain was nothing but a brutish mass of muscle, seething with bestial rage and a desire to destroy. Many different people in many different places believed, and were deceived, that they were the head and soul of this crowd, preparing to be soulless and headless, that they themselves, their own will, would control this body” (Altan, 1998a: p. 177).

**Metaphor Type:** Ontological and structural metaphor.

**Literary Interpretation:** In Altan’s depiction of a funeral, the anger of the crowd, blended with mourning, transcends individual sorrow and takes shape as a form of collective resentment. The coffin is metaphorized not only as the death of an individual but as the burial of the soul of an era; the crowd, in the wake of this loss, is portrayed as being at risk of transforming into a feral mass of muscle. This transformation can be explained within the context of Holloway’s typology of anger. “According to Holloway, when anger arises from a sense of injustice and wounded dignity, it reinforces social solidarity; individuals transcend their own selves and unite under the category of ‘we’. However, when anger transforms into resentment and ambition, it evolves into directionless destructiveness and fuels authoritarian ideologies” (Demir, 2018: p. 160). This dual potential is clearly observed in Altan’s fiction: a collective mourning capable of fostering social solidarity can, at the same time, evolve into an outburst of destructive violence. This double possibility demonstrates that in the literary representation of resentment, the pursuit of justice and the potential for danger coexist side by side.

#### 4.6. From Resentment to Limitlessness: The Liberating Psychology of Revolt

**Metaphor 6:** “As he watched the moment of the lieutenant’s impending death, he sensed that the soldiers who would kill him would do so not out of anger, rage, or revenge, but solely out of a desire to satisfy the infinite sense of freedom that an uprising gives its participants. Like branches broken by a great storm and falling into a river, they were carried far away from their own pasts and identities by the insurrection, and with a childlike delight in believing that all responsibility for this drift lay in the river that carried them, they surrendered themselves to the current; they seemed to be in ecstasy, swept away by the ecstasy that being swept along by

great events produced in people; no boundaries remained to restrain them, and to the final limit of this boundlessness death—they rushed with urgency and haste” (Altan, 1998a: p. 177).

**Metaphor Type:** Ontological and structural metaphor.

**Literary Interpretation:** This metaphor describes how individuals, while engaged in a mass movement, lose their capacity for rational decision-making and surrender themselves to the emotional current. Soldiers act not out of individual anger or revenge, but rather driven by the exhilaration of “liberation” offered by collective uprising. The analogy of branches broken off in a storm drifting into a river symbolizes the individual being swept away by the current, disconnected from their past, values, and identity. At this stage, even death is perceived as a natural and inevitable station along the course of this drift. In line with Le Bon’s analyses of mass psychology, this situation points to a collective experience in which the individual comes under the dominion of emotions rather than reason. While Le Bon likens masses to “leaves lifted and scattered by a hurricane” (Le Bon, 2020), in Altan’s metaphor, the “river and storm” analogies convey the same irrational drift. In this context, the resentment that transforms into a collective euphoria of freedom removes the individual from the position of an autonomous agent, turning them instead into part of an unlimited and uncontrollable mass movement.

#### 4.7. Collective Resentment

**Metaphor 7:** “With a face fading like a statue made of wet ash, the Sultan watched as thousands of soldiers tore the officer apart with their bare hands, ripping his head from his body, dragging his headless body across the ground, and raising the severed head to display it to the spectators. Instead of calming down with the appearance of Şakir Pasha, as if suddenly realizing that they had a magnificent audience—the very power that governed the empire watching them—the crowd grew even more frenzied, as though intent on staging a performance worthy of their spectators’ grandeur. Reşit Pasha seemed to have sunk into his seat, no longer hearing the Sultan’s words nor seeing anything around him. The crowd’s ceaseless roar lingered in his ears, and before his eyes was a severed head, its bloodied eyelids slit open, its torn veins dangling from its neck like purple threads. He had learned, in a way he would never forget, what an uprising truly was” (Altan, 1998a: p. 268).

