The Metamorphosis And Notion Of Distortion And Isolation

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"I cannot make you understand. I cannot make anyone understand what is happening inside me. I cannot even explain it to myself."

-Franz Kafka

The following paper analyzes the masterpiece of Franz Kafka named "*The Metamorphosis,*" which was first published in the year 1915. Literary tools such as diction, allusion, imagery, symbolism, etcetera are used to enhance the efficacy of a text. Books do not have the luxury of depicting visuals as films do; therefore, literary devices assist writers in adding effect to their perceptions. By implementing literary devices, authors can use "few words to achieve maximum effectiveness." (Fadaee, 2010) Throughout the content, Kafka employs several literary devices, such as symbols and thematic and allegorical expressions, to highlight the notions of distortion and isolation. He also incorporates elements of conformity and alienation that augment the factor of existentialism and Absurdism or "Kafkaesque."

The Fur-Clad Woman and Gregor's Misunderstanding

Kafka utilizes the symbol of a picture hanging on Gregor's wall. Kafka portrays even minor details about the interiors of Gregor's house, and in due course, he focuses his attention on the picture of a lady. According to the story, "It was a picture of a woman with a fur hat and a fur boa." (Kafka, p. 1) The lady in the picture is sitting in an upright position, symbolizing the civilized demeanor of humankind. However, regardless of civilization, she wraps herself with the help of the fur of a savage animal, which separates her from the world of people. According to Kafka, it was the initial phase of isolation, which can be associated with misinterpretation. Evidently, misunderstanding is a term that could have different meanings for different situations. However, for Gregor, this misunderstanding implies the factor of isolation because of the transformation he is encountering. The underlying transformation of Gregor creates substantial misunderstandings that eventually turn into his isolation. Initially, he expects that his family will understand the problem and will accept his transformed form, but contrarily, his family rejects him and shuts him away because of an unknown fear. The picture symbolizes the confusion Gregor feels about himself and his relatives; at the beginning of this phase,

he is not willing to entertain the thought of accepting the harsh reality.

Vermin as an Allegory of Kafka's Alienation

Critics believe that "The Metamorphosis" is an autobiography of Kafka, and through the character of Gregor, he endeavors to depict his inner feelings. It is a widely known fact that Kafka was a gloomy man and always stayed in a serious and dire mood. People posit that the main reason behind his sadness was his German nationality while he was living in the Czech Republic. Moreover, he suffered a tense time because of being a Jew. Moreover, he never indulged in a healthy relationship with his father and became unsuccessful in business as well. All of these factors made him feel inferior and weak, which he demonstrated through the symbol of the vermin. Kafka thinks of himself as a weird and monstrous creature as he writes that when Gregor wakes up, "his brown, arched abdomen divided up into rigid bow-like sections." (Kafka, p. 1) Bugs and insects are the most inferior mortals on the planet, and therefore, Kafka uses the vermin as an allegory of the most loathsome creature.

The Empty Room and Freedom Through Isolation

Another symbol used by Kafka is the act of Gregor's sister, who arranges the entire furniture of Gregor's room and puts away all his stuff except the picture of a lady and a desk. The empty room became bare and abandoned after all the rearrangements. The empty room symbolizes that Gregor's family is "giving up all hope of improvement and are leaving him to his resources without any consideration." (Kafka, p. 41) Through this allusion, Gregor realizes that his family never wants him to be cured. Kafka exploits the gesture as an eye-opening moment in the story, and Gregor moves ahead with the stages of isolation. Through this phase, he becomes comfortable with the idea of isolation and realizes that he is not depressed; instead, he feels liberated and free. He starts to indulge in his newly transformed form as vermin, and he "congratulated himself on his precaution, acquired from traveling, of locking all doors during the night, even at home." (Kafka, p. 7) It affirms that not all emptiness and abandonment are bad. Some can open innovative ways of exploring freedom, too.

The Father's Uniform and the Passage of Time

Kafka weaves several literary devices throughout the story; some imagery and symbols are rather simple, but some are more complicated than others. Take the instance of the uniform of Gregor's father, which keeps changing its condition throughout the story through different ups and downs. The story states that Gregor used to be the breadwinner of the home, but after the occurrence of metamorphosis, Gregor, of course, becomes unable to support the financial needs of his family. Consequently, in his absence, his mother, sister, and father have to join the race of earnings. In due course, his father gets a job as an assistant to bankers who need a sharp-looking and tidy uniform. At

the start, the father seems to be young and active in that trimmed and active uniform. The story explains that “above the high stiff collar of his jacket his firm double chin stuck out prominently, beneath his bushy eyebrows the glance of his black eyes was freshly penetrating and alert.” (Kafka, p. 50) But, with the passing of time, the uniform (like his father himself) started to seem exhausted and weary. The father’s uniform depicts a complicated symbology and portrays the position of Gregor in his family. By the time Gregor vanishes from the memory of his family members, they overcome the grief of Gregor’s death. The uniform implicitly refers to the fact that time and attitudes are subject to change over the course of time. Nothing is permanent in this world.

How Symbols Express Distortion and Isolation

By analyzing the above-given instances, it becomes evident that literary devices add a tinge of profoundness to the underlying proposition of a text. Through literary tools, authors can incorporate the most complex thoughts within content in just a few words. The vermin, the empty and abandoned room, a picture of a civilized lady with a muff around, and the father’s uniform all play a significant role in increasing the social and personal comprehension of the readers. Without symbology, Kafka could not describe how little he (or metaphorically Gregor) feels in the world. Without the notion of emptiness and a sense of hollowness, he could not describe the marvels of isolation and utter freedom. On the other hand, the use of fabric (the uniform of Gregor’s father) represents a perfect symbology because cloth can ascribe the wear and tear of time in a better manner. Through reading, analyzing, and comprehending “The Metamorphosis,” it becomes definite that the true essence of a story is hidden within the smart utilization of literary devices.

Work Cited

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