**Metaphor Type:** Ontological Metaphor—An uprising is a Spectacle.

**Literary Interpretation:** The metaphorical narrative in this scene demonstrates how the psychology of resentment, once it transcends individual anger and settles into the collective unconscious, assumes a transformative yet simultaneously destructive potential. Here, the crowd is represented not merely as the arithmetic sum of individuals, but as a distinct entity driven by the conscience of a new species created by coincidentally mixed people (Taburoğlu, 2016). This transformation aligns with assessments in political sociology that social rebellion may open emancipatory horizons, yet also engender irrational and brutal practices such as lynch-

ing and mass violence. The emotional chemistry of the crowd may transform the pursuit of justice into genuine collective resistance, while simultaneously transforming it into a spectacle that legitimizes violence. Thus, this passage implies that resentment not only fuels an emancipatory rebellion on the social level, but can also be the source of a mechanism that loses its ethical boundaries, aestheticizes violence, and transforms the individual into a fragment of a will external to them. In this context, Altan's narrative simultaneously reveals the dual nature of the psychology of resentment within social movements—its liberating potential and its destructive danger.

#### 4.8. Controlled Resentment

**Metaphor 8:** “Hikmet Bey had always felt this anger, and he never truly forgave the Unionists for stealing from him the excitement, the hope, and the future dreams he had for his country during the struggle to overthrow Abdulhamid, yet, this anger did not lead him to join those who opposed the Unionists, hiding behind a crude religiosity” (Altan, 1998a: p. 256).

**Metaphor Type:** Ontological and orientational metaphor. In the ontological metaphor context, dreams are depicted as a property that can be stolen; in the structural metaphor context, religiosity functions as a shield, and in the orientational metaphor context, the future is portrayed as a value snatched from ahead and thrown backward, and together, these metaphors demonstrate the systematic exploitation of individual hopes, faith, and social orientation by authoritarian regimes.

**Literary Interpretation:** In Altan's narrative, resentment is presented as a powerful motivator for the pursuit of justice. The feeling of a stolen future generates an impulse that mobilizes the individual and drives them to struggle. However, when this anger is not channeled and constrained by ethical values, it destructively directs not only oppressive authority but also alternative social projects and different ideological positions. In this context, Hikmet Bey's refusal to join “those hiding behind crude religiosity” despite his anger at the Unionists is significant. This choice demonstrates that resentment can be managed without becoming a tool of destruction and that anger can function as a force that fuels the motivation for justice. Therefore, Altan's perspective reveals the two-fold nature of resentment psychology: Positive Aspect: It acts as a force that triggers resistance, struggle, and social motivation in the face of injustice. Negative Aspect: Left unchecked, it can transform into a destructive cycle of vengeance that can even undermine justice itself. In this framework, resentment is positioned in modern political philosophy as a “double-potential” emotion: a catalyst for the manifestation of justice when kept within ethical limits, and a mechanism that poisons the social order and erodes the ideal of justice when left unchecked.

#### 4.9. The Primitive Cycle of Resentment

**Metaphor 9:** “Anyone who arrive at this country of foolish people become fools

in two weeks. It seems you've become a fool too. They say a punishment will be given...As if we needed one blood feud. What are you, the chief of Bedouins?" (Altan, 1998b: p. 436).

**Metaphor Type:** Ontological and structural metaphor. Ontological Metaphor: The terms "bandit" and "bedouin chief" indicate that individual behaviors are produced not on a rational and civilized basis, but within a primitive and violence-oriented social form. Here, society is conceptualized as an organism operating according to tribal order, far from legal and rational organization. Structural Metaphor: The despotic regime transforms the population into a community acting according to the "bandit" mentality. Law and justice are replaced by mechanisms of blood feud, punishment, and tribal loyalty.

**Literary Interpretation:** The metaphor "Are you a bandit?" illustrates how an individual's feelings of anger and resentment transform at the societal level. The psychology of resentment evolves over time into a desire for hatred and revenge, as the individual internalizes the injustices and humiliations they experience. In environments where justice is corrupted and legal avenues are blocked, this emotion directs individuals to primitive forms of violence rather than modern legal procedures. As Yeşildağ (2023) emphasizes, this situation "relates to individuals' behaviors not only at the physiological or facial expression level in moments of anger, but also to the restructuring of power relations" (p. 53). Here, resentment ceases to be an individual emotion and transforms into a vehicle for social mobilization of force.

In Altan's fiction, the "bandit" figure is not merely a common disruptor of order; it represents a subject who attempts to establish justice by their own hands, but who does so by stepping outside the law. In this respect, resentment, on the one hand, generates a motivation that liberates victims of oppressive regimes from passivity and drives them to action and on the other hand, it legitimizes violence and can destroy justice itself when separated from ethical values and institutional procedures. This dual nature clearly demonstrates that resentment can be both the engine of the quest for freedom and justice and the ideological fuel of the cycle of violence.

#### 4.10. The Dilemma of Resentment and Justice

**Metaphor 10:** "Should we do it like this? Should we soothe our grief with blood and revenge?" (Altan, 1998b: p. 463).

**Metaphor Type:** Structural and ontological metaphor: In this metaphorical structure, grief is likened to hunger, and the individual's spiritual pain is constructed as a physiological need. In the structural metaphor, blood is treated as a kind of nourishment, and revenge is conceived as a means to satisfy this hunger.

**Literary Interpretation:** The concept of resentment justice refers to an emotional and reactive pursuit of justice that emerges in exceptional circumstances where the law has become structurally dysfunctional, justice delivery mechanisms have been disrupted, and victims' rights have been systematically denied. In this

context, as Türk (2023) points out, the most critical dilemma with resentment justice is its vulnerability to violations of the principles of proportionality and causal link. “Even if the conditions for legitimacy are met, the question of whether acts of violence directed at third parties unrelated to the perpetrator can be considered just challenges the normative boundaries of this understanding of justice” (pp. 989-999).

The metaphorical expression “Should we do it like this? Should we soothe our grief with blood and revenge?” symbolizes the core dilemma inherent in the notion of resentment justice. Although the use of violence as a tool of justice may seem like emotional compensation for victimhood in the short term, in the long run, it can have consequences that could undermine the legitimacy of justice and make the establishment of social peace impossible. This metaphor embodies the risk of succumbing to the temptation of revenge, of reducing justice to sheer violence.

While it is understandable that resentment justice is neither utopian nor peaceful (Türk, 2023), when the universal standards of justice, particularly the principles of proportionality and non-discrimination, are violated, revenge-based acts fall not within the realm of law but into the category of mere reactive violence. In this context, the metaphorical sentence serves as a powerful ethical warning that justice must be constructed within rational, principled, and normative frameworks rather than emotional reactions. The short yet profound statement implies that in addressing emotional traumas, the method employed must rest on ethical and legal grounds. Blood and revenge are presented here as temporary and primitive means of relief; however, they are no cure for a wound as deep as grief. Altan positions law as the sole foundation of both individual conscience and social peace. On a metaphorical level, revenge is associated with *nourishment*, while law is linked to *healing*. Thus, the reader is guided not by short-term anger but by long-term legal principles in their quest for justice.

#### 4. 11. The Justice of Resentment: The Judgment of Suppressed Anger

**Metaphor 11:** “Those who had killed his son-in-law had seized control of the entire empire; punishing the murderers was impossible, even though their identities were well known, and the people shouted their names with cries of ‘long live’, remembering them with affection. He was confronted with such blatant injustice and unfairness that he struggled to make himself and those around him accept it. Everyone knew that he could restore the ‘corrupted scales of justice’ with a single command, that he could hold the murderers accountable for this crime in the very same way. As he told the Sultan, he was afraid of ‘this power’, he had the power, but he would not use it. ‘This is a test’, he said to himself, ‘this is a test’” (Altan, 1998b: p. 465).

**Metaphor Type:** Ontological and structural metaphor: In this analysis, justice is identified with the scales at the level of the ontological metaphor. While the scales

are normally a symbol of precise measurement and the pursuit of balance, their distortion suggests that justice has become corrupt and dysfunctional. On the structural metaphor level, the restoration of justice is framed as the act of repairing the broken scale and re-establishing equilibrium.

**Literary Interpretation:** The debate over the legitimacy of resentment justice emerges during extraordinary periods when the law as a system degenerates and loses its function as a means of ensuring justice. According to Türk (2023), to assess the moral legitimacy of this understanding, the normative judgments underlying the sociopolitical facts posited as conditions must be made explicit. “Socio-economic inequality and the corruption of the law may generate a logic that appears to grant the victim the right to suspend the law; however, this remains problematic from the standpoint of legal ontology. The binding force of law rests not only in its institutional existence but also on moral and universal norms” (p. 1007). Both the debate over resentimental justice and the ideological instrumentalization of law in totalitarian regimes converge on the crucial issue of delineating the boundaries of justice. In a system where law is corrupted and ideology is absolutized, the line between violence and justice becomes blurred. At this point, academic analysis must redefine both the ethical and political dimensions of justice, taking into account not only normative principles but also metaphors embedded in social memory.

The metaphor operates through a tragic impasse between law and conscience, where Sheikh Efendi possesses the power to punish those who killed his son-in-law, yet fails to exercise this power. The broken scales of justice are not a mechanical malfunction that can be fixed by a mere command; they symbolize the balance of judgment and the conscience of society. However, Sheikh Efendi seeks his strength not in mending these scales himself, but in weighing them against the scales of the law. This expression represents a test, indicating that the desire for revenge is internally restrained, and that this restraint does not delay justice but transforms it into an ethical stance that elevates it. Sheikh Efendi’s passivity is not a weakness; it is a powerful manifestation of his faith in the law. Here, justice exists not to legitimize anger, but to overcome it. In this passage, Altan stages the principle that the power of justice is sacred, not the justice of power, on a novel level. The scales metaphor represents both a broken order and a conscience that has the power to restore that order with its own hands, but refuses to do so. This silence draws an invisible yet firm line between justice and lawless vengeance.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study sought to examine, through historical examples, how individuals and societies pursued justice in periods when justice failed to manifest institutionally, the legal system was corrupted, and political authorities were directly or indirectly complicit in wrongdoing. Discussions surrounding the concept of “resentment justice”, in particular, offered a rich field of study not only at the philosophical and legal levels but also at the literary level. The metaphors employed in Ahmet Altan’s

novels, *Like a Sword Wound*, *Love in the Days of Rebellion*, and *Dying Is Easier than Loving*, offered a richness of content that illuminated the psychological, social, and political dimensions of resentment, thus providing a content-rich perspective that sheds light on both the present and the future.

Based on the findings, it can be inferred that the metaphors used during periods of tyranny reflect not only individual anger and a quest for justice, but also a collective psychology of resentment. It has been determined that social oppression, a corrupt legal system, and governments that undermine their legitimacy through injustices lead to the accumulation of resentment within individuals and society. This feeling has sometimes been a trigger for resistance and the struggle for freedom, while at other times, as in the case of the Committee of Union and Progress, it can evolve into a destructive drive for revenge. This dual nature demonstrates that resentment is an emotion that both sustains a sense of justice and, when left unchecked, can destroy justice altogether. Therefore, the legitimacy of resentment justice cannot be explained solely through external conditions such as socioeconomic inequality or legal corruption; it is a multilayered phenomenon that must be evaluated within the context of ethical, legal, and social responsibility. In this regard, Altan's novels are not merely literary testimonies, but also offer a conceptual and semantic exploration of individual and collective psychology that emerges in the absence of justice.

In Altan's narratives, resentment appears as a moral energy that keeps the pursuit of justice alive, but when left unchecked, it also points to a dangerous emotional cycle capable of undermining justice itself. This approach also directly overlaps with the author's personal and familial experiences. The author's father, Çetin Altan's journalistic life, marked by exiles, trials, and oppression, and his long periods of imprisonment during coup periods and in an increasingly authoritarian political climate, transformed the Altan family's quest for justice from an individual experience into a social legacy. This historical background reveals that the metaphors in the novels are not merely fictional aesthetic choices but also the literary projection of a vision of justice intertwined with the author's own life. Therefore, Altan's perspective on the justice of resentment carries a dual character: on the one hand, he renders visible the anger generated through victimization through the metaphorical language of literature; on the other, he offers an ethical warning that this anger, if left unchecked, may turn into a cycle of revenge that threatens social order. In this framework, Altan's novels can be regarded not only as testimonies to the era of despotism but also as powerful literary witnesses that bring the justice crises of modern Turkey into discussion on a universal plane.

In conclusion, this article reveals that rethinking the justice of resentment through literary representations contributes not only to the philosophy of justice but also to the construction of social memory and political consciousness.

For future researchers working on derivatives of this topic, examining how the metaphorical universe offered by justice-oriented literary texts is addressed in the context of different periods and authors will provide a broader perspective, partic-

ularly for understanding the multidimensional nature of the concept of justice in Turkish society.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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